



HAPPY TALK

APRIL 2006

Temporary Editor Janice Hayes

Mintues from March GAVM Meeting

March 9, 2006y GAVM Meeting

We had Cathy Longino with The American Cancer Society come and talk to us about the Relay For Life at Adams Stadium in Dekalb. She was gracious enough to talk to us and show a wonderful video on the Relay For Life. The Greater Atlanta Voice Masters has always participated in the Relay For Life at Adams Stadium and this year will be no exception. Cathy told us that Relay For Life is the biggest fundraiser in the world. The Relay raised \$360 Million dollars for cancer research last year! This year the Relay theme is "Come and Play at the Relay". We have decided that our theme for our GAMV team will be "Greater Atlanta Voice Masters are "horse-shoeing around at the Relay." This will be the 13th year that our team has participated at the Adams Stadium Relay. The 9th year for your editor. I have not missed a Relay since I have been a cancer survivor. The Relay is not just about raising money for cancer research. It is also about celebrating cancer survivorship and hope that one day this disease will be cured. We still need (4) more people to sign up for our team and pledge to raise \$100. each. All cancer survivors will get a t-shirt, a free dinner and to lead the first lap of the Relay For Life on May 19th. The Luminary walk will be extra special this year. Cathy Longino told us that there will be a slide show of cancer victims and survivors shown on a screen sponsored by Georgia Power. We would like to have photos of all our survivor's, and if anyone has photos of Jane DelVecchio, Mark Crowe, please give the to Melissa Thompson (Relay For Life Captain) ASAP! GAVM bought luminaries for the people who we have lost Jane DelVecchio, Bill Mapp, Mark Crowe, Deidre Duncan and Judy Naglit. We hope that you will all join us at this FUN event at The Relay For Life at Adams Stadium on May 19th 2006 at 6pm. We will have a blue tent at campsite #10. We will have bottled water for all. Please bring a lawn chair to sit in. If you are not a survivor please plan on bringing your dinner or buying it there at the Relay.

There are several places that sell food at the Relay to benefit The American Cancer Society. If you want to sign up for our Relay For Life team, you can do so at the next GAVM meeting on April 13th. You can also contact Melissa Thompson, team captain at 770-788-3882 or e-mail mjcthomp@bellsouth.net.

We were glad to welcome new laryncetomee Karen June Denny and her family Patti Read & Christie Sailors the March meeting. We want to thank Hetty Mapp for coming and bringing them all the way from Newnan. Welcome and please come again.

About Our People

When I write about the Relay For Life it is strange not to be mentioning Dan Lewis. Dan has always been our team Captain. When we think of Relay For Life the first person we think of is Dan Lewis, he is, after all the King of our Relay. For 13 years Dan has been a Team Captain for the Relay For Life. He has always worked hard to make the Relay a Fun and important event for the GAVM. Dan is recovering from heart valve replacement surgery he had at St. Joes. He has been in the hospital for over (2) weeks. He has had to have dialysis 3 times a week also. Please keep Dan in your thoughts and prayers. We will miss you Dan at the April meeting! Melissa and I visited Dan Sunday March 26th and his sprites were great and he is looking forward to getting home, and planning his next fishing trip.

Sunday March 26th I also found out that Tina Long was in the hospital. She had a detached retina. Tina had surgery Sunday and is home recovering. So keep Tina in your thoughts and prayers . We hope Tina is going to be well enough to be able to attend our April meeting . And Doing the next Newsletter! ! (:

Rita Brown is also home recovering after surgery. Please keep Rita in your thoughts and prayers. We Hope Rita is well enough to come to our April meeting. We sure miss you Rita!

Charles Ruppe has also been in the hospital. We miss you Charlie and hope you are doing better. Please keep Charlie, our former President of GAVM, and Honored member, in your thoughts and prayers.

Peter Zecher our honored member that moved to Florida,(taking our treasured member Karen Piper with him to be his wife) 3 years ago. Peter is fighting Cancer of the esophagus, he is responding to Chemo Therapy, and is in good sprits. Please keep Peter in your Thoughts and Prayers. We really miss you Peter! Karen Too!

We have not seen Charles Hubbard last month, we hope you are doing well.

We sure missed seeing you! Charles is one of GAVM Honorary Members. His personal objective is “By Giving My Best Each Day As I Receive It.”

Jimmy Boyd, a laryncetomee since 1995 and club member, passed away February 6th from a heart attack at 71. his widow, Christine Boyd, called to let us know about Jimmy’s passing and to donate his voice instruments to our loan closet. GAVM expresses it’s deepest sympathy to Christine for the loss of her husband Jimmy.

Words to Live by

Start by doing what’s necessary, then what’s possible, and suddenly you are doing the impossible.

.....St. Francis of Assisi

LOAN CLOSET

We are still looking for any new or used voice instruments for our Loan Closet for new laryngectomees. Dan Lewis was the first to make a donation at the March meeting. Dale Zahrhdt also donated 2 instruments. We hope Dale will be able to come to the next meeting. We miss you and Sharon. Christine Boyd donated 2 instruments that were her late husband Jimmy's. THANK YOU Dan, Dale and Christine! Your donations will help a new laryngectomee have a new voice after surgery! If you would like to make a donation to the GAVM Loan Closet please call Melissa Thompson at 770-788-3882 or Janice Hayes 404-259-5897 or e-mail us at mjcthomp@bellsouth.net or jhaze1071@aol.com

PUBLIC EDUCATION

Janice Hayes spoke to about 30 Speech Pathologists at a convention in Atlanta. Some of them had never seen a Laryngectomee before. I help them understand what it is like to be a Laryngectomee. How difficult going through the pre and post opt. and most important how Laryngectomee's can go out after they recover and have a productive, happy full life.

Don't Ever Give Up

(by Boris Jovanovic)

On Thursday, March 16, my cell phone rang as we drove through Eufala, a town about halfway between Atlanta, and Destin. It was Melissa Thompson on the other end and she asked me whether I could pay a visit to two new laryngectomee patients at Emory Hospital. Unfortunately I had to decline, because my buddy Phyl and I got a message from Captain Larry from Destin that Friday will be a good day for offshore grouper fishing. After we completed all the tasks at work that could not wait until next week, we packed up quickly and started for Destin. There 's a small fishing boat by the name of Dead Fish awaited us to take us on the first fishing this year.

Relax, this won't be another "fishing Story".....

Driving through Alabama towards the Florida panhandle I was thinking about these new laryngectomees that I would not get to meet. Did they inform themselves before the surgery or did they face their new “body configuration” at the hospital for the first time. In these few years that I have been visiting with patients, I met quite a few of both kinds. Never before did it occur to me to observe myself, as I was 6 years ago, through this newly acquired experience - to place myself into one of the two groups. There is no doubt, I was in that second group - I did not like my new “configuration” one bit. I wanted just one thing - to wake up from that horrible dream.

My family was fully behind me. Ljerka hardly slept, after work she'd come to the hospital and returned late at night, only to go to work the next morning. While I was still lying in bed unable to move she'd tell me I looked better and better. When I finally stood up and looked at myself in a mirror I did not scream only because my vocal cords were removed. I took pencil and paper and asked Ljerka: “How did I look three days ago if I look much better today?”

Alma Ownes understood that I have a ton of questions so she brought along a few brochures. I was supposed to find answers to my questions there but I found the “question of questions”. I found two unrelated texts about the number of laryngectomy surgeries and number of laryngectomees in the U.S. Comparing the two I concluded that the chances of long-term survival were minimal. I was angry at myself for not reading this sooner and for letting them perform this serious surgery on myself. In one word, I was very pessimistically disposed and especially so because they incorrectly inserted my drain and feeding tube and because of which I had had serious postoperative complications that I feel even today.

And then on day an elderly gentleman showed up and introduced himself as Jarell Yates with Greater Atlanta Voice Masters. He told me: “Don't worry, you'll be OK.” I was thinking that he at least lived to a respectable age before this happened to him. As if he was reading my mind, Jarell told me that he had his surgery more than 20 years ago (WOW!) and that he, since that time, lives a productive and virtually normal life. He opened a blue folder and produced the cartoon “Don't Give Up” (a picture of a stork eating a frog) I looked at the cartoon and wondered whether I was the frog or the stork. The author meant the frog, but I identified with the stork, because I felt as if someone or something was squeezing my throat because of damage to a nerve during surgery. Looking alternately at the cartoon and my visitor I decided to eat that frog. I said to myself “don't ever give up”.

Six years later one could say that I have almost swallowed that frog. Just 15 more years and I will be able to say to a new laryngectomee that I had had my surgery over 20 years ago.

With my this post-surgery neck I look more and more like a stork. Maybe that's why I go offshore fishing even though I know well that I can't swim with my stoma. But Ljerka thinks of everything. She finally got me to wear a USCG approved PFD(personal flotation device). that swim vest is not particularly comfortable. Phyl and the rest of the people on the boat are not wearing them. But I am telling them "guys, I have to wear this because if something happens and I drown without this swim vest Ljerka will suffocate me again".

Again I started a fishing story. Well, then, since we started ... I caught a grouper thiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiis big.

DATES TO REMEMBER

APRIL 13 GAVM MEETING ANNE BIGELOW HEAD AND NECK NURSE AT EMORY WILL BE OUR SPEAKER

MAY 19-20 AMERICAN CANCER SOCIETY RELAY FOR LIFE

MAY 12 GAVM MEETING WILL BE YUL BRYNNER SURVIVOR'S RECEPTION AT BUDD TERRACE BUILDING (MORE TO FOLLOW)

JULY 19TH - 22 INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF LARYNGECTOMEES MEETING/VOICE INSTITUE 2006 IN CHICAGO AT THE HYATT RENGENCY IN WOODFIELD

The person who cannot believe in himself cannot believe in anything else. The basis of all integrity and character is whoever faith we have in our own integrity.John Swan

New Web Site Design

(Boris Jovanovic)

Our web site has been almost completely redesigned. If you visit www.voicemaster.org you will see new design and when you open "our people" there is also in memoriam for Jane DeIVecchio . I encourage all of you to write down texts about former and current GAVM members. There are so many nice and interesting people in GAVM!

Most of the work has been done by my nephew Dejan Milicic, who lives and works in Nove Sad, the second largest city in Serbia, and my son Srdjan, who was active as webmaster from day one. I have done some of the work as well, but it is not proper to praise myself. (So let me do it for you) Thank you all so much!!!!!! Great Job!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Defan is 32 years old software engineer and works for “Centus” a Swedish software company that has offices in Novi Sad. His specialty are compiler. Check out <http://www.compiler.net> to see what he works with. Dejan has a wife, Renata, also a software engineer, and a two year old daughter Olivera. the three of them would possibly want to move to US on day, to live work and grow here.

Srdjan is a 26 year old electrical engineer with a degree from Georgia Tech and currently is looking for a position in electrical/computer in engineering or computer programming.

As I am putting this Newsletter together I can't help but think how amazing we all are! We all really bring something wonderful to the table and I am really proud to be part of such a giving, talented group GAVM!!! I want to thank you all for all you contribute!

Please come and join in on all the fun at our next meeting April 13th at 7:30 Shirley Olson will be back to setting a beautiful table with all kinds of good treats.

You can get by on charm for about 15 minutes. After that, you better know something. H. Jackson Brown, Jr.