




VIEW FROM THE TANK (OR FUTURES UNLIMITED, INC.), TAKE FOUR

By Sharman Collins – October 1998 (See 2008 Update at the end.)

As I write this, I am sitting in a trailer in Columbus, MS. Today was day 8 in a 10-day treatment program at Futures Unlimited. My goal for my fourth treatment here is increased endurance, strength and relief from tight muscles. And, Ed and I have been discussing my plans to downhill snow ski this winter! Pretty remarkable for someone who, a mere two years ago, spent 12 hours a day on a Bi-pap, wore a full-torso back brace, and used my scooter to ride from one side of the room to another. For those of you who are unfamiliar with the [treatment offered at Futures Unlimited, Inc.](#), let me give you a few pertinent details. "Futures" provides out-patient therapy and rehabilitation primarily for clients with post-polio syndrome, spinal cord injuries, cerebral palsy, head trauma and developmental disorders.

The standard treatment program lasts fourteen consecutive days. There are six sessions of physical therapy per day. The modalities used are the most basic in physical therapy. They are heat, hydrotherapy, massage, passive exercise (patterning), light and deep sensory stimulation, positioning and other relaxation/stimulation techniques. Treatment is done under very dim blue and green lights. Talking is not allowed and the clients are encouraged to relax completely. Posture and gait training and mild exercise, when applicable, augment the treatment program and are demonstrated after clinic hours. What sets this treatment apart from others is the inclusion within the modalities of over a hundred specifically sequenced movements and numerous and various stimuli which evolved from research of human development. The movements and chronological sequencing are the result of over 36 years of study by Ed Snapp in the area of childbirth, embryology and developmental theory, plus trial-and-error experimental therapy with central nervous system disorders, namely, cerebral palsy, brain and/or spinal cord injury and other neurological conditions.

I arrived at the clinic the morning of October 12, and after a consultation with Ed, while Bob and Jackie observed, I was ready to start treatment. It was great to see Willie, Barbara, and Linda again. And there were a few new aides I hadn't met before. The staff is truly unique at Futures -- warm and caring. Willie did "pressures" on me and then a session of table work. Every time I have been to Futures, I start out the first week very stiff and sore. My tight muscles relaxed about day seven. After table work, I was positioned in the inner tube, listening to a recording of sounds in the womb. Then, a break for lunch. Several other patients with post-polio syndrome were undergoing treatment. Lorna Johannes from Gibson, Iowa, was there for her first treatment. Karen Treberg from Kalamazoo, Michigan and Dottie Lofquist from Glen Ellyn, Illinois, were receiving their fourth treatment session. Joe Mayer, from Sawyer, Michigan, had the distinction of being one of the first PPS clients treated by Ed, the first time in 1991. During the ten days I was there, two young men were treated for spinal cord injury and head injury. I enjoyed meeting all of them and hearing about their different backgrounds and progress in recovery. We had to be reminded several times to be quiet during lunch.



After lunch, we started in again with table work. Ed had changed some of the treatments this session-- changes he feels will be more effective. There was more emphasis on upper body therapy. Pressures were done twice a day. After table work, it was off to the inner tube. I was comfortable in the inner tube from about the third day on. Before that, my body was tight and didn't feel like twisting into a fetal position. When I have been to Futures before, the "tank" has been my least favorite therapy. The incessant quiet and stillness plus the irritation of the water is difficult for me to tolerate. And, the "view" of the white ceiling through the clear plastic cover with the condensation dripping down your nose is not the least bit entertaining. All one can see are shadowy figures occasionally moving around the room. But this session, Ed had the oxygen tank connected so the air was delightful--and the added bubbles felt great popping around my neck and shoulders. I was much more relaxed and my body reacted in very positive ways.

I felt a positive change in my energy from about the fifth day on. Wow! We'll see how it translates to function once I get home. Also, my right leg and right shoulder feel more stable. At my final consultation with Ed, I promised to be ever-vigilant about my posture. He gave me a new home program which includes exercises to prepare my muscles for snow skiing! How exciting!

How fortunate I am to be able to continue this therapy on an ongoing basis. I will return yearly in hopes of gaining more strength and function. Hopefully, in a few years, the therapy will be available in a few more locations.

2008 Update: Sharman continues to do well. There is now a second clinic located in Phoenix, AZ. Go to the [Futures Unlimited website](#) for details.