

November 22, 2004

Good morning,

Annie says to tell all of you that she is much better. After many months, I can say that she is. Yesterday was the first day in a while that Annie did not inquire about my children (I have none) or ask me what we were going to do with the people I brought with me to see her (I brought no one). She seemed to be very much in the present time and said a couple of things that made me realize she knew it was her old friend Linda visiting (not a new friend).

Annie's birthday is the 27th of this month. For those of you who would like to send a card I will include her address at the end of this email. As I won't be in Chicago next weekend I celebrated Annie's birthday yesterday with her. Following birthday cake, candles, wishes, gifts and tea her mother suggested we might have just one glass of wine to celebrate. Annie jumped right on that and said a cigarette to go with it would be good too. I said that I really didn't care for a glass of wine but Annie and her mother could do so without me. So Annie's mom reneged on her offer. For the next half hour, Annie had us in stitches laughing about the great birthday party she almost had. She has never lost her sense of humor, timing and delivery when telling a story. She still loves to make people laugh.

Finally got Annie to use the walker instead of just pushing the wheel chair. The walker forces her to pay more attention, uses her upper body muscles and helps her coordination. She worked diligently at it for a half hour outside on a bumpy sidewalk. Then we used it indoors and it was perfect in the house for her. She actually got the hang of it. The walker allows her more freedom and mobility in the house. She made it to the washroom by herself and was so pleased. This way she doesn't have to be tied to a chair or wait for someone to assist her to move from one place to another.

There has been a lot of progress this past couple of weeks. Her eyes actually look better. It appears to me that the iris is centered a little better - it has moved up just a bit within the eyeball. She can look at something a bit more directly - doesn't have to tilt her head back to see things as much.

She saw another neurosurgeon this past week and he called her a miracle after seeing her first MRI's. Could not believe she is walking and doing as well as she is. Her angiogram was fine with the exception of a small bump or clot in the brain. But it has remained the same and the neurosurgeon said next year they would do another CT scan along with another angiogram. Her medical bills continue to mount. They see their neurologist tomorrow so I might have more news for you all in my next email.

Annie's mother continues with her tireless care. They walk to the local gym 5 days a week in order for Annie to work out with Kevin, her trainer. He seems to be doing very positive work with her.

Annie was truly with us yesterday - she was focused - funny - aware - curious and always smiling. Keep saying your prayers and maybe this birthday will bring a better year for Annie and her family.

For birthday cards: Annie Mategrano
C/O Veronica Wallace
411 West Hampton Drive
Wheaton, IL 60187

Linda