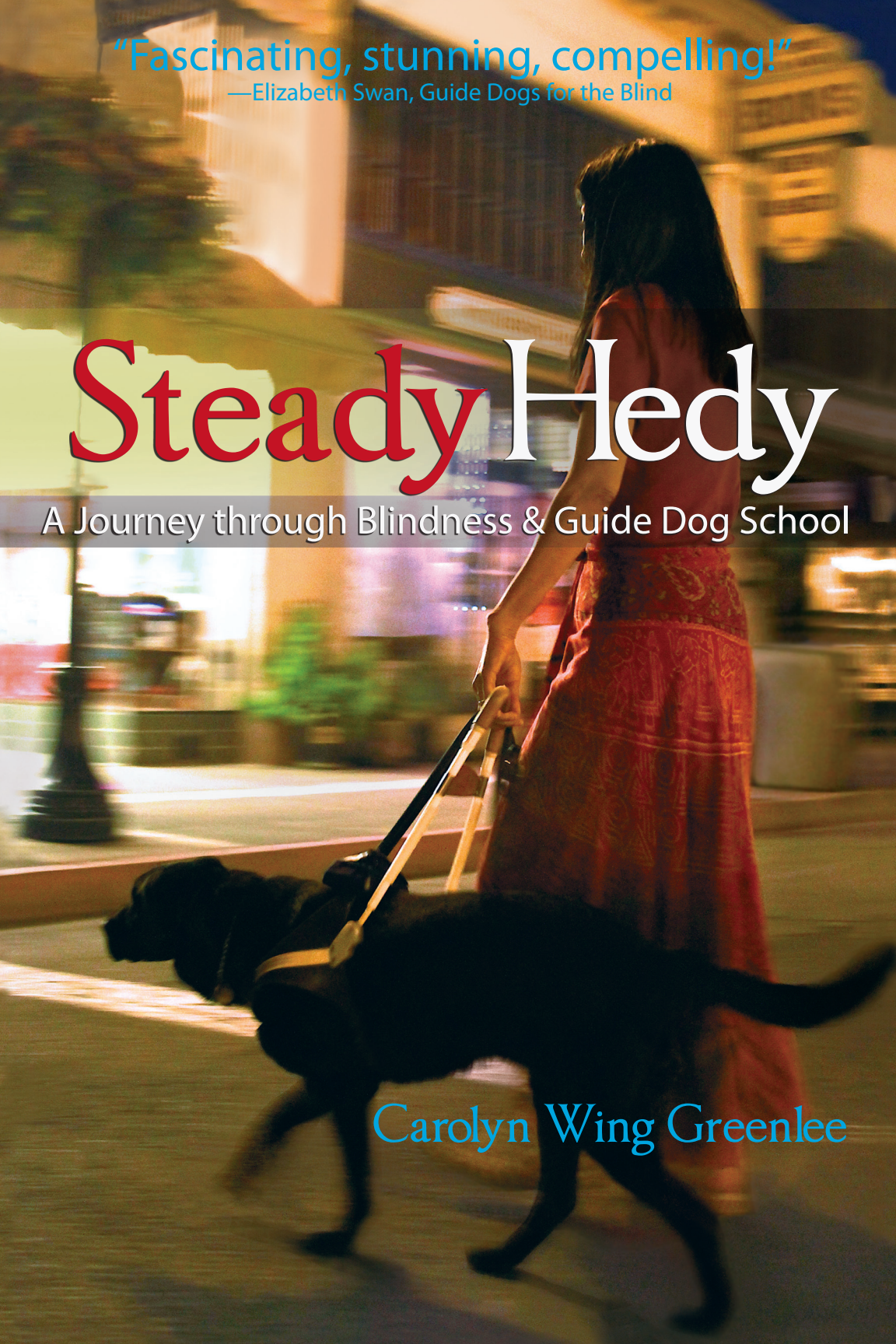
"Fascinating, stunning, compelling!"
—Elizabeth Swan, Guide Dogs for the Blind



Steady Hedy

A Journey through Blindness & Guide Dog School

Carolyn Wing Greenlee

Inside Front

Chapter 1

Dog-a-Thon. Big black letters. Hard to miss. Also hard to read—for me. The Earle Baum Center for the Blind had been sending me their newsletter for years, and for years I'd barely glanced at them. My eyes balked at the large letters that enabled most low vision folks to keep reading. In my case, the bigger the letters, the more parts were missing—shot full of holes while golden squiggles (euphemistically called scintillations) obscured the black fragments with jiggling worms of light. The large print of the newsletter only reminded me of the rarity of my disease. Even specific aids for the blind were not helpful to me.

Still, I was intrigued. There would be activities and games for dogs. What would it look like to have a bunch of guide dogs gathered together enjoying events designed just for them? Obstacle courses? Demonstrations? I had never seen a guide dog in person. Stately shepherds with pointy stand-up ears doggedly guiding their blind owners through the obstacles of life—that's what I envisioned when I thought of those amazing canines. Suddenly I wanted to see them. I called the Center.

"Hello, I'm a low-vision person. I don't have a guide dog, but I understand I don't have to be completely blind to get one. I'd like to go to the Dog-a-Thon just to watch some of it." The friendly voice on the other end sounded genuinely concerned about my needs. Gently she began asking questions. How was I getting along? How was I getting around? Did I need more help? Finally she said, "Why don't I have someone come and talk to you about it?"

His name was Scott Kies, Orientation and Mobility Specialist (O&M). He called the very next day. What did this have to do with guide dogs? I already knew how to use the white cane. Two days later he called again. I stalled. He called again. Finally I agreed on a date—a full month after his initial contact. I wasn't sure I wanted to see him. I was busy. I had other things to do.

Scott Kies was tall, outdoorsy, wry of humor, and a little thin on top (which he pointed out with a grin). His voice was gentle and high the way some athletes sound. I liked him, though I struggled to remember his name. For the first couple of months I kept wanting to call him Frances.

When Scott came into my house, he left his shoes at the door. It surprised me that he'd done that without asking. When I remarked about it, Scott explained that he'd noticed my shoes next to the door. I told him it wasn't necessary; I was shoeless only because I preferred going barefoot. He shrugged and said it just felt right for him to leave his there too. It reminded me of something my dad told me. "In Chinese medicine you can tell about the whole from a little part. From the tongue you can assess the condition of the body. From one action you can assess the character of a person." From that one gesture I saw Scott's keen observation and his unconscious thoughtfulness.

"Show me what you know," Scott said. I took out the neatly folded stick, flipped it into its full length and demonstrated what I'd learned. Three years before, the Department of Rehabilitation had provided me with a red-tipped reflective white cane and a trainer who showed me how to swing it in front of me in an arc the width of my shoulders to make sure the path was clear. The trainer taught me to shoreline, keeping myself oriented to my path by finding the edge of the sidewalk, road or hallway with the ball on the end of the cane. That was about it.

Scott did not tell me how horrified he was to see how little I knew. How could I be safe just swinging the stick—never using it to probe off the edges of curbs to determine their distances from the street or whether the dark spot was a shadow or a hole? I soon learned there were many more uses for a cane than shorelining. For example, going up stairs. Scott talked me through each step: First you locate the staircase. Holding the cane vertical, place the ball on the first step. Walk up to the cane, bending your elbow while keeping your forearm parallel to the ground (he called this the "checking your watch" position). Decide if you are "square" to the step. Find the hand rail. What is the height of the riser? Probe to discover the depth of the tread. Hold the cane vertical in front of you against the riser of the step ahead. Raise the cane off the tread.

Keep your arm in the same position as you ascend the stairs. The cane will automatically clear the tread of the step and bump the riser of the next step. When your cane swings out at the top step you know you have one step left.

I liked Scott's clear, step-by-step method of doing stairs—techniques refined through many hours of teaching, streamlined for clarity. I practiced going up the stairs. It was easy. Going down was more unnerving. Scott explained the procedure, then said, "Do you think you're ready to try it?" I stood at the top of the long descending flight and talked myself through the instructions. *Stand at the edge of the step. Cane down. Checking Watch Position…* It wasn't long before I was scampering up and down with the greatest of ease. How different from the hesitant, head-down, fear of falling method that was, literally, a pain in the neck!

There were lots of steps from my deck to the cement walk that curved to the front door of my office/studio next door. One set had both wide and narrow steps which were hard for me to negotiate. Scott suggested that I have the edges painted in a contrasting color. I followed his directions. How easy it was after that to see where each step ended! For the inside of the house, Scott had other helpful hints. If I put a different texture or color of mat at the bottom of the stairs, I would know when I had completed the flight—a perfect technique for a barefoot girl.

I was a stickler for using things only for their stated intended purpose. The cane was for getting around when I couldn't see. My vision was still pretty good when I first got my cane, so I used it at night or in dark places and kept it folded up the rest of the time. After all, I was not totally blind. I didn't feel right pretending to be more deserving of special treatment than was warranted. I told Scott I felt guilty for using the cane when I could see. I had noticed people looking at me, puzzled. One man commented, "Obviously you can see, so why do you have a white cane?" He wasn't unkind, just curious. Nevertheless, I was embarrassed. I felt as if I didn't deserve a cane because I wasn't blind enough—a fraud playing on the sympathies of others. All I lacked was a can full of pencils and a jar for donations. Scott said, "The cane isn't just to help you find obstacles, it's for identification so people know that you can't see

them. If you run into them or they wave at you and you don't respond, they'll know why."

That had happened many times. A lady at church complained that I'd looked straight through her as if she didn't exist. She didn't know that whatever wasn't in my central field of vision, wasn't there. It wasn't black or missing, it just wasn't. And whatever fell in that blank space didn't exist to me. It's strange, but if you realize that you see with your brain, not with your eyes, you start to understand how that could be.

After Scott explained that the cane was for identification, I was okay with using it all the time. Now if I bumped into anyone (or vice versa) the person would apologize effusively instead of muttering unpleasantries as they limped away. My friends told me it was fun going places with me because crowds would part before me like the Red Sea. Doors were held open with a smile. It made people feel good to be helpful.

While Scott was making sure I was getting all the skills I needed, I was enjoying being with someone who was vigilantly watching out for me. Most sighted people didn't. I remember standing at the mouth of the underground tunnel at Marine World with sharks on both sides and overhead while a whole lot of people were pressing in behind me. I had stopped in my tracks, unable to adjust to the sudden darkness, feeling abandoned and a little panicked until my husband remembered and came back for me. All of my friends and family had left me at one time or another—and when they returned, chagrined, to retrieve me, they had all said the same thing: "You do so well we forget you can't see." Scott never forgot. Yes, it was his job, but he wasn't just teaching me mechanics; he had come alongside to make my life more secure and free. And everything in his approach and demeanor encouraged me to believe I could be.

One day Scott said, "You have a new hat to wear. It says Teacher. You can help people understand blindness better." I was truly surprised that so many people were unsure what to do when they saw a cane. Some were embarrassed to be whole around another who was obviously so pitifully disabled. I was trying to think of ways to help people be more at ease. If you're comfortable, they are too. Anytime I'd have to sign my name, "Sign there" didn't help

me. Rather than explain that I couldn't tell where "there" was, I'd whip out the plastic signature guide that Scott had given me and say,"Please put this over the place where you want me to sign." The checker would smile, happy to oblige. "Every day I thank God I can still see," I'd tell the checker. "Enjoy your sight. It's a wonderful gift." It put a positive note on the task, and maybe it helped them appreciate their own eyes more.

There are some humorous things about the public and canes. Sometimes people speak louder and slower. Number one, not everyone with a cane is totally blind. Number two, usually our other senses work just fine, though the real increase in capability doesn't actually kick in till all the light blinks out. I learned that from my son John who watched a program hosted by Alan Alda on the brain. In this experiment, they took a college student with normal vision, wrapped her head so she could not perceive light, taught her to use a cane, read braille, and find her room in a dorm with many identical corridors and doors. Within a few days she was able to find her way around campus and do her work using braille. Scans of her brain showed that new areas had lighted up to take on the tasks. After a period of time, they removed the wrappings and the new areas in her brain went dark. She could not find her door and she could no longer read braille.

That made me feel better. People often said things to me such as, "But your other senses become much more acute." It used to make me feel worse since my hearing is, through age, a little less keen than it had been. I thought something was wrong with me but, after John told me about the experiment, I knew it was not time yet. I was still too sighted. If I ever go totally blind, I'll have an increase in sensory sensitivity to look forward to.

Another thing people said—and they intended it from the goodness of their hearts—they said, "You may not be able to see with your eyes, but your inner vision is even greater." Pu-LEEZE! My inner vision? My inner vision's screaming, "It's dark in here! Somebody turn on the lights!"

And braille? Forget it! Once on a plane a stewardess saw my cane, smiled brightly, and lugged over to me the huge book of emergency info in braille. I felt bad that she'd gone to all that trouble and was obviously so delighted that she'd thought of it,

so I drew my fingers over the bumps for her sake—and because I was curious. What did braille feel like? The white paper was heavy and thick—a wide expanse of raised bumps. I'd never seen anyone read braille, and as I ran my fingertips over the letters I couldn't tell which bumps were in which configurations. Everything felt the same.

In 1985 when I found out I was 80% blind, I tried playing piano with my eyes closed. It was a very different experience. Suddenly I couldn't play scales I'd been running for thirty years. I decided I'd better learn things such as braille while I could still see. Maybe now would be a good time. I asked Scott. He knew how. When I mentioned it to him, he explained the alphabet to me, but I couldn't remember. Not much room left on the hard drive. Scott told me older people had a much harder time learning braille—possibly because they were out of the habit of learning, or because they'd spent all their lives reading type. To begin obtaining information through another sense—reading by touch—was a whole different skill. And there could be loss of sensitivity in their fingers from calluses or neuropathy. I was an older person and I had calluses from forty-four years of playing guitar. The case against braille was building up. Scott said, "You're a very visual person with a good amount of sight left. You have technologies to help you do your work. Why take the time to learn a skill you don't really need?" That was a relief. One less thing to try to stuff into the old brain.

But what about the dog? Scott wasn't enthusiastic. It was a lot of work and I'd have to be away from home for a month of training. A month! Was that really necessary? Aren't they already trained? When I talked to my son John about it, he quipped, "If you're going to get a chauffeur, why do you need to learn how to drive?" I decided it sounded like too much trouble. I wanted a dog, but not one that required that kind of commitment. Still, I loved dogs. I missed mine. Had it only been three years? It seemed she'd been gone forever.

My husband Dennis was not a dog person, but he knew I was. In 1992 he asked me if I wanted a black Lab. Velvet was a Canine Companion drop-out. Too distractible. He got her for me from one of his patients who was about to move. The family owned two

dogs and had to leave their daughter's since the other one was their disabled son's working dog. Velvet lived with us for a dozen years of significant changes: our move to the house on the hill, my dad's cancer, my mom's illness, and Dennis' deteriorating health and heart surgery and return to work six months later. We used to joke that I was a Ferrari and he was a Mack Truck He seemed to be able to get through anything. This time, though, I noticed he wasn't totally back. He tired easily. He was more forgetful. The doctors had explained about his time "on the pump"—the four hours his heart was still while they replaced a valve and repaired another. While his blood circulated through a machine, tiny air bubbles formed in it and created small strokes that left him with mood swings and depression. He spent more time on the couch. The TV was almost never off. He said he needed the noise to soothe him. He was often despondent. But one day when I returned from work, he was unusually happy. He told me he had found a program called "The Dog Whisperer." He said he'd been attracted to the title because of my work with Monty Roberts, who many years ago was dubbed "The Horse Whisperer" because of his ability to communicate with horses through their body language. Like Monty Roberts who spent endless hours observing mustangs in the wild, Cesar Millan had observed pack behavior and learned how to communicate with dogs according to their natural inclinations.

That got us started watching dog training programs. There were many experts—even another who called himself "The Dog Whisperer." They had different methods, but most of them agreed on one thing: With dogs it was all about the Alpha—the leader of the pack. In the wild, the Alpha decides where to go, what to do, and keeps them safe. His dominance assures the pack that they have a capable leader so they can relax. The weight of the world is on the shoulders of the leader, not the pack.

Shortly after we started watching all the programs on dog training, I met a young man named Garland Garrisi. He trained his own hunting dogs—high energy beasts who were admirably obedient. How did he do it? High Collar Alpha Walk. He raised the chain collar up till it was under the dogs jaw. Since it's a more sensitive place on the dog's neck, you can get the dog's attention without having to use force. To establish your place as leader of the

pack, you Alpha Walk your dog—High Collar for control—with you walking slightly in front.

I thought about many dog owners I'd seen. Mostly they were being dragged by their pets. Those dogs were asserting their Alpha position. That's why they didn't listen to their owners, and the owners tended to laugh and say it was the personality of their pets. They had obtained the animals for companionship—furry friends with no other purpose than to share their lives and make them happy. "He thinks he's a people," I'd hear them say. Or, "They're our kids." Garland said their dogs love them, but they don't respect them.

Listening to Garland, and seeing his huge black Lab so responsive to his every move, I wanted to try it. I knew I could do it. Visiting some friends, I tried it on their maniacal terrier and was positively ecstatic when the pushy little pest stopped cold, stared at me in unbelief that turned into deep respect, and became a sweet, polite small gentleman. I wished I had a dog to rehabilitate, but Velvet was pushing fourteen. She was too crippled to be a raging maniac needing high collar Alpha Walks.

Shortly after Dennis and I began watching dog training programs, my mom died. Then Velvet died. Then Dennis had his strokes, and I'd lost most of my sight. There wasn't room in my heart for much of anything—certainly not another dog. Nobody could fit into Velvet's place and I had no energy to invest in a new relationship. Then one day while I was visiting my dad in Southern California, my dear friend Nancy Cristler stopped by with her new dog—a sweet red brindle greyhound named Lily. Nancy told me that, in giving an ex-racer a new life, she had found herself being healed from the trauma of her struggles with cancer. When I looked into Lily's eyes, I saw her gentle heart and fell in love with the breed. I had been dogless for several years. Suddenly I felt a rush of longing. I wanted one.

Nancy volunteered at Greyhound Adoption Center (GAC) in San Diego. I wanted to go. She got permission. I was so excited that the day she was to pick me up (at 3:00 a.m.) I couldn't sleep all night. I figured I could nap on the way, but I didn't. We talked about greys for four hours straight. Then I spent the time at GAC socializing with dogs that were let out four times a day to romp

together in long fenced concrete runs. I was a bit alarmed when fifteen tall dogs came rampaging out towards me, but they were all that same temperament I'd seen in Lily. They all had those calm eyes. You'd think something that skinny would be hyper and nervous and always looking for a chance to run, but they're the opposite. "Forty-five Mile an Hour Couch Potatoes" they called them. The staff assured me greyhounds would rather sleep.

I had read stories of the horrors these dogs endured—owners who, when the dogs fail to win races, simply stop feeding them, dogs turned loose in the desert and left to die, fast dogs forced to run many races a day until their paws went bloody. How could anyone do such things to those magnificent animals? Fortunately there were organizations such as the Greyhound Adoption Center that had agreements with owners whose dogs were "retired" and put aside in a holding area for the rescue groups to come pick up. With all my heart I wanted one.

There in the runs I successfully Alpha-walked the most rambunctious of the greyhounds and fell in love with Borax, the biggest dog there. Boy, did he have attitude! But I Alpha walked him and found I could control a very large, powerful animal. It was exhilarating. I am small. All my life, large things have intimidated me. Now this huge dog walked by my side gentle and docile. I wanted him.

The staff reminded, me that I wouldn't get to choose. Dogs were carefully matched with adopters. They told me the most successful matches occurred when the adopter left the choice of details—gender, color, etc.—to the staff. They said Borax may not be the best choice for me. I needed a dog with low prey drive because I had a Siamese-mix cat named Hope. Greys were trained to chase white furry objects. Hope was just such an object. Nonetheless, I had seen that I could do it. Dogs responded consistently to the Alpha walk. My heart ached for those abused animals.

When I was a child, I had been beaten by someone. Older adults told me about it decades later. Though it had gone on for years, I didn't remember a single incident. Still, it left its effects. Perhaps that's why I wanted a dog that I could rehabilitate. I was hoping my ministrations to the grey would heal me the way Lily was healing Nancy.

So I made the decision. No perfect pooch for me. I didn't want one who came beautifully trained, complete, in need of nothing. I wanted to work with the animal. Offer a safe place. Develop and release his potential. Thus I dismissed the vision of shepherd in harness, its alert, intelligent eyes scanning the scene, ready to protect its helpless master against the dangers of the unseen world. I decided to apply for a greyhound. When I told Dan Worley, my business associate and friend of many years, he was interested too. He had also been dogless for a long time. Since he lived next door in my studio, we thought if we each had one, two greys would be rescued and they would have the comfort of each other's company. That very day I began praying for God's best choice of dogs for us.

Qualifying for a greyhound from Greyhound Adoption Center was complicated. These were special needs dogs. There was a long form to fill out. Then, if you were approved, there would be a home interview. Gail Griffith from Sacramento was the volunteer who drove the two hours over the windy mountain roads with her bright little dog Poppy, a plucky small (fifty-eight pounds) female greyhound in a color described as red/fawn. Poppy had the happiest tail I'd ever seen. Dan thought she was adorable.

Gail came to inspect our houses, check my fenced back yard, ask questions and answer ours, and determine if we would be fit to adopt any of their precious greys. Gail also wanted to make us aware of the nature of the animal we chose to adopt. I had been talking to Nancy and the folks at the Center, so I knew a few of the issues: Greyhounds can never be let off leash outside. They are not trained to come back. Every open door looks to them like a starting gate. They have never seen anything but the track, the crate, their handlers, and other greys. They're not used to other breeds. They've never seen a sliding glass door, a chair, a child. They don't know how to fetch (and probably won't). As sight hounds, they have sharp eyes and when they spot the prey, they will go after it with all their might. They will be out of earshot in ten seconds. You have to hold their leash with a particular double grip and they wear a special collar called a "martingale" (which is included in the adoption fee) because regular collars slip right over their slender, streamlined heads. Some greys never respond to their names.

Gail asked what we wanted in a dog. Dan requested one he could play with—a dog who was peppy and energetic. Dan loved to play and often told me I didn't know how to have fun. I said I had a good time doing my work. Writing was fun to me. Dan was nine years younger than I, and Italian and German, which our friend Lynne said explained everything. Dan was loud, demonstrative, and known for talking before thinking. His motto was, "When in doubt, floor it." Mine was, "When in doubt, don't."

As a creative team, Dan and I balanced one another, but we had years of bumpy times thrashing through our differences as we worked on music, theater, and books. Before teaming up with Dan, I thought all artistic collaborations were a joyful sparking of inspiration—iron sharpening iron. Before Dan, I thought I was a nice person. For nearly twenty-five years Dale Enstrom and I had worked on music with nary a cross word. But Dan could bring out the worst in me. I'd get so frustrated and angry that I wanted to throw things and slam doors. I hated violence. How could I be this hateful, shrieking banshee?

Lynne said God put some people into our lives to rub off the rough edges. He put Dan in my life to show me the truth about myself. I was a quitter. Instead of trying to save the relationship, I'd give up. Cut and run. Get a divorce. Move away. Through Dan, God showed me that a valuable alternative: Work it out.

Dan was a fighter—for his ideas, his honor, his way—but he'd also fight to keep a friendship, all the way to a coming to recognize his own wrongs and making a heartfelt apology. I wasn't good at "sorry." Mom never said it, even when faced with hard evidence that she was wrong. I don't remember anyone in my family using that word, and it was almost impossible for me to get out of my mouth. But Dan had shown me that friendship can survive furious conflict and afterwards be better and stronger than before.

It was a good thing for my black Lab Velvet that Dan lived close by because he became her personal stick thrower. She adored him for it and would fetch till she dropped if he let her. For the most part, I enjoyed his exuberance and energy, but we were very different from one another—yin and yang. At sixty years of age, I didn't have an abundance of energy. I wanted a sensitive, gentle soul like Nancy's Lily. I was a writer. My dog would have to be content

doing nothing for hours. Dan was a musician and sound engineer. His dog would have to be content in a studio with screaming electric guitars—also having nothing to do for hours but lie nearby. We had to have two greyhounds with low prey drive who were compatible with each other. Of course, the more criteria, the longer the wait. GAC was careful. That's why they had a 95% success rate in their placements. We were willing to wait. I loved the idea of a dog that was chosen just for me. What would she be like? I was excited to meet her, but we didn't hear anything from GAC for a long time. I just kept praying. Not many months later, my sister Adrienne said, "Why are you getting a greyhound? They don't do anything. You should consider a working dog, one that can help you get around." That triggered another memory.

For six years I had worked to keep my ailing mother clean, her tube ends sterile, her bottom dry. When the bed sores got too deep, Daddy and I turned her every two hours and cleaned them ourselves. The second year into her rapid degeneration, Mom told me she asked Jesus to accept her. "I don't think He did, though," she mused. "Maybe I should send Him a fax."

I laughed but it also made me sad. Why would she think Jesus wouldn't accept her? The Chinese believe the worth of something is shown by the amount they are willing to pay for it. He died for her. He paid the ultimate price. I showed her the Scriptures that assured her without doubt that Jesus accepted her and she finally believed it.

It was the worst and most horrible, and also the best and most glorious time of our lives together. The mother who had been perfect and demanded perfection of her inept second daughter became the mom of my dreams. She appreciated every little thing I did for her. She called me her angel and said endearing things to me. And when she could no longer talk without choking, she loved me with her one remaining eye. I talked to my mother more openly during those six years than in all my years before.

The evening of Easter Sunday, 1999, Mom asked me to baptize her. She wasn't able to get into a tub, so I took a little water and sprinkled her head as she lay on her bed. "Now if I die will I go to heaven?" she asked in the voice of a small child. I laughed and said, "You would have gone even without it, but yes, you will go

to heaven." She sighed and smiled serenely. Then she said with a wife-sounding tone in her voice, "Now if we can just get Daddy to believe so he can be with us forever…"

At last I had something to share with my mom. Every day I read her *The Upper Room* daily devotional and the Bible verse that accompanied the meditation written by a believer somewhere in the world. We prayed together—no longer only mother and daughter, now sisters in Christ. And I was the older one by almost thirty years!

Though we had never been close or affectionate, emotionally or physically, one day I impulsively climbed up on her hospital bed and held her—an older sister comforting her younger sister in a warm, secure embrace. She began to tell me her fears. When she confessed her alarm at each day's loss, I told her I understood. Each day I was losing more sight. She worried about me then—her mom-heart overriding her own fears of being invalid. She expressed her concerns. A few years before, my husband had gone through a triple by-pass, a valve replacement and a valve repair. He was diabetic and unwilling to resist ice cream and Gummy Bears. Mom said he was digging his grave with his teeth and would become too ill to help me as my vision decreased. She fretted, "Who will take care of you when you're blind?" To make her feel better (and me too) I said, "Don't worry about me. I'm going to get one of those cool dogs."

On March 25, 2004, my mom stepped into Eternity, infirm no more. I spent six more weeks with my father, both of us processing the loss together. We had worked side-by-side to make Mom's last years her best. Dennis had told me it was right and proper for me to care for my mom, saying, "The Bible says Honor your father and mother. She needs you more than I do. I can take care of myself." Then she died and I came home. It was his turn now.

Two years later, Dennis had a stroke. Then another. Word went out. Churches prayed. Dr. Miner and Dr. Jolin, chiropractors whom Dennis had mentored, and his acupuncturist friend, Karinna, rushed to our house to help him. I struggled to take care of him, trying to implement all the additional herbs and supplements they prescribed. As I did with my mom, I did my best to keep up with each detail. This herb would help restore his neural pathways. This

exercise would re-pattern his brain. This would clear his arteries of plaque. This would strengthen his heart. The physical therapist came and made recommendations. Hang onto the railing of the deck and walk sideways. Do Word Searches, etc., etc. The speech therapist determined there was complete Visual Neglect on the left side. Though there was nothing wrong with Dennis' eyes, his brain failed to recognize the left half of his field of vision. When he ate, he cleaned only the right side of his plate. I was instructed how to help him solve those problems rather than turning his plate for him.

As with my mother, I thought if I could just do everything as prescribed, I could make the situation the best it could be. But each one who had come to offer help added another protocol. Instead of following only the orders of the primary physician and physical therapist, I was trying to do six others a day as well. I wrote out a schedule so I'd remember to administer the pills at the right intervals—with food, between food, first thing in the morning, last thing at night. I arranged for drivers, doctors' visits, outings, visitations. When Dennis refused to do his exercises, I became cheerleader and did them with him. He didn't know day from night. He was awake and hungry. Where was his nurse? Where were his kids? Why did I serve him such terrible food? Why wouldn't I give him ice cream? Why didn't I want to be married to him anymore?

I couldn't do it. Even with every supplement, exercise and visit from experts, family and friends, I couldn't keep Dennis from sliding into inertia and depression—and I couldn't see well enough to clean up after him. One day I noticed that the drinking glass in my hand was shaking. My mother's degenerative neurological disease had begun with hand tremors. Fear crawled over my scalp. Was I going to be stricken down the same horrible way?

My friend Stephanie said, "You need a break." Vehemently I replied, "I'll never send him away." Her voice was soft, caring. "I just see you falling apart. Why don't you ask God about it?" Fiercely I retorted, "If He wants me to, He'll have to change my heart." Almost instantly I saw the stark reality of my condition. I was on the verge of a total breakdown. It wasn't even the healthiest situation for Dennis. He needed interaction with other people and he wanted to be near his children. So I investigated options, visited possible

places, applied to the one that seemed best, arranged the personal interviews, hired a crew to move him and an apartment's worth of our furnishings into a pleasant assisted living facility with an excellent staff, and then I sat down in my empty house and realized I could no longer read.

www.earthen.com/steadyhedy.html

You can fight the blindness and it will defeat you, or you can embrace it and see what happens.

"***Steady Hedy*** gives readers an honest and insightful glimpse into Carolyn's struggle to accept her vision loss and her eventual decision to train with a guide dog. Carolyn shares her perceptions of her guide dog training experience and gives readers vivid snapshots of the lives of her eclectic classmates.

Carolyn's path was, at times, a bumpy one, but with Hedy at her side,she embarked upon a journey of self-discovery and acceptance that culminated in her triumphant completion of her training at Guide Dogs for the Blind. The book chronicles her metamorphosis from an insecure, blind daughter of a Confucian scholar to a competent and confident woman who happens to have a visual impairment."

—Stacy Patnode, Training/Class Specialist, Guide Dogs for the Blind

"I so enjoyed reading this book. I couldn't get through the pages fast enough. This book validates the reason why I can raise puppies and how I can let them go. Such a sweet enduring story. I loved it."

—Pat Salzarulo, puppy raiser

"***Steady Hedy*** is a gift to all of us to see behind the scenes into the world of Guide Dogs for the Blind and to learn more about the blind community. It's exhilarating."

—Sarah Findley, puppy raiser

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