

## Moving into Miracles: A Healing Story

by Ann Green

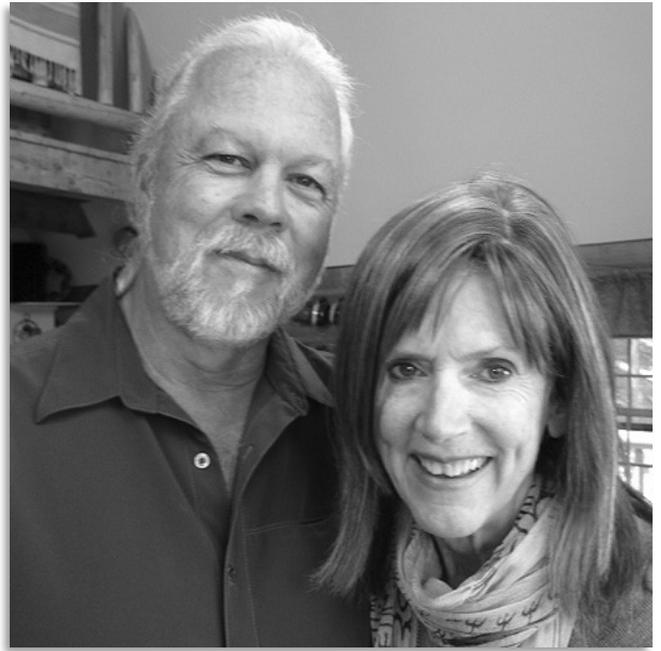
*Ann and Ben have been year-round residents of Allenspark since 1999.*

On a beautiful spring morning in 2005, I was driving down the canyon to deliver the final layouts for a book I'd been working on. As a graphic designer for nature and conservation organizations, I was looking forward to getting this book to the printer. A car was tailgating me, so I pulled over, but then hit a reflector pole. I panicked and over-corrected in trying to get back on the road. My Jeep rolled into the opposite lane toward the rocks and flipped end over end, landing upside down against a rock wall. I lost consciousness and can't remember the faces of the kind people that helped me that day. I do know Dayton Raben from Eagle Plume's kept me semi-conscious until the ambulance arrived. My husband, Ben, caught up with the ambulance and followed it to Longmont United Hospital, not knowing what my condition was. When I woke up in the emergency room and recognized his face, what joy I felt. But I noticed that my right arm was shaking and my left arm hardly moved at all. I was told that it was most likely the trauma of the accident. Since nothing was broken, I was released the next day.

I was in a lot of pain for the next month and thought I had a closed head injury. Over the next two years my neck was so bad there were times I couldn't drive. When I walked, my left side hardly moved and my right arm shook. I was still doing some housework and an occasional hike and was continuing to work. Then in 2006-07 I lost both my brother and my mother and became involved with the closing of homes and businesses.

By the Spring of 2007, the symptoms were not getting better, so in I went to a neurologist in Golden. She told me I was exhibiting signs of Parkinson's Disease. An MRI and some other tests confirmed it. It may have been pre-existing and triggered by the accident, but I'll never know as brain injuries are so complex. Over the next few years I saw a number of neurologists and tried many medications, but none seemed to relieve the symptoms.

From 2008-10 I was still able to work but it was getting more difficult to do little things like opening jars, writing, dressing and washing my hair. Neck spasms became horrible and excruciating along with



balance issues. My whole body seemed rigid. I saw physical therapists, massage therapists, cranio-sacral therapists, and chiropractors. I tried horseback riding, Qi-gong and water therapy. The relief lasted a few hours at most. There was one time that the neck pain was so bad I could barely see to drive. Another time in Estes Park as I paid for a medication, the cashier told me I was drunk and had to leave or he would call the police. I told him I had Parkinson's and left the store humiliated. I was losing my balance day by day and every movement and moment was becoming difficult.

Sometime after my last graphic job, Keith Devers' The Meeker Park Story, I went to a lecture on Parkinson's at a small church in North Boulder. Little did I know that that lecture would change my entire life. Dr. Kara Beasley, a neurosurgeon, and Dr. Avrom Kurtz, a neurologist, were the main speakers. The Davis Phinney Foundation had a table with pamphlets on something called DBS (Deep Brain Stimulation). I had no clue what it was but thought it sounded incredibly invasive. Dr. Beasley explained the whole procedure with a video. In short, they implant thin insulated wires (called leads) with electrodes at the tip into a targeted area of the brain that run down to a battery-operated neurostimulator in your chest. The whole system is under the skin. This pacemaker-like device delivers a constant high

frequency stimulus to the tip of the electrode implanted in the brain. This stimulation overrides abnormal chemical activity in the brain. Soon after that I made an appointment with Dr. Kurtz. He was very professional and clinical, yet so informative and direct. After a year or so of trying other medications I thought about surgery again, but worried it might change my brain forever. (Did I really want doctors drilling into my brain and placing wires in my head and pacemakers in my chest!! Are you kidding me??)

Then in September of 2013, while visiting my sister in Santa Fe, I attended another lecture on DBS. During that visit the 100-year flood hit the Front Range devastating many communities and instead of a 2-week visit I spent almost 3 months under my sister, Megan's care. She arranged for home care, physical therapy, medical tests and urged me to go to that 2<sup>nd</sup> life-changing lecture. I began to think of DBS as a real possibility. By the end of that year and early 2014, my symptoms had gotten so bad that I could barely walk and needed help eating. Just getting from the sofa to the toilet was a challenge. I couldn't imagine going on like this. I was really getting desperate and so was Ben. Our world was becoming smaller and smaller.

In September of 2014 I met with the surgeon, and received some wonderful news, that I was a great candidate for the procedure. I'd never had any previous surgeries and did not react to medications. I suffered from pain and daily living limitations, though I had always been healthy and active. What struck me most about my surgeon was her vitality, confidence and can-do attitude. After much testing, the surgeon and my doctor decided to go with a bilateral DBS, which is a safer procedure with two generators (like pacemakers) in my chest and eight leads in my brain (four wires in the right and four wires in the left). What a concept--I'm just a party animal!

My first surgery was scheduled for October 30, 2014. I was petrified and was partially awake during these surgeries so that I could respond to arm movement tests for placement accuracy. The first surgery was a success--a high five and two thumbs up!

Dr. Beasley called my second surgery on December 4, "textbook," with perfect placement of all eight leads. My neurologist was also ecstatic. The last surgery on December 30 placed two

neurostimulators in my chest next to each collarbone. That went well but was the most painful and took the longest to heal.

Waiting between these surgeries seemed like an eternity for Ben and me. It wasn't until after the last surgery that I would receive any benefit. Ben, bless his heart, was always there for me, always holding space for me with such patience. He was an angel for me to experience love, light, and hope in the darkest of times.

I was "turned on and tuned up" on January 2, 2015, at the surgeons' office. Ben wheeled me into the office where I met with two assistants who programmed a meter about the size of an iPad. They adjusted first the right side and then the left. Just like that, instantaneously, my right arm and hand stopped shaking. My left arm was no longer glued to my body and it moved when I walked. When I stood up, I could move my neck without any pain, from side to side and all around--for the first time in nine years. Ben had wheeled me into the office and I walked out on my own, moving both arms and probably two inches taller. As we headed toward the parking lot, Ben pushed the empty wheelchair behind me.

This surgery has given me back my life. What a transformation; it's been a gift beyond measure. I am walking, hiking, eating, writing, cooking, smiling, driving and working on the computer again. What an amazing feeling of calmness and well-being I have now. Presently, there is no cure for PD, but thousands of people worldwide have received DBS therapy over the past twenty years. There is always hope that someday in the near future a cure will be found.

Throughout this journey to health, I must thank so many people and organizations. Of course the hospital and medical staff of Good Samaritan of Lafayette, but, most of all, the amazingly loving people of Allenspark. What an outpouring of support, prayers and hope from the people and the whole community. I cannot list everyone, but you know who you are. Thank you! Thank you! I would especially like to thank my dear sister, Megan, and her husband, Will, for all their love, prayers and support over these many years and my incredible husband, Ben Brown. I live each moment and each movement. I'll never take anything for granted. Miracles? Yes, I do believe in Miracles.