

**Journal Entry – March 1<sup>st</sup>, 1975**

Joe's going in for brain surgery today. Mom says it's experimental, but Joe should be okay. If it works, Joe won't have seizures anymore. It's funny, I've seen hundreds of them and it's just a part of life. He blanks out for a few minutes looking spacey and then he's back. A kid at school had a seizure last week right next to me. All the others at our table freaked out but me. I told them he'd be fine in a minute and sure enough, even while the teacher was calling for help, he came out of it. He was really embarrassed, cried and everything. I'd seen them two or three times every day and I don't think it ever occurred to me how it must affect Joe. Of course, Joe's also brain damaged and slow. Mike at school is a regular guy. He says he has a seizure once or twice a month. He called them petite mal, which means small. Mike said there's worse kinds where you jerk around and stuff. That would be weird. I hope you're okay, Joe, and that this makes things better.

**March 20<sup>th</sup>, 1975**

His hair is starting to grow back. He was really zoned for weeks as his brain healed, I guess. Didn't know we were around or anything. Mom said that's normal and that it went really well. The scars look gross, though. Joe hasn't had any seizures since the surgery, Mom says, but those first few days he looked like he was in a really long seizure. Mom says no, though.

**June 29, 1975**

Geez! Joe had a seizure, one of the big jerky kinds! Scared me bad.

**July 22, 1975**

Joe's smarter – still slow, but smarter. The trade off is no small seizures every day, but really, really big ones every few months or so. Not sure that's better, but Joe said he thought a girl was pretty. He's never said that before!

**September 19, 2002**

Found this old journal. Don't remember writing so much about Joe when I was a kid (I don't even remember keeping a journal) but I'm glad I did. It reminds me how much he's overcome and what it was like back then. Joe can go years now between seizures, depending on how much rest he gets and what he eats. They seem to be getting worse, though. Mom, still my best link with my big brother, says the doctors are getting worried. They think one of them will be too much and Joe will die. I don't talk to him much any more. Now that we're on the other side of the country, it's easy to lose touch, and he's not big into phone calls. I'm so proud of him...

**June, 2007**

Sis is hopping mad at Joe. He wouldn't come to the wedding. He's withdrawn so far from the family, but I was amazed he'd miss his niece's wedding. Then Mom told me what was going on. He's hearing the tones that mean a seizure is coming on. This will be a big one. Noise and commotion bring them on, and he's holding this off as long as he can. He didn't want to ruin Ann's wedding either. I should go see him...

**December 12<sup>th</sup>, 2007**

Mom's gone. Oh, I'm going to miss her. Joe actually came to see her one last time. No one's seen him in months. Sis said she was surprised at how good he looks. I'm proud of him. Seeing Mom like that is hard on all of us, but she's always been Joe's lifeline...

**December 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2007**

I got the call this morning. They found Joe on the ground at work. He held it off until after Mom passed, that final seizure. Cause of death hasn't been determined yet, but what else could it be? Dad thinks it's a broken heart, he missed Mom so much. I don't have the words to say how proud I am of him. I know he's been holding this one off as long as possible. I believe he chose to keep it at bay until Mom let go. He knew losing her son would devastate Mom. Instead he chose to go through that grief for her sake. Man, my life has been so easy compared to his. With everything working against him, he prevailed on his own terms. Double-digit IQ and he still started his own business. He married a woman who loved him, and lived a hard life with integrity. If I live to be 100 I won't be half the man he's been.

I should have called him...