



Night of Aphasia Arts

a celebratory event of creativity

Poetry Book



National
Aphasia
Association

Poets

Andy Cummings, Ervin Harris, Warren Matthews, Allen Pate, Vickie Porter, and
Debi Pierson from the East Carolina University Aphasia Group

Aphasia Support Group at the University of Tulsa

Breezy Braithwaite

Craig Smith

Douglas G. Campbell

James Jett

John Hyde

Kathryn Paulson

Mark Harder

Paula Gallagher

Robert P Parker

Rochelle M. Anderson

Shelomith Cunningham

Trazana Staples

Healing — a poem

Positive vibes, getting better, and being me.
Working out, going on walks, however you move is good.
Going to church, praying, and laying hands.
Hugs from my people...my spouse and my pets.

Comfort food helps us too.

We think about our stroke, but it gave us community. Friends like me to talk with, smile with, share, and laugh. Our group makes us better.

It takes hard work to feel better, but in the end you're stronger because of it.
We stay positive through the bad and keep a positive mindset.

This is what healing means to us.

*By Andy Cummings, Ervin Harris, Warren Matthews, Allen Pate, Vickie Porter,
and Debi Pierson from the East Carolina University Aphasia Group*

Life with Aphasia

Aphasia makes no sense

Aphasia means my mind doesn't click

Words are better when I explain I had a stroke first

Sometimes people hang up the phone

It is hard when I know what I want to say but the word
that comes out doesn't match

It is hard when I know the letter and can't find the word

I still like fishing, music, and movies

My life is better when friends get together to share food

I want people to know that when family includes me in
conversation I feel respected and important

By the Aphasia Support Group at the University of Tulsa

Aphasia's Altramentous Sonnet

It's in the count-minutes, hours, days, weeks.
Appointments carved out on the calendar.
Diaries- filled mundane ledgers, to peek.
Doctor's orders!- breathe calming lavender.

I, natural borne- force fed my mother's milk.
With ten fingers, ten toes, one smile, one nose.
No longer obsessed with perfections ilk!
For recalling conference-my mind blocks prose.

There is no prescription to extract words!
Host of apologies- a stolid mind.
Disconnect- words fly south as unheard birds.
Numbers, lost dialect of another kind!

My own penmanship illuminates light;
Recollections from aphasia's dark sight!

By Breezy Braithwaite

Me and You Aphasia

Aphasia

Stroke

Me

It's been years

It's been scary

Good for family

Good for friends

people like you

We are strong

we laugh

We cry

we talk

we listen

We are visible

We feel invisible

sometimes

But we survive

we are we

Aphasia

By Craig Smith

Black Hole

brain to pen
the connection gets
lost sometimes
pardon my
unhappy consonants
and disappearing vowels
sentences falling off the page
into a crevasse so deep
they are often unretrievable
rescue attempts are
sometimes successful
jumbled or whole
they make their way
back to the light

By Douglas G. Campbell

Overboard

swallowed by the sea
sinking down
the cold depths crush me
devoured by darkness

sinking deeper
into the salty expanse
horizontal pupils meet mine
I feel eight arms
wrap around me
the rhythm
of three beating hearts
comforts my body

outnumbered by nine brains
I surrender to the gentle beast
the peaceful cadence
of this liquid abyss
suspends time and space

suckers cling to my skin
the pull of a peaceful ascent
brings me towards the light
breaching the surface
I breathe again

By Douglas G. Campbell

Struggled

I can hear but she won't listen to me
My brain is here but I'm struggle her hearing
Deep thought cloud in mumbles believe it's
rumbled
I feel the water bubbled on around me

One flip Blind eyes stared looking straight on her
Thought paths came by looking in the wood
I fill like Small tree and she's a bush
Alone dark cloud splits around me.

Threw the Valley saw you almost missed us dancing on the drive
Coast to Coast from east to west from the far
I talked with us until the phone sleeping.

Strange deep around me she is gone nuts about me.
But yet I'm still gone circle in a wagon.
I'm awake tired but she is sleeping dreaming not evening thinking about me.

A road side window like a game not looking at me.
Can't hear like a book radio podcast.
Slow down and back up shacking around the bend.

Sitting in the living room hold on the dividing.
Watching on her but different chairs.
Wish I could see around the corner but I can't see there!!!

By James Jett

The One They Call 'Dementia'...

you steal away our secret places
robbing our familiar faces
precious times that now are gone
with silence now our only song...
loitering in the mask of madness
hidden while you ate our sadness
greedy for our memories
you fed yourself for centuries.
your stealth has fudged our very names
yes, you're the one we all can blame.
for cowardly acts, you're such a fiend
you even hide us from our dreams.
you leave us feeling sad and dense
when wiping out our confidence
you suck from us our very lives
and up till now you have survived.
the elephant sat in our room
is you my friend, but very soon
despite you spreading evil gloom
we'll come for you and seal your doom
we've throttled mumps and blindness
with our fortitude and kindness
yes, we've done away with agues and plagues
and severed tumours with our blades
we've ousted aids and fevers
with our medics and believers.
so, when we find the medication
through our hope and dedication
we will bring this war to you

in everything we try to do
protecting all the dreams you plunder
saving lifes' great awe and wonder
the students learning here right now
will stop your senseless greed somehow
and when dementia does succumb
and all the healings have been done
we will celebrate with tea and cake
because we've put you to your fate
no longer hated mystery
you'll be locked away in history....

By John Hyde

My Butter Won't Fly

My sun won't rise
my moon used to light
my page won't turn
my fish is gray, not gold

my dishes no longer wash themselves
my butter won't fly

my damsel is definitely in distress
my whistle won't blow
my fly refuses to swat
my corn falls right off the cob

my frog won't leap or even catch bugs
Why won't my butter fly?

My book won't mark anymore
my stack doesn't smoke
my pool no longer whirls
my school isn't high or middle, it's barely elementary

my life is in pieces, yet I hold on
I'm cracked, but I am

not broken

By Kathryn Paulson

Aphasia Is (a poem)

Aphasia is like poetry.
An emptiness of words,
salivating for thoughts,
hungering for communication,
thirsting for understanding,
swallowing pride,
craving for purpose,
but just out of reach.

By Mark Harder

Ancient Voices

It's lonely,
in the world of aphasia.
I wish I could fly, fly, away
to another time.
When the ancient voices
of images, dance, and music,
were the only languages.

By Paula Gallagher

Second Heart Attack

Paralyzed by loss, I flew eastward.
I remember the church's entrance.
I remember the vestibule. The vaulted
ceiling. The procession in and the
procession out. I felt detached from
the funeral. I felt like someone else
was sitting there. I soared above grief.
In psychedelic vision, I saw flashes
of her death. Labored last breath.
Her shriveled face. Two hands folded
on her chest as a symbol of memory.
Cherry casket. It was surreal, haunted
by enigma. I imagined "Slow blurred
funeral with no deathblow." Mom was
beautiful and vain. I knew she was alive.

By Robert P Parker

mom after

mind's shattered
empty spaces in memory
photographs survived

By Robert P Parker

I'm Dead

I am a virtual vision
behind your shoulder.
You cannot hear me,
but I listen intently.
Tender-hearted and
absent. I bow in Zen
posture for those
I've missed. "Cin-cin!"
I say. Thank you for
all the people celebrating
our life together.

By Robert P Parker

Mom's Funeral

Paralyzed by loss, I flew eastward.
I remember the church's entrance.
I remember the vestibule. The vaulted
ceiling. The procession in and the
procession out. I felt detached from
the funeral. I felt like someone else
was sitting there. I vaulted above the
mystery and grief. I saw flashes of
Mom's death as I observed from
the ceiling. In multicolored vision
I saw Mom's dying. I saw the hands folded
on her chest. I saw the deep cherry casket.
It was ghostly, surreal mystery. I fantasized
"Slow blurred funeral with no endpoint."
I knew she was beautiful and vain.
I knew Mom was alive in life/memory.

By Robert P Parker

Chris in Missoula

Did you see us standing by your bed?
You were unmarked, calm, even normal.
Your heart beat as we caressed your blonde arms,
soft chest, and stringy red-brown hair.
A nurse came and brushed your hair
lovingly, as if you were her son.
Your heart was still beating on the pump.
Did you hear us cry.? Did you hear us say
we loved you? Did you hear us say good-bye?
Drained we wrenched from your bed.
and left, crying softly. We waited, in the lobby,
until the machine turned off. You were a
speck on the ceiling and saw everything.

By Robert P Parker

Chris #2

A nurse whisked you to the operating room.
Did you feel take your corneas?
Did you know that a woman saw
with your eyeball? I think so.
What were you feeling when the pump ceased?
I don't know. I don't know. No, I do know.
You climbed skyward just by being you,
a grin ironically as you spirited in space.

By Robert P Parker

Jumbled, a poem about aphasia

"Babel", Star Trek Deep Space Nine, DNA infection
Aphasia, losing speech, alone, worried and afraid
What's going to happen? Stuck with aphasia? Antidote?

Vaccine cured the virus, aphasia is gone, Star Trek won
Earth survived. Star Trek remembers past, present, and future
Doctors, therapists and scientists keep us well

Somewhere in the universe, Star Trek knew I had aphasia
Beamed me aboard the starship USS *Defiant*. Healed my aphasia. I am
free!
Talking constantly, working, reading newspapers and books, in charge

In a twinkling, miserable to realize my life changed back to normal
My aphasia buddies laughed, cried, and listened; now they are away
My mind zigzags in a lost world, aphasia friends hidden only in my dreams

By Rochelle M. Anderson

Aphasia the Evil One, a poem about aphasia

Aphasia the Evil One
You must be aphasia
You left me speechless...

Listening, watching, and waiting. I am always here

Hiding in the forest. Nobody finds me
France, 1864, medical journal. Called "aphasie" by Trousseau
See volcano and lava, fire and lightning, hurricanes and floods
I am immoral, strong, invincible

I will kill dreams like jobs and vocations
Steal their money. Break up families and friends
Because of me, no books, no letters, no movies
Loathing, detesting and bitterness are my game

I hate speech therapists because they help people get better
They must stop teaching people to write, talk, and speak
Therapists get rid of me and make me crumble and burn
Aphasia destroys language and will rule forever

I am aphasia, hear me roar

By Rochelle M. Anderson

My Freedom

Bring me close to it
I think about my people being free
The kids running through there
The freedom they feel
The ability to just walk and say yes
My freedom, my joy
I feel free when I hear it
I can see everybody and everything flowing

By Shelomith Cunningham

I Will Rise Up

When the ancestors send you back from Death
you have no choice but to live again
I rise back on my feet learning from the mistakes I made
I will learn to love more
to care more
to listen more
to be present more
And to Love ME More
I will be thankful with each given moment
I will leave the old me behind me
The old world is foreign to me
I will keep rising, rising, rising into my power
I will rise up again!
I will fly like the great Eagle
I will be fierce like the great cat
I will be silent like the wind
I will be magical like water
Like a great mountain I will not be moved
I will fear no evil for the Great Spirit in me
Everything I thought I lost
I actually gained
This is not my end but my new beginning
I will Rise Up!

By Trazana Staples