

cannot see him for the great person he is; the CP does *not* come first.

He is now a young man of 25 years, and I am learning to accept his independence.

It is a “never-ending story.”

**Elaine A. Dunham, RN**

*Shriners Hospitals for Children*

*Springfield, MA*

United Cerebral Palsy has branches in most communities and provides a variety of services for children and families.

A number of excellent books also are available to guide parents and nurses who work with children with CP. Many of the books are written by people with CP who have triumphed.

### **Support Hospitalized Child**

CP is not a disorder that requires hospitalization; therefore, when children with CP are hospitalized, they are usually admitted for illness or corrective surgery. To facilitate the care and management of hospitalized children with CP, the therapy program should be continued (as their condition allows) while they are hospitalized. This should be incorporated into the multidisciplinary care plan, with every effort expended to make certain the ground that has been so laboriously gained is not lost. Nursing care of the child with CP is similar to that of any child with a disability, and children with CP should be approached as would any child in the hospital. Speech impairment is common in children with CP, but this may not correlate with their ability to understand. Therapy programs should be continued, when appropriate, during the time they are hospitalized. Encouraging the parent to room-in and actively participate in the child's care helps promote family-centered care. However, it is also important to remember that hospitalization may be the first time a parent can defer care to a nurse and not be the primary caregiver. This respite may be crucial to the parent's well-being. Respect the parent's preference in this regard.

## **Neural Tube Defects (Myelomeningocele)**

Abnormalities that derive from the embryonic neural tube (**neural**