

"Alzheimer's is not the end of a person's story, it is the beginning of a new way of living and relating. We must see the whole person, not just the disease."



*- Dr. Peter Rabins, Johns Hopkins University,
co-author *The 36-Hour Day**

Copyright Notice

© John du Preez, 2025 (Expanded Edition)

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be copied or transmitted in any form or by any means, mechanical or electronic, including photocopying, recording, storage, or by any information retrieval system, without prior written consent of the publisher.

This book is licensed to the original purchaser only. Distribution or duplication by any means is a violation of international copyright law. No resale rights are conveyed with this book. You may not sell, give away, or otherwise share the content of this book with any party for any reason.

The moral rights of the author have been asserted.



Forgetful Not Forgotten



My Story of Living With Alzheimer's

John du Preez

Dedicated to Miena, my wife, and my children and grandchildren, whose unwavering support gave me the courage to share my journey.

"Life is like a tunnel. When you enter it on one side, you do not know what awaits you at the other side..."

(Ellen Khuswayo)

Living Testament (2025)

This book is not just a record of my struggles with Alzheimer's; it is my living testament.

At 93 years old, I continue to live with clarity of mind - even when my short-term memory often fails me. My journey has taught me that Alzheimer's is not merely an illness of memory, but of identity, dignity, and love.

What I have learned is simple but profound: **knowledge is power.**

When you arm yourself with understanding, when you lean on your family, your faith, and your own determination, you can push back against the shadows of this disease.

If my words can ease the fears of even one newly diagnosed person, or bring comfort to one caregiver who feels overwhelmed, then this testament has served its purpose.

FOREWORD by Ian Murgatroyd **grandson-in-law**

This is the story of an ordinary man who made the choice to fight an extra-ordinary disease.

John Du Pu Preez was diagnosed with Alzheimer's in 2004 and as you will understand, it was a terrible shock to John, and a secret that he initially kept from his family as he came to terms with this devastating illness.

John applies to the military protocol that if you want to fight an enemy you should know all there is to know about that enemy. It is this belief that caused

a paradigm shift in John's way of thinking and led him on a journey to research and discover everything that he could about living with Alzheimer's.

The beauty of John's story is that it is an open and honest account of an illness that is normally told by clinicians and caregivers. This book it is a case study bought to you directly from the mind of a man living with all the frustrations, trials and tribulations of what is often more difficult for the families of sufferers, than the sufferers themselves.

As you read this book you will realize that if one chooses to accept an Alzheimer's diagnosis in the early stages, combined with the close support of friends and family, then there are some key life changes that can thwart this sickness and significantly delay the onset of dementia.

John gives us a holistic view on how to Live with Alzheimer's and teaches us that this disease cannot be fought by the individual alone. He covers the full range of topics that include nutrition, brain training and stress management. Through his experience as a care giver, John also shares some very important knowledge on how to care for Alzheimer sufferers in the latter stages, ensuring that this care brings the love, support and dignity that all sufferers deserve.

Thank you, John, not only for your courage and bravery in your own fight but also for parting with knowledge that will equip Alzheimer sufferers and their families all over the world.

My Personal Journey: Living with Alzheimer's

John's involvement with Alzheimer's began in aged care and later as a patient himself. Upon confirmation of his diagnosis, he was devastated but determined to resist its progression. He developed non-medical strategies to promote memory retention and maintain self-esteem,

He emphasizes the importance of recognizing early symptoms, such as extreme forgetfulness, and advocates for making them widely known. Early intervention offers opportunities to delay disease progression and maintain quality of life.

Dedication

John dedicates this book to his wife Miena, his son Jean-Jacques, and family members Jacques and Caro, who have provided steadfast support during his years of research and writing. He also acknowledges the suffering his family may have endured due to his focus on Alzheimer's.

Devotion and Thanks

John expresses gratitude to God for the inspiration and determination to continue his research and writing. He thanks his children and grandchildren for their encouragement and gives special mention to his daughter Judith—whose gift of a book spurred deeper research into Alzheimer's.

He also appreciates the moral support and encouragement from friends such as Maria van Staden and Carla van der Spuy.

Prologue - Knowing the Enemy

"Military strategists believe that if you want to fight an enemy, you should know all about that enemy."

When I first heard those words, I knew they applied to me. I was diagnosed with Alzheimer's in 2004. At first, I tried to keep it a secret - even from my family. I needed time to understand what this illness meant for my life, and what it might take from me.

What I discovered is this: Alzheimer's is not only a personal battle, but a family's battle. It challenges relationships, it tests love, and it reshapes how one lives each day.

But I also learned that if you accept the diagnosis early on, if you refuse to surrender, there are ways to fight back. Through research, lifestyle changes, and an unrelenting will to live with dignity, one can delay its progression.

This book is my attempt to pass on what I have learned, not from the perspective of a doctor, but from the heart of a man living with Alzheimer's.

Words from The Editor of the Vrouekeur of 25 July 2008 (one of South Africa's leading magazines).

"An Alzheimer's sufferer decided to empower himself so that he could fight the sickness, instead of the sickness prescribing to him how he should live. His fearlessness and refusal to abandon who he is without a fight, can serve as inspiration to us all.

The story of John du Preez is a lesson to us all. The biggest enemy is our inability to chase our dreams, achieve success and realize our ideals, it is not always the circumstances of other people, but ourselves! What we think of ourselves determines how we see ourselves, which again determines what we are capable of. Yes, it helps if external factors play along, but in the absence thereof there is only one person who can motivate you or be more than what you are: yourself!"

"Alzheimer's is the sickness that cannot be wished away."

Forty years after that truth was first voiced, it remains just as valid - if not more so. Worldwide, an estimated 57 million people are living with dementia, and Alzheimer's accounts for 60 - 70% of those cases [World Health Organization / World Economic Forum.](#)

That's nearly 40 million individuals, whose voices and stories often go unheard.

In the United States alone, 7.2 million Americans aged 65 and older are living with Alzheimer's dementia in 2025 - and that figure is expected to nearly double to 13.8 million by 2060 if we don't find breakthroughs in treatment. [Alzheimer's Association / Alzheimer's Journals.](#)

This disease doesn't wait for retirement age to begin its work. Globally, nearly 10 million new cases are diagnosed each year, while people with dementia currently outnumber those affected by heart disease - by a long shot. [Wikipedia / World Health Org.](#)

Despite its growth, Alzheimer's remains shrouded in denial and stigma. Families may shy away, conversations may be hushed, et the disease presses on unchallenged.

That's why knowledge is the first line of defense. Early recognition - the moment someone notices forgetfulness, confusion, or repeating themselves - is critical. With early diagnosis comes the opportunity for treatment, planning, and, most importantly, preserving dignity.

Hope on the Horizon

It's not all bleak. In recent years, a new chapter has begun in the fight against Alzheimer's:

- Lecanemab (Leqembi) and Donanemab (Kisunla) - approved in 2023 and 2024 - are among the first drugs shown to slow cognitive decline by around 30%, a true milestone for the field. [The Guardian / giving.musc.edu.](https://www.theguardian.com/giving.musc.edu)

On the research frontier, **Trontinemab** - being tested in **Janssen's BrainShuttle™** platform - has demonstrated rapid and robust clearance of amyloid plaques, setting up Phase III trials in early symptomatic and even preclinical Alzheimer's patients. **Roche**.

Exciting innovations are also coming from the lab: Scientists at UC San Francisco have identified FDA - approved cancer drugs that may reverse gene-expression patterns seen in Alzheimer's - and in house models, they even restored memory abilities.

Other hopeful strategies include anti-amyloid prevention trials aiming to delay or halt Alzheimer's before it takes hold. **WashU Medicine**, and trials testing **semaglutide (Ozempic)** - already used for diabetes - on memory and cognition, with results expected in late 2025. [Alzheimer's Society](https://www.alzheimers.org/).

Experts are calling it the dawn of a "new era" in dementia treatment - cautiously optimistic, but real. They foresee oral medications, blood tests for early detection, and accessible therapies that could one day reach even remote communities. [The Guardian / Alzheimer's Society / giving.musc.edu.](https://www.theguardian.com/alzheimer-s-society/giving.musc.edu)

Living with Alzheimer's



MY STORY

My involvement with Alzheimer's began not as a patient, but as a caregiver. For years, I worked in aged care, helping others who were already in decline. I never imagined that one day I would stand on the same battlefield.

When the doctor confirmed my diagnosis, devastation was my first companion. But despair soon gave way to determination. I refused to surrender my mind without a fight.

I began to study, to read, to seek out every scrap of knowledge. I developed non-medical strategies to train my memory and preserve my self-image. I learned to camouflage my lapses, to maintain dignity in conversation, to laugh where I could, and to share openly with my support group in Mossel Bay.

I became convinced that the earlier the recognition, the stronger the defense. The tragedy of Alzheimer's is that most cases are only acknowledged when the sufferer has already slipped into deeper decline. That is why I have made it my mission to speak from the inside—to let others know the earliest signs, and the earliest tools of resistance.

Commentary (2025):

Today, science continues to show that lifestyle factors—exercise, diet, social engagement, brain training - play a powerful role in delaying the progression of Alzheimer's. Early diagnosis and intervention remain key, but John's story reminds us of the human side: persistence, faith, and daily resilience.

Even now, I say to those newly diagnosed: Do not let fear be your first response. Let knowledge, faith, and determination lead the way.

I live in Mossel Bay, a town in the Western Cape, South Africa. It is in my opinion one of the prettiest towns on the Garden Route with its largest town, George, some 50 kilometers from here. We have several Old Age Homes and a support group for Alzheimer's sufferers.

During the past seven years I have done a lot of research about Alzheimer's sickness and in the process, I gradually compiled a program that can help to counter and thwart the sickness. My program is directed towards the renewal of memories and the establishment of new memories of people in the early phases of the sickness and when the person is still clear of mind. By following the program one can stay clear of mind even though your short-term memory fails you.

My research has uncovered certain nutrient supplements that may prevent a person from getting Alzheimer's in the first place. I speak from experience. The book opens the door to retaining a clear and active mind. After all, '*A mind is a terrible thing to waste*'.
(From "One Child"-Torey L. Haydon - Readers Digest Association 1981-Condensed Books, p.213)

Did You Know?

Global Reality...

Today, over 55 million people live with dementia worldwide. That's one new case every 3 seconds. Families who act early can delay progression through lifestyle changes and supportive care.

I have been involved with the Alzheimer's disease and its complications for about seven years now. First, as a provider of a caring service in our own private Home for the Aged and for about four years as a sufferer of the sickness myself. When I received the confirmation that I have in fact without doubt incurred the Alzheimer's Disease I was devastated, although I had suspected it for a quite a while.

I am a member of the local Alzheimer's Support Group. I am 75 years of age and still clear of mind. From my research and personal experience, I have found a method to counter the disease and lead a reasonably normal life.

I believe that I can rightfully say that I have made a non-medical breakthrough which can enable the Alzheimer's sufferer in the first phase of the sickness to promote memory retention. I have also demonstrated through my program how to keep your mind clear and to maintain your self-image, pride and confidence.

Because the sickness cannot now be cured, it is important to resist it, fight it and thwart it until a cure has been found. And that is what I did because I knew that as soon as a person enters the early phases of the sickness the process will relentlessly continue until that person is totally dependent on others.

Seven years ago, I wrote a short guidebook on the sickness, which was directed towards carers and relatives of Alzheimer's sufferers. After that I carried on with my research in the knowledge that I have become part of the problem myself. I have been living a Dr Jekyll and Mr. Hyde type of life up to now because I know the connotation of the word 'dementia' lends itself to a misconception regarding the sickness. By partaking in a program such as mine, one buys time and at the same time you enable yourself to stay clear of mind. When you have a clear mind, you are able to reason in a logical way and therefore able to know what is going on around you.

You will know when you cannot recall a name or an incident which you should be able to remember. Thus, you will be also able to identify the early stages of the sickness at the time when you are in fact experiencing it.

In all my dealings around Alzheimer's sufferers I cannot recall that I have in fact met many AD sufferers who have a clear mind - which leads me to the conclusion that most cases are reported only after they have entered the second or the final stages of the disease. It is most important that the symptoms of the earlier stages of Alzheimer's should in some way be made more generally known to the public at large.

One of the very first signs of Alzheimer's disease is that a person becomes extremely forgetful – especially on recent events and the names of persons.

"A one-timer is not yet an Alzheimer's," someone once said to me but once a person experiences extreme forgetfulness, he owes it to himself and those close to him to consider his situation in another light. He should then also take more careful cognizance of the other symptoms of the early stage. One must wonder how many of the reported cases of Alzheimer's in our country and worldwide, are in fact still only in the earlier stages of the sickness.

The tragedy is that while the Alzheimer's sufferer is still in the early phases of the sickness, there are in fact unexploited ways and means to delay its progress and live with the short-term memory loss and gradual degeneration. Up to now there is no cure for Alzheimer's or to stop that gradual degeneration, especially if it has reached the later stages where the sufferer cannot fight it anymore.

Research is predominantly focused on the search for a wonder drug, which is still to be produced.

Existing drugs can delay the progress of the symptoms, but their effect wears off relatively quickly. My program does not involve medication; therefore, it can do no harm, and it will give sufferers hope for the future.

The connotation to the word ‘dementia’ lends to the misconception regarding the sickness. *The Readers Digest Afrikaans-English Dictionary* describes the word ‘dementia’ as ‘weak minded’ and ‘insane’. This can be one of the reasons why Alzheimer’s is regarded as bad news. It is in my opinion that for those reasons persons who have already contracted the disease in its first phase keep it to themselves when they realize it. The relatives of Alzheimer’s sufferers will also keep their silence regarding the sickness. The fact that family and close friends can in fact recognize and realize it, even before the person concerned, places some responsibility on the shoulders of such relatives.

I try not to use the word dementia if possible and to refer to the ailment as Alzheimer’s sickness. Alzheimer’s disease is a medical condition and is no different than medical conditions such as Arthritis, Asthma or Hypertension. Incorrect perceptions in respect of Alzheimer’s disease prevail in many societies here and abroad. Alzheimer’s sufferers are mostly regarded as having lost the capability to still be useful in life.

The same seems to be the case with persons who suffer from epilepsy. When I saw the article on epilepsy in the *Cape Times of May 29, 2007*, I thought it appropriate to quote it, seeing that it applies to Alzheimer’s sufferers even more so. *“It is sad and unjust that human beings should suffer because of ignorance and false beliefs about a medical condition. This unnecessarily magnifies the difficulties encountered by such people in everyday life.”*

“Every three seconds, someone in the world develops dementia.”

Fear of being ridiculed by friends and the public forces the Alzheimer's sufferer to keep it a secret for as long as possible.

The same applies for the close family who can see what is happening to their dear father or grandfather and they would prefer to keep it in the family. Alzheimer's is an ailment which normally progresses gradually and because Alzheimer's is not some sickness where the symptoms are widely known, the victim fails in many ways to recognize what is wrong. The victim is loath to admit the deficiency.

Alzheimer's sufferers and their families should make it a point to find out everything they can about the disease. Such persons should have the boldness to also attend support groups.

To me the phenomenon of Alzheimer's disease is close to my heart. I can say that I have made it my number one enemy, which I fight with all my knowledge. From the outset I must confess that I am no medical man, psychiatrist or neurological researcher. I am a victim of this sickness, and I thank God that I was given the time, the insight and the courage to fight it.

The fight against Alzheimer's is not an easy one. It breaks you down slowly but surely. I did not want to give in and wait for it to take its normal course. With my knowledge of the sickness, I knew that ultimately the sickness could only be conquered through a medical breakthrough. In the meantime, one needs to find all means to thwart it and not wait like a lamb going to slaughter.

There is no reason why my program cannot work for others in the case of Alzheimer's sickness in the first phase. It works well enough for me. The proviso is that the candidate must still be clear of mind, even though his short-term memory fails him. I want to share my knowledge with those afflicted in the first stages of the sickness and with the relatives and carers of those who cannot fight it anymore.

The more success I have with my theories the more I will share it with others. I keep up to date with what real researchers achieve and use what I find meaningful from those inputs. So far, my method of fighting Alzheimer's works for me and on my road forward I will try to improve it, especially if I get feedback from others in my situation.

I intend to convey my message as far as possible in ordinary everyday language and to avoid the type of medical jargon which most of us do not understand. I have decided to put my experience so far on record and not to sit back until medical science one day comes up with a wonder cure to stop the disease in its tracks.

Up until recently I operated a private Home for The Aged. My contact with the aged goes back about eight years. About 50% of our borders had Alzheimer's disease to some or other degree. All were in their seventies. My partner and I both joined the local Alzheimer's Support Group to be able to understand and care for our residents. This enabled me to acquire quite a lot of knowledge regarding the subject in question. I was therefore very aware of the symptoms of the sickness.

About seven years ago I began to show significant signs of forgetfulness which made me worried about my own mental state as I clearly experienced the first tell-tale signs of Alzheimer's sickness. I became very forgetful but could still remember names of people I knew. I am relatively certain that most people thought that I was at times pre-occupied since it was generally known that I am working on a manuscript of a novel. I was very worried as I have personally seen what Alzheimer's sickness does to people. I was 68 at that time and realized that with ageing your chances of becoming a victim of Alzheimer's disease are very likely.

Because it was known that I am a writer of sorts, Maria van Staden, the leader at our support group, encouraged me to put all my information together and to write a handbook on the sickness. The result was that I put all the information I gathered and published a guidebook in 2003 - *ALZHEIMER DISEASE. (In English and Afrikaans)*

The purpose of that book was to enable family and carers to deal with Alzheimer's sufferers. I sold copies of the book to support The Alzheimer group and to help with expenses towards entertaining guest speakers.

During that time, I also had personnel to look after the elderly persons in our care. I found that they were not properly trained for the work. I designed a training course for Care Nurses in Homes, for family caring for a sufferer and started to train our own staff.

This effort culminated in a full-blown training course with Alzheimer's caring as one of the two legs of the course. I now can boast a significant number of girls who were trained by me and most now have jobs in Old Age Homes. In the meantime, I was constantly monitoring my own condition I had already decided to fight the sickness, but I did not really know how. My deterioration was gradual and at that time only the Chairperson of our local Alzheimer's support group knew of my problem.

Some years ago my daughter, Judith, sent me the book: '*The Human Mind and How to make the Most of It.*' by Robert Winston.' There I read amongst others: "one can 'recruit' parts of the brain to take over functions of that part of the brain which controls short-term memory." My daughter knew I was researching the Alzheimer's phenomenon, but I do not think she suspected my real reason.

According to Winston, emotions are also involved with memory and parts of the brain can be taught to adopt the memory functions of that part of the brain which is not functioning to order. This really made me think seriously and lead me to decide to do exactly that - to try and recruit parts of my brain. But of course, I did not know how to go about it.

From my own research I gathered that it could help to fight the Alzheimer's disease if one keeps one's mind active. This I could do because I am a translator and at that time, I was busy working on a manuscript of a semi-political story. Another advantage was that I read a great deal - especially the *Reader's Digest* condensed books and at least a newspaper every day.

After that I gathered every piece of information about Alzheimer's in the hope that I would find a method to aid memory retention. It is difficult to give a detailed summary of all the different pieces of information I picked up here and there. All the information eventually contributed towards my present program to fight the sickness. In the text to follow I will repeat the most important information I could lay my hands on, and I will try to not make the contents agonizing and long-winded.

At times I will be using my own words and not always quote the source in detail, because I do quote the sources at the end of this document. I will be referring mostly to information I gathered before November 2006, which at that time had already started to form a pattern to me. I still did not have a fixed plan, apart from the belief that I should keep an active mind to counter the sickness.

I had developed a habit of constantly looking for information in newspapers especially. I cannot recall exactly when I acquired or received some specific information.

I remember that I discovered an article in the Readers Digest of January 1996. (pages 71-76). I found this Readers' Digest in my son's office in Pretoria when I was there to see a specialist for my back injury. A specific article caught my eye and was about: "*Miracles of the Brain*", by Joel Swerlow. Amongst others he made the following statements:

- i) "Neurons die every day and are never replaced,"
- ii) "New neurons would have none of your memory,
- iii) "Still, older people continue to generate new connections and keep old ones via mental activity".

And then about Alzheimer's Disease "*No cure exists. Genetic mutation is a suspect in Alzheimer's but accounts for only ten per cent of cases. Primary biological suspects are tau, a protein that may play a part in forming tangles that choke neurons, and Amyloid, a protein that sticks to neurons like glue. Amyloid accumulates when neurons begin to generate more than the brain can flush out, forming plaques*".

The same article in the *Readers Digest (January 1996)*, which I have also quoted above, mentions the case of a young boy, *Matt Simpson*, who had half his brain removed due to a rare incurable disease. In spite of the fact that the youngster lost nearly half of his left cortex, he survived the operation. The left cortex controls the thought process, as well as the use of the right-hand side of his limbs, but after some time the boy showed remarkable recovery, and math became his favorite subject. He also showed just as remarkable a recovery of speech.

His speech therapist said: "*It appears that he is fostering and accelerating the growth of dendrites*" (threadlike extensions that grow out of neurons, the specialized cells of the nervous system) and "*The neurons seem to be making better connections.*" It was reported that "*Matt also can use his right arm better now. He still limps, but less.*

Brain scans show that control over his right arm and leg has settled into the cortical area that controls his left arm and leg..."

Joel Swerlow also made the following observations: "Proper connections amongst the hundred billion or so neurons mean a better-functioning brain. Connections come from inherited growth patterns and in response to stimuli that the brain encodes as nerve impulses. When these electrical impulses reach the brain, they trigger the release of messenger chemicals, which induce electrical impulses as they travel from one neuron to another. This process, the basis of brain communication, sometimes stimulates new dentrine growth." and "People such as Matt demonstrate that the brain has unexpected flexibility. The left side of the brain of a right-handed person - precisely what was cut out of Matt – specialising in creating music and poetry and handling mathematics: yet Matt still enjoys piano lessons, and math's is his strongest subject at school."

With regards to memory retention Swerlow said that "Different aspects of memory reside in various parts of their brain - images in one place, emotions in another. These various centers can't function unless connected to the hippocampus." To me this means that a particular memory may still be in the part of the brain where it was stored, but that the connection from there to the hippocampus is being interrupted along the way.

Referring to Alzheimer's disease Swerlow also stated: "It strikes up to ten percent of people up to 65 and up to half of those over 85 years." The information mentioned above, together with that of Robert Winston ("one can 'recruit' parts of the brain to take over functions of that part of the brain which controls short-term memory") gave me a lot of motivation to fight off the ailment.

**"If you can't remember my name, just call
me Doctor. I forget a lot too."
- Dr. Alois Alzheimer (attributed anecdote)**

I knew that I was on the right track regarding brain capabilities and keeping the brain active. I accepted that my translation work and constant reading was keeping my brain active. I had no reason to doubt the observations of either Robert Winston or Joel Swerlow because it was clear that it resulted from many years of research.

My condition changed gradually but stayed within the limits of the first phase of the disease. During this time, I was keeping myself mentally very active by reading anything I could find regarding the brain and its workings. About a year ago I decided to start fighting the illness in earnest, but I still did not know how.

I first decided to invent methods to camouflage my illness. At that stage I began to experience not recognizing people who I should have been able to remember. I taught myself tricks such as not showing the frustration I experienced on such occasions and to respond with friendly clapping on the back and remarks such as: “*Hello my dear*” to ladies and “*Hi there friend*” to others.

In Afrikaans it is much easier, you simply say ‘dag swaer’; in Zulu or Xhosa even easier by saying: ‘Yes, my Bra’, or ‘Hi Sissy’. And invariably I got away with it. I played for time until a remark would identify the name of the person. Then I would continue the conversation and mention the name of the person if need be. I still find that apart from the fact that my short-term memory is fading I remain totally clear in respect of the present day, where I think and act coherently.

At times my memory works fine, and I can remember events that happened the day before and even a week before, but in general my memory is limited to that which occurs on the present day of my life, plus of course from the distant past.

I have no real problem with the long-term memory.

That is depending how one defines '*long term*'. Events of 10 years ago are still clear, but events of 2-3 weeks ago slip away. I have also found that my memory is affected by my mental condition as well. If I am under a lot of stress and/or pain, at times I cannot remember what happened a day or two ago. I have found that my brain retains pleasurable memories far easier than unpleasant memories. This makes me believe that Alzheimer's in the initial stage can at times be a combination of biological defects as well as psychological elements. I would suggest that Alzheimer's also causes psychological damage to one's image and self esteem.

I believe that if I utilize my clear moments, I can fight this sickness and delay the ultimate outcome by several years. As I continue with my day-to-day struggle against this ailment I carry on doing research. My present research involves the functioning of the human brain, and I am only touching the surface. My research is hampered by the fact that I have no medical background.

As you will know, the experts are still not very sure what causes the Alzheimer's Sickness. I feel that heritage (genes) may be one of the causes, because at 70 my own father had Alzheimer's. At that time, I was small, but I remember my mother telling friends that he was losing his mind and how she at times ridiculed and scolded him as 'getting senile'.

I now see myself as reasonably knowledgeable on this subject, especially since I have become part of the problem. My theory is that a person is capable to fight, delay and even overcome the progression of the sickness, but only as long as you are clear of mind. If you are clear of mind, you will be able to put up a fight. I use this term frequently and I need to explain exactly what I mean with it. In my own case I find that I am totally clear of mind every single day so far and that should be the case with other sufferers in the first phase.

Clear of mind means that for the purposes of normal day to day existence you are totally clear in what you think. You think and act coherently. You can face the problems of the particular day and solve it if possible. It does not imply that on those days you can also recall the short-term and even some longer-term memories. They are lost and stay lost. In my case I experienced regularly that I could not recall much of the previous day or days. I am clear of mind and when I meet someone I should know, but do not recognise the person, I realize it immediately. It is sometimes the reaction of that person that indicates to me I should know him or her; otherwise, I vaguely recognise the face but cannot put a name to it. But I do know that I do not recognise the person. I know it vividly and clearly. You are so clear of mind that in conversations you automatically avoid reference to the previous day or days, unless reminded about a matter, in which case it may trigger a memory. This is the best way I can describe the term “Clear of mind” and I use that term quite often.

The brain, with its intricate workings sometimes recalls some things from the previous day or days and sometimes fails to do so. Allow me to enlighten you on some more of my research to date.

My research made me believe that the brain is a machine capable of adapting according to its needs. To be able to use the brain to adapt, it is of course necessary that the brain is in a working condition. The brain must be able to function clearly in the present tense, although the short-term memory is not operating well. It is very important to keep the brain as active as possible and to use the method of association to trigger off memories.

According to Winston one can ‘recruit’ parts of the brain to take over functions of that part of the brain which controls short-term memory. I have adopted this theory as one of my main weapons in my fight against this phenomenon.

The realization that repetition is the answer to memory retention did not come overnight. However, some of the research I did, as well as knowledge I already had, pointed in that direction. It was only at the end of last year that it dawned on me that without doubt 'repetition' was the answer to storing and retaining memories in the brain.

When I embarked on my mind games (training my mind to recall) and before I was aware of the article mentioned, I started to accompany my wife on her daily delivery of bread to about 30 outlets in town. Although I have been living in Mossel Bay for about 8 years I could pinpoint only about 6 of these outlets.

After 2 months I knew where the places of delivery were except for two - and more or less the time of delivery to each of them. The Café that I could not recall readily is the '*Dolphins Café*'. Although I could visualize the Café, there seemed to be a blockage, and I failed to remember its name. I had to refer to earlier entries in my diary. When I think about the Café, I can see it in my mind's eye and even the name '*Manny's*' which I recall being sign-written against the outside wall. We have many dolphins in our harbor, and I associated the café with the name DOLPHINS and saw whether I could remember it in following days.

After another month I could recall all the places and their names. This made me believe that I was in fact using unused brain cells or neurons by way of repetition to restore the names and places. I surmised that through this method of 'repetition' I had virtually forced my brain to store the memory in another area. Is it possible, then, that one of the approximately 15 areas of the brain used for storing memories and planning the tomorrows could be used to store recent memories? To me it is in a way irrelevant as long as it works!

In 2025, over 57 million people live with Alzheimer's worldwide."

Although I realized at this stage that I was using repetition, this was really no surprise to me. What made me decide that repetition was the possible answer to-wards memory retention?

In retrospect I think it was my experience when I accompanied my wife during the delivery of bread. That was where I decided that by seeing all those places over and over again, my brain did in fact register the names. This in effect means that the actual thought of using repetition as a memory retention instrument was in fact triggered by something I had read somewhere and thus may have been influenced by it.

Then I thought about a summary I made about ten years ago on the methods Techniques of Management and under the heading of Communication. At that time, I had it on a Floppy and later I saved it on a CD. I had placed many old files on my computer, and I simply requested 'search' to look for it and there it was. I quoted *Louis A. Allen* in that summary about Management.

Way back in 1964 *Louis A. Allen* compiled what he called the '*Louis A. Allen Vocabulary of Professional Management*'. The following is a direct quote from that summary I made:

1. *"It is of course vital that people remember what they hear and understand. **Repeating and association** helps in the improvement of memory retention. You as managers have formulated a message and wish to communicate it to a group of workers. Here you can make use of repetition without it being monotonous.*
2. *For example, you start off by telling the workers what you are going to say. Secondly you say what you have to say.*
3. *Thirdly you tell them what you have said.*
4. *The fourth step is to ask the workers to tell you what they understand. You have now given the message in effect three times, and the workers have chewed on it four times."*

At that time, I wanted to compile a short course on Techniques of Management - but it never materialized. I think my theory about repetition originated in the above and that my subconscious mind then took over.

When I was a young detective (1960- some 60 years ago) I entered for my exams for Commissioned Officer. I made summaries of the lectures and summaries of the summaries, which meant I had visual contact with the lectures. I also then read the summaries into a tape recorder. On going to sleep I put on my ear plugs and played the tape while I slept. I now had visual contact (the notes) and contact in my subconscious mind and thus I repeated the contents in this manner at least 8 times before sitting the exams. I came third in the country out of 105 who passed.

I would not suggest for an elderly person to go as far as to tape what is to be remembered and replay it while asleep. It may cause stress and thus increase subsequent production of Cortisol with its damaging effects. I may decide to do this myself though.

That terrible word '*Pavilion*' kept fading away from my memory. '*Pavilion*' is the name of a restaurant. Then I thought of trying to remember the word by way of association. I concentrated and thought about a sports pavilion. I tried this association by visualizing a sports pavilion. After about six attempts the word stuck in my mind. Now whenever I want to recall the name of that restaurant and it does not come immediately, I think about a sports pavilion and then I have it. What puzzles me is how I can remember a sports pavilion so readily? I think that the word 'pavilion' does not in any case fit a restaurant! I also at one stage studied a book by JAC Brown, called the '*Power of Persuasion*'. I was then a member of State Security and making a study of communist methods to brainwash prisoners of war. I am now referring to more than 20 years ago.

This book described how one could virtually remove memories and outlooks by installing new memories by way of repetition. This book was based on facts about American soldiers captured in Vietnam. Those soldiers were subjected to constant brainwashing and when back in the States they were confirmed communists.

Apart from that I had once also assisted a girlfriend with a university task on propaganda and advertising and how advertising worked when repeated over and over again. My accumulated knowledge made it a natural decision to decide that I should continue repetition to improve my memory recall.

After my experience with the delivery of bread I decided to embark on a specific program, based on the theory that my brain can be trained to use different parts of it to make up for those cells that have become redundant. I have for example started a very elementary type of 'mind games. Where once I used to hang my keys next to the door as we enter our home, I now place them anywhere in the room. I make a mental note of the place and the fact that the keys are placed there. Here I am successful most of the time. I used to forget regularly where I had placed my cap. I still forget where I have left it, but not if I force myself to concentrate on the place where I leave the cap and repeat the fact to myself a few times.

To me... repetition is one of the most important methods of installing new memories. Invariably when I place an article in a particular spot and at that time know exactly where I have placed it, I still forget. This causes frustration and anxiety, but when I make an extra effort to memorize the place and repeat it a couple of times, the next morning I know where I have placed it. I still must accept that though at the time of my actions I know exactly what I am doing, the memory sometimes fades away. It is like a dream where you wake up and know exactly what you have dreamed, but if you do not write down the dream, it just fades away and no matter how hard you think it stays away.

I picked up another piece of information from a Western Cape newspaper: '*Die Burger*' dated 12 January 2007. According to this paper researchers in the Washington University in St Louis used advanced brain imaging techniques and found that when one plans future happenings, you see yourselves in your mind's eye partaking in such happenings. The future and past processes show the same activities in the same brain areas, said the researchers in a statement. This research was published recently in the Publication: "*Proceedings of National Academy of Sciences*".

The researchers also found that you use the same areas in your brain to think back into the past. It was also found that when one visualizes the future in your mind's eye the context of the future relates to parts of experiences from the past. Visual and spatial memories stored in their memories of the past can serve as reference frameworks

Although I do not really understand how the researchers came to this conclusion, to me that makes perfect sense.

The study also showed that future thoughts are not isolated in the frontal cortex as was suspected (although that area is involved in future orientated tasks such as planning and monitoring).

According to the article, approximately 15 areas are involved in the recall of the past and to enable you to see your conduct of the future. My question to myself was when events from the past are recollected - how far back in the past are they? Because normally one would accept that events from yesterday would determine your planning for today. In the case of Alzheimer's events of yesterday are normally lost. An advantage in future planning is that it can avoid stressful occurrences and thus avoid unnecessary and harmful Cortisol developing in your system. I should think that crisis management is for the strong and lion hearts only. Myself, I cannot really deal with crisis management without building up stress.

I also realized that I should emphasize the following statement and always keep it in mind: “*Still, older people continue to generate new connections and keep old ones via mental activity*”. Especially the reference to ‘mental activity’ is most important. This reference to ‘*mental activity*’ also made me realize that with constant reading I was busy with mental activity. Even my research into Alzheimer’s sickness was without doubt a mental activity and constant mental exercise. I then realized with finality that mental activity amounts to repetition.

By reading a lot, thousands of words come in your way; and you naturally would encounter the same words over and over again. You see the words; you read the words many times without realizing at that time that you are busy with repetition.

Those words form part of your memory, and the brain is not given a chance to forget it. This is then also the reason why one can continue to think clearly although your brain leaves you in the lurch when it comes to short-term memory. This was in any case my own deduction as to why I was still clear of mind and at the same time was drastically losing my short-term memory. I keep my brain active as far as possible. I read a great deal and apart from that I do the translations of our local Town Council, which come to about 120 pages per month.

During the seven/eight years I have been the official translator (I work from home) I have probably translated about 8,000 pages comprising of at least 3,000 different items on the agenda of Council. Whenever Council Officials ask me to translate a document and if it is an item translated by me during the preceding years, I immediately remember that I have done it before. Invariably I am right, and I can look it up in my computer records and simply print it for them. However other traumatic experiences in my life, such as the murder of my uncle and our own place being burnt down while my family and I were inside, seem to fade away and I have trouble recalling them.

Perhaps I do not want to think about them.

The facts as stated in the above paragraph indicate to me that incidents such as bad (or traumatic) experiences can be '*short-circuited*' by the brain, probably to protect your sanity of mind. The degree of my ailment is at times aggravated by stress and sometimes I experience deep depression, which is another side effect of Alzheimer's sickness. I manage to control my frustration and hide it, which is why I am not subject to regular bursts of ill-temper, but I admit that some things do irritate me, where it would not have bothered me before.

I am now at the stage where I do not get very excited or frustrated when I realize, I have forgotten some information.

Every time I am unable to recall certain memories, I simply repeat them to myself a couple of times until they come back easily enough. I do this any time of the day, even while driving a car or in the company of others. Next day I will again recall the information I need and every time I do this, it comes back easier. What works exceptionally well is when I plan in my mind that tomorrow I will be remembering where I have placed something or what I intend to do the next day. Here I am making use of the principle 'that when one visualizes the future in your mind's eye the context of the future relates to parts of experiences from the past. Visual and spatial memories stored in their memories of the past can serve as reference framework.' This works time and again for me.

I achieve more and more success with my method of repetition. This again motivates me to do more research. Now I have much more self confidence and confidence in the method of repetition in the knowledge that every day or so I progress. I clearly remember how much easier what I need to remember. I do not fret too much anymore over memories that I do not really need.

What is more important is that my daily existence has become more bearable and normal in a way.

Every time I am unable to recall certain memories, I simply repeat them to myself a couple of times until they come back easily enough. I do this any time of the day, even while driving a car or in the company of others. Next day I will again recall the information I need and every time I do this, it comes back easier. What works exceptionally well is when I plan in my mind that tomorrow I will be remembering where I have placed something or what I intend to do the next day. Here I am making use of the principle '*that when one visualizes the future in your mind's eye the context of the future relates to parts of experiences from the past. Visual and spatial memories stored in their memories of the past can serve as reference framework.*' This works time and again for me.

I achieve more and more success with my method of repetition. This again motivates me to do more research. Now I have much more confidence in the method of repetition in the knowledge that every day or so I progress. I clearly remember now much easier what I need to remember. I do not fret too much anymore over memories that I do not really need. What is more important is that my daily existence has become more bearable and normal in a way.

The experiences related above and a few other cases I have been researching, made me believe that I was on the right track. I have also found literature which indicates that in the past patients who suffered from strokes were encouraged to use other portions of their brains to take over the damaged brain cells.

I realize of course that I have merely delayed the process of Alzheimer's disease and that everyday brain cells die off for reasons which are not known, and that there is no medical cure yet.

I believe that I succeed in storing new facts somewhere in the brain by way of repetition. I believe that by keeping my brain active, I repeat and confirm old information time and time again and I even feed new information to the brain. It is also now clearer that much of the information is retained. Whether it is retained in any of the 15 other regions in the brain which can accommodate memories or in new neurons is not a big issue, as long as it is retained. The fact is that repetition works for me in its various forms of application.

For repetition to work is not easy and it is no game, although I named it ‘mind games’ in my diary. Absolute dedication to the program is essential as well as a determined mind. To make it work is however not beyond the reach of an average reasonably intelligent person. The brain must still be clear, and the reasoning ability must still prevail. It is more involved than simply repeating something a few times like a parrot. Sometimes it needs quite a few repetitions before you remember certain facts and information. One does not use repetition alone, although that is the prime method. Memory retention is also at times aided by other factors such as a visual reference framework as well as pre-planning which also serves as a reference framework. The application of association is also a method that works.

Lifestyle and the elimination of stress factors are also important factors. You need to accept the fact that every now and again your memory will fail to live up to your expectations. When I forget some information or face, I stop trying too hard to recall it. That exercise causes me too much frustration and stress. I then simply try to restore that memory by way of repetition all over again. The pleasure of succeeding makes up for the setbacks.

I started a diary in April this year and in it I record the results of my research, my successes as well as frustrations when I experience setbacks.

The diary will also serve a good purpose. If I reach the stage where I am no longer coherent, the diary will show it. I do hope they discover medication before that happens. My greatest pleasure now is when I remember things that I recently failed to recall. I now easily recall the names of all my grandchildren and many acquaintances.

My battle against the sickness is far from over. I also use the diary to indicate what goes through my mind at times, as I am sure happens to thousands of others in my situation. Deep depression attacks you from time to time and you wonder if one morning you will wake up and find you do not remember anything anymore. Doubts and fears stalk me at times, and I need to motivate myself to carry on with my program. At times I am lonely even when there are people around me, because I cannot really discuss my problem with anyone. I tell my thoughts to my diary.

Some of my thoughts as well as my deep interest in my research I keep to myself, because I realize that those closest to me do not really understand what importance my research is to me. This makes me in many ways a lonely man. I hide my loneliness behind a smile. I know I have been blessed with a keen mind which enables me to continue the research. The more I continue with my work, the more I come to the conclusion that through the years too much stress has made its mark.

I simply must relate a small piece of my history in order to explain how the burden of accumulated guilt through the years has subjected me to stress which many times exceeded the threshold of tolerance. I think that I can safely say that I am in some way the victim of circumstances that chose me. I can say that without being too sorry for myself. Today will be the first day in my life that I put on record some of the occurrences which no doubt relates to who I am today.

Caregiver Support in 2025

Caregivers remain the unsung heroes of the Alzheimer's journey. New global initiatives include:

Memory Cafés – safe community spaces for patients and families.

Digital caregiver platforms – offering training, counseling, and respite support.

Financial aid programs – slowly expanding in parts of Africa, Asia, and Europe.

The focus has shifted from just managing decline to preserving quality of life for both patient and caregiver.

"Early diagnosis allows families to plan, adapt, and find strength together."

Physically as well as my mental set-up. I hope to one day publish my diary and will probably be asked to take the following out of the manuscript as not really being relevant to the research. I do think it is relevant in the sense that future readers may also come to a stage when they must dig deep into their past in order to somehow get closure. Without making peace with oneself how can one get closure?

I become nostalgic and then I remember the days many years ago when I was still young, ambitious and happy in my first marriage. However, that did not last long. I shall not dwell on those thoughts much, because I hide them deep - all these years I have been forced into directions which I would not really have taken if I had a choice. Many persons believe that you are the director of your own destiny. I cannot agree with that. If my first wife had not died at the age of 24 after we were only married for about five years, leaving me with two very young children, my life would have been less complicated. I was then a member of the local CID in our small town. I never asked to be incorporated into the Bureau for State Security. That, I think, changed the whole course of my life from then on.

From then on, I virtually lived a life of stress, plagued by a constant belief that I was serving a political system that was in essence neither right nor fair. To this day I am sure that my family background was a reason why colleagues less qualified were promoted ahead of me. Now, with the knowledge that I only gained some forty years later, I realize what effect my lifestyle must have had on me. I worked day and night for many years. I was a member of the Counter Espionage Department for a while. Then for about two years or so I was an undercover government agent. I spied on those whom I knew was busy fighting an unjust system. I knew enough, or at least had enough knowledge, to realize that my colleagues and I were thoroughly and constantly brainwashed.

I went through deep waters all those years, especially because some of the brainwashing was based on true facts. The degree of stress that I went through surely made its mark.

I never committed murder in the line of my duty. My sense of guilt is because of my failure to have been there for my children. For betraying my second wife in the course of duty. Had I only been a hard type of a man I probably would never had a guilty feeling and feelings of remorse about my past life. But I was not created that way. The feelings of guilt throughout the years have caused constant stress and I now realize constant strain on my body and mind.

Last night I happened to watch a movie. Part of this family drama was involving the mother who had a severe case of Alzheimer's. She did not recognise her husband and daughters anymore and was also physically very sick. This movie focused on the trauma and stress caused by the mental condition of the mother and the difficulties the family experienced in trying to cope with the situation.

The movie also vividly displays the utter fear and horror the sufferer herself experiences when she suffers an anxiety attack. This was a very disturbing experience. I suppose it will be asking for too much to really get closure at this stage in my life. I can now only ask God to give me enough courage and strength for the road I am now carving out for myself. I sit with a rather old and much used and abused body. Along the old road no doubt my body and its central nervous system incurred damages. With my acquired knowledge I aim to repair as much as is humanly possible. At times I still think back about all the clues that fell in place, and I ask myself '*was it by chance or am I being used?*' I know one thing for sure and that is that I never would have had the endurance to just carry on, hour after hour researching and then typing the results.

I know that I was driven by a powerful force and that it can only be attributed to the strange ways of my God. A God who I blamed for 45 years for taking away my first wife when she was so young and who I blamed for allowing her to suffer so much pain. It made me sad and angry.

I buried this sadness and anger deep inside but never saw fit to forgive God for what I thought was an unnecessarily cruel deed - to take away my first wife by cancer. I could understand why she had to die, but never the terrible pain she suffered during the three years of her sickness. That I thought was not necessary. She did not deserve that at all. And nor did I.

Then a young lady, Corlea, walked into my place and we discussed training of Home Nurses. On leaving, she promised (out of the blue) to bring me a book. That same day she returned and placed '*The Shack*' in my hands. After reading a few pages I realized that it was a book written with exceptional flair and sense of humor. But reading it became a heart-sore experience. The book brought all the memories of long ago vividly back and left me drained. I could not let go. I read through the book in less than two days.

It brought also back memories of the trilogy by *Neale Donald Walsch*, who wrote: "*Holistic Living, Relationships, Abundance and Right Livelihood*". As you will recall, I have included some details about the work of Walsch earlier on in my diary. I quote: "*There are two extremes in the life of man. It is love on the one side and anger on the other side. These sentiments are experienced by everyone. It is true that the overpowering factor of the two also become the overpowering factor in a person's life.*" and "*until we have used the balm of forgiveness on our wounds, those wounds will fester inside us long after the outward signs have disappeared*"

That was my case. After reading '*Holistic Living*' a few years ago, I was gradually able to forgive those I believed caused me harm and today I manage quite well in that regard. I don't think I ever doubted the existence of a living God, but I never seemed to forgive God. My anger festered long after the outward signs disappeared, and I could never understand why God allowed pain and suffering to the innocent.

I still do not understand what motivated Corlea to hand me the '*The Shack*' as I do not advertise my sorrows on my sleeve. So, it must have been sheer coincidence or was it meant to be? Before the end of that book, many things became clear to me, although it did not entirely heal the wound. The scar is there, and the damage done by all the stress I have experienced over the years as a result of not understanding the ways of God.

During the past five years or so, in my research of the Alzheimer's and related sicknesses, I was guided by one coincidental piece of information after the other that came my way as if by miracle. I know now that God was in fact throwing me lifelines. What could I not understand is "*why me?*" The story of how I became involved with the research of Alzheimer's is contained in my diary. After reading '*The Shack*' I became even more convinced that I was being used as a tool.

I also now understood more clearly why I survived a life where in several cases I faced dangers which could have been fatal. I accept now that I was allowed to survive so that when the time was right, I could embark on this journey. A journey which ultimately would serve as an inspiration to me and others with Alzheimer's and memory loss problems.

During my research I have made remarkable discoveries and that can only be attributed to the guiding hand of our Supreme God. I have had no real qualifications to be able to make the discoveries I have made.

Some time ago a young friend who knows about my research brought a very interesting book to me. This book is called '*Mapping the Mind*' and is authored by *Rita Carter*. Seeing that my study is about memories, I focused on those entries she made on this subject (*pages 261-293*). I did not dwell much on matters such as state of mind and human behavior although these are closely connected to and influenced by memories. I was once again concerned with how memories are made, how memories are retained and how or why memories are lost.

The reader will wonder at why I find it necessary at this late stage to keep on adding more information after deciding that I have concluded my story. I asked myself that question and told myself that any new information on the workings of the brain could only enhance my knowledge. Also, I believe that any new information I receive is still part of the lifeline I have been given at times and thus I cannot ignore it.

It is true however that as a researcher of a highly scientific phenomenon, my work will fall short. But I need this work to be done. Initially for myself, but gradually, I believe, for the sake of all people suffering from Alzheimer's, ageing and memory loss. You should look at my other book, *My Diary in context* and try to see the whole picture as it unfolded during these past few years.

The scenario is of a person who, because of the trauma caused by severe short term memory loss, goes through various emotional experiences. If I manage to convey my feelings of morbid depression at times, it is good in the sense that readers will appreciate that great psychological adjustments are needed to survive such stress-related conditions. I am not looking for sympathy for myself but hope that I can contribute towards a deeper understanding by Caregivers and relatives of those suffering from Alzheimer's' Sickness.

As for real scientists, I can hardly see them spending much time reading through my work and the diary and being confronted with facts they probably already know. On the other hand, man is also an emotional being and many scientists see the link between emotion and the physical side of life where you are constantly fighting against memory loss.

Carter in fact includes ‘emotion’ in some aspects of the process of retention of memories. “*The sort of scenes that stick in our minds are those that for one reason or another were experienced in a state of emotional excitement. This is because excitement, by definition, is brought about by a surge of excitatory neurotransmitters that increase the firing rate of neurons in certain parts of the brain. This has two effects, both of which have obvious value. First it increases the intensity of perception, producing that ‘crystal clear’ feeling and sense of slowed time that people typically report when they are in the midst of a crisis. Second, it boosts long-term potentiation, so events that happen in such a state are more likely to be remembered and avoided (if nasty) or sought after (if nice) in future.” (p268)*

My program includes all the methods I could find on how to remember and how to retain memories as well as the addition of supplements to enhance the functions of the brain. Have I not done enough research to satisfy myself that I should in fact now stop looking for more information on the subject? I think I shall not really be able to stop looking for more information about the brain. As it is, I cope rather well with my program and the supplements I am taking. By furthering our knowledge about this very intricate part of the human machine, we will be more apt to appreciate it, assist it and protect it in its memory building and retention processes. We can enhance the brain’s memory retention ability by keeping it active and by assisting it to operate at capacity. Another reason why I have decided to place on record additional information is that it gives us even more hope for the future.

The more I delve into research concerning Alzheimer's, memory loss and aging, the more optimistic I become in the belief and hope that a cure is just around the corner.

According to *Rita Carter* you must look at individual cells, because that is where memories are made. Memories consist of the same essential thing: "*an association between a group of neurons, that when one fires, they all fire, creating a specific pattern.*" *Thoughts, perceptions - any brain function - is made up of this same thing.* "*A memory is a pattern like these. The only difference is that it remains encoded in the brain after the stimulation that originally gave rise to it has ceased. Memories form when a pattern is repeated frequently, or in circumstances that encourage it to be encoded. This is because each time a group of neurons fires together the tendency to do so again is increased.*" (p261)

One of the problems that I still have is the recognition of faces. On page 199, I found an entry that explains the storage of faces in your memory, and I quote: "*Familiar faces are stored in the brain in neutral circuits – memories – known as face recognition units (FRU)....FRUs - like other memories- are kept alive by constant use. Each time one is activated it becomes more deeply etched into the brain through the process of long-term potentiation.*" And further on the author says, "*If an FRU is activated frequently, it will also stay 'warm'. Normally, an FRU needs quite a strong stimulus to be activated- typically the sight of the person it represents, or the sight of something closely connected, or very similar to them.*" I have for several years now speculated on '*when are memories transferred to become long-term memories.*' According to *Carter*: "*Episodes that are destined for long-term memory are not lodged there straight away. The process of laying them down permanently takes up to two years. Until then they are fragile and may quite easily be wiped out.*" (p268)

Carter claims that many different brain areas are involved in memory. This then agrees with my earlier belief (based on information by research scientists) that there are at least 15 areas in the brain involved in the making and retention of memories.

According to an illustration on page 270 of Carter's book she listed 23 regions in the brains where memories were stored. She quotes the *Canadian Brain surgeon Wilder Penfield* as having identified these regions by probing the cortex during operations on conscious epilepsy patients.

Dr. Carter explains the creation of memories very clearly. According to her "*Episodes that are destined for long-term memory appear to be shunted down to the hippocampus from the cortex, where they are registered as neural patterns much the same way as they are in the cortex. However, because the hippocampus is connected to so many different cortical areas it is able to create a global representation of events.*"

And here follows a most interesting part of her study: "*These episodes seem to remain in limbo for some time – perhaps as long as two years - before they are finally laid down. During this time, they are frequently brought together by the hippocampus and replayed. This happens largely during sleep and may account for the intrusion of daily events into dreams. Every replay sends messages to the cortex where each element of the scene was originally registered. This regeneration of the original neural patterns etches them deeper into the cortical tissue, protecting them from degradation until eventually the memories are more or less permanently embedded.*"

Carter lists the following as the Human memory system:

Temporal lobe: long term memories. Procedural memories, like riding a bike, are stored in the **Putamen**. This refers to deeply ingrained habits.

The **Hippocampus**-involved in laying down and retrieving of memories, particularly personal ones and those related in finding your way about. **Amygdala**: unconscious traumatic memories may be stored here. **Caudate nucleus**: many instincts come from here- such as genetically encoded memories. Long-term memories are stored in the Temporal lobe-and permanently lodged in the Cortex. (p 264)

Carter also touches on Dementia and mentions in particular Alzheimer's disease. She basically agrees with the theory that Alzheimer's is caused by the accumulation of insoluble protein fragment - beta amyloid in the cleft between neurons, blocking communications. She also mentions that the protein fragment is caused by '*biochemical errors in the breakdown*' of the essential protein – the amyloid precursor protein (or APP)... I could not find any reference in her work regarding the theory that the '*tau protein*' is causing the tangles in the hippocampus. However, in my opinion the same rule should apply to 'the amyloid as well as the tau protein, namely that a biological failure in the breakdown of the proteins cause the plagues and tangles we read about. I believe that researchers will find methods that will enhance the workings of the human brain, and which could rectify the biological errors.

However, such biological errors might also of course stem from a defect in any of the organs of the body involved in the breakdown of proteins not doing its job properly. In such cases, treatment of biological errors would have to begin at the source of the breakdown.

Rita Carter quotes *Professor Steven Rose, Director Brain and Behavior Research Group, Open University* who was involved in attempting to analyze the biochemical sequence involved in making memories. In their experiments they used chickens.

“Researchers are unlocking clues in our genes, blood, and even gut health.”

The Professor explained as follows: “Young chicks peck spontaneously at small bright beads, testing them for edibility. If a bead tastes bitter, the chicks peck only once and thereafter avoid similar beads. Tasting a bitter bead initiates a sequence of biochemical events in particular regions of the chick brain’s, beginning with the release of the neurotransmitter, glutamate. Within half an hour or so, this activity at the synapses has triggered a complex burst of signaling molecules within the neurons, which turns on specific genes in their nuclei. These genes code for the synthesis of proteins that are transported to the synapses and inserted into their membranes, thus remodeling the synapses and altering the pattern of connections. I believe that it is these remodeled synapses that are part of the long-term memory trace.”

“We have found that in chicks there is a special class of proteins involved in the switch from short-term to long-term memory, called cell adhesion molecules, which are not merely embedded in the synaptic membrane but protrude into the inter-neuronal spaces. Attached to the protein chain are sugar molecules that make the chains sticky and capable of attaching themselves to matching proteins protruding from the opposite membrane. The cell adhesion molecules work like Velcro to hold the neurons together.”

“To remodel the synapses, two communicating neurons must first un-stick the Velcro molecules so that the synapses can move, grow or even divide in two. Later the cells stick the adhesion molecules together again so as to hold the synapses in their new configuration. This requires a wave of Velcro molecules to be produced some four to seven hours after the learning experience – the time of transition to long-term memory. In chicks we have found that blocking the synthesis of the cell adhesion molecules or blocking their sticky ends with antibodies prevents these processes and hence the memory for the bitter bead fades after about six hours.”

“Blocking the action of APP, or other cell adhesion molecules, in anaesthetized rats with antibodies can reduce the duration of long-term potentiation (ability). So, cell adhesion molecules may be necessary for the proper remodeling of synapses during memory formation.”

I asked myself, where do the sugar molecules come from? It must be sugar molecules manufactured by the body or taken in by the body by way of food. This means if the body is no longer able to provide the essential sugar molecules to the brain, then the above activity cannot take place, and memories will not remain long enough to be passed over to the long-term facility. But nowadays there is a solution to this problem and that is to supplement the body with the needed nutrients and essential sugars.

A question which is often asked is how much memory the brain can hold. Carter states that *“the brain has 100 trillion connections joining billions of neurons and each has the potential to be part of a memory. So, the memory capacity of a human brain is effectively infinite, provided it is stored in the right way.”*

She further says: *“The brain also works by linkages. If you cannot remember a fact, link it to a meaningful memory and use the latter to book the former.”* (pages 288 & 289) I have never really tried this method consistently, but I do remember one case where I did so successfully. This was when I could not remember the name of a customer on my wife’s bread delivery round - the ‘Pavilion’. I linked it with the word ‘Stadium’.

A further important point she makes about memory retention is the following: *“The hippocampus damage seen in trauma victims is thought to be brought about by long-term elevation of stress hormones. A single flush of these hormones, as we have seen, helps to form memories.*

But if the brain is constantly bathed in them, it seems the hippocampus may be damaged with deleterious effects on memory recall and consolidation.” (p 287)

According to Carter behavioral eccentricities may be traced to abnormalities in the brain. ‘Dyslexia’ may be caused by a short circuit in the messages converting sound to visual cues. Addiction, eating disorders and alcoholism can stem from dysfunction in the brain’s reward system.

I have now finally put the book of Rita Carter down. This book more than ever confirms the absolute miracles of the brain. By inserting the above information in my book, I know now that the brain can do everything to record memories and to recall memories - no matter what your age. All that is required from us is to follow certain basic rules and the brain will automatically do the rest. The brain was provided with the necessary know-how. All it needs is co-operation from our side. Now that we know much more about the intricate workings of this wonderful part of the body, we should have the confidence to realize that the brain is still capable of assisting us in the remembering process.

We need to follow some program however, and my specific program should serve as a basis which individuals can adopt and improve and adapt according to their own specific circumstances. Carter ends the piece on memories with an observation by Professor Rose: *“Hopefully, understanding the mechanisms involved in Alzheimer’s disease and the role played by APP in the formation of memories will eventually enable us not just to treat but to prevent this tragic disease.”*

Research worldwide is focused on the search to find a medical drug to at least stop the progression of Alzheimer’s disease. In Australia, for example, there was a program where 400 AD sufferers were part of a controlled experiment to assess the value of a certain medication.

Lately these type of experiment is being conducted all over the globe.

Repetition is the best method to feed facts, information, places and experiences into the brain, even for people who have no memory problems. I wish to repeat the following statement of mine: '*Whether it is retained in any of the 15 other regions in the brain which can accommodate memories or in new neurons is not a big issue, as long as it is retained. The fact is that repetition works for me in its various forms of applications.*'

When I realize that I have lost certain memories along the road, memories I really need, I decide to restore them again in my memory. This I do via my program of repetition and if need be, with various other helpful tools, such as visual and future references. Other information which I can do without, because it is not important, I simply let be until it does become needed. I am only sure that I have retained certain information when I have already needed it several times and was able to recall it. The same of course also applies to new information.

It is not as involved as it may sound. Any person who wishes to follow my program needs also to read the contents of my original book, ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE (the practical guide). I would say that the secret of my program is the use of logic, determination and, of course, repetition. The qualification to partake in it is simply that one should be able to understand the program.

Unfortunately, it will not be possible to take part in such a program once the second (middle) phase of Alzheimer's sickness has set in. The longer you keep an active mind and follow my repetition program, the longer you will thwart and delay the second phase of the sickness. You can say it is a case of mind over matter, but if the mind is going or gone, it will matter no more.

Despite the cautions nowadays regarding the use of nutritional supplements, they are necessary at times for elderly persons because of the decreased ability of the body to obtain the necessary nutrients from food that we eat.

Taking additional nutrients in their natural form is always recommended. With the aging process in mind and the body failing to operate in the way it did when much younger, it stands to reason that one needs to assist it with the taking of additional nutrients. Extreme caution should be taken, and we should not go on a shopping spree for all the wonder treatments currently being advertised.

If you want to fight the Alzheimer's' sickness you should at least ensure that the body stays reasonably healthy. For that a person needs immune strengtheners. The particular type of supplements required will differ from person to person. They also differ due to certain chronic ailments for which certain medication may be being administered. These are factors one must take into consideration before choosing a particular supplement. Here your doctor should give you advice but at times a good pharmacist is a better advisor. He sits with enormous literature regarding supplements. If you do take medication due to chronic or other sickness, the pharmacist should be informed about it. He will decide which supplements you can safely take. The advantage of a good pharmacist is that he will give you good advice and it will save you the doctor's fees.

In my diary I mention a particular piece of information in respect of nutritional supplements. It deals with the hormone '*Cortisol*'.

An acquaintance gave me an article from a magazine and asked me to translate it into Afrikaans, which I did. It dealt with the so-called '*Hormone of Death*' and the aging process.

The heading of the article read: **ANTI-AGING AND LONGEVITY** and under that, also in ‘bold’: **TARGETED: THE “DEATH HORMONE” BEHIND AGING** and further on the following

‘Breakthrough can reduce damage to the brain and body’s critical systems.’

One of the most dramatic scenes in nature is that of the ‘salmon’ who forces itself against all probabilities upstream to go and spawn. The stress caused by that powerful biological driving power literally tears the fish in pieces whilst it struggles like one possessed against the white waters. By the time the fish reaches its destination it only has enough strength left to spawn. After that, it dies. What unpredictable energy drives that ‘salmon’ over waterfalls and raging streams? It is a hormone known as Cortisol and man also has it.

I summarized the article as follows: According to *Ronald Lawrence M.D.* a hormone known as ‘*Cortisol*’ is let loose by the ‘adrenal glands’ in answer to stress. Chronic extensive stress causes constant manufacturing of Cortisol which breaks down your body gradually. The ageing process itself also causes increased Cortisol levels.

But breakthroughs in anti-aging research discovered a number of nutriments which can assist to decrease Cortisol levels. Cortisol, the “*death hormone*” is so toxic for the brain that it kills off and damages brain cells by the millions. “*It’s like bathing the brain in battery acid,*” *Khalsa* believes that Cortisol is a primary cause of brain degeneration during the ageing process. Cortisol production is one of the primary causes of the death of cells. The decrease of Cortisol can be a way to prevent Alzheimer’s. It appears as if a very important body hormone known as **DHEA** (*dehydroepiandrosterone*) could be the answer. DHEA is the most abundant hormone in the bloodstream and is also manufactured by the Adrenals.

When we are young it reacts as a natural regulator of the Cortisol level. But as we age the DHEA levels decrease dramatically. By 80 you have only 10-20% of the DHEA which you had at 20. '*Cortisol is the most vicious immune repressor one can find*'. However, the taking of synthetic DHEA in order to replenish your body's shortages causes that your body ceases to manufacture natural DHEA.

DHEA can put a stop to this process and can even cause a dramatic turnaround to the ageing process. The problem with synthetic DHEA is that it can disturb your entire hormone system because it sidesteps important controls in the body. DHEA (dehydroepiandrosterone) should therefore be manufactured by the body and helped with what is known as SAM.

To manufacture SAM from methionine (an essential amino acid) your body needs three nutriments: '**pyridoxine (Vitamin B-6), folate (folic acid also known as Vitamin B-9) and cobalamin (Vitamin B-12)**'. Vitamin B-Complex has all these components and can be obtained from any local pharmacy.

As a result of ageing the brain still degenerates slowly. The main reason is the decreased capability of the body to take out the necessary nutriments from the food that we eat.

SAM is also the precursor of the body's second most powerful antioxidant brain nutrition, '*glutathione*'. SAM is the best natural anti-depressant which has ever been found. SAM is also the body's precursor to its own pain relievers: '*encephalin*' and '*endorphins*'.

SAM literally cleans your head. SAM dilutes the brain fluids to the same density as that of younger persons.

It thus appears as if SAM could be the answer to ageing and prevention of Alzheimer's. I remember that the original document was in English and that I had to translate it. From the outset of my program, I have decided not to dabble with medication. But reading the above I have decided that it could no harm if I seriously consider the contents thereof. SAM seems to be the answer towards stimulating the brain and renewal of cells and subsequent retention of memory in these new cells.

The above-mentioned seems too good to be true, but I believe that somebody such as *Dharma Singh Khalsa, M.D. of Alzheimer's Prevention Foundation in Tucson Arizona*, would not lightly make such a statement. *Dr. Ted Bottiglieri Baylor University Research Centre* is also quoted.

I do not prescribe the above or any supplement, but in my opinion, it is perfectly safe. My research showed that Vitamin B is not harmful to the body, provided that the prescribed measure was taken. The recommended dietary (RDA) may not be exceeded. The same rule is applicable to all supplements.

In addition to vitamins your body also needs 15 minerals that help regulate cell function and provide structure for cells. Major minerals, in terms of amount present, include calcium, phosphorus, and magnesium. Our bodies need smaller amounts of **chromium, copper, fluoride, iodine, iron, manganese, molybdenum, selenium, zinc, chloride, potassium** and **sodium**. Amounts needed for most of these minerals are quite small and excessive amounts can be toxic to your body.

Such mineral supplements are available at local pharmacies and mostly relatively cheap. I would therefore suggest that apart from taking Vitamin B Complex we should in fact get some mineral supplements as well.

One can rest assured that products on the market would have been well researched.

I think I have now reached a reasonable summary regarding the data I have been looking at in respect of anti-ageing and a way to 'decrease Cortisol' in the system.

This does in no way mean that SAM can in fact restore memory cells that were wiped out because of brain neurons that died as a result of a dysfunction of the brain. It cannot restore memories that were wiped out in the process.

It would of course give my program of repetition and the subsequent taking over of the memories by another undamaged part of the brain an even better chance to succeed. By introducing SAM into my program, I will at least try to minimize the degeneration that sets in because of too much Cortisol in my system as well as the effects of natural ageing.

I am sure there are many other vitamins and minerals which can be used to build up the immune system but must caution once again that in all cases we should get expert advice before we use any of them and we must stick to the rule of not exceeding the dosage.

My research regarding the value of herbal medicine can also be given serious consideration. I accidentally came across the book "**Die Alfa en Omega genesing**" (*healing of diseases and pains*) by *Dr Francois Janse & Dirk Cilliers*.

I found interesting natural substances that could be used without any dangers attached to them. I have already dealt with this in the first book (Alzheimer's Disease - a practical guide) and readers should look it up for reference.

A way must be found to assist the body to fight this unknown factor attacking the neurons in the short-term memory brain cells. It is a known fact that the body has self-healing powers. To be able to contribute its share in the fight against AD the body's immune system must be strengthened. As the body grows older, so does the body's ability to extract the needed nutrients from vegetables, fruit and other food become impeded. Supplements are one answer to the intake of nutriments to the body by way of fruit and vegetables. The provision is that supplements should be taken with care to ensure that the body is not poisoned with toxins.

It is to be recommended that Alzheimer's sufferers should always first consult an experienced pharmacist or doctor before they react to advertisements recommending certain supplements. Medication they also may be taking should always be taken into consideration. Where, for example, a person is already taking the blood dilution medicine such as *Warfarin* on prescription, this could be dangerous and lead to excessive bleeding if the person was to take supplements which also were effective in thinning the blood. This is especially applicable to the elderly.

Speaking of natural healing through herbal supplements I need to mention the following information I picked up from the *Alzheimer's South Africa News of April 2007*:

"Scientists from the University of Wageningen in the Netherlands have demonstrated that high-dose folic acids supplements taken over a long period slow the effect of ageing in the brain" and folic acid supplements are available without prescriptions and are inexpensive. Vitamin B12 is also important for the nervous system.

The same newsletter: *"Extracts of sage and lemon may help to improve memory and behavioral problems in people with Alzheimer's disease and other types of dementia."*

And “*In controlled trials in normal volunteers, both extracts improved memory, and lemon balm improved mood. Lemon balm reduced agitation and improved quality of life in people with Alzheimer’s.*” Prof Elaine Perry (University of Newcastle upon Tyne, UK)

I have just finished reading my notes again and found the reference to the approximately 8,000 pages I have typed during the past 7 years or so during translations. If those pages averaged about 400 words per page, it would mean that I in fact typed 8,000 x 400 words in that time. That would come to some 3,200,000 words. Because the Municipality uses stereotype sentences and expressions it is possible that I repeated many a word and sentence during that time and up to now. That could then be the reason why my memory regarding Municipal matters is rather good. It may mean that without realizing it I must have been using repetition all along. After all, it is inconceivable that I could have used so many different words without repeating many of them. I surmise that I could have repeated some words up to 100 times during the period concerned.

During the past weeks I have again given a lot of thought regarding the value of “*mental activity*”. As I have mentioned before, I read the Afrikaans newspaper ‘*Die Burger*’ every day of the week except on Sundays when I read one of the Sunday papers. On average *Die Burger* has about 20 pages, without counting the Annexures. An A-4-page typed material has an average of 420 words typed in font size 12 on Times Roman format. Each page of *Die Burger* consists of 4 x A-4 pages. We can then roughly say that one page of *Die Burger* contains $420 \times 4 = 1680$ words. 20 pages of *Die Burger* will therefore contain about $1680 \times 20 = 33,600$ words. If we take the space of photos and adverts in consideration at about 25% of the space, then we still sit with about 25,000 words which we read in a day by just reading *Die Burger*. Local newspaper. Over a period of a month, it amounts to $25,000 \times 26 = 650,000$ words.

I, of course, read every piece of news in the paper because I know it is therapy for me. It sounds simply incredible that if I read Die Burger from Monday to Saturday I have read (and see) 25,000 words x 6 = 150,000 words every week just from that newspaper alone. On top of that I read the weekly magazine, the '*Huisgenoot*' every week. Here I do not read everything, but about 50% of the written contents. *Huisgenoot*, a magazine, has about 150 pages on average of which one can write off 50% for photos and advertisements. I then read about 50% of that remaining 50%. The *Huisgenoot* has about 150 pages. I thus read $75 \times 400 \times 50\% = 15,000$ words per week from the *Huisgenoot*. Roughly I read 15,000 words per week from the *Huisgenoot* thus: $15,000 \times 4$ per month = 60,000 words per month.

Now if one adds the number of words per month of *Die Burger* and the *Huisgenoot* we come to the following number of words: $650,000 + 60,000 = 710,000$ words read in one month. Here I do not even count the English newspaper which I read at least 3 times per week. Again, I surmise that there are many words which I must have read time and time again.

To me this process is not a pain. In fact, it is a pleasure because that is part of my therapy against the Alzheimer's disease, which I enjoy thoroughly! It is impossible to determine it exactly, but one can imagine the number of times I have read the same word repeatedly in these past years. This amounts to repetition over and over and over again. Calculated over a time of 3 months I have read and thus also seen approximately 2 million words! This gives one an idea of the number of words your brain can absorb with ease. Looking at my own program to keep my mind active, the thought struck me that readers of this book may find it difficult to keep up the program without building up tiredness and stress. In fact, it is really not as strenuous as it may seem. It should for example not be so difficult to start reading one of the daily papers every day.

By just doing that you will be reading and seeing 150,000 words every week just from that newspaper alone! This will build up vocabulary which you may have lost during the ageing process. It will thus renew your vocabulary which is needed to keep your mind clear. This will of course be a sacrifice of leisure time for those who do not like reading. Without much effort any person should be able to keep up such an easy program and by reading magazines my record can even be surpassed. In between you must try to get enough rest and relaxation to avoid the stress level.

Another advantage of extensive reading is of course that it builds up your general knowledge regarding current affairs. This will enable you to partake in conversations during a social get-together, regarding virtually any subject, ranging from politics to sports.

Yesterday evening when I was repacking my files and documents I came upon a clipping from a newspaper, '*The Daily Mail*'. It was headed '*Camera to aid memory recall*'. The reporter was *Fiona Macrae*. Unfortunately, the date was not noted on the clipping. I do not remember the piece at all, but I must have put it aside some time back because of its contents. According to the paper "*a camera has been developed to help Alzheimer's sufferers improve their memories. The digital device is worn around the neck and takes snap of movement or changes in temperature and light. Played back on a computer at night the series of pictures could improve the recall of those suffering from Alzheimer's disease or memory loss brought on by strokes, epilepsy and accidents.*"

In tests that were done on an amnesia patient it kept events that would have been forgotten in less than a week fresh in the mind a year later." Once again luck was on my side to have seen, kept the article, and later to find it again. To me this information is very important and something to be explored.

The decision of last night to record it in my diary is also in accord with the information I have about images and recall.

With reference to the above, I shall explore the possibility of using a cell phone to record certain pictures and sentences (which I choose) during the day and to play it back later on my computer. A cell phone may work better than a camera, because photos can be taken selectively (by persons in the early stages of the sickness) of places and important information can be stored on the cell phone as well. I shall prioritize the pictures and messages I will be recording. However, I do not think I need it at present.

There is no get-away from life's challenges and hiding behind Alzheimer's so as not to take up responsibilities as long as one can function reasonably well. I was once again considering the chances of success for other Alzheimer's sufferers following my method.

In my view a person should have the following qualities and accumulated knowledge of Alzheimer's sickness for the successful implementation of the program.

1. Determination to succeed. Without the determination to overcome setbacks, it simply will not work.
2. The person must make repetition a habit, a sort of ritual of the mind games. It should stay a challenge and not be a pain to carry it out consistently rather than haphazardly.
3. The person must be of average intelligence and must be able to understand the theory as well as how to implement it.
4. The person must be able to comprehend the extent of the Alzheimer's disease; and must know and believe that at this stage in time there is no quick cure for the disease. Reading and studying the 'guidebook' section of 'Alzheimer's Disease' is therefore essential.

Hope for the Future

Alzheimer's research is entering a new era. With advances in AI diagnostics, blood-based biomarkers, and global collaboration, scientists are closer than ever to identifying Alzheimer's earlier and tailoring treatments. While a complete cure remains elusive, the fight is no longer just about managing decline – it's about extending dignity, independence, and meaningful connection for millions.

Lifestyle and Prevention

Research in 2025 highlights the importance of a brain-healthy lifestyle: Regular physical activity (walking, swimming, cycling).

A Mediterranean-style diet rich in olive oil, nuts, and leafy greens.

Cognitive stimulation through reading, music, and puzzles. Strong social connections to reduce isolation. Studies suggest these habits may reduce dementia risk by up to 40%

5.The person must adopt rules in the guidebook to control the stress level but not those easy ones alone. Look it up now and then.

6.The person must believe that if it works for me it will work for him/her as well; especially since there is so much published research regarding the capabilities of the brain.

7.The person must be willing to from time to time re-read the contents of the guide and the diary. There are always some things you miss with the first reading of any large documentation.

Determination is needed because in the process there will come times that one tires of the effort, especially if at first you experience some setbacks. Once the mind games and the practice of repetition become second nature, it becomes a habit and a sort of ritual.

One must really understand and believe in the logic behind the theory of repetition in the first place and the fact that the brain does have additional capacity to store new memories. Alzheimer's disease is no playmate. It is real and here to stay. You must believe however that it can be opposed and, in many ways, delayed and even stopped in its tracks. Once you have started to have success with your program you should continue with the struggle because unfortunately AD is an ongoing ailment at this stage in time. The original cause of Alzheimer's continues to be doing its destructive job. Your program will not make the neurons that have been destroyed well and alive again. What you will be doing, is feeding information to whatever new neurons have been formed and/or to neurons in your brain capable of accepting new memories.

At this stage of my story, I think it appropriate that you should read the contents of my '**guidebook**'. It should give you a better background regarding Alzheimer's Dementia. We also owe it to those Alzheimer's sufferers who have passed the initial stages to include the information.

I have now given a short survey of my involvement in the Alzheimer's sickness and the program I follow to fight the sickness.

Up to now I have had a lot of success in my attempts to re-install and recall memories which I have lost along the way. I experience great pleasure in being able to recall memories and to find it is in fact possible. To know what I have planned the previous day, that it comes back easily the following day. To be able to know where I can look for certain information. To know that when I leave for town, I must take my home keys with me. Lately I can tell my wife where we have placed this or that when she has forgotten. To me it is clear that from the beginning of this sickness, I have been applying the principle of '*repetition*' without realizing that I was doing it.

My lifestyle, the translations I do, the compiling of the book (guide), and lectures on Home Nursing, all resulted in mental activity. In the process I had also by necessity repeated thousands upon thousands of words. The repetition had then ensured that all the repeated words were again permanently retained in by my brain. Vocabulary is the instrument that man needs to be able to think logically and to know what is happening around him. In my opinion this process enabled me to be clear of mind every day, although my short-term memory at times left me terribly in the lurch. I can think of no other reason why my mind and thus my day-to-day existence still stays clear.

However, some days are not without hiccups. Sometimes the memory suddenly refuses to co-operate and then I must again start the process of retaining the lost information by way of repetition. I must always remind myself that the process of degeneration has not been stopped. Neurons still die and, together with them, also the memory. New neurons are still being manufactured, but unfortunately, they cannot recall memories they never had. New neurons can only accommodate new memories.

Stress is a factor in memory loss, and its elimination is therefore very important for memory retention. So also, the return to a more normal lifestyle. I may have mentioned this before, but then it seems to be the privilege of people with my condition to repeat themselves.

I also find nowadays that when I plan ahead, I have more memory retention and the following day I remember what I have planned. Through practice I have now managed to ‘fool’ my brain. I tell myself that if this works, namely that what I plan today I will remember tomorrow, then this should work if I apply that principle to doing something now and telling myself that a few hours from now I shall remember it. Nowadays I do this automatically and it works for me. This ensures that I very seldom forget important matters which should be dealt with later in the day.

I intend to gather as much information about Alzheimer’s as possible for as long as I am able to put it down logically and where possible with proof or back-up information. A diary type of memoirs will at the same time serve as a barometer of any decline, degeneration and hopefully any improvements in the coherency of my state of thought and recollection abilities. This will enable me to monitor any progress more correctly because it will serve as an easy reference.

I have mentioned the utter frustration if I forget important memories and cannot recall some events. But the times when I experience successes, especially if I use the repetition method, motivate me.

Lifestyle in my opinion is also very important. You need a calm environment, without stress and many worries. Circumstances have now forced me that way, although I have not found closure in some aspects of my life. I need to diarise at least some of my day-to-day experiences - the successes as well as the failures.

I need to make time for that, and practice repetition every single day.

The work you have now read forms the basis of my personal struggle against this nasty sickness. To achieve my goal, I not only work towards practicing my mind, but I have also adopted the philosophy that the world owes me nothing. That way I will one day know that I have achieved something by contributing my knowledge towards fighting this terrible sickness.

The reason why I know more than the average person about the subject is my initial involvement in the Home for the Aged which was a family affair. I saw what was happening to some of the old people staying there. I saw the degeneration from people who could hold a conversation to people who became confused and non-communicative. I saw the need for more knowledge by Caregivers and relatives about the disease and started to research the sickness. This ended in the short guidebook, **ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE**, that I published in 2003, which would serve as a guide to the relatives and Caregivers of Alzheimer's sufferers.

The book dealt with Alzheimer's and is not a scientific achievement because I am no psychiatrist or medical man. It was meant for ordinary people like me. The initial research was only directed towards identifying the illness and how to deal with it. In my research, I did not really have hope for those afflicted. I accepted that ultimately the outcome would catch up with all sufferers and that all sufferers would go through the various stages until they were totally at the mercy of Caregivers and their families.

Since then, I have changed my mind, and I honestly believe that I have discovered a way to retain and recall memories. I manage to keep the enemy at bay and to lead a reasonably productive life.

I believe that the same benefits should be applicable to people who follow my program.

To those who may one day read my diary I wish to mention that English is not my home language and through trial and error I shall try to get my message across. I shall most probably repeat myself sometimes without realizing it, but at times also deliberately because it is part of the therapy.

I have now reached the stage in my story when I have to decide whether I should publish it. I owe it to those other Alzheimer's sufferers who are in the first stages of the illness to communicate the contents of my program to them. My program is not a medicine related exercise and can therefore never be harmful to those who attempt it. That is the reason why I will publish it without fear of criticism that the program was only tested by myself and that it was not backed by empirical evidence of similar programs.

However, all the sources I have quoted do conform to the criteria of empirical research and it is on the findings of all those sources that I have come to my conclusions.

I will therefore never go so far as to say it is I who discovered that repetition is the answer to memorizing things, faces and happenings. I think repetition is as old as the mountains - the difference is that in the case of Alzheimer's disease we need to apply repetition more intensively. I can safely boast that it is I who made this program work for me. If it works for me, I am sure it will work for any person who is in the early phases of sickness, provided of course that he understands and applies the program conscientiously.

The following is an extract from the book: **When I Grow Too Old to Dream:** *"It is a definite need for those who suffer from one or other form of dementia to retain their dignity, respect and self-image."*

TWENTY GOLDEN RULES

Keep your brain active by reading as much as possible. If you still have work, continue to do it as long as possible.

1. Use repetition to store and retain memories of places, persons and happenings. Carry on until you can recall it. Try using visualization when you do the repetition bit of retaining memory.
2. Work on elimination of stress factors in your life.
3. Start to do your own research and to diarize your progress. Do your own research in newspapers, magazines and libraries and Internet, especially with reference to nutritional supplements to strengthen your immune system. Take special care that you use nutrients referred by your local pharmacist and never to use more than is recommended.
4. Tell yourself if it works for the author of this book it will work for you too.
5. Make the program your first priority - know that it can work.
6. Believe that a drug is on the cards in the near future - such belief will give you more confidence and determination to carry on with the program.
7. Make contact and visit your local support group source of inspiration and information gathering.
8. Visit Old Age Homes - When you meet elderly people in the later stages of the sickness you will be scared out of your mind and be more determined to postpone your own degeneration as long as possible.
9. Do not be ashamed to admit to relatives and close friends that you have a memory problem - but do not advertise it. Outsiders will not understand that you are not mentally insane or weak minded.
10. Control your temper - it is a bad sign to be oversensitive and to lose your temper about trivial matters.
11. Start a hobby if you do not have one.

12. Keep active but do not overdo it - read the tips contained in the 'book' section of this document. (Section 7- carry on making life easier for yourself and to not bother to remember things that you can diarize). Remembering can be tiresome at times and failure to immediately recall a memory causes stress. Make notes of matters already finalized and things you still have to attend to. Diarize matters you cannot attend to immediately. In this way you will prevent embarrassment and still be in a position to do responsible work for a considerate period of time. Notes will assist you with your memory.
13. Appreciate and laugh at Alzheimer's jokes - at least people still can joke about it, especially those who think it cannot happen to them.
14. Adopt a pose for those times you meet persons you should recollect but fail to do so.
15. Do not neglect or alienate your family even if they become aware of your problem.
16. Be proud that you can continue a reasonably normal lifestyle.
17. Work on getting a positive mindset - you need to also read the diary of this document about healing of the mind and how to get closure on matters still disturbing you.
18. Plan your actions for tomorrow - this works fine for me.
19. Carry on with the program in the belief that God will not task you with anything that you cannot overcome.
20. Most people care, some don't - fuck them!

I sincerely do believe in what I am doing and no longer think that I am grabbing at straws in my desperation to avoid what had seemed unavoidable. I am satisfied that I have found a way, without medication, to retain memory and thereby to delay the progression of the sickness and to add useful time to my life. I hope this has made sense so far.

"Memory Cafés and support groups help reduce stigma and loneliness."

For your information I want to quote two pieces from my diary which I think should now be brought to the attention of readers. I am jumping the gun because that news gave me a tremendous motivation in knowing that I have been on the right track all the way so far. I have received an e-mail from the **McCusker Foundation for Alzheimer's Disease Research in Western Australia**. The letter reads as follows:

*"Your comments are broadly on track. We now know that a genetic disposition is a factor in a large proportion of late onset of Alzheimer's disease and 100% of early onset where the gene, pre-sinilan 1, is involved. We also have a lot of evidence in support of the belief that the protein beta **amaloid** is a major factor in AD as parts of this protein, gamma secretase, causes neurons to die. We also believe that an active mind can create additional capacity which can protect against AD but not actually prevent it. There is also a lot of research to suggest that the brain is capable of undertaking tasks lost due to the loss of those specific parts of the brain normally associated with that function. This however is normally associated with the brains of young people when it has more flexibility."*

The above sentences which I emphasized in italics are in fact confirmation of my theories on which I have based my program. The instrument I use to apply the program is basically repetition in all its various applications.

The other more recent e-mail had a bit of good news for Alzheimer's sufferers in general and came from the **Alzheimer's Association, National Office in Chicago**. It reads as follows: '*Thank you for your communication regarding your theories on Alzheimer's. We are very sorry to hear that you have been diagnosed with AD, but we are very hopeful that within the next two years a drug will be available that will arrest or improve the symptoms. Thank you for your interest in research which advances the fight for the cure.'*

Seen in a global context it is good news to hear about all the research into Alzheimer's. News such as that motivates me and keeps me going, believing that a cure is around the corner.

Lately we regularly read about more discoveries regarding the mysterious workings of the brain. Such breakthroughs will always bring more hope that a treatment, which will stop further deterioration of one's brains, will be developed. I want to refer to one such a piece of news in this section of my story.

'Die Burger' of 9 June 2007, under the heading of "neuroscience" referred to the possibility that: "*new treatment for memory problems may be possible. According to this report scientists from America have identified that part of the brain which is responsible for the feeling of Déjà-vu (that you have experienced a specific situation before). They believe this may lead to new treatment for memory problems. According to Professor Susumu Tonegawa of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology - Déjà-vu is a faulty working of the brain's capability to correctly sort out new information, or episodic memories. Episodic memory enables man to know what is going on around you and to be able to remember it at a later stage.*"

THIS CONFIRMS MY BELIEF THAT AS LONG AS YOU HAVE A CLEAR MIND YOU WILL KNOW WHAT IS GOING ON AROUND YOU AND THUS BE ABLE TO RETAIN MEMORIES BY WAY OF REPETITION AND ITS VARIOUS APPLICATIONS.

When you know what is going on around you, you will naturally also realize it when you fail to recall certain memories. Those are the memories you will then practice to recall by re-installing them in your brain by way of repetition. "*Neurons in the memory center of the brain - the hippocampus - create a map in your brain of new places and experiences. When two experiences are however very similar, two of the maps sometimes overlap. That which distinguishes the two images becomes vague.*"

According to Tunegawa, the type of memory which enables man to quickly identify faces and places becomes vague with the ageing process. “*Seeing that we now know the molecular and cellular road to that region in the brain, the possibility exists that a drug can be developed which improves the memory connection*”. According to him it is especially important for neuron degenerating ailments such as Alzheimer’s.

In the *Sunday Argus* of June 24, 2007, there was this prominent article “*Alzheimer’s vaccine on the horizon*” which caught my eye. It was written by Fiona Macrae. I will quote a few selected phrases and pieces of information contained in the article.

“*A REVOLUTIONARY drug that stops Alzheimer’s disease in its tracks could be available in a few years.*” The article also mentions that “*the jab, now being tested on patients, could be in widespread use in as little as six years*”.

To me six years seem a long time and most probably too late for my liking. I had based my theory that I could possibly keep the degeneration at bay for about three or four more years by following my program, thus buying time until a drug is available to stop the progression. And “*Early tests showed the vaccine as highly effective at breaking up the sticky protein that clogs the brain in Alzheimer’s, destroying vital connections between brain cells.*” And “*The vaccine uses a tiny section of the amyloid attached to an empty virus shell to trick the immune system into attacking and breaking up the deposits of protein clogging the brain.*” (I am sure that when your immune system is constantly kept up to standard it will be able to give the sticky deposits of protein a good go). It also refers to the early stages of the sickness. Scientists say that the vaccine is likely to be given to those in the early stages of Alzheimer’s to stop the disease from progressing.

“However, while the jab may stop the disease in its tracks, it is not expected to repair dead tissue and so is not a cure. Nevertheless, preventing the disease’s progression would have an enormous affect on sufferers’ life.”

This article confirms once again the statement that the clogging of protein in the brain causes Alzheimer’s. However, it does not address the question of what actually causes the clogging of the protein. The article also reveals that tests will still have to be developed capable of detecting the disease in its early stages to allow the drug to be given at the first opportunity.

According to the article, “existing drugs can delay the progress of the symptoms, but their effect wears off relatively quickly. In contrast the new vaccine may be able to hold the disease at bay indefinitely”. From experience I know that such drugs are very expensive and only the rich or persons with very good medical insurance can afford them. Herbal related nutriments are still relatively cheap and within the range of ordinary persons.

My way of reasoning is that we cannot afford to wait for tests that would identify the sickness in its early stages and thereafter to receive the vaccine or other medication to stop the process.

Those researchers are talking about six years from now. What are we as Alzheimer’s sufferers going to do in these six years? We simply cannot just sit back and wait for the inevitable outcome. The time factor is essential, and I say that while we wait for such tests and the vaccine to stop the sickness we will have to depend on the suggested symptoms and a medical opinion thereafter. Once we are sure that the sickness is in fact Alzheimer’s and not some other ailment with similar symptoms, you should actively begin to fight it.

“Exercise, diet, and social connection can reduce dementia risk by up to 40%.”

I realize that others may not be as dedicated and desperate as I am because they may not have seen the ultimate results of Alzheimer's as I have. I am therefore in a privileged position to really understand the extent of this ailment as I have seen it many times during the past seven years in the environment in which I lived up to now. It really scares the living daylight out of me and leaves me at times in the darkness of despair.

Most Alzheimer's sufferers are not even aware of the slow decay of the brain, which is starting to affect their memory retention. The tragedy is that Alzheimer's is in fact bad news and even those who start to worry about their memory ability, will not readily admit that something is now amiss in that function of their brains. They will tell themselves that they are overworked and that office stress causes that they forget important dates of meetings etc. The businessman may get away for a considerable time if he has a reliable secretary who can remind him of appointments.

Other persons, like me, may get away for some time by pretending they forget because they are absent minded. Nevertheless, once you have a closer look at those symptoms of the earlier stages and find that you are prone to a few of those symptoms, that is the time when one should really evaluate oneself. Alzheimer's is like a thief in the night that will enter your home when you think you are safe. The problem with Alzheimer's is that many times the person concerned does not realize that he has contracted the sickness.

By that time, it has advanced so far that the person does not understand what has happened to him/her. Another big problem is that although the children suspect what is happening to a parent, they are reluctant to speak about the ailment openly with that parent; mostly of course because they do not want to hurt feelings. Another reason is that it is in fact bad news, as I have stated above. And nobody wants to hear bad news.

Alzheimer's is bad news because by now it is generally known that Alzheimer's cannot be cured. Alzheimer's is worse news than cancer nowadays, because many cancers are in fact curable! Thus, the children really have no real option, but to live with the problem until there is no other way than to place the father or mother in a place of care.

In 1 Tim. 5:8, we read that a person who does not look after his own people has denied faith and is worse than a non-believer. These are harsh words, but it was meant to ensure that elderly persons are entitled to all necessary help and care by the children. This places a duty on the children of Alzheimer's sufferers to give their parents moral support in all aspects.

This duty also includes informing the sufferer about his ailment if he does not yet suspect it himself. It implies also that they should encourage and motivate that parent to attend support groups, if they are still in the earlier stages of the sickness. They should also encourage their parent to follow a program such as mine. Such a program is not comparable with medication if you cannot afford expensive medication. The ideal situation of course is to make use of those medicines that you can afford and at the same time carry on with my suggested program.

Since I have seriously and conscientiously started practicing my memory retention program, I have experienced a definite improvement in my memory retention capability. There are numerous times now when I say to myself that I have remembered where I have placed articles in the flat. Granted, the flat is small, but there are many hiding places. When I leave the flat to go to town, I now never forget to take the keys with me.

What is to be gained by using my program? I know that neurons die off because of Alzheimer's sickness and with it the memories which were locked up in the neurons.

It is so, but then I also know that new neurons are also created in older persons and that 15 other regions in the brain are available which can also accommodate memories. I am privileged to have been thrown a lifeline more than once and to have accumulated knowledge that I can share with others. Most important of all is to keep in mind that I am not a scientist and neither am I particularly clever. I am just an ordinary person with a mission in life. I need to get my story told so that other sufferers may also get the chance to delay the progress of Alzheimer's and its associated memory loss.

The following eleven statements and activities constitute the basis of my whole program:

- * One can 'recruit' parts of the brain to take over functions of that part of the brain which controls short-term memory;
- * Neurons die every day and are never replaced;
- * New neurons would have none of your memory;
- * Still, older people continue to generate new connections and keep old ones via mental activity;
- * 15 other regions in the brain are available which can also accommodate memories;
- * Visual recall and recall by way of association - association helps to trigger my memory;
- * It is of course vital that people remember what they hear and understand;
- * Repeating and association helps in the improvement of memory retention;
- * Planning the tomorrow. (The future and past processes show the same activities in the same brain areas, said the researchers in a statement. The researchers also found that you use the same areas in your brain to think back into the past).
- * Change to a more relaxed lifestyle, without too much stress and constant attempts to keep stress level within the stress threshold. (Always keep in mind that mental activity is vital to this program.)

- * Use of nutrient supplements to aid the immune system and to speed up the brain processes.

Using the aforementioned as a basis, my non-medical program is the following:

- (a) Keeping my mind active
- (b) Repetition and its various applications, such as visual recall and recall by way of association
- (c) Planning the tomorrow – including placing objects where I must find them after a few hours or the next day.
- (d) Lifestyle change
- (e) Mind games
- (f) Rest
- (g) Stress management including relaxing by way of listening to my favorite music.
- (h) Use of nutrient supplements to aid the immune system and to speed up the brain processes
- (i) Body exercises - in my case mild exercises because of my leg injury.
- (j) Adopt a pose for those times I meet persons I should recollect but fail to do so (this enables me not to worry about meeting such persons and so keeps my stress level down).
- (k) Work on maintaining a positive mindset
- (l) Don't bother to remember anything not really needed.

Repetition is the best method to feed facts, information, places and experiences into the brain, even for people who have no memory problems. I wish to repeat the following statement of mine: '*Whether it is retained in any of the 15 other regions in the brain which can accommodate memories or in new neurons is really not a big issue, as long as it is retained. The fact is that repetition works for me in its various forms of applications.*'

"Keeping the mind active is just as important as keeping the body strong."

When I realize that I have lost certain memories along the road, memories I really need, I decide to restore them again in my memory. This I do via my program of repetition and if need be, with various other tools such as visual and future references. Other information which I can do without, because it is not important, I simply let be until it does become needed. I am only sure that I have retained certain information when I have already needed it several times and was able to recall it. The same of course also applies to new information.

It is not as involved as it may sound. Any person who wishes to follow my program needs also to read the contents of my original guidebook. I would say that the secret of my program is the use of logic, determination and of course repetition. The qualification to partake in it is simply that you should be able to understand the program. Unfortunately, it will not be possible to take part in such a program once the second (middle) phase of Alzheimer's sickness has set in. The longer you keep an active mind and follow my repetition program, the longer you will thwart and delay the second phase of the sickness.

It is now clear to me, more than ever, that I have here a solution for replacement of memories. There are however many questions that need to be answered. At what stage does the brain for example transfer short-term memories to the part of the brain which stores the long-term memory? I cannot really see how research can determine such a process. Thus, I have decided to accept that it occurs automatically and that that stage, of itself, is not really important. I am sure that the inner workings of the brain must be baffling to scientist and professional researchers as well.

My application of repetition is not an easy task. I still cannot claim that this method will work for all persons suffering from AD. In theory it should work, provided as I have stated before that the individual has clear moments for at least the day.

This does not imply that the memories of that particular day will still all be clear the next day. The problem here being that you could not be expected to repeat every occurrence or thought of that day for up to ten times for example. This would probably drive any person around the bend. What I have been doing, is to repeat that which I need to remember several times until I remember it clearly. I still have blank spots where I forget what I should have been able to remember. In those cases, I make a point of repeating the occurrence or name every now and again. To practice this method will also require determination from the AD sufferer. After a while it should become second nature.

My program gives myself and others the opportunity to delay the ultimate with perhaps many more reasonably happy years. I repeat that I cannot lay claim that my program will work for everybody, because what works for me may not work for someone who does not understand it or does not have the necessary will and drive to carry it out.

I believe in my program simply because I am experiencing that it in fact does improve my short-term memory. Apart from that, it has also restored my confidence in my capabilities. My Program does not include drugs to delay the progress of the symptoms. If I could afford them, I may have been tempted to try them.

In my fight against the Alzheimer's sickness there was some luck involved in that without realizing it, I was from the outset already busy with the repetition method to retain memories by keeping my brain active due to my research and reading habits.

It is extremely important that the person who is in the early stages of the sickness must realize that he/she is in fact experiencing the early stages of Alzheimer's sickness. Therefore, such person should have at least some basic knowledge about the sickness.

More articles on this matter should be seen in newspapers and magazines. Support groups should actively campaign to make the public more aware of this menace in society.

In my correspondence with *Dr. Frieda Van Rensburg*, a neurologist from *George*, she pointed out that memory loss can also be caused by concentration problems, anxiety and depression. I do recall that in my writing somewhere in this document I did mention that whenever I experience severe stress I seem to forget more easily. I also find that traumatic experiences also cause forgetfulness in my case. But as I have stated before, I think it is the way of the mind to protect one from unnecessary grief and more stress.

According to the Alzheimer's South Africa pamphlet issued after April 2007 the most common types of **Dementia in South Africa** are the following:

- * Alzheimer's
- * Vascular /multi infarction dementia
- * Alcohol dementia
- * Post-traumatic dementia
- * HIV/Aids –related dementia.

Adding to this list I now also include those supplied by the neurologist mentioned above.

According to the above-mentioned neurologist, memory loss can thus be experienced by the causes she mentioned. My opinion is that except for HIV/Aids dementia, many of the other forms of dementia can be either cured with medicine or healed with psychological counseling. In those cases, memory loss may only be temporary. It can also be safely assumed that memory loss can be caused by a combination of Alzheimer's dementia and any one of the mentioned dementias, for example small strokes. That of course would be extremely bad luck.

The Alzheimer's newsletter mentions that Dementia, which is the result of small strokes, will be noticeable more or less immediately as against Alzheimer's which manifests more gradually. Dr. Van Rensburg also stated in her letter that '*diffuse impairment*' can also occur. In this case such impairment could of course also involve other parts of the brain and long-term memory. Long-term memory loss may then affect your ability to have a clear mind and to think coherently. This will naturally result in an inability to restore and retain memories since the program cannot be successfully followed.

As far as Dementia and memory loss because of alcoholism is concerned the same rule as is the case with Alzheimer's should of course apply when it comes to restoring and retaining memories. The proviso is that the person should forthwith abstain from using and abusing any form of alcohol or drugs and stop smoking as well.

By partaking in a program such as mine, one buys time and at the same time you enable yourself to stay clear of mind. When you have a clear mind, you can reason in a logical way and therefore able to know what is going on around you. Thus, you will be able to identify the early stages of the sickness at the time when you are in fact experiencing it.

In the Afrikaans magazine, '*Huisgenoot*' of 16 August 2007 page 27, I read an interesting short note about keeping your brain young and I quote: "*It is never too late to start living healthily, according to a recent American investigation in which more than 16,000 persons between 45 and 64 years of age participated. It was found that if you eat a lot of fresh fruit and vegetables and exercise daily, your chance to get Dementia decreases with 40% and heart diseases with 35%.*"

I have personally, neglected to give attention to the importance of exercise probably because of my injury which has meant that I cannot effectively exercise.

However, I need to emphasize that exercise is very important, even if I do suggest it only at this stage of this book. It is suggested that those persons who suffer from Alzheimer's in the first phases should take up a hobby or sport which they are still capable of enjoying at their age. During my deliveries at the **Mossel Bay Golf Club** I noticed many men and some women who are in their fifties, sixties and over. I am sure that they get quite a lot of exercise and fresh air during their practices and play.

Apart from that, they experience social interaction with other players in a relaxing atmosphere which can cancel the stress factor. This also applies to tennis and other activities such as bowls.

All the sources I consulted on the influence of stress on the human mind agree that stress is a major contributor in the destroying of brain neurons. Taking all the information we have into consideration I thought of the adverse effect stress must have on my own nervous system. I have been subjected to so much stress (sometimes to severe stress for long periods) that it must have rubbed off and injured memory brain cells in my case. It is so that we as humans do need stress to exist. We need some stress to be able to perform and to exist in the various environments where we live. It is only severe stress which carries continuously that causes harm. The secret is to be able to manage stress so that it does not reach the threshold of what the brain can safely handle, taking into consideration the Cortisol which is bombarding the brain during extreme stress.

I am sure many people with Alzheimer's or other memory loss problems could make use of my program and even improve on it.

What I have been doing is to establish a program that works for me. Because it is not a medical program there is no reason whatsoever why it should not work for others. At present I am satisfied that I am coping rather well and that the program enables me to continue to lead a '*reasonably normal*' life. Many people do not even realize that I do have a memory loss problem at all.

Something that has been bothering me lately is that I have doubts whether everybody who is diagnosed with Alzheimer's does in fact have the ailment. Through my research I have established that there are quite a few other sicknesses and health conditions which in fact can cause memory loss and other symptoms very similar to Alzheimer's.

The point I am trying to make here is that memory loss can be caused by other ailments and that such other ailments can be either cured or at least made tolerable. I did say previously that a person may have Alzheimer's and at the same time one or more of the other sicknesses.

During these past weeks I have read so much about the influence of stress on the brain that I can conclusively state that I am satisfied that I was on the right track all along. I also found information that it was proven in experiments with mice that stress not only kills off brain cells, but it also hampers the brain in its function to manufacture new neurons - and that such neurons that have been manufactured during extreme stress do not survive long either.

I do not think that I have over-emphasized the importance of stress management and would suggest that those future readers of my story should concentrate on the elimination of too many stress factors in life. I constantly try to bring down my stress level and do not tackle any tasks that would put too much stress on my system.

I do not think that I have over-emphasized the importance of stress management and would suggest that those future readers of my story should concentrate on the elimination of too many stress factors in life. I constantly try to bring down my stress level and do not tackle any tasks that would put too much stress on my system. I no longer have that urgency which can be compared to the example of the salmon swimming up waterfalls to reach their ultimate destination. When I think back to a year ago, I can hardly believe that I am the same person. Admittedly, there also are many vague spots in my memory of this past year. I still forget yesterdays- especially when I do not need those memories. It does not make me frantic anymore.

At this stage I think it is important to try to paint a picture of where I stand now in comparison with the person who had little hope for the future a few years ago. The best way I can do it is to describe a day in my life, and I may as well take today as an example. Yesterday I planned today's program and that I would in fact type the last chapter in my book. Today happens to be the very first day of January of 2008. Christmas has gone into the past like a dream. I am confident that I shall remember this Christmas. The only requirement is that I think about it every now and again and the memory thereof will automatically be transferred to my long-term memory. I now live by certain rules which are prescribed in my program.

It is of course not possible to follow all the rules of my program every day. The program is there to be used of course, but one can make use of the various requirements of the program as it is needed. However, it is sure that every day you will use a number of these prescription rules. This morning when I woke up, I remembered my plans for today without even having to think twice. I walked around in our flat and knew exactly where I had placed certain objects.

I place my crutches in a different-out of view place every time. I had no problem finding it: I had no problem in finding my attaché case although I had deliberately placed it next to my bed (where I never place it); I remembered my appointments for the day, and I shall be able to contact customers who are looking for accommodation etc.

There are also some rules I apply where I place things at times in the same place every time. I do this not to overdo my program of placing objects in different places. These are rules that 'normal' persons should also apply. Such people also forget at times, especially if their minds are otherwise occupied.

What else can I say? I have not cured my memory loss through my program, but I can safely and honestly say that I have experienced remarkable progress. I now know how to replace important memories. I still forget faces, but it does not cause me anxiety anymore because I know how to cope with it. I still forget where I have placed an object if I do not make a point of remembering the place and seeing the place in my mind's eye. I lead a much better organized life. I even have ambitions for further research and possibility of taking a one-year course in microbiology. To the outside world I am a perfectly normal 72-year-old man.

I have discovered the value and absolute necessity of correct nutrient supplements. I have learned that the use of nutrient supplements can in effect assist in the manufacturing of new brain neurons.

What more do I really need in life? Like all people with driving an ambition I am not satisfied. Where I initially gave myself only a few cognitive years, I now have extended that goal to at least another 10 years

Most satisfying for me is the thought that my research and writing will assist many people with Alzheimer's in the initial phases and give them a new lease in life. The same applies of course to people with memory loss due to the ageing process. I ended my book on the 28th day of December 2010 and thought that I have really said enough.

However, I think I owe it to my readers to add the following:
Firstly, to say that I am still alive... and of course to also mention my progress as well as the regression I have experienced in memory retention.

Update (August 2025)

John du Preez is still with us today. At 93, he lives with his granddaughter in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. Though now wheelchair-bound, he retains nearly 80% of his cognitive faculties and continues to participate in both family life and social settings.

His presence is a daily reminder that even in the face of Alzheimer's, dignity, humor, and connection endure.

I cannot really and honestly say that I have had a good year. I think I should describe it as a year of mixed fortunes. Thus, I shall begin by mixing the good and the bad in my short narrative. I was lucky enough to once again share in the contract to do the translation for our local authority here in Mossel Bay. This keeps me busy and helps to keep my mind active.

Now for some not-so-good happenings. Some time ago I fell down the steps, 13 of them at the flats where we were staying. Concussed- and was lucky to get away with only one wound to my head and some vertebrae that was probably dislodged more than they were. Resulting that my legs are becoming more useless. The good news is that the fall did probably not result in brain damage as I seem to still be able to rationalize and think reasonably well enough to carry on monitoring my health situation.

Some more bad news is that my health seems to have taken a turn for the worse. On the 13th of November (2009) last year I was working at my computer. It was about 3 pm and I woke up in hospital the next morning about 14 hours later. A stroke, the doctors said. My common sense told me that it could not have been a stroke, because I got out of that bed, again without brain damage or any further impairment of my already not-so-good physical body. I had a session with a specialist who said that she was rather of the opinion that I suffered a seizure because of an epilepsy attack.

I must face many day-to-day frustrations. Although I fight it, I undergo periods of depression where I tell myself '*I should throw in the towel-like a good boxer who has lost his touch*'. Then again, I go through times where I am proud of my achievements, such as doing very important history-making translations for our Municipality. I experience that extra satisfaction that what I am now doing is part of building one of the best infrastructures in the Cape Province, if not in the entire country. I am part of that and proud of the fact that enough confidence exists in my capabilities. As to the memory-loss part I need to once again refer to the following:

Planning the tomorrow. (The future and past processes show the same activities in the same brain areas, said the researchers in a statement. The researchers also found that you use the same areas in your brain to think back into the past). The above advice still works for me.

I still place my crutches in a different-out of view place every time. I have normally no problem in finding it: I have no problem in finding anything which is important to my day-to-day existence. I would place something very deliberately in a place where I do not normally place it.

I shall mostly be able to find that article without any problem, the same day or a day or two after that, I think the secret to this is in the words ‘planning tomorrow’. That is planning. Never mind if it is for a day or just a few hours. It does, however, not work if I get too much confidence, then I would place an object somewhere and simply not take note of where I have placed it. I have found that this is a problem that even ‘normal’ persons experience when they do not concentrate on what they are doing.

However, I still believe that one should not place unnecessary burdens on memory. There are certain rules that any person should apply more so people with a certain degree of short-time memory loss. Thus, many objects I handle I normally put in a fixed place. That can of course also cause certain frustrations if those people sharing your home simply use such objects and after using them, place it at random anywhere. Then you look for it and start thinking that you in fact did use it and that it was you who replaced it. To me this causes a considerable degree of frustration and unnecessary stress.

How much more to a person who cannot rationalize that someone else could be the culprit? I then of course nagged like an old lady with wet pants. I think that in my house the family accepts my overreaction to such matters. Then of course I have become paranoid about anything just lying around and not in place. I make these statements because I want to make relatives aware that they should allow some leeway for paranoid types of thinking and behavior.

I am sure that my memory has lately faded, especially where I do not comply with my own rule of making a note of a happening and planning. I found that lately I forget what I have had for dinner the previous night if I did not make a mental note to remember. This distressed me a great deal until I found a very simple solution.

I simply ask my wife before she goes off to work! Having an understanding wife in this regard is lucky. She tells me what we ate and most times I then remember. This then is no cause of stress for me anymore. The same applies to other matters I forget. Apart from that there is no real difference in my day-to-day life. As I sit here, I can still think coherently and plan ahead.

Having said that I think it is time that I really booked off... I shall now continue to do some more research, especially on essential sugar theory. I had a story to tell, and I have done just that.
God Bless.

I quote again from the book: When I grow Too Old to Dream: *"It is a definite need for those who suffer from one or other form of dementia to retain their dignity, respect and self-image."*

By following my program, I was able to build up my own confidence, self-image and self-respect. By giving others in the early phases of the disease the opportunity to follow the program they would also have the chance to retain their dignity, confidence and self-image.

I rest my case and pray that my contribution towards fighting this terrible disease can in some way make the journey of fellow sufferers a journey of hope and no longer one of despair.

Lifestyle and Prevention

Research in 2025 highlights the importance of a brain-healthy lifestyle: Regular physical activity (walking, swimming, cycling). A Mediterranean-style diet rich in olive oil, nuts, and leafy greens. Cognitive stimulation through reading, music, and puzzles. Strong social connections to reduce isolation. Studies suggest these habits may reduce dementia risk by up to 40%.

SUMMARY

I shall continue with my diary and still record information which can be useful to us. I will continue with my mind games and my use of repetition to build up my memory capacities. I shall continue with activities to keep my mind active, because I believe that therein lays the secret of having a clear and coherent mind despite lack of short-term memory. The use of repetition works for me and even better if I make use of visual and spatial memories stored in the memories of the past which serve as reference framework.

For me, future planning works the best. If it works for me, I see no reason why it will not work for other Alzheimer's sufferers in the first stages provided of course that such persons are clear in their minds and can think coherently. You need not be very educated to understand the theory and to be able to practise it. What is needed is the determination to carry on with the experiment and to each day of one's life wake up with the resolve that this is one more day in the rest of our life.

We will have many setbacks, but each setback means a challenge and each rectification of a setback is a victory over Alzheimer's disease. We are all products of the past, especially if you are an Alzheimer's sufferer. 'Life is like a tunnel. When you enter it from one side you do not know what you may encounter when you reach the other side.' In our case we dare not sit back and hope. We need to grab at all opportunities, even at times when it may appear as if we are grabbing at straws.

Although I have a wife, son and family, and some friends here in Mossel Bay, I have in some way been a lonely person since starting my research.

Lonely because I cannot really discuss my theories and my fears with any of them because I know they would not understand. I cannot even discuss my successes with them. I would love to see the day when Alzheimer's sufferers in the early stages would also start to attend support groups and start to believe that all is not lost for them. I would also love to see the day when the mystic and bad connotation regarding the AD does not exist anymore.

I would like to once again quote from the Cape Times of May 29, 2007: *"It is sad and unjust that human beings should suffer because of ignorance and false beliefs about a medical condition. This unnecessarily magnifies the difficulties encountered by such people in everyday life."*

Most Alzheimer's sufferers are elderly people and for their benefit I need to quote the following remarks regarding aging from the book: **The COMPLETE MANUAL OF FITNESS AND WELL-BEING; Readers Digest. 1990. p 278.** *"Most important of all is to realize that mental and physical stimulation are both essential and possible. Whatever your age, it is never too late to learn something new".* Amongst its many subjects the book gives special attention to the elderly and how to grow old gracefully. To those Alzheimer's sufferers who still have an active mind the book can provide valuable information.

I sincerely believe in what I am doing and do not think anymore that I am grabbing at straws in my desperation to avoid what has seemed unavoidable. I am satisfied that I have found a way, without medication, to delay the progression of the sickness and to add useful time to my life. There is a piece from a poem, which I have quoted to myself many a day since starting with this program. It goes as far back to when I was still at school.

I think it was from a poem by *Thomas Carlyle*: “*So here has been dawning another blue day, think will thou let it slip useless away?*”

This should be a sentence of motivation for all who decide to take up the struggle against Alzheimer’s disease.

LIVE EVERY DAY FOR THAT DAY

EPILOGUE

This morning, I sat in my office, looking out of my window and watched a fishing boat slowly making its way through the tranquil waters of the Bay harbor. In the background, the sun was creeping into view behind the majestic Outeniqua Mountains. I thought '*what a pleasure to be alive and to be able to fully appreciate what you see around you*'.

This is a far cry from the despondent and pessimistic person I was when I started this research. As is the case with many epilogues, my story should also have a happily-ever-after ending. In my case I could very well say that my struggle to regain my memory was not in vain. Where I could not even remember the names of my grandchildren three years ago, I now have a memory that is probably near too normal, but I need to constantly live in terms of the program I have designed. I have reached a blessed 93 years.

Presently I live with my granddaughter, Mariska and her family. I am on no medication. Healthy as can be, except my eyes got damaged during eye surgery (which was supposed to make my sight better) now I cannot read anymore, my research came to a halt.

Apart from the discoveries I have made regarding supplements the body needs, I am humbly proud of the program I have put together. I am positive that the program is a solution for persons with severe memory loss. I am also proud to know that I have searched and found many facts, previously unknown to myself and to fellow laymen, about the human machine, the brain and mind. In my case working the program has in fact now become an automatic process, where I subconsciously apply the rules.

Yes, I take my Vitamins and Minerals faithfully every day. To me my program opened the door to retaining a clear and active mind. The program also strengthened my conviction that the body can heal itself, given the needed nutrients supplements, healthy living and limited stress. Unfortunately, the program cannot heal broken bones.



THE END

Summary and Reflections

John's program is founded on logic, determination, and repetition. While not a cure, it offers hope and practical strategies for those in the early stages of Alzheimer's. The approach is accessible to anyone willing to try, provided they remain clear of mind.

Throughout setbacks and successes, John has found satisfaction in helping himself and others. He stresses the importance of dignity, respect, and self-image for patients, and encourages family members to be supportive and proactive.

Brain Training and Memory Retention

Drawing on research and personal experience, John learned about the brain's flexibility. Books by *Robert Winston* and *Joel Swerlow* revealed that mental activity can help older people generate new neural connections. John found that repetition and association were key to memory retention.

Through daily activities—reading, translation work, and “*mind games*” - he discovered the value of repetition in storing memories. Visualization, planning, and associating new information with familiar concepts all contributed to improved recall.

Lifestyle and Stress Management

John's story includes reflections on past stresses, personal guilt, and the importance of forgiveness and closure. He describes how chronic stress can harm memory, and advocates for a calm environment, positive mindset, and stress reduction.

Social engagement, hobbies, and exercise are also emphasized as ways to maintain mental and physical health. Nutritional supplements, particularly vitamins B6, B9, and B12, and minerals, are recommended to support brain function, though always with professional advice.

Practical Techniques

John outlines several practical techniques for memory retention:

Keeping the mind active through reading and work

Using repetition to store and recall memories

Employing visualization and association

Maintaining a diary to track progress

Planning in advance for daily tasks

Managing stress and maintaining a healthy lifestyle

Seeking support from groups and professionals

Accepting help and being open with family

Twenty Golden Rules for Living with Alzheimer's

Stay mentally active

Practice repetition and visualization

Reduce stress

Research and record progress

Use recommended supplements

Believe in the program

Prioritize the approach

Maintain hope for medical advances

Connect with support groups

Visit aged care facilities

Be open with family and friends

Control temper

Start a hobby

Stay active but avoid fatigue

Use notes and diaries

Laugh and find humor

Adopt coping strategies for social situations

Value family relationships

Take pride in normalcy

Cultivate a positive mindset

Conclusion

John's journey is a testament to the power of determination, adaptation, and hope. His story offers guidance for others navigating Alzheimer's, emphasizing that with the right approach, it is possible to preserve dignity, confidence, and meaningful connections.

Disclaimer

This publication is general in nature and not a substitute for professional advice. Readers should seek medical guidance before making decisions based on its contents.

References

Selected texts and publications referenced throughout the document, including works by **Robert Winston**, **Rita Carter**, medical journals, magazines, and personal correspondence.

A Poem about Alzheimer's

Do not ask me to remember.
Don't try to make me understand.
Let me rest and know you're with me.
Kiss my cheek and hold my hand.

I'm confused beyond your concept.
I am sad and sick and lost.
All I know is that I need you
To be with me at all cost.

Do not lose you patience with me.
Do not scold or curse or cry.
I can't help the way I'm acting,
Can't be different 'though I try.

Just remember that I need you,
That the best of me is gone.
Please don't fail to stand beside me,
Love me 'till my life is done.

- Unknown

