

June 9, 2018 began as a routine day for 87-year-old Ervin Stewart. His morning shower seemed to be taking longer than usual, so his wife checked on him. She found him face down in the bathtub, his body covering the drain, almost drowning him. Ervin couldn't speak, walk or swallow. In addition, the left side of his face drooped, he couldn't see clearly from his left eye and he was confused.

Ervin was rushed to Cleveland Clinic Akron General and diagnosed with a stroke. Ten days later, he stabilized and was ready for the next phase of his recovery. Doctors and his family chose Cleveland Clinic Rehabilitation Hospital, Edwin Shaw, an inpatient rehabilitation hospital that specializes in helping stroke patients recover.

Ervin arrived weak, unable to move or eat without assistance. He had trouble feeling, thinking and regulating his emotions. According to his daughter, Ervin appeared sad and anxious. He didn't like being left alone, leaving her with, "...no vision of a recovery for my dad."

Ervin's care team shifted into gear, evaluating him and tailoring a treatment plan to his needs.

Occupational therapy swung into action and worked on cognitive issues. They helped Ervin keep a memory journal, which allowed him to recall daily activities and document progress over time. Speech language therapy led him through exercises to strengthen

muscles in his mouth and throat. This improved swallowing and speech difficulties. One of Ervin's big milestones was drinking "real" water without a thickener for the first time since his stroke.

Concurrently, physical therapy worked with Ervin to improve leg strength, endurance and balance with body weight support and a lot of positive encouragement. Ervin began doing a minimum of 10 minutes on a stationary bike to help prime his leg muscles. Then, therapists helped him into an overhead harness system that bore much of Ervin's body weight. Slowly, therapists allowed Ervin's legs and hips to bear the weight, improving his strength.

Over time, with three hours of therapy each day, Ervin went from not being able to walk on his own to walking over 500 feet his last day in therapy — and climbing a full flight of stairs.



On the day he left, Ervin was mobile and able to bathe, dress and handle daily living activities on his own. Most importantly, he was confident that he could continue the home training program his therapists provided. Ervin, equipped with a rolling walker, headed for home with the support of his wife and son.

One year later, Ervin returned to Edwin Shaw for a visit. He regained almost full function of his left side and is able to enjoy much of the life he lived before the stroke. He's pain-free, and back to waxing his

three cars, including his beloved '68 Marlin. Ervin loves eating "real food" at restaurants with his daughter and taking walks around the family pond with his son. He is looking forward to planting a vegetable garden soon. Ervin says he "loves people, life and wouldn't change a thing."

As Ervin was ready to leave, he eagerly shook the hands of his care team, wowing them with his strong grip.