

THE WESTERN SUBURBS are rich with authors. To give you a sampling of what your neighbors are writing about, we've queried them about their latest books. Here are their answers:

Writing a memoir before the memories fade away

By Peter Zheutlin



WHEN DR. TOM GRABOYS CALLED ME IN THE SPRING OF 2006 to ask if I would be interested in working with him on a book, I was eager to help. I had known Tom for more than 20 years. I had enormous respect for him: He was, among other things, my father's cardiologist and a member of the "cardiology dream team" assembled by the Boston Celtics to evaluate Reggie Lewis after he collapsed during an NBA playoff game in 1993. He was a clinical professor at Harvard Medical School. Telegenic and articulate, he was frequently invited by network shows such as *Nightline* and *The Today Show* to talk about heart health. He was a marathon runner, a tennis player, and modest to a fault. I was rather in awe of him.

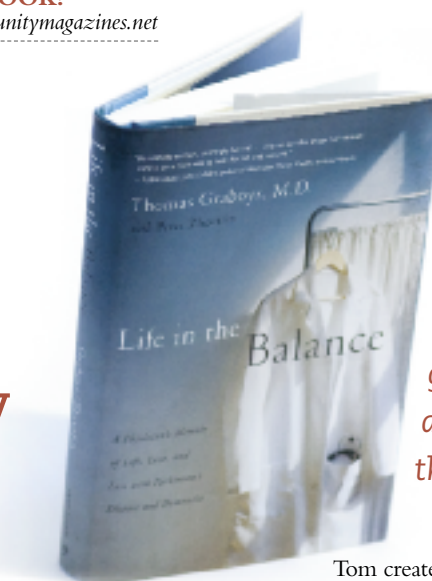
But the Tom Graboys who called me in 2006 was not, to use his own words, the "old Tom" I had known since 1985. Though I knew that Tom had been diagnosed in 2004 with Parkinson's disease, I wasn't fully prepared for the "new Tom" I met shortly after he phoned. His lithe, athletic frame was now stooped. He shuffled when he walked, and his hands trembled. His face betrayed a certain discombobulation. But, most notably, his ability to communicate clearly, logically, and quickly had largely deserted him.

Tom has Lewy body dementia, a syndrome that afflicts a third of Parkinson's patients. The symptoms are similar to those of Alzheimer's disease, and it is progressive. Tom was eager to tell his story, to make it public, because he thought it might prove helpful to others facing their own medical struggles, whether as patient or caregiver. And he wanted to capture his experience on paper quickly. He didn't know how much longer he would be able to tell his story.

I was daunted by the prospect of writing with Tom. Would I be able to capture his experience with dementia, especially given its impact on his ability to articulate his thoughts? Would Tom—whose mind sometimes seems to suddenly shut down—be up to spending a year or so working on a book? Or might the disease overtake our efforts?

On the other hand, I knew I had been given a rare opportunity. Tom was an unusually gifted clinician and an unusually compassionate doctor who believed the most important diagnostic tools at his disposal were his ears; he listened, and his patients loved him for it. In turn, Tom valued each patient's trust as a gift, one that offered him a window into the human condition. And that was what Tom was offering me: the opportunity to view his life and how it had been rent by Parkinson's.

Over the course of a year, Tom and I met twice a week at his home in Chestnut Hill. He took me on an intimate tour of his life and his mind. For example, the book tells the toll the illness has taken on his sex life. This may be too much for some, but Tom was intent on writing as brutally honest an



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account as possible. As a physician, Tom created an atmosphere in which patients felt safe disclosing their most personal concerns. He understood that many of them were relieved to find a physician with whom they could talk comfortably about sex. Tom was so open with me that I felt no subject was too dark or too taboo to explore.

Such is the nature of his illness, that there were times when I almost thought the "old Tom" was sitting across from me, only to have the metaphorical switch Tom often spoke about, flick off. There were hours when I was unsure whether I had gathered any information that would be of use in the book, and times when I felt completely lost as Tom struggled to keep his train of thought on the rails. Yet, days or weeks later, when I would go over the notes, I was often surprised by what I found. Even in the most disjointed conversations, I found threads that could be stitched together quite logically.



Dr. Thomas Graboys

For example, one day Tom told the story of a patient who had also become a close friend, Randolph "Ry" Ryan, a former *Boston Globe* editor. The story was about events Tom hadn't thought about for a couple of years. While Tom was away over a New Year's holiday, Ryan had died of heart complications. When Tom returned home, he found a phone message from Ryan wishing him a happy holiday and indicating that he planned to see him about some chest discomfort. I wasn't sure what prompted Tom to tell me this, nor was he.

But when I looked over my notes days later, I spotted something else Tom had said: He had asked himself rhetorically whether he might have done anything to prevent his Parkinson's. I realized then that when Tom was talking about Ryan, he was also talking about himself. He had anguished over whether he could have saved his patient; now, in the swirl of his illness, he wondered whether he could have saved himself. Perhaps by osmosis I was beginning to think, in some subtle way, as Tom did, and that allowed me to see a picture where before I saw only fragments.

Tom was forced to retire from medicine, a calling that he loved, in 2005, and the book became a focal point of his life. Writing it was an extension of his work as a doctor. He proved to himself that despite what he had lost, he could still share abundant knowledge and wisdom. That he had the determination and desire to bare his soul, and the most painful details of his life, is more than remarkable. It is a gift. ■

Peter Zheutlin is the co-author, with Dr. Thomas Graboys, of *Life in the Balance: A Physician's Memoir of Life, Love and Loss with Parkinson's Disease and Dementia* (Union Square Press, 2008), and the author of *Around the World on Two Wheels: Annie Londonderry's Extraordinary Ride* (Citadel Press, 2007).

**Mothers Need Time-Outs, Too:
It's Good to Be a Little Selfish—
It Actually Makes You a Better Mother**
(McGraw-Hill, 2008)



AUTHORS: Susan Callahan of Wellesley, Anne Nolen of Dover, and Katrin Schumann of Dedham

WHAT IT'S ABOUT: We interviewed more than 500 women in the United States and abroad to give voice to regular moms. Our book features real-life stories and tips on how moms have let go of self-imposed, impossibly high standards in order to reconnect with themselves and loved ones.

EXCERPT: Come again—*selfish*? While most of the hundreds of women we spoke with cringed at the word *selfish*—because more than anything, they aspire to be *selfless*—each and every one agreed that she felt better and did a better all-around job when her own needs were being met. . . . By sacrificing our own needs, we end up resentful and exhausted. It may sound crazy at first, but if women started paying more attention to themselves instead of doing everything for everyone else, everyone would be better off.

Yes, it means taking quiet time *every day*. It means knowing yourself and determining your priorities. It even means sometimes putting yourself and your desires *before* those of the children. In some ways that seems radical; yet it's simple and ultimately, beneficial to all.

WHAT INSPIRED YOU? Our own lives as mothers—working in and outside the home—felt so stressful and out of control, and we wondered, *does it really have to be so hard?* What was making us feel so exhausted and invisible?

WHAT SURPRISED YOU MOST IN YOUR RESEARCH? How universal the problem of guilt is—it's the main reason mothers tend to put themselves last.

WEB SITE:
[www.moms
timeouts.com](http://www.moms
timeouts.com)



**The Brontës: Remarkable Children
of the Moors in their Everyday World**
(Self-published, xlibris.com)



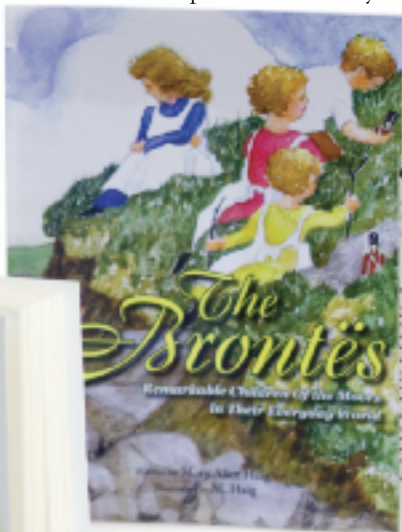
AUTHOR AND ILLUSTRATOR: Mary Alice Haigh of Wellesley

WHAT IT'S ABOUT: August 1826, a typical day in the lives of the four Brontë children in Yorkshire, England. They lived in a parsonage with an exceptional father, Reverend Patrick Brontë. Realizing his children were extremely bright, he home-schooled them to the equivalent of a college education. The biographical details woven in the story will interest children as they grow up and read the novels of Charlotte, Emily, and Anne. Recommended for ages 8-12.

EXCERPT: Emily paused in her play to look down over the valley and her beloved moors. She wondered about the lonely farmhouse and the sheep grazing on the greenest of grass. Almost out of sight—in a corner, where stonewall met stonewall, a family of gypsies lived in their colorfully painted caravan. Emily's mind wandered as she drifted from the battlefield, and into a story of her own. She never told anyone about the story she just invented about the gypsies; and—and, it was private.

WHAT INSPIRED YOU? After attending the Massachusetts College of Art, I worked as a draftsman on developing radar at MIT during WWII. Next, I sailed to England with the Royal Navy as a war bride, and drew steam and diesel locomotives in a Dickens-like drafting room. While riding on the pillion of a motorcycle, I discovered the magi-

cal little town of Haworth that was home to the Brontë family.



**Paths to Power: How Insiders
and Outsiders Shaped American
Business Leadership**

(Harvard Business School Press, 2007)



AUTHOR: Anthony J. Mayo of Needham (co-authors Laura G. Singleton and Nitin Nohria)

WHAT IT'S ABOUT: We explore how seven demographic factors—birthplace, nationality, religion, education, class, gender, and race—have shaped the path to the CEO position. We are particularly interested in how each factor opened and closed doors to access, and when and why certain factors gained or lost significance over the 20th century.

EXCERPT: *The following contrasts James Stillman, who headed National City Bank around 1900, and Sandy Weill, who held the same post at its successor, Citigroup, a century later.*

Although a New Yorker himself, [Weill] had no legacy connecting him to the local business elite. In fact, Weill learned through numerous rejections from Wall Street firms that the more prestigious companies were largely averse to hiring Jews. Or, if a company did hire Jews, it discriminated against Eastern European Jews like Weill. . . . Weill finally found his first job in 1955 as a messenger to Bear Stearns, a second-tier Wall Street brokerage at the time.

James Stillman, who was Episcopalian, encountered no difficulties with religious prejudice, of course. He . . . had his first job at sixteen in his father's cotton business, an enterprise prominent enough that the senior Stillman sat on several boards of directors, including that of National City Bank. With his father in failing health, James was granted power of attorney and headed up the family's business interests by age twenty-two. He grew close to Moses Taylor, then president of National City Bank, who became a key professional mentor.

WHAT INSPIRED YOU? I was very interested in learning whether American business is really now open to all.

PREVIOUS BOOK:

In Their Time: The Greatest Business Leaders of the 20th Century (HBS Press, 2005)

WEB SITE: www.hbs.edu/leadership

