

THE WAITING ROOM



Dark Role, Bright Lights

To research his latest movie role, **Donald Sutherland** didn't have to go beyond his own doorstep. The memories of his father's struggle with Parkinson's disease and his mother's dementia would give him just what he needed to play a Parkinson's sufferer with dementia.

For all the Parkinson's literature and videotapes he studied, it was the wealth of personal experience that enabled the 72-year-old actor to give what critics are praising as a mischievously heartbreaking performance in the just-released *Aurora Borealis*.

"Suddenly the guy took me over," Sutherland says of his character, Ronald Shorter, who feels his Parkinson's and dementia have made him a burden to his wife at the same time he's reestablishing

a relationship with his grandson. "It was about saying goodbye to someone you love and taking care of the physical shell that had enclosed that person who you had loved. It was about generational differences and love."

Witnessing Ronald's long, painful slide into dementia, the grandson matures from a 25-year-old slacker in the coming-of-age film. Their growing connection makes him the only person who believes his grandfather's improbable claim of seeing the northern lights known as "aurora borealis."

At the time he took the role, Sutherland was "terribly, terribly, terribly depressed," lower than he's ever been in his life. "But the thing about playing Ronald," he muses, "is I came out of it with no depression."

The Bionic Woman

Since becoming the first woman (and second person) ever fitted with a bionic arm, **Claudia Mitchell** can do things most of us take for granted. "I can open a spaghetti jar and hold it up at an angle and use the spoon to empty it out," she says. "Small things like that may seem trivial to a two-armed person, but it is very exciting to me."

Mitchell, 26, lost her left arm in a 2004 motorcycle accident. Since the brain can detect the presence of an amputated limb, she was fitted last year with a 10-pound prosthesis controlled by her own thoughts. Nerves in her shoulder that once sent signals to the amputated arm were surgically rerouted to healthy muscle on her chest. Sensors on the robotic arm detect these nerve signals, which then instruct the arm how to move.

"Before the surgery, I doubted that I would ever be able to get my life back," Mitchell says.

A former Marine officer who served in Kuwait and now mentors fellow veterans, she hopes the technology will help amputees returning from war.





Still the Leader of the Bandstand

At age 76, “America’s Oldest Teenager” knows a thing or two about time being of the essence on television. So when the producers of the Emmy Awards asked him to “walk out” onstage for a special tribute, **Dick Clark** didn’t miss a beat. “I’ve just begun to learn to walk again,” he told them in mock protest, “and the show might run a little long.”

In just his second TV appearance since suffering a stroke in December 2004, Clark was already seated on a stool behind a podium when this man who needs no introduction was introduced. Embarrassed by the warm standing ovation from the Emmy audience, Clark faked a grimace and tapped his wristwatch. “Please, sit down,” he said. “Please, the producer will have a fit. You’ve got to sit down.”

Through a jovial yet touching tribute, Clark spoke with a slur but embellished his appearance by gesturing with his arms and hands. After video clips chronicling Clark’s decades as host of “American Bandstand,” Barry Manilow moved him to tears with a rendition of the show’s famous theme song.

“Before I had my stroke,” Clark told millions of Emmy viewers, “I was thinking about all of the things I’ve been involved with all of my life—music, comedy, drama, talk shows, even reality TV. And I realized that I have accomplished my childhood dream to be in show business. Everybody should be so lucky to have their dreams come true.”

Not even his stroke and his long rehabilitation have changed that.

A Heartfelt Push for Jerry’s Kids

Not even a heart attack could keep **Jerry Lewis** from hosting his annual Labor Day Telethon for the Muscular Dystrophy Association. And as if that wasn’t remarkable enough, he came back to wheedle the most dollars ever in the history of this granddaddy of all televised fundraising events.

Three months after suffering a mild heart attack and 40 years after launching his telethon, the 80-year-old comedy legend returned to shatter his own record: \$61 million in contributions and pledges for research and services to benefit people with neuromuscular diseases. Long an American institution, this year’s telethon featured acts ranging from **Celine Dion** to the Village People.

“I’m deeply gratified by the generosity of the American public,” Lewis declared. “They never fail to come through for ‘my kids’ who have muscular dystrophy and other conditions. This remarkably successful effort will mean the world to the tens of thousands of individuals and families who are fighting neuromuscular diseases.”



The Dream Doctor’s Nightmare

For one of the nation’s most eloquent radio hosts, it was only natural that the problem first became noticeable when his voice began to falter. “Initially I had hoarseness,” **Charles McPhee** says. “I had to project with more exertion. I’d be navigating a phrase and, all of a sudden, I’d slur.”

A month later, in June, McPhee found out why: amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS). In August, he revealed his diagnosis on air. And he began using his nationally syndicated program—“The Dream Doctor Show”—to educate listeners about the degenerative neuromuscular disease.

As a pioneering social scientist whose research focuses on analyzing and interpreting dreams, McPhee soon noticed ALS slipping into his own dreams. In one, he dreamed he was blind, with eyes as slit-like as a cat’s. “I realized that I had been blind to the quickness and severity of ALS,” he explains. “The clock really is ticking; I need to plan.”



Just 44, McPhee knows that he will soon lose his ability to speak, to move, and even to breathe without a respirator. Given his faltering voice, he decided that his last call-in show would air Oct. 21 (with more information available on its website at dreamdoctor.com). Instead, this author of three dream books plans to devote himself to writing several more.