

RAINBOW CLIENT**Gabrielle Mussehl***By Kimberly Paetzold, Editor*

Mrs. Gabrielle Mussehl— affectionately known as Gabe — was born in France in 1927. She left her parents, brother and sister-in-law in 1950 when she married and immigrated to the United States. With new her American husband by her side, she was always the adventurer and enjoyed her early years living in the States. I asked her about that time of her life — Gabe stated, *“immigrating was quite an experience. When I took the immigration exam, I was asked — Who was the first American President? — I had no idea, so I said Abraham Lincoln. Obviously that was wrong, but I was able to stay here anyway.”*

Gabe and her husband started a family — they had one son. She worked at the City of Van Buren for the better part of 25 years

and in the late 1990's, Gabe's husband passed away. Gabe was on her own and left to care for her only son who was afflicted with cerebral palsy.

The Day Life Changed...

In November of 2000, Gabe and her son decided to spend Thanksgiving Day with friends. It was on the way home after dinner that their terrible accident occurred. I asked Gabe if she remembered anything about that ride home, but she could only recall the winding roads.

The accident rendered Gabe unconscious. Admitted to Saint Joseph Mercy Hospital in Ann Arbor, she was treated for traumatic brain injury, fractures of the right tibia and fibula, left radius and ulna. Unfortunately, Gabe's son was fatally injured in the accident.

Rehabilitation...

About 8 weeks after the accident, in January, Gabe was admitted to Rainbow's Stoney Creek residential facility. There her focus was on active rehabilitation and regaining independent living skills. At that time, her therapists reported a high level of motivation to become as independent as possible. Although her initial hesitation and quiet nature was of some concern, Gabe overcame her fears and developed trust in her treatment team. Her hard work and willingness enabled her to make significant rehabilitation gains rather quickly. Alert and well oriented, with her short-term memory intact, Gabe was able to move on to Rainbow's Woodside home. This is where she continues to reside while working on rehabilitation gains in an environment focused on higher levels of independent living skills.

Life is good...

Now 78 years of age, Gabe is enjoying her golden years. She has relatively good health and many hobbies including: Crocheting, knitting, needlework, and reading mystery / suspense novels — John Grisham is her favorite. Part of her daily routine includes working for the Canton Public Library and at Rainbow's Corner Café while actively searching for additional community employment. Gabe told me she loves to be with people, and according to the Woodside house staff, Gabe enjoys helping and 'mothering' other Rainbow clients.

Her good nature and adventurous spirit continue to make themselves known. At 75 years old, Gabe rode her first horse, on a Rainbow outing. She enjoys attending music concerts and likes eating at restaurants with friends and other Rainbow residents. She has visited Chicago on a Rainbow sponsored trip along with various Michigan vacation spots, including Mackinaw Island. She also managed to set sail with friends on an Alaskan cruise. In fact, she has participated in almost every scheduled Rainbow outing including fishing, bowling, and camping.

On a visit to her Woodside home, she proudly showed me several woodshop projects, which included two stepping stools and a magazine rack. She also shared her current crochet project; a maroon blanket for a friend. It was quite beautiful.

Gabe's thoughts...

At the end of my visit, I asked Gabe how she liked living at Woodside home. *“I am happy here and have lots of friends,”* she stated. What is Gabe's advice for others going through brain injury rehabilitation? *“Work hard with your treatment team and they will help you get well. The Rainbow staff is very good at what it does. Successful rehabilitation is mind over matter — Don't give up!”* ♦





Pictured left: July of 2004, Gabe enjoyed an Alaskan Cruise with friends. (John is on the left)

Pictured below: Woodside is a bright, sunny home with a lovely backyard. (From left to right) Annie, Dan, Gabe and Eddie enjoy grilling outside on the deck.

Senior Life at Rainbow



Pictured left and below: Gabe (right) and Rainbow client Mabel Blakemore (left) attend a Motown Review at DTE Energy Music Theatre.

