

Poetry Porch: Poetry

Stroke

By Helen Heineman

I've had a stroke.
Almost everyone knows
What that means.
It's a sudden blow,
Struck quickly
And silently
That stops the brain
From functioning normally,
That takes away a function
You didn't use to think about,
Like reaching out
Right or left
For something you wanted,
But now can't grasp.
Or playing the piano
Or painting a picture,
Actions that always
Came without much thought.

I've had a stroke of luck,
I used to say,
When I won a prize
Or published a poem.

Or sometimes I felt
The stroke of his hand
On my back,

And it was warm and good.
And I often stroked the heads
Of my children in pure love.

Baseball players could
Stroke the ball
Over the heads of infielders
For an unexpected hit,
Bringing fans to their feet
In a rush of joy.

It wasn't a word
With bad associations
For me until I used it,
Sitting in my wheelchair
And had to explain to friends
For the first time.