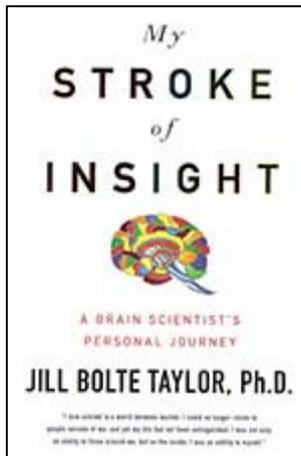


## Readin' & Writin' with Lauraine- August 2008



Sitting here in my finally cooling off living room, I am aware I should be writing a column on light summer reading. Instead I have chosen *My Stroke of Insight* by Jill Bole Taylor, Ph.D.. Why did I choose this book? Because my friend, Molly Sherman, raved about it. Then two or three other people mentioned it, and I read about it on Amazon. And now you are reading about it.

Another interesting twist: this book is by a woman who had a major stroke, and I just wrote about Haakan, one of my Blessing characters who suffered from a stroke (only then they called it apoplexy). I am always intrigued by the way life weaves little threads together to yield greater understanding. We need to watch for those more.

The author of *My Stroke of Insight* is a brain scientist, a researcher, teacher in medical schools, and, at 37 years old, far too young to experience a catastrophe like this. But she did. And because of her knowledge of the brain, she could track exactly what was happening, and later through assisted recall, has helped teach the teachers.

Through her book and speaking, she teaches and encourages those who have had strokes, or other brain injuries, and the folks who live with and take care of those patients.

Taylor takes the reader on the journey that happened to her, from the moment blood began flooding the left hemisphere of her brain, through the trauma and the amazing peace she experienced, followed by her years of healing and rehab to help her mind to function normally again. What an amazing journey! And she writes in such a personal way, that I felt I was right along with her. My life is richer because I read her book, which alone is adequate reason for reading a book. Sharing it with others is another.

Memoirs are very popular right now, but until a friend pointed it out, I didn't see this as a memoir. But it is, her memories of what happened to her. The value lies in the universality of her experience. A good memoir takes a personal event and applies it to the broader, more universal experience.

So, as I have asked before in this column, *what has happened in your life that can help someone else?* (The more someone elses, the better).

I know I have included many of my life experiences in my fiction, by drawing those things experiences into the lives of my characters. That is one way of dealing with them. Others may write non fiction books, including the possibility of a memoir. The more universal, the wider the appeal, but sometimes memoirs need to be written for family and friends, both as history and enrichment.

So, how do you start? Make a list of questions that people have asked you, or you've asked others and write the answers. Age old wisdom says, 'start at the beginning'. I'd say the beginning of the trigger incident, not the beginning of your life, unless you plan to write an autobiography.

The hardest part is starting. Blank pages or screens are intimidating. But write something, anything, and tell your story as if you are talking to a good friend. The editing can come later, but get the story down. This is the advice I give all writers, no matter what they are writing.

Learning from other people's experiences is one of the benefits of reading. That is why writing what you've learned is important in the scheme of things. Memoir, autobiography, family history, essays, fiction, they all share what it means to be human.

I hope, like *My Stroke of Insight*, your writing will bring hope to your readers, and perhaps some joy and laughter along with the serious stuff.

Blessings on your summer, and until next time,

*Happy readin' and writin' from Lauraine.*

