



Mommy, I Feel Funny

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REGIS TODAY

Imagine spending your childhood and young adulthood in fear—fear that you are being followed, that you are in danger. And what if that fear was real? That you *were* being stalked, but not by a person, by a disease in your own brain.

That's how it was for Danielle Rocheford '91. Since she was a baby, Rocheford's been stalked by epilepsy. The onset of a seizure descended on her like a dark foreboding, like "a monster was sneaking up behind me," she remembers feeling as a child. This prelude to a seizure, called an aura, is an often inexplicable feeling. What little Rocheford told her mother was, "Mommy, I feel funny," and that became the title of her new children's book about epilepsy.

That Rocheford would reach this point in adulthood—a professional woman, married with a child, actively involved with the community—was never in doubt. She has always been a determined woman.

"I refused to let epilepsy take control of me. I was determined to be the winner of this."

This even through her difficult 9th grade year when her medications ceased being effective and she spent nearly the entire year in the hospital.

By the time she arrived at Regis, her illness was basically under control with

medications, but she still had to tread very carefully. Courses that required speaking in front of the classroom put a lot of pressure on her. As did taking classes with strict time limits. And when she felt stressed, she'd have a seizure or just blank out.

Rocheford persevered and did the things she loved at college: played sports, got deeply involved in photography, and completed the requirements for a B.A. in communications and sociology.

But her seizures continued and five years after graduation, she took a radical medical step: brain surgery. The surgery would involve removal of a piece of her brain—a piece very near the brain's memory center. If anything went wrong, she could lose memories. And this was what led to the book.

"I wanted to put down on paper what I remembered in case I lost some of my memory," she says. Years later, on the anniversary of her surgery, her mother encouraged her to turn her writing into a children's book.

The surgery was completely successful. Rocheford has not had a single seizure since her surgery and is off all medications.

"I feel this is my way to give back," says Rocheford. "To show positive reinforcement to other children. Epilepsy is still not spoken about. I wanted to tell a true story for somebody who experienced it."

Published in March by Green Swing, a Wyatt-MacKenzie imprint, the book is selling well and Rocheford hopes it will be used in schools, doctors offices, and libraries as a resource for families and children dealing with epilepsy.

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