

WHEELCHAIR BRAVADO *by Mary Ann Haske*

On December 5th, I got on Amtrak with my granddaughter, Madison, and daughter-in-law, Candace, to travel to NYC for the weekend. Snow was predicted but I was not about to stay home. When I looked out of the window in Philadelphia I was dumbfounded. The accumulation was several inches and still coming down strong. I called the accessible taxi to meet me at the train station but they were booked. (718-706-7433, A Ride for All) So, I figured, if my wheelchair would not go through the snow (it had never been tested), I would be spending my time in Penn Station while Madison and Candace would be attending Radio City Xmas Show and plays. I was trying to put a good spin on things so Candace would not be too worried. I did not have luggage. I had strapped my charger and a small backpack with minimum amount of clothing to the back of my wheelchair. (Candace had a huge suitcase on wheels.)

Well, we got off the train and started out. My wheelchair, an Invacare Torque with Tarsys Weight Shifting Tilt System, plowed along amazingly. Madison climbed up into my lap and away we went. Candace was pulling her case through the snow and had a rough time.

Because of so many cancellations, we were able to add interesting activities to our agenda. There were no lines at the Xmas windows and no crowds at the tree at Rockefeller Center.

Saturday there were blizzard conditions but away my chair and I went. We had front row, wheelchair, seating at Radio City. Unbelievable. When we came out, it was like a white out. We could not see our hands in front of us. The only problem we had that day was Saturday evening, when I got into that proverbial drifted bank and got stuck. (The street had not been plowed in front of the Plaza Hotel!!!) My daughter, Susan, had joined us and she said she had not a clue as to what to do because I was really bogged down. Not to worry. A couple of young men came over and lifted me and my chair out of the drift and onto the sidewalk.

It stopped snowing Sunday morning and the crowds picked up but we kept right on trucking. We did use the accessible taxi on Monday to get to the train station so Candace would not have to struggle with the suitcase.

I cannot praise my wheelchair enough. So much ice and slush was up under the chair that Madison and I had to scrape it off and put ice in the trash can so it would not melt on the hotel room floor. I was sure that the electrical system would fail but my chair was awesome. I am glad that I have a positive tale to tell and I am glad that I had the courage to shrug the worries off and board Amtrak that Friday morning!