

Obtaining SSDI is a difficult and complex process. Two out of every three applicants are initially denied - and they have a story to tell.

An Out-of-World Experience

Campbell, Calif. – For 16 years, Sally Greenawalt had a high profile job that was, literally, out of this world. Until [Parkinson's disease](#) interfered, her job of training NASA astronauts and ground crews was an experience like none other. Finally, difficulties caused by [the disease became too much to continue working](#).

Yet, while the physical discomfort could be managed, her career could not. Unsure of what would happen and what the future held from a financial standpoint, Ms. Greenawalt [received an assist from Allsup Inc. to obtain her entitled Social Security Disability Insurance \(SSDI\) benefits](#).

[Allsup](#), the nation's premier SSDI representation company, boasts a staggering 97 percent success rate. The company is so highly regarded that, in October 2006, [the Better Business Bureau presented Allsup its Torch Award for excellence in customer service](#). Since 1984, the disability advocacy company has helped tens of thousands of people obtain more than \$1.3 billion in SSDI and Medicare benefits.

Ms. Greenawalt worked for Lockheed, which had a contract with NASA to train the space flight astronaut crews. Now 63, she worked at the NASA Ames Research Center at Moffet Field on the outskirts of San Jose, Calif., not far from her home in Campbell. Ames conducts the critical research and development of enabling technologies that make

NASA missions possible. It is home to more than 2,300 employees, including those in the Life Science Space Operations department where Ms. Greenawalt once worked.

“I miss it a lot. It was a unique and challenging job, very fast paced and I loved working with the people there,” Ms. Greenawalt said. “I was diagnosed with Parkinson’s in 1998, but it wasn’t until November of 2005 that I couldn’t work any more. At that stage, it became a Catch-22 situation.

“Without my medicine I couldn’t do my work, but its side effects increasingly impaired my performance. It left me feeling too anxious and at that point my doctor determined more medicine would not help me keep working.”

Parkinson’s disease is a progressive illness that has no cure and does not discriminate. More than one million Americans are affected by it, including former boxing champion Muhammad Ali and actor Michael J. Fox. Doctors are unable to predict or prevent the disease from impairing the body’s motor system, which leaves a person with little or no control of their movements. Some medications can control the symptoms but no drug has been found to stop the progression of the disease.

“I started experiencing tremors at first and then I had some gait problems that I had to deal with,” Ms. Greenawalt added. “Once I got to the neurologist, that’s when they diagnosed me with Parkinson’s. I was prescribed medication but Parkinson’s is a progressive disease and I delayed taking the strongest medication on a regular basis until 2004. By that time, it had become hard to concentrate and focus on my work, which required fast responses.”

While medication can control certain functions, the disease eventually leads to physical impairment.

“I had always done a fair amount of traveling in my job but that was now becoming more and more difficult to do. The job also required me to do a lot of things with my hands, but simple things like note taking became impossible. I could still use a keyboard for my computer but not as well as before I was diagnosed.”

Allsup Inc. helped Ms. Greenawalt from the start.

“My long-term disability company put me in touch with Allsup and there was some information I needed to supply them. It was a tremendous relief to have help from Allsup and to know I could rely on people experienced with this process,” she said

Having paid FICA taxes while she was working, Ms. Greenawalt was entitled to Social Security disability benefits and, with Allsup representing her, her chances of receiving SSDI benefits immediately improved. Although the Social Security Administration denies nearly two of every three people who initially file for SSDI benefits Allsup has helped thousands of people obtain more than \$1.3 billion in SSDI and Medicare benefits.

“I had anticipated having problems because I heard stories of people having trouble getting these benefits, but I received my award in only about five months,” Ms. Greenawalt said. “It was a relief when Allsup called with the good news. Katie Bates was my disability representative and she was very helpful. She called and asked me some questions initially over the telephone. I received an initial lump sum and now I get a monthly check.”

Ms. Greenawalt's life these days remains busy, just in a different manner than her days with NASA.

"My main problem these days is dealing with physical tension," she said. "The medicine helps stop the stiffening of my body and joints. I have my ups and downs. Some days I'm slow and awkward, it just happens. There is nothing I have to do so I can take my time," she said. "I go to my classes. I'm doing yoga and tai chi because it helps with my movement. I'm also taking a class in marine biology at the local community college."

The marine biology class should come as no surprise. Just another adventure for Sally Greenawalt, except this one stays on Earth.