

“I have MS, but MS doesn’t have me”

Sheryl Frey

My story begins in 1975 when I began to experience the strangest numbness throughout my body. Eventually it disappeared only to return again in 1976. I did nothing and again, the symptoms disappeared. After fifteen years of marriage to my husband Robert and just two months before my 36th birthday, I gave birth to our daughter Carrie. We were thrilled. With the birth of our daughter came many changes to our lives. Life took on a whole new meaning.

In 1988, I again began to experience unusual symptoms such as blurred vision and numbness in my body. After many tests, I was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis – Carrie was five years old. It was then I decided that I had to be strong for Carrie. She deserved a mom who could go with her to kindergarten, bake cookies, and do all the things I remembered my mom doing for me.

I was also very involved with the Order of the Eastern Star, an organization I joined in 1966. I was on my way to being the Worthy Grand Matron, which is the highest office for women in the organization on a provincial level. There were four busy years ahead of me but I was determined to make it happen and it did. Those years were special and rewarding. I did have a few ‘attacks’ but once again medication worked and no doubt, with help from a higher power, life continued to be wonderful. Eastern Star continues to be an important part of my life and I have been honoured with an appointment to a committee on a worldwide level for the next three years.

Eventually walking became more difficult. I began to use a cane, then a walker, now a scooter. We had to move from our farm to a bungalow with main floor laundry and large open spaces which made life easier for me. Carrie began driving as it became difficult for me. She has been my inspiration to manage my condition so I can continue to share in her accomplishments and one day be fortunate enough to hold a grandchild in my arms.

One of the most difficult things to deal with has been how my having MS has affected Robert and Carrie’s lives. However, none of my success in dealing with MS would be possible without the support of family and friends. Losing your independence is difficult and frightening. It was my wish to share my story in the hope of making life easier for someone else.

I once heard a man being interviewed. I can’t remember the question, but I have thought often of his answer, “I have MS, but MS doesn’t have me”. I try hard not to let it have me either. I also try to focus on what I can do, and forget about what I can’t, all the while striving to stay just one step ahead of the disease, thus making my life and the lives of those close to me worth living.

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