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Tribute as Zoe loses battle with Multiple Sclerosis



A BEAUTIFUL, inspiring, outgoing and courageous girl who lived her life to the full... That is how a heartbroken Thornaby family will remember Zoe Laing, who this week lost her brave battle with multiple sclerosis aged just 25.

She was struck with the debilitating disease when she was 17 and studying at Middlesbrough College.

But Zoe refused to let her condition dictate her life, despite being first confined to a wheelchair and later her bed, requiring ongoing nursing care.

The 6ft 1in blonde beauty was determined to live the exciting life of any young woman, achieving all her ambitions and being a true inspiration to her family, friends and fiancé.

After developing the incurable neurological condition, she was forced to give up her media studies and fashion college course and cut short a promising career as a model.

But after appearing in a TV documentary in 2006, *The Fashionistas*, when Zoe was interviewed about her disability, clothes and careers, she vowed to re-launch her career.

In February 2007, despite being confined to a wheelchair, she made a triumphant return to the catwalk escorted by her dad Martin before a 200-strong audience at a Teesside wedding fair at Hotel Tall Trees in Yarm.

She told the Gazette afterwards: "It was brilliant. It was better than I expected. At first I was nervous as I didn't know if people would accept me but they gave me a standing ovation.

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"My dad pushed me down the catwalk and held my hand when I stood up at the end and posed. It was brilliant."

As her mum and dad, Angela, 46, and Martin, 47, brothers Martin, 23, and Jordan, 13, and fiancé, Phil King, 26, come to terms with their tragic loss, they have all been left with tremendous memories of Zoe.

Her mum even boasts several tattoos after being talked into it by her daughter on their 'Girlie Thursday' trips out together.

"She would get about in her wheelchair pushing herself on one leg," she said.

"She could transfer herself from her wheelchair into a taxi to go to the pub. Then at about 2am I'd get a drunk call saying 'Mum, I'm outside, come and get me'.

"Sometimes she would make her way in the middle of the road in her wheelchair, up Thornaby Road to the Jolly Farmer's pub."

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Her dad added: “When she came to accept her illness, she almost made a joke of it.

“It didn’t stop Zoe achieving everything she wanted to, including catwalk modelling and, for that, even wearing a wedding dress.

“She wanted to go on TV and she did, she wrote poems which were published in books. She even started to write a book about her life to try to give other people strength.

“She loved shopping and travelling, and she used to make friends wherever she went.”

When Phil first met Zoe in Thornaby’s Griffin pub he said it was “love at first sight”.

“I was taken by her courage, nothing stopped her,” he said.

In October last year he was inspired by his fiancée’s bravery to trek up Africa’s highest peak, Mount Kilimanjaro, to raise cash for the Multiple Sclerosis Trust.

Completing the epic climb with friend Ben Short, 26, the pair, both telecommunications engineers, raised around £8,000. Phil is planning to continue fundraising in his fiancée’s memory and in October is heading for Everest’s base camp, again with Ben.

Youngest brother Jordan also raised £500 with a concert by his rock band at his school, Thornaby Community School, where Zoe also went.

The family, of Maple Avenue, wanted to thank everyone who helped in caring for Zoe over the years, including Butterwick Hospice, primary care and district nurses, Julie and Penny, her carers, and Karen Little, her MS nurse and now a family friend.

Donations in lieu for the Butterwick Hospice.

Chat Group Egglecliffe

Due to the recent change of drivers, we have had to change the time we meet at the Ecclescliff community centre.

The new time will be between 11.30am & 13.30 pm from now on.

www.mssociety.org.uk 24 February 2009

Sativex satisfies regulatory hurdle

The makers of cannabis-based treatment Sativex have today reported the results of a trial held to establish how effective the therapy is in people with multiple sclerosis (MS).

GW Pharmaceuticals were asked by the Medicines and Healthcare Regulatory Authority (MHRA) to hold the withdrawal study, which evaluated 36 people with spasticity and who had previously been taking Sativex on prescription.

This group was divided into two, with one continuing to take Sativex, the other being given placebo. Today’s results show that in those people given placebo over four weeks, symptoms of spasticity worsened, but that there was no evidence of an adverse reaction to having the treatment withdrawn.

Dr Lee Dunster, Head of Research at the MS Society, said: “We know from our members that there is huge interest in how this drug performs in trials.

“These latest results satisfy a necessary hurdle with the drug regulators and we’re looking forward to seeing data from the larger trial that will show how effective it is in greater numbers of people.”

Results of the larger trial are expected in March.

Hookworms under the microscope in MS trial

Scientists from the University of Nottingham will study the potential health benefits of parasitic worms as part of a study investigating treatments for people with multiple sclerosis (MS).

It is thought that hookworms may play a role in damping down the immune system, which is overactive in people with MS, the most disabling neurological condition in young adults.

The £400,000, three-year project funded by the MS Society, aims to determine whether infection with a small and harmless number of the worms can lead to an improvement on the severity of MS over a 12 month period.

If the trial is successful, the worms have the potential to provide a simple, cheap, natural and controllable treatment for MS.

Jayne Spink, Director of Research at the MS Society said: "It sounds like science fiction, but it has been shown in a previous small study that people with MS who also had gut parasite infections had fewer relapses.

"Over time, parasitic worms have evolved to be able to survive an immune system attack and have been linked to a reduction in the severity of the symptoms of MS, which can be debilitating.

"If the theories can be shown to be accurate, using hookworms as a future treatment option may prove to be science fact."

MS affects more than 85,000 people in the UK and several million worldwide. Symptoms range from loss of sight and mobility, fatigue, depression and cognitive problems that often come on as attack - or relapses. There is no cure and few effective treatments.

The WIRMS (Worms for Immune Regulation in MS) study is led by Professor Cris Constantinescu and Professor David Pritchard and is a randomised, placebo controlled, phase 2 study in people with relapsing remitting MS and will be carried out at multiple centres up and down the country.

The 25 worms are microscopic and are introduced painlessly through a patch in the arm. They are then flushed out after nine months.

Dorothy Sutton, 58, from Awsworth, has lived with MS for 32 years and is a Helpline volunteer for the MS Society. She said that although the treatment sounded unusual, anything that could potentially help alleviate the symptoms of MS is a positive step.

"We have to explore every avenue of research to find treatments for MS. As long as it's safe and effective in helping the horrible symptoms, I don't think people mind where it comes from."

Prof Constantinescu, said: "People are really interested in this form of potential therapy because it's a natural treatment. It's been tested for safety and we now need to study the potential benefits and any side effects."

I was a child carer looking after my mum – and it turned me into the Hairy Biker cook

Dave Myers has made his name as one half of the BBC TV chef duo the Hairy Bikers. His culinary skills were not honed, however, in the kitchens of top restaurants but at home - and out of necessity.

For his idyllic childhood was cruelly shattered at the age of eight, when his mother was struck down with multiple sclerosis. She had been a wonderful cook and provider of family meals - and Dave, an only child, assumed the role of both carer and chef.

Here, he tells his poignant - and often funny - story of how his mother's illness turned him into the celebrity chef he is today...

Dave Myers often thinks of his parents as he climbs on to his motorbike and sets off on a new journey of culinary discovery. Sadly, they never lived to see their son become one half of the successful TV cooks, the Hairy Bikers.

It would have been a proud legacy: Dave inherited his love for biking from his father, his passion for hearty food from his mother and his enthusiasm for travel from both parents.

But he might never have learned to cook at all were it not for the fact that when he was just eight years old, his mother was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis (MS).

Today, after many years living all over the UK, Dave, now 51, lives in his home town Barrow-in-Furness with his partner Lili. His house is just a stone's throw from the streets of terrace homes where he spent many a carefree hour as a small child.

'My early childhood was great - happy and full of adventure,' he remembers. 'Our house backed on to the houses of lots of my friends, so I used to spend all my spare time playing outdoors with them.'

'My mum, Margaret, was 42 when she had me. She'd been told she couldn't have children, so when I came along she and my dad Jim, who was already 55, were surprised and delighted.'

Dave remembers his mother as an energetic woman who seized life with both hands. 'She had a great sense of humour and was very active, a real doer. During the war, before I was born, she worked as a crane driver in the shipyard.'

'She was also a fabulous cook. We always had hearty, homecooked meals - bacon and eggs for breakfast every day - even though we didn't have much money.'

'Mum baked her own bread and I can still recall that wonderful smell filling the house. I used to love it when she made cakes and I could lick the bowl clean.'

But, almost overnight, life was to change for the whole family. Dave recalls sitting down for dinner as usual one evening, aged seven, looking forward to the steak and chips he could smell cooking in the kitchen.

His mother walked in with a tray full of food, lost her balance and fell, sending the dinner flying all over the floor. At the time, they laughed and joked: 'Looks like the steak's gone for a burton.'

With the benefit of hindsight, Dave now knows this loss of balance was no laughing matter: it was the first visible symptom of Margaret's MS.

A few months later, Dave's mother went for a lie-down because she was feeling tired. When she tried to get up again, she lost control of her legs and couldn't get out of bed. She ended up collapsing in a heap on the floor.

'She called out for help and I came running, but I was just a little boy,' Dave says. 'I wasn't big enough or strong enough and I didn't know what to do.'

'There weren't any neighbours around, Dad was on a late shift and, of course, we didn't have mobile phones in those days. We had to wait until he came home at 10pm to help her. It was very scary.'

Dave remembers making his dad a ham sandwich that evening - the first time he had to prepare dinner for the family because his mother wasn't capable. And after that incident, she never really got any better.

She went into hospital for three weeks for tests and was diagnosed with MS. Within only a year she was in a wheelchair. Dave and his father, newly retired from his job at a paper mill, became her full-time carers.

Down to earth, pragmatic and fiercely loyal to his parents' memory, Dave is not one to feel sorry for himself.

Yes, life changed, he admits, but he got on with it: 'Becoming a carer didn't ruin my life - I still had lots of mates - but it certainly tied my childhood down.

'I couldn't go to bed until Mum went to bed. Dad would take Mum's legs and I'd take her arms and we'd carry her up the stairs each night. It wasn't until I was 13 that we were moved into a council flat with proper facilities and adaptations for a disabled person.

'We were offered virtually nothing by the authorities, no respite care at all. But once a year, we'd go away with the MS Society to a holiday camp where Mum would be looked after and I could play with other kids whose mum or dad had MS. There were also coach trips to the Lake District and other sites of interest.

'Looking after Mum was a lot of responsibility, although Dad shouldered most of it, and our extended family was also very supportive.'

For Dave, the hardest thing by far was watching his once vivacious mother become a shell of her former self.

'Like 15 per cent of those with MS, she had no respite, no remission, just a steady deterioration,' he says. 'But even worse than the disease were the brutal medications she was prescribed.

'She was a person full of energy but unable to expend it because of her MS, so she got extremely frustrated. The doctors' response was to give her tranquillisers to calm her down. Then, because she could not sleep, they gave her barbiturates.

'The drugs knocked the stuffing out of her. She had no will to cope with her illness, she'd just sit there passively.'

Margaret suffered from mood swings and extreme emotions that she was not always able to control. Sometimes, she would also make involuntary noises. For a teenage boy, such outbursts could be embarrassing.

'When I was 13, I got the part of Toad of Toad Hall in the school play,' Dave recalls. 'My teachers were adamant that Mum should come to see me perform. But halfway through the performance she started screaming and wailing - I'm not sure whether it was excitement or what. She simply couldn't control herself.

'I remember wishing she hadn't been there. I got a bit of flack for it and that finished me off for school plays.'

On another occasion, Dave took his mother for a walk in a local park. All of a sudden, she started crying and shouting hysterically at him. Bewildered and embarrassed, he didn't know what to do.

'I wheeled her into a rosebush and then let her tyres down, so the wheelchair wouldn't roll,' he says. 'Then I left her there and went to get my dad.

'He wasn't angry with me; he understood why I'd done it. When we got back to Mum, a park keeper was with her, trying to reinflate her wheels with a bicycle pump.'

Margaret's disability meant the housework and cooking were left to Dave and his dad. 'He did his best but for the first year we lived on a diet of instant potato, tinned meat and tinned peas,' says Dave. 'It soon became clear that if we were going to survive we'd both need to learn to cook properly.'

He adds: 'We found a cookbook that had come with the cooker, dated from the end of the Second World War. It was called The Radiation Cookbook and we started to experiment with recipes from it.

'One of the first things I ever cooked on my own was a cheese and potato pie. Dad ate it without complaint but he was a traditional Northern man - for him a vegetarian dish was a side dish, not a complete meal.

'Dad regularly used to take me on the back of his bike to go fishing in the sea off Barrow. Whatever we caught we'd fillet for dinner.

'I remember watching him peel grapes so he could make sole Veronique, except he didn't have any sole so he used plaice. Still, it looked and tasted really good. If we caught more fish than we could eat, I'd sell it around the houses for pocket money.'

Being confined to a wheelchair meant Margaret gained weight, and when the doctor advised her to diet, the whole family joined in.

'We all ate salads,' says Dave. 'I was 11 and started to construct complicated salads with all kinds of ingredients, such as tinned salmon and peeled cucumbers. I tried to make them look as interesting and appealing as possible.'

Dave soon found himself becoming not just a proficient cook, but an adventurous one. He admits there was a lot of trial and error and his creations weren't always a success. 'Garlic was just starting to appear in the supermarkets, so I thought I'd cook a recipe with garlic. But, being unfamiliar with it, I used three whole heads, instead of three cloves. Dad diplomatically said he wasn't sure he liked garlic, and I had to agree with him!'

When Dave was 17, tragedy suddenly struck for a second time. His father, then 72, suffered a debilitating stroke. The first doctor who called round told Dave to give him some aspirin and then left him alone to care for both parents.

'I put Dad in his bed and put Mum in my bedroom, with a commode. I had no idea what I was going to do. Fortunately, when the district nurse came round, she realised I couldn't cope on my own. She sent another doctor, who asked, "Which parent do you think you can cope better with?"

'It was awful to have to choose, but I said Dad because he had a chance of recovery, and I knew Mum was never going to get any better. Soon afterwards, she went into hospital and, because she was 60, was put on the geriatric ward. Dad stayed with me. Sadly, Mum would never come home again.'

Dave managed to complete his A-levels and take an art foundation course in Preston, commuting every day for a year, so he could look after his father and visit his mother. But when he was 20, his father died following a second stroke.

'They left it to me to tell Mum,' he says. 'She was absolutely heartbroken, as you can imagine. It made her very depressed.'

When Dave moved to London to study at Goldsmiths College, he kept the council flat in Barrow so he could spend the holidays with his mother. Three years later, she died of pneumonia, common among those who are bedridden and severely ill with MS. She was 65.

Only after both his parents had died did Dave feel angry. 'I realised the doctors hadn't done anything constructive to help Mum and that we hadn't got any respite care. We'd needed far more support. I also felt angry at the way Mum's spirit had been destroyed by MS.'

After graduating, he took a job as a make-up artist in the BBC's prosthetics department. It was while he was working on a Catherine Cookson film in Newcastle that he met Simon King, then a location manager, who shared his love of food, motorbikes and travel.

They remained in touch over the years, crossing paths several times. Then, in 2002 they decided to follow their dreams and initiate a project based around their three great passions. They made a TV pilot, which then developed into a short series, and the 'Hairy Bikers' were born.

'I don't think the Hairy Bikers would have come about if Mum hadn't got ill,' Dave says. 'My passion for food really is my mum's legacy. Caring for her not only forced me to learn to cook, it also made me self-reliant and self-motivated.'

Although it's now almost 30 years since his mother died, Dave still supports the MS Society. He and Simon have put their names behind the fundraising Cake Bake Initiative, which takes place on May 1, encouraging everyone who can to bake a cake to raise money for the MS Society.

He says: 'Baking is wonderful - it's so inclusive. The whole family can share the idea of making cakes, and you can't beat a house full of the smell of freshly baked cakes. I still make my mum's Victoria sandwich and butterfly cakes, and her "dead fly" pie with currants.'

The Hairy Bikers are currently filming a 28-episode series called The Hairy Bikers Food Tour Of Britain, testing out the culinary delights of each region. It will be shown in the summer on BBC2.

'In one episode I'll be cooking my Mum's wonderful Yorkshire Pudding recipe, using her old tin, which I've kept for decades,' says Dave. 'It never works as well, or tastes as good, if I use anything else.'

Cake Break is the MS Society's official fundraiser for this year's national MS Week (April 27 to May 3). To apply to host a Cake Break call 0870 241 3565 or visit www.mssociety.org.uk/cakebreak.

The impact on millions of unsung carers

- Each year more than two million people become carers. Three in five will become carers at some point.
- A carer is usually someone who looks after a parent, relative or neighbour owing to sickness, old age or disability.
- Help and financial support is available. Social services will assess the impact of caring, so keep a diary.
- Carers may be offered a break from caring or help with housework.
- Any special equipment, housing modifications and nursing care will be assessed separately.
- Carers have the right to request flexible working arrangements.
- Your local authority will assess what you will have to pay towards community care. This will be based on income and capital.
- You may be entitled to a Carer's Allowance of £50.55 a week if you are at least 16 and spend more than 35 hours a week caring for someone.
- For more information go to www.direct.gov.uk/en/caringforsomeone or www.carersuk.org.

What is MS?

Multiple sclerosis (MS) is the most common disabling neurological disorder affecting young adults. An estimated 85,000 people in the UK have MS. It occurs as the result of damage to myelin - the protective sheath surrounding nerve fibres of the central nervous system. This damage means messages between the brain and the body are not transmitted as they should be, leading to a range of symptoms, including loss of sight and mobility, pain, fatigue and depression. There is no cure for MS and few effective treatments.

The four types

- There are four types of MS, each with its own characteristics:
- Relapsing/remitting: The most common type of MS, where people experience relapses (or attacks) followed by a period of remission.
- Primary progressive: Symptoms begin and steadily worsen, resulting in a continued progression in disability. You will not have distinct relapses and remissions.
- Secondary progressive: Most people who have relapsing/remitting MS later develop a form known as secondary progressive MS. This type of MS is identified when your condition becomes steadily worse, and your disability progresses, for a period of six months or more, whether you continue to have relapses or not.
- Benign MS: If you have a small number of relapses followed by a complete recovery, you may be described as having benign MS. It is only possible to make a diagnosis of benign MS once you have experienced little or no disability for ten to 15 years. However, a diagnosis of benign MS does not guarantee that you will be free of problems; a relapse may occasionally occur after many years in which your MS has been inactive.

In the long term, life expectancy with MS is around the same as normal. Only one in five people with MS need to use a wheelchair in the longer term.

www.mstrust.org.uk 26 February 2009

Drug improves mobility for some multiple sclerosis patients

The experimental drug fampridine (4-aminopyridine) improves walking ability in some individuals with multiple sclerosis (MS). That is the conclusion of a multi-center Phase 3 clinical trial, the results of which were published February 26 in the journal *The Lancet*.

"This study indicates that fampridine could represent an important new way to treat multiple sclerosis and perhaps become the first drug to improve certain symptoms of the disease," said neurologist Andrew Goodman, MD, chief of the Multiple Sclerosis Center at the University of Rochester Medical Center (URMC) and lead author of the study. "The data suggest that, for a sub-set of MS patients, nervous system function is partially restored while taking the drug."

The study evaluated a sustained-release formulation of the drug, Fampridine-SR, which is being developed by Acorda Therapeutics, Inc. The company, which funded the study, submitted a new drug application to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration earlier this month. Goodman has been a consultant and advisor to Acorda for its fampridine studies in MS.

Multiple sclerosis is a disease of the central nervous system and is the most common cause of neurological disability in young adults. Worldwide it is estimated that more than a million people are affected by MS which is typically characterized by recurrent relapses followed by periods of remission early in its course. The symptoms of the disease vary from person to person, but commonly consist of muscle weakness, gait difficulties, numbness or tingling in arms and legs, difficulty with coordination and balance, blurred vision, and slurred speech. Over time, the effects of the disease tend to become more permanent and debilitating.

While the precise cause is unknown, it is understood that the immune system in individuals with MS attacks myelin, a fatty tissue in the central nervous system that wraps the fibers - or axons - that connect nerve cells. Similar to the insulation on an electrical wire, myelin allows for the efficient conduction of nerve impulses. When myelin is lost or damaged in the disease, signals between nerve cells are delayed, disrupted, or even blocked.

It is believed that fampridine improves the transmission of signals in the central nervous system of some MS patients by blocking potassium ion channels. These channels serve as gates on the surface of cells and regulate the normal electrical activity. In laboratory experiments involving nerve fibers with myelin that was damaged in a manner that mimics MS, scientists found that blocking these channels results in a recovery of signal conduction.

In the Phase 3 study just published, the effects of Fampridine-SR were tested in 301 adult MS patients at 33 locations in the U.S. and Canada over a 14-week period. Three quarters of the participants took the drug and the rest were given a placebo.

Typically, MS drugs have been evaluated based on the ability to prevent relapses. Because the goal of this study was to assess changes in function, the researchers instead sought to evaluate participants' mobility and muscle strength - as opposed to the disease process. In prior studies, Goodman and his URMC colleague, the late Steven Schwid, MD, had validated new methods to measure changes in gait, or walking speed over distance. Employing these methods in The Lancet study, they found that 34.8% of those receiving the drug experienced an improvement (an average of about 25% increase) in the speed they could walk 25 feet compared to only 8.3% in the placebo group.

"During the course of the disease, many MS patients experience a decline in mobility and this disability has a major impact in terms of quality of life," said Goodman. "As a clinician, I can say that improvement in walking speed could have important psychological value; it may give individuals the potential to regain some of the independence that they may have lost in their daily lives."

Several other drugs have been approved to treat MS. These treatments either counter the nervous system inflammation that is a characteristic of the disease or suppress the immune

system generally. While these drugs can be effective at preventing new relapses and slowing the progression of the disease, there are no treatments currently available that improve impaired function, such as mobility problems, for people with MS.

Participants in the trial were allowed to continue to take most other medications for MS and researchers did not observe any negative interactions. However, a total of eleven patients (4.8%) in the fampridine-treated group discontinued the study due to side effects. Only two of these were considered by the investigators to be possibly related to treatment.

Co-authors in the study include Schwid, Theodore Brown, MD, MPH with Evergreen Hospital Medical Center in Kirkland, WA, Lauren Krupp, MD with Stony Brook University, Randall Shapiro, MD with the Minneapolis Clinic of Neurology, and Ron Cohen, MD, Lawrence Marinucci and Andrew Blight, PhD all with Acorda Therapeutics.

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Women living life to the full despite MS

Multiple sclerosis is a life-changing condition most commonly diagnosed between the ages of 20 and 40. Health Reporter Helen Rae talks to women with the illness and looks at what support is available for sufferers in the North East.

Mum-of-one Joanne Murray has the debilitating condition multiple sclerosis (MS). But she is determined not to let the illness - which affects 85,000 people in the UK - take over her life. So she keeps busy, making sure the family home is spick and span, working in the local pub for a few hours every week and most important of all, looking after her daughter, 22-month-old Caitlyn.

"I was finally diagnosed with MS when Caitlyn was only four months old," said Joanne, aged 25. "Now I can't walk very far and my balance is affected. But I am not going to let it beat me and Caitlyn keeps me going. "She is my little helper. She has learnt to go and get my slippers for me and I can take her out in the buggy. I feel so lucky because we are a very close family and everything is nearby."

Joanne, who lives with her husband Michael in Berwick, is supported by her local GP and a team of community healthcare professionals, including Northumberland Care Trust's community MS specialist nurse, Jane Metcalfe.

"When I was diagnosed, Jane came to the house and helped me get everything I needed," said Joanne. "She still comes and visits me and I can phone her any time and I know I will get any help I need."

Joanne also goes to regular evening sessions organised by Jane in Berwick where MS patients and their carers can meet for specialist information, listen to monthly guest speakers, have a chat and experience complementary therapies like massage.

"It was good to know that you aren't the only one in this situation and just to be able to talk to other people about it," explained Joanne.

Fellow MS patient Margaret Turnbull has difficulty walking after being diagnosed with the condition seven years ago. But she still gets out and about and makes sure her dogs, Chunky and Molly, have their daily exercise.

The two red collies trot along quite happily by the side of Margaret's mobility scooter and they are a familiar sight for local people near her home in Felton, Morpeth.

"The dogs seem to sense that I have MS and they are very well behaved and very gentle," said Margaret who used to work at Castington Young Offenders Unit and lives with her partner, David Carss.

"I was diagnosed in February 2002 and now my right leg and right hand are affected," she said. "I have difficulty gripping things and some days I am not so good. But there's always help available if I need it."

Margaret, 59, is also supported by her GP and community healthcare professionals, including Jane Metcalfe.

"Jane comes to the house and makes sure I have anything I need," explained Margaret. "I can ring her any time and she gives me confidence - it's nice to know someone is there with specialist knowledge who can help and you don't feel as if you are a burden."

Jane works with MS patients across North Northumberland to help them access services and cope with their condition. Since taking up her post more than two years ago, she has become involved with more than 100 patients. She also runs specialist clinics in Alnwick and Berwick.

"MS is a very individual disease. It can fluctuate and affects people in many ways, not only physically. MS can also affect mood, memory and concentration," said Jane.

"Northumberland has a slightly higher than average number of people with MS and it's particularly important that these people can access services near their homes wherever possible to avoid unnecessary travel.

"Now they can have routine procedures like checks, blood tests, reviews or intravenous steroids carried out locally rather than having to travel further."

Jane links up with other healthcare professionals including the Care Trust's community rehabilitation team of occupational therapists, physiotherapists, speech and language therapists and psychiatric nurses. She also works closely with the MS Society and the MS Research and Relief Fund.

David Muir, assistant head of operations for Northumberland Care Trust, said: "Alongside our colleagues that work in general practice and the hospitals, Northumberland Care Trust is thoroughly committed to contributing to the continued care of those with MS.

"As well as contributing to the NHS ethos of treating patients as close as possible to their homes, posts such as the specialist MS nurse post operated by the adult directorate, also make a significant personal impact on the lives of those living with long term conditions such as MS."

He spoke of his hopes to expand the service in the future. "We are thankful to both the MS Society and the MS Research and Relief Fund for their support of this post and we look forward to continuing this relationship to the benefit of our residents," he added.

www.mstrust.org.uk 23 February 2009

The MS Society's MS Life convention will take place at The Sage Gateshead

MS Life will feature talks from leading MS scientists, providing up to date information on the condition including future areas of research.

The lifestyle event is aimed at anyone affected by multiple sclerosis and is the biggest event of its kind to be held in the North East. Research presentations, workshop sessions and an exhibition are all part of the free to attend weekend event.

A fashion show, accessible club night and wheel & walk fundraiser ensure there is something for everyone. The dates arranged are June 12th -14th and tickets are available through the MS Society web site.

Disclaimer

Articles in this Bulletin are meant for the sole purpose of information only and do not necessarily reflect the views of the committee.

YOUR JOKES

Stay!

I pulled into the crowded parking lot at the Super Wal-Mart Shopping Centre and rolled down the car windows to make sure my Labrador Retriever Pup had fresh air. She was stretched full-out on the back seat and I wanted to impress upon her that she must remain there.

I walked to the curb backward, pointing my finger at the car and saying emphatically, 'Now you stay. Do you hear me?' 'Stay! Stay!'

The driver of a nearby car, a pretty blonde young lady, gave me a strange look and said, 'Why don't you just put it in park?'

How the fight started

After retiring, I went to the Social Security office to apply for Social Security. The woman behind the counter asked me for my driver's license to verify my age. I looked in my pockets and realized I had left my wallet at home. I told the woman that I was very sorry, but I would have to go home and come back later.

The woman said, 'Unbutton your shirt'.

So I opened my shirt revealing my curly silver hair. She said, 'That silver hair on your chest is proof enough for me' and she processed my Social Security application.

When I got home, I excitedly told my wife about my experience at the Social Security office.

She said, 'You should have dropped your pants. You might have gotten disability, too'

And that's how the fight started.....

How to call the police when your old and can't move fast anymore.

George Phillips, an elderly man, from Meridian, Mississippi, was going up to bed, when his wife told him that he'd left the light on in the garden shed, which she could see from the bedroom window. George opened the back door to go turn off the light, but saw that there were people in the shed stealing things.

He phoned the police, who asked "Is someone in your house?"

He said "No," but some people are breaking into my garden shed and stealing from me.

Then the police dispatcher said "All patrols are busy. You should lock your doors and an officer will be along when one is available.."

George said, "Okay."

He hung up the phone and counted to 30.

Then he phoned the police again. "Hello, I just called you a few seconds ago because there were people stealing things from my shed. Well, you don't have to worry about them now because I just shot them." and he hung up.

Within five minutes, six Police Cars, a SWAT Team, a Helicopter, two Fire Trucks, a Paramedic, and an Ambulance showed up at the Phillips' residence, and caught the burglars red-handed.

One of the Policemen said to George, "I thought you said that you'd shot them!"

George said, "I thought you said there was nobody available!"

MEMBERS COMPETITION

A £5 prize will be given to the member whose entry has the most correct answers. Even if you can't answer all the questions, send in those you have answered – you could still win!

USING ONE OF THE INITIAL LETTERS FROM EACH ANSWER WILL GIVE YOU THE NAME OF LOCAL TOWN OR VILLAGE

- 1/ One of the Great Lakes
- 2/ Cluedo Room
- 3/ What was the name of Rene Artois wife
In the TV series Allo Allo
- 4/ One of the bones in the arm
- 5/ In the Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe,
What is the name of the Lion
- 6/ The vaccine BCG us used to combat which illness
- 7/ Birthstone of October
- 8/ Which gas was named after the Greek word for new

Name:

Address:

Send Completed Forms To:
Mr D Henderson
74 Windermere Road
Stockton-on-Tees
TS18 4LY

All entries to be received by the next social. The winner will be drawn from entries received with the highest number of correct answers.

Answers to last quiz:

1/ Huron 2/ Ulan Bator 3/ Termite 4/ Tinkerbelle 5/ Oregano 6/ Nitrogen 7/ Hall

8/ Erhart, Amelia 9/ November 10/ Rook 11/ York, New