

# Prize-winning author sells hope to MS patients

By SHIRLEE IDEN

Miriam Ottenberg is a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist who calls herself "a salesperson for hope."

Miss Ottenberg, who has multiple sclerosis (MS), has written the first comprehensive book on MS by a layman and for lay people.

Called "The Pursuit of Hope," the book is intended to inform and inspire MS patients in this country who may be in despair.

"I want to talk to MS patients," she said. "Many have been given misinformation and are misled into being depressed."

"I believe we'll have the answer to

the MS mystery in five to 10 years. A great deal has been learned and I want to share my hope."

In addition, she is touring the country to reach the general public "because everyone knows someone with MS."

"I'd like them to help by staying friends with MS patients and sharing good times with them. I want to convince them to contribute by fundraising children for the MS Road-a-thon."

"She said children all over the country get sponsors who pledge funds for MS for each book they read."

"Amy Carter earned \$300 in this

way," she said. "All MS drives are for research and patient service."

Another reason for her travels is to sell her book, the proceeds of which go to MS. The book, first published last November, is now in its sixth printing.

"My publisher couldn't believe there hadn't been a comprehensive book

written on MS before," she said.

But it was the suggestion of her former boss at the Washington Star that prompted her to undertake more than two years of leg work, over 100 interviews and six months of writing to produce "The Pursuit of Hope."

It meant going back, first, to her own recollections of being gradually aware that something was amiss.

"One week in May, 1960, I won the Pulitzer Prize, for exposing used car frauds, and lost my father," she recalled.

One night her parents called from Europe to congratulate her and the next night she was awakened by an international operator at 3 a.m.

"My mother told me, my father had just died of a cerebral hemorrhage," she said. "A week later, I started across the street and a policeman jerked me back to the curb."

She had nearly been hit by a car, yet to her, the car appeared at least half a block away.

"I did not know then, and would not know for many years, that I had lost

my depth perception, that the two-layered look of cars was created by double vision and that the cause was multiple sclerosis."

For years afterward, Miss Ottenberg can recall bouts of what she calls her "jigsaw puzzle" vision, which she later learned is called "scotoma."

"That's one early symptom of MS," she said. "I also had a dropped foot and when I walked, I would stumble. I had a number of broken bones."

By 1965, Miss Ottenberg knew she had MS, but contends she probably had it since 1944 when the "jigsaw puzzle" vision began.

"My doctor suspected it for a long time but didn't tell me," she said. "He knew how important my work was to me."

"I had a great crush on the newspaper business — it was my game, my fun. I worked very long and hard."

One day in 1966, she told the doctor her housekeeper believed if he was any kind of doctor, he would explain why she fell all the time.

"He took me right into the hospital

for tests and I was told I had a demyelinating disease," she said. "Somehow I just accepted it."

Once, watching a football game on television, she saw a piece on "Athletes for MS" and thought to herself: "That sounds like me."

"I called the doctor and asked if I had MS and he said: 'I told you that before.'"

It was when she was forced to retire from her newspaper job, which she said demands "legs and eyes" most of all, that her boss suggested she research the disease.

Her research and travel has convinced her that there is hope, that cause and perhaps cure are not far off.

"MS is not a fatal disease," she said. "Back in the 1930s or earlier, people died of the side effects. We can control them today."

Miss Ottenberg has encountered hundreds of MS patients in her mission to better understand the disease, she shares with them.

She writes about their courage and stamina in coping with MS.

## Workshop will counter youth's nothing-to-do summertime complaint

Help is on the way for parents who are already wondering how to keep their children from getting the summer blues by the end of June.

A workshop, called "Mom, There's Nothing To Do," begins at 8 p.m. Monday, June 4, in Farmington Hills Community Library, 23737 12 Mile Rd.

The event was given last spring by the library in cooperation with Farmington Youth Assistance (FYA) and will be repeated to provide information and motivation for the constructive use of leisure summertime.

"When you pull them all together, you'll find that there are more things to do in the Detroit metropolitan area in one summer than most people could do

in a life time," said John Pinkerton, of FYA.

Spokespersons from the Farmington Parks and Recreation Department, the YMCA, the Farmington Community Center, and the area's public schools will be on hand to preview their summer activities.

PARTICIPANTS in the workshop will also learn what activities have been planned by the Farmington Community Libraries, the Oakland County Parks and Recreation Department, the Southeastern Michigan Travel and Tourist Association, the Jewish Community Center and the Farmington Clergy Association.

Detroit Adventure, Inc. brings information about 30 Detroit area cultural and educational institutions and their plans for the summer.

All of the participating organizations will be represented in booths for workshop visitors to visit and browse and ask questions.

Barbara Walker, spokesperson for the library, estimates there will be about 250 information packets, brochures and materials for workshop visitors to pick and choose from for their summer plans.

Many of the offerings are freebies and many of the activities can be had at low to moderate prices.

## Trip tickets

The Farmington Hills Parks and Recreation department is sponsoring a discount ticket sales program for area and out-of-state amusement parks and summer attractions.

Attractions include: Bobo, Cedar Point, Sea World, Greater America, Kings Island, Old Chicago and the National Football Foundation College Football Hall of Fame.

Tickets are on sale now through Sept. 7, 1979. For further information, contact the Parks and Recreation office at 474-5115.

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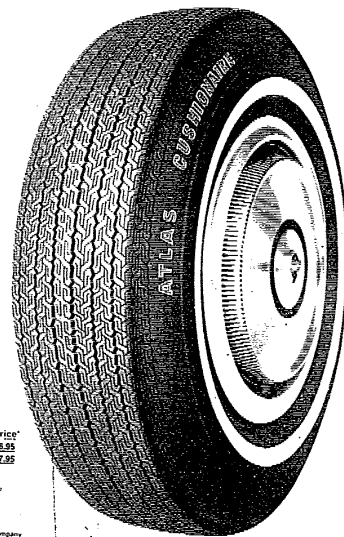
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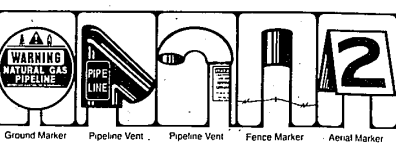
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