

# Opinion

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(A1F)

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## MS: mysterious, sinister, deadly

MY CLOSEST ENCOUNTER with multiple sclerosis came after the fact. Twelve-year-old girls were not considered candidates for the disease of the nervous system that destroys the myelin sheath around the spinal column in an onslaught that affects vision, balance, mobility, and other functions. So when our daughter, Linda, did develop these symptoms more than 20 years ago, there was never a misdiagnosis of multiple sclerosis, though, in a matter of days, she began to suffer double vision, lack of balance, and constant nausea.

"A tumor, or encephalitis," the pediatrician intoned. "We've got to get her some help quick."

Days spent in Children's Hospital evolved into a spinal tap which eliminated encephalitis as the problem; the shaving of Linda's long honey-blond hair for a ventriculogram; and then a diagnosis of an inoperable brain tumor.

She was supposed to die in weeks, but had cobalt treatments at Harper Hospital, improved physically and came back to us emotionally from a deep depression, which had kept her mute and locked into herself. For several months, she improved: walked, swam, rode a bicycle and was something of a curiosity to medical personnel.

IN JUST a few months, her symptoms returned. For humanitarian reasons, she was treated with cobalt to her brain to reduce the pressures of the tumor. The cobalt also damaged Linda's brain.

Fourteen more months she lived a kind of half life. Each morning my husband, Jack, carried her into the family room where she lay on a sofa. She slept in a hospital bed in her own room, but seldom used the waiting wheelchair. Her neck muscles lacked strength to support her head.

She watched TV, played games with her younger siblings, and often couldn't quite remember things, like one in senility.

Two vital decisions were made. Linda would stay at home with us, always. And when it was over, a complete pathology would be undertaken. We had lived with mystery long enough and believed that perhaps the doctors could learn something that might help others.

ONE NOVEMBER night, my daughter died holding my hand, finally at peace.

In a few weeks, when the pathological examination and the resulting tests be undertaken, we were told that Linda never had a tumor, that she had MS.

Several times after Linda's death, I remarked to physicians that she had died of MS and they contended I was mistaken — she was too young. True, they knew more about disease, but I made a point of learning.

Just today I was told that MS literature describing the degenerative disease as occurring in patients from 20-40 years of age has been changed and now refers to patients 15-40 years at onset. Sophisticated diagnostic procedures now substantiate that it does occur in younger persons.

THE TRAGEDY of MS is that it appears, in a sneaky way, in young people, and can take a long time to cause pronounced symptoms. A virus is one possible cause, one that can stay dormant for many years.

MS patients get remissions, when symptoms leave, almost miraculously. In some fortunate persons, the attacks may never recur. For others, in weeks, months, or years, they're in trouble again, often worse trouble.

Linda's mysterious improvement after the first cobalt course was a remission. We know that now.

Stewart Newman, a Southfield MS patient, once said that MS can involve any bodily function, sight, hearing, bladder and bowel control, and cause muscular weakness, too, making it a formidable foe.

DAN MURPHY, Oakland County executive, is the honorary chairman of a performance of a Pulitzer Prize winning play at the Birmingham Theatre to benefit the MS Society.

Murphy is one recruit in an army of sup-

porters of the society and the research, rehabilitation and other work done under its auspices.

Genie Francis, who plays Laura in TV's "General Hospital" stars in the sometimes touching and often hilarious story of three sisters.

"Crimes of the Heart" won the Pulitzer in 1981. It also won the New York Drama Critics Circle Award. You can get a cheaper ticket by not attending the Jan. 27 opening event but not the warm glow that comes from supporting a positive effort.

IF YOU CHOOSE to support the MS Society, for \$25 you can see the play, for \$50 you can see the play and attend a gala reception at the Robert Kidd Gallery. And for \$100, or \$175 a couple, you can add a buffet dinner at the Bloomfield Open Hunt.

Dennis Green, whose wife, 33, is an MS patient, has big plans and high hopes for the hunt club gala.

"My wife was diagnosed a year ago, not very long after our marriage," he says. "We got a crash course in MS, a mysterious, unhereditary, emotional and physical affliction."

Green, using show business connections, is trying through Pat Archer, owner of Excalibur, a Southfield restaurant, to get Frank Sinatra to appear at the hunt club party.

"O! Blue Eyes," who will be performing in the area that night, is the national honorary chairman and a spokesman for the MS Society. Green and others have their fingers and toes crossed that a very special personality will make it to the Bloomfield Open Hunt.

Before the fact or after, it isn't necessary to be an MS patient or even to know one to want to help. Those who need ticket information can call the MS Society at 967-2022.

## oral quarrel

### Vatican-U.S. relations

This week's Oral Quarrel question asked readers how they feel about the United States re-establishing diplomatic relations with the Vatican after a lapse of 117 years.

Following are the responses:

I think the Pope is a wolf in sheep's clothing. I am fed up with hearing his name through the media so much.

No conflict of church and state. A power which controls as many people and exerts as much power as the Vatican, there we should have diplomatic relations.

The United States should not appoint a Vatican envoy. This violates the principle on which the United States was founded — the separation of church and state. The Vatican exists primarily as the headquarters of the Roman Catholic religion rather than as a secular state. Conferring upon it ambassadorial status provides that religion with a status none of the many other church organizations in the United States and the world can have.

The desire for mutual Christian relationships between the church and the state should be for world peace. A suggestion that the antiquated Constitution of the United States be brought up to modern times. We need Christian people in this country and not Communists or atheists. We only live once and why can't we be kind and loving to everyone as God wants us to be. Wish I had the faith of Pope John Paul. Bless him and the Farmington Observer.

As a listening post for the world if the United States should establish diplomatic relationships with the Vatican we'd have an advantage that we have otherwise not had. Many countries already have diplomatic relationships with them and it would provide us with the opportunity to be in on the relationship that these countries already have. I think we should establish diplomatic relationships with the Vatican.

The United States shouldn't have any diplomatic relations at all with the Vatican. It may be a sovereign state, but its rule extends over a church not a country. We do not need diplomatic relations with a church that already is quite well represented in this country. It seems to me that this country's Constitution guarantees a separation of church and state. And this is a flagrant violation of this principle. I'm disappointed in President Reagan. I voted for him. I'll vote for him again.

This is a fine idea. Too bad it wasn't done earlier. In the late forties it was tried before, the last time I recall. In that time there was a lot of military information coming out of the Vatican that we had no other way of getting. This is one way of doing it. They should have done it before but haven't got around to it. That's my point of view — it's a real great idea.

It is absolutely essential that our government not do this proposed diplomatic relations with the Vatican. A separation of church and state, which we should be concerned with. To my knowledge and education this has been followed and should be followed.

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**PATIENTS WHO PRACTICE AVOIDANCE**

It is common for a patient to say, "I've been putting off seeing you, not because of the money, but because I couldn't work up the nerve to come." What keeps them away?

One reason is apprehension. The person believes that he or she will learn something about their health that they don't want to know, such as "Stomach cancer" or "Lose weight." Another cause is a misconception that a test the physician may perform, such as an X-ray, will adversely affect the person's health.

What seems to work the best to overcome this attitude of avoidance is having the patient talk over the matter with friends or family in a calm way. Repeatedly pointing out to the person that procrastination solves no problems eventually leads to their changing their mind. However, this dialogue needs to continue until the patient has made and kept his or her doctor's appointment.

Thereafter, it is up to the doctor to provide sufficient motivation so that the patient will comply with appointments, tests and treatment.

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