

health & beauty matters

FEELING BETTER ALL AROUND



Living with Multiple Sclerosis

By JERRY FORD

As diseases go Multiple Sclerosis (MS) is a real enigma. There is no identifiable cause, no apparent reason why people have varying rates of disease progression or the fact that it affects women more than men, and there is no cure.

Several treatments exist to alleviate many of the symptoms, but most of the 50,000 Canadians with MS just get on with the business of living.

Marlene was diagnosed when she was forty years old, and mother of three children. When reviewing her medical history it is clear the disease onset began when she was twenty-eight. Although she gets around very well using only a cane for support, she is now the caregiver for her daughter Laura, who has progressive MS and cannot live on her own.

Laura's first experience with MS at twenty-one developed into a full blown case of primary progressive MS at twenty eight years of age.

She moved back home with her parents and her then eighteen month old daughter went to live with her father.

Laura receives Canada Pension Plan Disability Pension, "If she had to live on that rather than living with us," says Marlene, her mother and primary care-giver, "I don't know how she would manage".

Sherry Robinson was a mother of five when diagnosed ten years ago with MS.

Formerly very athletic and now a power chair user, Sherry refers to herself as differently abled. She can do anything, but the methods she uses to get there may be a little

unorthodox.

Accepting MS was a major struggle for Sherry and she refers to a comment from one of her coworkers at Allendale. "Take the cards you have been dealt and just keep on living".

There were two other great advantages that Sherry had, an incredibly supportive and loving family and an enlightened employer who was prepared to make workplace changes to allow a single mother to continue working and support her family.

Marg had two children and a husband when MS hit her at thirty one years of age. Bone-weary fatigue is a common symptom for people with MS, and is often the cause of conflict in a relationship when a spouse misinterprets the fatigue for disinterest or laziness.

Although Marg needs a walker to get around her ex-husband still will not acknowledge that she has a progressive illness.

Norm was a successful self-employed tradesman supporting his wife and two children when he first experienced MS symptoms in his late twenties. The loss of his wife to cancer a decade later left him struggling to survive as the illness progressed, and credits his success to his amazing family and wonderful friends.

At sixty with secondary progressive MS he cannot work and lives with his daughter, her husband and two children. Norm considers himself to be one of the lucky ones because he is rich with love despite being cash poor.

Multiple Sclerosis (MS) is an auto-immune disease of the central nervous system (CNS). In Multiple Sclerosis, inflammation of nervous tissue causes the loss of myelin, a fatty material which acts as a sort of protective insulation for the nerve fibres in the brain and spinal cord. This demyelination leaves multiple areas of scar tissue (sclerosis) along the covering of the nerve cells, which disrupts the ability of the nerves to conduct electrical impulses to and from the brain, producing the various symptoms of MS.

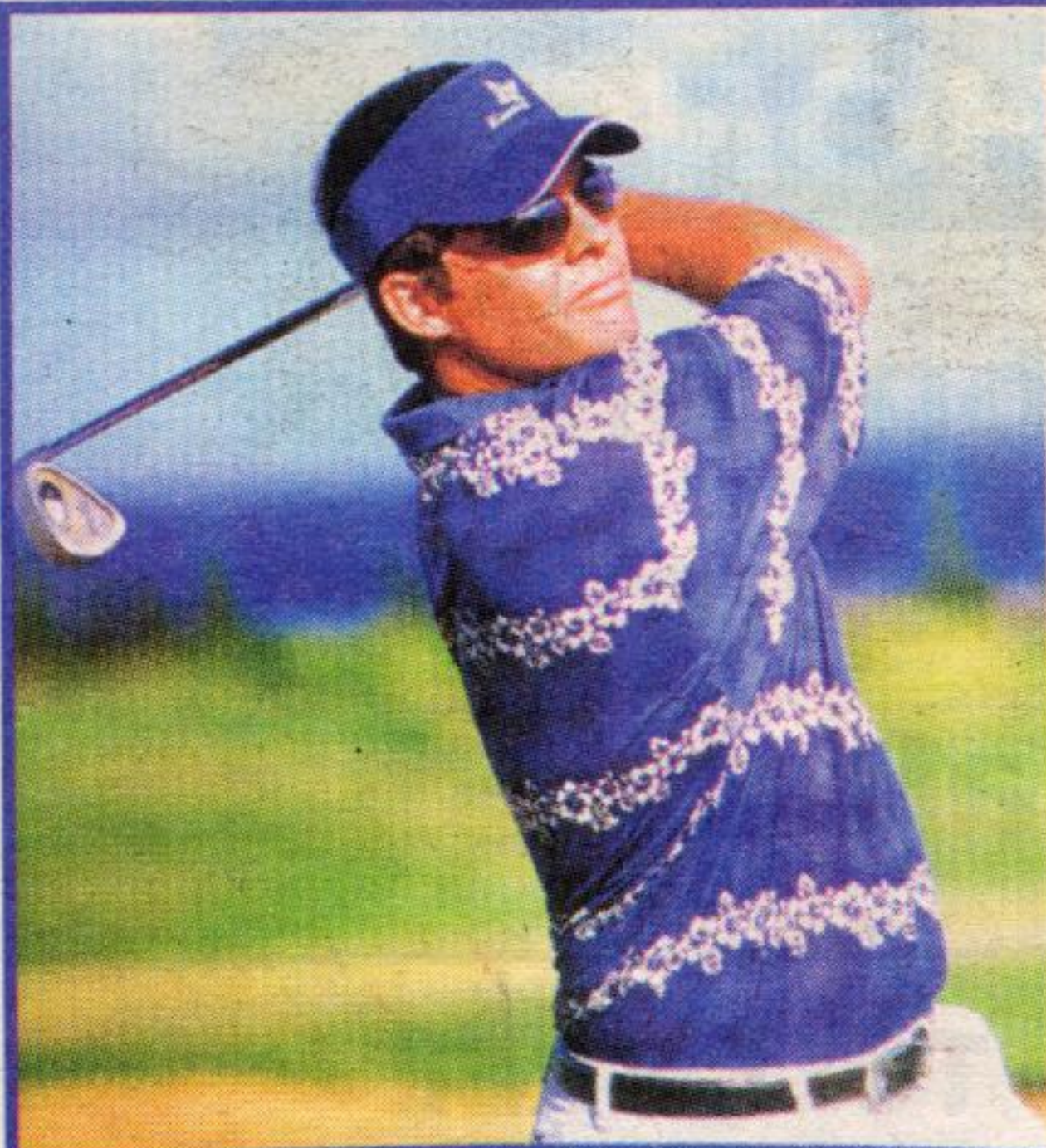
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