



Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

Linda Shepherd has learned to live with muscular sclerosis with the loving help of husband Mike and sons, from left, Jeff and Jim.

## Quietly, she battles a shadowy opponent

By IRENE GENTLE  
*The Champion*

At the age of 17, Milton's Linda Shepherd was not worried about her high school prom. She was worried about walking.

A puzzling numbness had recently crept through the left side of her body so that at times she couldn't feel her legs at all.

Finding the cause was too often hampered by sensation that would suddenly flare back into being.

During those good periods, neurological tests would be dropped. They'd resume once the disconcerting numbness made a comeback.

"When I was walking I would have to see my legs moving because I wouldn't feel them," said Ms Shepherd.

Eventually she was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis, the neurological disorder that at its worst can cause lost vision and lost mobility.

Seventeen years later, she spends much of her time making like a stumble is really just a stumble.

That's because few of her acquaintances even know she has MS.

"I can have troubles walking but if I stumble, it's just, oh, I did that," she said. "I don't like people to think 'there's her MS kicking in.'"

That doesn't stop Ms Shepherd from leaping out of the closet at MS fundraisers.

In fact, her family gets in the act. Just recently, her husband Michael managed to raise more than \$3,000 during Milton's annual MS walk.

The whole family took part, including Ms Shepherd.

"I like to keep quiet. I'm not showy," she said. "But I like to do my part."

According to the MS Society of Canada, approximately 50,000 Canadians are afflicted with MS. Most are diagnosed between ages 20-40.

Though MS has been recognized since the 1860s, there are still many mysteries surrounding it.

Today, many researchers believe it is an auto-immune disease.

It is definitely a non-fatal disease of the brain and spinal cord.

Symptoms arise when the body begins to attack myelin, the protective coating surrounding the central nervous system.

Most often, myelin has been compared

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## Flower show for mother

On Sunday, May 9, why not treat your mom to a few flowers in a natural setting, rather than a vase?

Crawford Lake Conservation Area is holding a "Wildflower Walk for Mom" from 1 p.m. through 3 p.m.

There will be a guided walk along the trails of Crawford Lake, after which mothers can enjoy a complimentary cup of Nature's Tea.

Cost for the event is \$7 per adult and \$5 for seniors and students.

Organizers ask that people pre-register by calling 854-0234.

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