

OPINION

Long road back

The *Champion* often features local residents who are ailing because of some debilitating or terminal disease.

Through these deeply personal stories, we hope to raise levels of awareness in the community about the illness that has affected the individual as well as the toll it takes on family. We also promote fundraisers with the hope that one day there will be enough dollars for research to find cures for such devastating conditions as cancer, heart attacks, strokes, muscular dystrophy, cystic fibrosis, Parkinson's, ALS, multiple sclerosis and Alzheimer's. The list is endless.



Barrie Erskine

It's difficult for the writers of such stories not to be touched in some way by the courageous individuals who are at the heart of their articles, as well as the families that struggle to come to grips with the effects of a catastrophic illness.

The *Champion's* Halton Division family is going through such an ordeal as one of its own has been handed a grim diagnosis. Barrie Erskine — a talented, multi-award winning photographer whose work has regularly appeared in this newspaper — became ill last summer. His symptoms included confusion, muscle weakness, fatigue and blackouts. He was tested for a litany of ailments, including West Nile virus and Lyme disease. Nothing was definitive except for a lesion on his brain.

He was eventually diagnosed with Clinically Isolated Syndrome (CIS). A definitive MS diagnosis won't be made until more time has passed and there is evidence of further brain lesions. Erskine was in the hospital for several months, feeling safe knowing that medical help was literally at his fingertips. Going home was difficult.

Gradually, his strength began to return and he managed to participate in the recent MS fundraising walk (starting on foot, riding a scooter, then finishing on foot, which he said was psychologically very important). However, last Friday Erskine had trouble walking. He's at home now, receiving medical treatment. The Erskines, while coping with what appears to be another attack, are wondering if this incident will lead to a definitive MS diagnosis.

With May being Multiple Sclerosis Awareness Month (see page A20), Erskine wants to raise community awareness about this cloak-and-dagger disease. He also hopes residents will participate in the fourth annual MS Golf for a Cure at Burlington's Crosswinds Golf and Country Club June 18.

Remember, Barrie, your media family is behind you — encouraging you every painful step of the way.



ReadersWrite

E-mail your letters to miltone@haltonsearch.com.

Let us decide if Town is doing the 'wonderful' job CAO claims

DEAR EDITOR:

In last Friday's *Champion*, the front-page headline read 'Town doing outstanding job: CAO.'

I think it would be a good idea if town council and members of regional council took a look around Milton before they decide how "wonderful" things are.

If they really want to know how things are going, they should have a town hall meeting and invite townspeople to speak about this subject — without limiting how people can voice their opinions and views.

**AGOSTINO GALIOTO
MILTON**

Aroundtown

Silence speaks volumes about challenges facing the deaf

My ears were closed and my eyes were opened.

That's what happened Tuesday afternoon as I trekked through Milton Mall wearing a big pair of earphones, trying to ignore the strange looks I was getting.

Moments later I entered Towne Dental and attempted, without being able to hear or speak, to describe a jarring pain in my jaw.

Let me tell you, it wasn't easy.

This activity was all part of the 'Deaf for a Day' — or in my case, about 10 minutes — program put on by the Canadian Hearing Society at Milton Mall.

Each participant was equipped with ear buds and headphones and given a scenario that involved going into one of the stores or businesses and inquiring about a product or service.

My companion, Jim Hardman of the

Canadian Hearing Society, explained through an interpreter what I was doing to the surprised-looking women behind the counter of Towne Dental.

Then he stepped back, no doubt ready to be amused.

Wanting to truly make a genuine effort and not take the easy way out, I tried to figure out how I could describe my imaginary situation by motioning or mouthing.

But I froze. There was no chance of success. Sure, maybe I could convey that my jaw was in pain, but there was no way I could ask if the pain was due to an infection or from clenching my jaw.

I've never been good at charades, and that talent wasn't about to manifest itself at that particular moment.

After a few painfully awkward moments — I was literally stupefied — out came the pen and notepad in desperation. From then on things went smoothly as the pad was passed back and forth, and I got what I needed.

Relieved, I walked back to the hearing society's booth.

At the "debriefing," I asked Hardman how he'd handle a similar situation. Probably the same way I did, he said, perhaps interspersed with some motioning and maybe a word or two.

Unfortunately, writing things down isn't a solution for every deaf person, he said. What about someone who's illiterate? How about a deaf person from a non-English-speaking



Stephanie Hounsell

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