

teen *inside*MS

See What's Inside

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A Portrait of Love



by Jennilee Duncan

My big brother, Tyler [above and on the cover], has influenced my life in so many ways. I can't even begin to think of all of them.

My mother has MS and tries very hard to do all the things that she can do for us.

My father is a good man, but ever since Mom was diagnosed, he has almost gone into a shell. Tyler taught me how to fish, frog gig, and understand about MS. When we were young, and mom was resting, my brother let me paint his toenails. He played store and ball with me also.

He quit school his junior year, but went on to get his GED. He sat me down at my 8th grade graduation and made me promise to stay in school. I'm going to try to be class valedictorian so he can write my speech for me!

I'm heavy for my age (15) and I get made fun of a lot. Tyler hears about these incidents, and makes the people

apologize to me. He says they pick on people to try to make themselves look good.

He is my lifeline. I have learned a lot from watching him make mistakes, and he makes sure I see where some things will get you.

Sometimes we just go riding in the country and listen to music and talk. He always has to approve of my friends (boys really), and I trust his judgment.

Tyler moved out of our house in August 2004, and I thought I would die. I missed him so much. But he calls me and comes by a lot.

He is engaged to be married, and at first, I guess, I was jealous. Tyler would not take a side or choose one over the other, and made us sit down and talk it out. I told him that it was very unfair of me to put him in that position, and as always he forgave me!

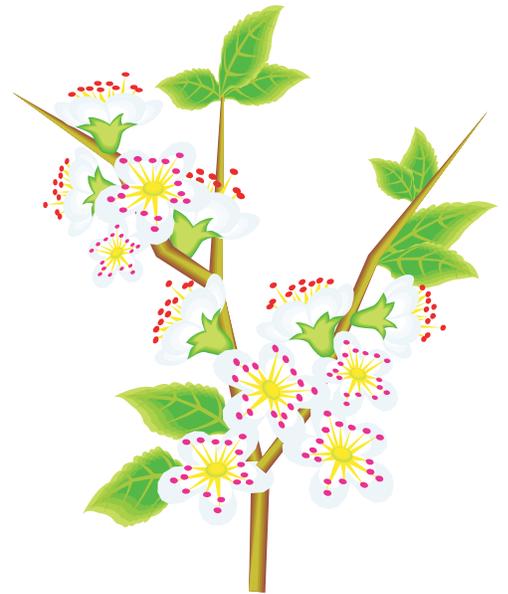
Two weeks ago he became a father. Of course I was there and taped the whole thing. The tears of joy, pride, and happiness that we shared—unexplainable! He is a great father. He works on the river barges. He calls to check on us, and helps Mom with her medication.

My brother is, and always has been, my best friend, my father, my brother, and my confident! I love him. ■



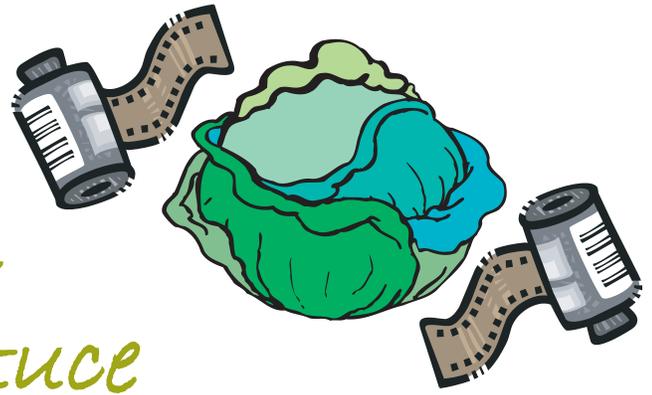
Plum Blossoms in Early Spring

Plum blossoms in early spring
Hard, dark lines
Laced with milky-white blossoms
Graceful curves of bark
Sprouting teardrop petals
Solumn deathly branches
Supporting lively, silky tufts
The stiff yet fragile trunk
Extending limbs up to the stars
Swaying with the gentle breezes
Catching raindrops from the sky
Basking in the Chinese sunset
Color canvas to your black and white
Stillness rushing over thee
Symbol of courage, hope, and purity ■



by Kimberly Turner

Two Rolls of Film and a Head of Lettuce



by Anya Rose

Two rolls of film and a head of lettuce. That's what you could find in our vegetable crisper on any given day. Yesterday, I opened my aunt's freezer and found bread, ice cream, and three reels of film. I closed it thinking, "Eh, nothing to eat." But I opened it again when I realized I found it perfectly normal to keep film in the freezer.

There's probably a whole slew of things that seem perfectly normal to me only because I grew up with them. It would be perfectly normal, say, to spend an evening playing under the bleacher seats while my mother rehearsed for a show. And I always brought something to occupy myself with when I went with her to gallery sit. Never did it once cross my mind that other kids probably didn't do these things with their parents.

My dad's "I'm gonna go for a walk, wanna come?" naturally translated to, "I'm gonna go bush-whacking through the woods in hopes of finding something interesting, wanna come?" The strange sounds that came up through the heater vents just meant he was busy editing his latest film. It was not unusual to fall asleep listening to the sounds of slowed down traffic and sped up voices.

Almost weekly, I fell asleep to the sounds of people talking and laughing. Sometimes it was in my own bed while my parents played poker in the diningroom, sometimes I was sprawled out on someone's couch. I'd sleep in restaurants with my head under the table, on my mom's lap, while she

Two Rolls of Film and a Head of lettuce (continued)

continued to carry on a conversation with the rest of the party. I'd wake up in my own bed, utterly puzzled as to how I had gotten there without waking up. I guess I was a heavier sleeper than I thought I was.

Even my mother's multiple sclerosis never seemed out of the ordinary to me. Her bee venom therapy, her daily injections, the modifications to the house to make it more wheelchair accessible, all of it was as normal to me as keeping film in the refrigerator. Never once did I wake up and think, "Wait a minute, most kids don't have these experiences." I guess I was a heavier sleeper than I thought I was. Maybe the next time she goes on about how hard it must be for someone to have a mother with MS, I'll tell her not to worry, it's just like two rolls of film and a head of lettuce. ■

[Reprinted with permission from "Experiments in writing and random thoughts", www.tobearose.blogspot.com, the blog site of Anya Rose, former "MS Through the Eyes of a Child" artist.]

Youth Against Multiple Sclerosis

Kaley Zeitouni, who writes "Kaley's Kolumn", was 12 years old when she was diagnosed with MS. In response, she founded what is now a non-profit organization dedicated to raising MS awareness among children and teens. She called that organization Youth Against MS (YAMS). Initially started as an MS Walk team to raise funds for the Southern California Chapter, YAMS, Inc., boasts an official board of directors and is run completely by teens. Its aim is two-fold:

1. Develop educational materials targeted to teenagers.
2. Raise money, through events, for the Society.

YAMS goes National

The National MS Society is now working with YAMS, Inc. to bring new YAMS groups to Society chapters across the country. The mission remains the same: to connect, educate, engage, and empower teens. The program will target high school teens, ages 13-18 who either have MS or some connection to the disease. Initial plans include the development of a National Teen Advisory Council, creation of teen-focused educational programs, and team development for Society fundraising events.

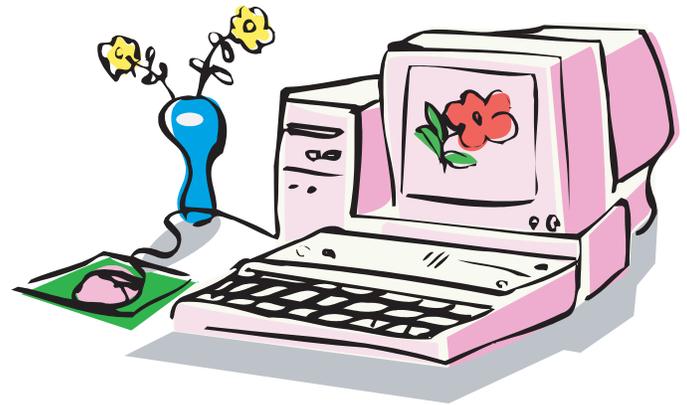
For more information, contact your chapter (1-800-FIGHT-MS).

Rolling With the punches

By Tara Brennan

My mom's first MS attack was right after I was born, so naturally I had no idea what was going on. Fortunately, my mom was not hit with MS severely at first. It did hit harder when I was ten years old. My parents decided to get divorced. My dad did not give the cliché statement of "We don't love each other anymore" but instead said, "It's not safe for you to be around her anymore."

I didn't see my mom for a while, and if I did it was with the supervision of another relative. My mother persevered and two years later won the right to see her children without supervision. Only a few months later, my mom, sister and I were driving when an elderly man had a stroke while backing out of his driveway. He hit my mom's car and caused us to go into another lane. My mom was no longer allowed to drive while her children were in the car. For four years after the accident, visitation with my mom was solely at her house unless she could get a friend or relative to drive somewhere else. Those days



were a lot harder for me to deal with than normal teenage problems.

Recently, MS has had a more positive impact on her. Even though her disease is gradually getting worse, her seemingly unending divorce has inspired her to start a dating Web site for "special singles" which enables single people like herself to meet others who share similar disabilities. This Web site is growing larger and larger everyday and gives my mom a sense of satisfaction when dealing with her MS.

With the imposing example of my mom's determination and triumph over MS, I have learned to overcome the negative effects. You simply must "roll with the punches." ■

Talk to us and other teens about MS!

Send us your letters, stories, poetry, photos and art. E-mail: editor@nmss.org. Mail to: Teen InsideMS, National MS Society, 733 Third Avenue, NY 10017-3288.

Please send artwork (photographs, cartoons, drawings, or pictures) via email or on a CD (jpeg format). We cannot return material or be responsible for original artwork, so please send your work this way. We will notify you if your work is going to be published.

Please include your age, name, and address or e-mail address. We will not release this to anyone. (If you are under 18, we may need a form signed by a parent or guardian.)



***Teen InsideMS* is published quarterly on the Web site
of the National MS Society.**

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