

## **A Man Gets To Know His Limitations (With Apologies To Clint Eastwood)**



From 1972 until 1977, I was in a rock band. Off and on. I played the drums - not very well, and I'm not being modest. I never took lessons, and the only people I ever saw play the drums were on a show called "Don Kirchner's Rock Concert." This show was on past my bedtime on Friday nights, and there were no VCRs or DVRs back in those days. Plus, my drum set was a real mongrel, cobbled together over the years from age 11 to age 15 and funded by a chicken debeaking job (don't ask) that paid a poultry, er, I mean, a paltry, \$2.10 an hour. I had a lot of fun being in a band, but I stopped playing after someone stole most of my drums in 1977.



Playing with my band in the 70s.

A couple of years ago, I decided that I wanted to try to learn how to play the guitar. Hello MS! It turns out that my clumsy fingers, the pinky finger especially, really do not want to do the things necessary to play most chords. A friend who was trying to help said, "just put your pinky finger there on the fret board."

Wasn't gonna happen. And this was a major bummer. I'd actually never even considered that MS would limit me in this way.

I next tried to play the bass guitar. It was easier, but I still couldn't move my hands fast enough to stay loyal to the tune I was trying to plunk away at. My mind knew what I wanted to do, but my fingers had missed the memo.

So, back to the drums. It turns out that my son-in-law, Skyler, plays the drums and his drum set is so much better than what I had back in the day. He asked me if he could store his kit, as they're called (though not by me), in my family room. Sure thing. He even set them up so I could play at will.

Well, hello again MS. This particular physical limitation has been the hardest to swallow in a while. Playing the drums, which had been effortless and fluid, has become decidedly effortful and deliberate. There's just no... flow. The once almost automatic coordination of my hands and my feet has been replaced by the same conscious and intentional movement I use to scale the stairs without falling on my face. Again: major bummer!

I gave it the ol' college try. I still enjoy sitting down and pounding away at Skyler's drum set when I'm in the mood. It ain't the same - and, I'm not sugar-coating things here, this really does suck-but it's fun anyway and what else am I going to do. It's not like I was scheduled to go out on a world tour with my new band. And, as my lifelong friend, Kathy, told me, I still have my voice and I can carry a tune.