

Dear adversary



30 years of living with MS.

by Lois Kipnis

Veteran's Day, 2016

Dear MS, on our 30th anniversary:

Do you recall our first encounter?
The beach. Intense heat. Knocked me off my feet.
I stumbled in the sand. You grabbed my hand,
Touched my spine. Electric shocks. Tingling.
Weakening my myelin sheath covering.

You lingered a while, then disappeared.
Wooed me, pursued me for over a year.
I loathed not knowing when you'd reappear,
Or the tease when you stuck around longer.
My resistance weaker; feelings stronger.

But thirty years ago, on Veteran's Day,
I learned your true name when you came to stay.
Pitched your tent. In my face. Under my skin.
Jabs which made my body a pincushion
Affecting speech, balance and cognition.

It's then, dear adversary, we went to war,

For I understood what MS stood for.
Self-pity at first was my reaction,
Passive until I opted for action.
And so I declared you my enemy.

Battle cry? "Possibility, not negativity!
Rehabilitation, not debilitation!"
You exacerbated; I retaliated.
You captured, held me in submission,
I regrouped; went into remission.

My ammunition? Determination,
A stockpile of books, information.
Outsmarted you with an education.
Camouflaged my fatigue. Never succumbed.
Made humor my captain. Stuck to my guns.

Thought you'd wear me down and rank me squeamish,
But I mustered courage for each skirmish.
When you immobilized, I mobilized.
Showed you muscle, changed diets, exercised.
Prioritized. Fortified. Strategized.

So, MS, master of surprise attacks,
For thirty years, I've fought to force you back.
I'm a Veteran now. Scars. Earned my lesions.
Proven a warrior for all seasons.
Course of progression? No rhyme. No reason.

But I'll fight battles to the bitter end.

Determinedly,

Lois Kipnis

Your War of Nerves Friend

Lois Kipnis, who was diagnosed with MS in 1986, is a creative arts consultant with 40 years of experience as a drama teacher and arts administrator. She's the author of "Without a Script: A Caregiver's Journey" and "Things Can Always Be Worse!" and the co-author of three educational books, including "Together We Can Improvise." Kipnis lives in Massapequa, New York, and enjoys spending time with her family, attending writing workshops and reading her stories and poems at bookstores, libraries and other venues. Writing has always been a catharsis for her, whether she writes about living with MS, the past eight years as caregiver for her mom, or humorous and serious short stories. "Writing engages my mind, provides me with a creative outlet when physical activities are a challenge, and is a vehicle for me to educate and share my philosophies about life," Kipnis says.

See more at loiskipnis.com.