

Taking the plunge



by **Linda Landers**

When I married my husband, Sherwood, in 1962, I knew he was committed to taking the plunge. Little did I know that at the age of 75, he would take a different kind of plunge. On Jan. 1, 2015, “Woody” walked into the 47-degree ocean at Smuggler’s Beach just off Cape Cod, along with about 200 other people participating in an annual polar plunge, and accompanied by our longtime friend, Hedy Griffin, a retired nurse.

Ever since he was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis about 14 years ago, Woody has maintained an attitude that he will never give up and will keep doing things to challenge himself. The first morning of the new year, he parked his walker in the sand and proceeded to walk into the water. Three Marines attending the event helped him into and out of the surf. “When I emerged from the water, some people congratulated me, but I was thinking that some people with MS couldn’t do what I did,” Woody says. “I did this not only for myself, but for all those with MS who could not.” Besides, he notes, his MS might have even helped him do it. Since his legs are somewhat numb, the temperature of the water didn’t bother him as much as it might have otherwise.

Woody turned 76 in July, but he’s planning to return to the cold Atlantic waters in South Yarmouth again in January. This time, he has issued a challenge to his physical therapists: Meet him in the water, or make a donation to the National MS Society.

Linda Landers lives in Dennis, Massachusetts, with her husband, Woody, who was diagnosed with MS in 2001.

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