



Mid America MS Achievement Center News

From the Participants

Can You Top This?

By Mary Franzke

My MS began the year we were married. Five years later we decided to have a child. My husband and I asked our doctors what effect pregnancy would have on my MS and how hereditary it was. The information I found at the time (1983) was that my child would have a .001 percent higher chance of having MS than the general population. This seemed like decent odds. No one could tell us what the effect on me would be though, but it didn't matter because I would have gone ahead anyway. As it turns out, I should have been more careful.

The pregnancy progressed smoothly but I was careless with the food supply and gained about 40 extra pounds, which turns out to be quite a bit when your baby just weighs 7 pounds at delivery! By the middle of my eighth month, my unsteady legs reminded me about the weight, but I still could walk four or five blocks while using my cane and, come on, I was pregnant, not fat!

Then it happened. Just four weeks before Tim was due to be born, while working as a research assistant, I had to carry some forms down the hall. I was wearing shoes with no-skid rubber bottoms for safety. Unfortunately they grabbed the carpet and I tripped and collapsed

ungracefully with my leg twisted under me. I knew from the cracking sound and intense pain that this was not good.

Two hours later the orthopedist showed me the X-rays. "It's broken," he said with a smile. "The tibia's fractured and we have been wondering how to set it so you can have that baby next month." This was depressing news. If they put on a cast it would reach to the top of my thigh and interfere with the delivery. I couldn't possibly manage my stomach, the cast and a set of crutches.

Finally they decided to screw the bones together and avoid a cast completely. The next day I had spinal anesthesia, which gave me my first experience with paraplegia and total numbness below the waist. "That's what it must be like!" I said to myself. "Thank goodness it will wear off in a few hours."

I spent the final month of my pregnancy at home during a hot Kansas July. My mother came to help and produced several "cures" for my depressed mood, like chocolate chip cookies; not the best diet for a fat, pregnant MS'er with a broken leg. "Some day this will be funny," I told friends who looked at me with pity. It took a few years, but now I have the best "worst pregnancy" story of anyone I know!

We now have two sons. Tim is now 21 and Chris is 16.