

# "MS" is NOT an Acronym for "Mustang Sally"

by Carol Eilers

First and foremost, the following is not an article about equine lameness, but instead is one about a debilitating human illness, Multiple Sclerosis (MS).

Whether you ride your horse(s) for pleasure, for work or for show, I wonder if you have ever stopped to think about how distraught you would be to not have that horse's sturdy and trustworthy legs to propel and support you? And further, just think how distressing it would be if your own two legs were suddenly and unexpectedly not able to support and propel you! Such is exactly what many people with Multiple Sclerosis have to deal with every day—legs that are not trustworthy enough to support them, so they move about in wheel chairs.

And that is why it was so upsetting to me to learn that my 35-year-old niece, Brooke Raymond, was diagnosed with MS in November, 2009.

MS is a potentially debilitating autoimmune (body attacking its own tissues) disease that works against one's own body by causing demyelination of the central nervous system. Myelin coats the nerves and brain cells and is an important structure for effective transmission of nerve messages. This process of demyelination can be compared to erosion of the rubber insulation surrounding a copper wire in an electrical cord. It leads to shocks and short circuits and neurological deficits. In a nutshell, MS disrupts the flow of information from the brain to the body.

Fortunately, with modern medicine, my niece has recovered from the initial attack that temporarily left her without the use of her hands, and she has now returned to work full time. But for her, every day now is like Forrest Gump's proverbial box of chocolates—she never knows what she will get or when the next relapse that will cause further progression will occur.

Brooke is trying to take control by having a new mission, and that is to raise funds that provide support and services to those suffering from MS. Just as importantly, she is raising funds that are needed to support research to find better treatments and even a cure for this all-too-common disease that strikes, for the most part, young female adults in the prime of their lives.

Brooke lives in Colorado, and the Colorado MS Society is sponsoring a series of MS walks in nine communities this spring and summer to raise money and awareness. Brooke and her team will be walking in Fort Collins and they are looking for donations to the cause. She is currently the Number One individual fund raiser and is captain of the Number One team for fund raising in Fort Collins. At the time I wrote this, Brooke was the 6<sup>th</sup> highest individual fund raiser in the entire state of Colorado. My brother, who is her Dad, was 2<sup>nd</sup> in Fort Collins, her mother 5<sup>th</sup>, and her brother 6<sup>th</sup>. (The actual MS Walk is May 1, but the deadline for donations is August 6).

You can see that this is a family effort, and thus I feel the desire to also pitch in and help Brooke and her team raise money for research to find the cure and raise money to provide support services. By writing this article, I hope I am doing my part to increase awareness of MS. It is an incredible cause. I am joining their team as a virtual member (non-walking, but offering support and raising funds), and am soliciting for the effort to stamp out MS.

The Fort Collins fundraising goal is \$65,000 and they anticipate about 600 walkers. The statewide walk goal for Colorado is \$1.1 million and there will be 10,000 people participating. The Colorado Chapter is a driving force of research for the prevention, treatment and cure of MS and contributes funds to support 335 National MS Society research projects worldwide - eight of which are located in Colorado.

If you are so inclined and moved, you could help Brooke's team (now including me) remain Number One in Fort Collins, and also remain one of the top five teams overall for Colorado, **knowing that your contribution will be making a difference in the lives of people affected by Multiple Sclerosis nation-wide.** Thank you in advance for making this effort for Brooke and anyone else with MS.

After all, I want to see my niece sitting on a horse, not in a wheel chair, and we can help her and others do that by pulling together for this awesome cause.



Initially, Brooke's hands betrayed her in such a way that she would not have been able to feel the reins, much less hold on to them.

More research funds are needed to help Brooke and others like her to fight MS.

To donate electronically, here are the instructions:

- 1.) go to [www.walkmscolorado.org](http://www.walkmscolorado.org)
- 2.) Click on "Donate" in far left column, or upper right bar
- 3.) Type in participant's name: "Carol Eilers"
- 4.) Type in State: "Iowa"
- 5.) Click on "Search"
- 6.) Click on "Carol Eilers," far left on the bottom of the screen.
- 7.) Click on "Donate to Participant" and go from there...

This will bring you to the participant's page.

But if you prefer the old-fashioned way of doing things, you can make a check out to "National Multiple Sclerosis Society" (or just "NMSS")

and send it to:

**National MS Society  
Colorado Chapter  
PO Box 172685  
Denver CO, 80217-2685**

On the "For" line on the check, please write in "Brooke Raymond." Then add "Brooke's Survivor Walk" and "Fort Collins MS Walk" somewhere on the check, preferably under the "For" line.

**Or send to me, at:**

**Carol Eilers  
5070 Northridge Pt. SE  
Cedar Rapids, IA 52403  
....and I will do the rest**

If you cannot, or choose not to contribute at this time, that is fine, but please spread the word about this horrible disease and get others to become advocates and supporters in their own communities. Thank you for taking the time to read this, and considering what role, if any, you can play in the fight against MS.