

Fighting MS with Faith and Angels by **R. Carter Blaisdell, Editor**

Katherine Blaisdell (Hunt) Anderson, West Chester, PA, was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis (MS) in 1988. With the help of her angels – including her husband, **William Forbes Anderson** – she’s learned to live life to the fullest, focusing on what she can do, not on what she can’t do.

Kathy’s Angels

Between 20 to 40 family and friends gather to go with her on the annual MS Society walk in the Philadelphia, PA, area. They bring children as young as two years old and family dogs, sporting their T-shirts to identify themselves as “Kathy’s Quickies,” named after her wheelchair.

Part of this group is “Kathy’s Angels,” who help her year-round with meal preparation, household chores, prayers and encouragement. Most of them are members of her church, Great Valley Presbyterian Church, Paoli, PA.

Around the Christmas holidays Kathy invites them to an “Angel Party” at her West Chester, PA, home. With help she serves refreshments and gives gifts of angels, hand crafted each year by her sister, **Susan Hayford (Hunt) Struble**, North Port, FL. Lower Merion High School special needs students bake cookies for the event.

“The party was first done as a thank you to all these gals who help me so much during the year. Then it also included those who are involved in helping others in some way, plus we give donations of needed items to an organization,” Kathy explained.

Her Husband’s Support

Her husband, Bill, has been wonderfully supportive. He does the shopping and cooking under Kathy’s direction. They eat a meal from the same plate of food; he feeds them both. Kathy is an articulate and attractive woman who plans parties, has friends over for lunch, belongs to a twice-a-month book club, a Bible study group, and participates in a fitness club. She scripts the annual Advent Candlelight Service at her church.

The MS hit her when “both kids [daughters **Jennifer** and **Rebecca**] had gone off to college, and it was going to be ‘my time.’ In the beginning it was devastating. You feel like you’re losing control of your life.”

She eventually had to leave a job she loved as a tour guide and interpreter at Winterthur Museum, Garden and Library in Delaware.

Faith and Friends

She continues, “The good Lord and my friends helped me realize I could put the energy I was spending being frustrated and anxiety-filled toward something else and get on a different path, as long as there was somebody around to help me. Instead of saying, ‘I can’t put my wrist watch on anymore’ or ‘I can’t do dishes,’ I tried to remain open and interested to other possibilities.”

Those around her know that Kathy draws her strength from her faith and the Paoli Health and Fitness club program, called “Fighting Back,” for people with neurological difficulties, who have had strokes or been in auto accidents, for example. She goes three times a week, for half an hour each time, careful to avoid making the fatigue worse that is so prevalent in MS.

Fighting Back Scholarship

Kathy was selected as a 2002 recipient of the Fighting Back Scholarship Program, Wayne, PA, which recognizes and aids individuals who have suffered a life-changing illness or injury, and who have endured that experience through courage, desire and perseverance. The program allows recipients to continue in therapy after their insurance and personal resources run out.

Younger mothers come away after being with her with a sense of encouragement. Her motherly wisdom gives them hope. Her attitude and effort let others realize that nothing is so big that you can’t handle it, if you have the Lord in your life and friends to help you. She blesses people from her wheel chair.

Kathy explains, “My limbs are no longer working, but my heart and my head are working fine....MS is my hobby and my job, because you really do have to manage it. Her continued therapy has allowed her to maintain her range of motion, like getting in and out of her wheelchair. Most people don’t like their wheelchairs, but I think of my wheelchair – and all the other equipment I use – as enablers.”

Kathy is a graduate of the Univ. of California, Davis, 1966 (B.A., Political Science). Kathy married Bill in 1965 when he was a U.S. Air Force 1st Lt.. He had graduated from M.I.T. in 1961 (B.S. Industrial Management). They celebrated their 40th wedding anniversary this spring with a trip to northern California to be with their younger daughter, Dr. **Rebecca Stevens (Anderson) Piotrowski**, and husband, **Kenn**.

Bill’s Air Force Career

By 1968 Bill flew over 100 missions from Thailand over North Vietnam as an RF4 Navigator during the Vietnam War. Bill was Base Commander at Wethersfield Royal Air Force Base, England, and Director of Intelligence Systems for all Tactical Air Forces, Langley Air Force Base, VA, before he retired as a colonel in 1985 after 24 years of active duty. Since then he’s been planning future information systems for multiple governments.

Katherine Blaisdell (Hunt) Anderson *From: Phyllis JoEllen (Hook) Hunt, Lois Bethel (Blaisdell) Hook, John Blaisdell, George Uriah Blaisdell, John Blaisdell, Ephraim Blaisdell, III, Ephraim, Jr. – (6.34)*