

Champion Ken Schuler

Youngstown, OH



Diagnosis date: September 15, 2008

What was your first symptom? Complete paralysis from my waist down. Through physical therapy and steroid IV's, for the following six months, I learned to walk again.

How does MS affect your daily life? I have more limitations than before. Having to adjust to new routines because of fatigue and pain and drained of the strength feeling in my body. My fatigue and pain has increased since last year and I can't do as much as before because I feel drained faster now. I am more humbled now than before. It took a long time to learn. Pride is a hard pill to swallow.

Why is Bike MS or the Ohio Buckeye Chapter important to you? Bike MS spreads awareness of our disease and when fellow MS-ers who still have the ability to ride do so for those of us who can no longer ride – we ride with them through spirit.

How has the National MS Society helped you, or how have you been involved with the Society? The National MS Society helped me by sending me tons of information about the disease and that helped ease the shock of the diagnosis. They also sent me list of local neurologists who specialize in MS treatment. They sent me contact information to two local MS self-help groups. Then when I moved they sent me contact information on neurologists and MS self-help groups in the new area.

I participated in a Copaxone study group and I average two MS Walks per year since my diagnosis. In 2011, I participated in the local MS Walk (1 mile loop) at the Canfield Fairgrounds, the National MS Walk (4 mile loop) at Mill Creek Park in Mahoning County, and the other super walk was at Toledo University in Lucas County where a record was set with over 1800 walkers. I also attended our MS picnic and several seminars. I also volunteer at events and I try to make it to two to three events each year.

What is your message to the riders? Enjoy the ride and take nothing for granted for one day that ability is there and the next it may be gone. Take in the sights, sounds, and smells for those who've lost those senses. Have a safe and fun ride and thank you!

Favorite movie: Westside Story and Apocalypse Now

Favorite musician: Louis Armstrong, Dizzy Gillespie, and Wynton Marsalis

Hobbies/pastimes: Hunting, writing poetry and building models.

What is something most people don't know about you? I'm a pretty good cook and my poetry has been published twice.

Who is your hero? My parents because without them there is no me and I'd never have gotten the opportunity and privilege of being a father and grandfather. Also, my family and friends who have stuck by my side through this illness even as it progresses.

Identifier: The picture is of a tattoo I designed and had placed upon my left calf (in the military our left foot is our plant and pivot foot). It is of the U.S. Air Force logo (for my 18 years of dedicated service). The National MS Society logo has a pink line (for breast cancer awareness) instead of the black line. Along the bottom is a banner with 15 SEPT 08 on it (my MS diagnosis date) which happen to fall five days before the end of my third enlistment. After six months of physical therapy I tried to reenlist for my fourth enlistment (to get my 20 years in) and I was refused as I was deemed unfit for duty due to my MS. I don't mind though, it gives me more time to be in contact with my children and grandchild. I'm a firm believer that if a door is slammed in your face it doesn't mean there isn't an open window to go through. Live the life you're granted with to the fullest and always remember we have MS it doesn't have us.

