

appeared in an MS Newsletter:

“I am pleased that Annette Funicello’s story (in “People” August 17, 1992) helped heighten awareness about MS. However, I was disturbed by some of her references to losing quality of life and being confined to a wheelchair. This perpetuates stereotypes.”

If we are shown as those people who have glorified and accepted weak role models, who acquiesced to this disease, what hope is there?

When I was diagnosed eighteen years ago, I was delivered the news in the hospital where I, like Ben Thrift, had just finished a series of tests which were supposed to tell me why I had lost my coordination and physical strength. As if the shock of knowing I had such an alien disease was not enough, I was also told that nothing could be done about it. In Ben’s interview a similar story was told, but he was more emphatic a lot earlier in the game in reference to his diagnosis than I was: “When I was twenty-eight, I came out of hospital in a wheelchair, blind, incontinent, totally paralysed, and was told that that was the way I was going to spend the rest of my life. I had a young wife, three young children, and I had, up until then, a good job. And so I told the doctor where he could stick his wheelchair, to which he had just imprisoned me for the rest of my life, in a loud voice, in the ward where he told me, and got a roar of applause from everybody!” I, on the other hand, spent weeks crying because I was sure that I had been sentenced to a hopeless and useless life. My fears were confirmed by speaking to many others (I didn’t know Ben at the time) who were also struggling with the disease.

Fortunately, sanity prevailed. However, after ten years of