



The Challenge Journal

MS Challenge Walk
2005

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3 days. 50 miles. Closer to a Cure!

How much is 50 miles? For my metric-oriented friends, it is 80 kilometers. Traveling that distance by car seems to be a breeze, especially on the I-95 where the posted speed limit varies from 55 to 70 miles per hour.

In June of 2005 when I contacted the National Multiple Sclerosis Society South Florida Chapter (NMSS-SFL) regarding the event, I had no idea what I was signing up for. Every one I talked to had only one thing to say "F-I-F-T-Y M-I-L-E-S!!!!!!!" Dwight at the NMSS-SFL asked me if I had ever done any thing like this and my response was "No, but I know it is a huge commitment and I can do it." Dwight explained that there is a lot of training required prior to the event and that each participant is required to raise a minimum amount of money. While all this was being explained to me, the only thought that crossed my mind was "Exercise? I'd actually have to do some exercise?" Well, a day later I signed up and began planning on how I was going to ask everyone for pledges.

In this Journal, I hope to capture the essence of the event and how it brought new meaning to "doing for others". The people I met, the experience my family and I had the pleasure of sharing and the new friends we made, all because a group of people decided to walk. After they walked the first 20 miles, they walked again. Only to wake up one more time and walk to the end!

As the posters said — The Walk "did" Challenge me and the Experience "did" change me!



How do you tell 750 people that they need to start walking in order to keep walking until they have walked 50 miles? You don't - The Walkers "wanted" to be there!

The MS Challenge Walk

The New England MS Challenge Walk is an annual event held in September - an excellent time to visit Cape Cod, home of the Kennedy family and Cape Cod Potato Chips. The walk is broken down into three sections. On the first day, Walkers follow a route that takes them from the starting point through to the Cape Code Sea Camp, a 20 mile journey. The second day starts at the Sea Camp and takes the Walkers through the scenic Cape making a 20 mile loop back to the Camp. The third and final section is ONLY 10 miles and has us starting at the Sea Camp and ending at a school in town.

The Walkers are supported by Crew. An integral part of the event, Crew include people that sign up for the event and members of the National MS Society Staff. The Crew are responsible for rest stops strategically placed every 3 miles (on average) providing water, sports drinks, snacks, medical attention and most importantly, cheering for the Walkers. The Crew also consists of a bicycle contingent that rides up and down the route supporting the walkers. Crew on motorcycles support walkers along the route and especially at intersections. Then there is the crew at the Sea Camp, consisting of medical staff, massage therapists, decorators, organizers, setup/prep, check-in, and more. Inside you will find more about the walk and the participants.

This is an event that is a true challenge of the mind and the body. Every person that made a contribution, the sponsors, the pledges, the Crew, the staff, the Law Enforcement, the Medical Teams and the Walkers will all remember it... Here's why...

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Points of interest:

- This year, there were about 750 Walkers.
- There were about 350 Crew Members.
- There were about 150 One-Day Volunteers.
- An estimated 400,000 Americans have MS.
- Every hour, a person is diagnosed with MS.
- The percentage of women with MS is 70%
- There is no cure for MS.
- There is no known cause of MS.



Fundraising — Thank You!

You helped me raise \$5,829!

Thanks to you and Tyco's Matching Gift Program, I reached my goal and then some! Your average sponsorship was \$70.

The highest sponsor contributed 17% of the total. 40% of your pledges were made through the MS Society's web-based ePledge tool. 55% of the sponsorship was made through checks and 5% through cash.

Each and EVERY sponsor's support has been incredible and motivating. I thank each and every one of you from the bottom of my "soles".

Since you raised over \$5,000, the kids got to paint my foot and have it imprinted (picture top left). Today I understand why the footprint is taken "before" the walk

starts.

This year Crew members were also challenged to raise funds, but were not required to do so.

The Challenge this year raised over \$1,000,000

This money is used to fund research for a cure and to provide programs to support people suffering from MS and their families.

Surprisingly, I am still being asked if it is too late to sponsor and no it is not. The National MS Society is still adding up the fundraising monies. So, if some one says, "I meant to sponsor him", let them know it is not too late.

THANK YOU...

...for your amazing support.



The South Florida Team

From Florida there were a total of five walkers. This seems to be a really small number considering there are 15,000 known people effected my MS in South Florida.

Three of the Florida Walkers decided to "do their own thing" and we never really got to spend time with them. In the beginning I thought that was strange—but as time went by, I realized that with the number of people there and the number of walkers we actually met along the way, it really did not matter.



I had the pleasure of walking with Kristine for 49 of the 50 miles. Kristine and Melanie are from St. Lucie, FL.

Dwight and Dori are from the National MS Society South Florida Chapter. They were the GREATEST support team we could have wished for. They helped with every thing from fundraising, planning, cheering to helping us get there.

After the first day of walking 20 miles, walking down to the beach seemed like it took forever. As you can see, it was a great evening to be at the beach. I even had a jacket on!! Imagine that.

From right to left are Melanie Perez (Crew), Kristine Parker (Walker), Dorianna Andrade (Staff), Dwight Eisenman (Staff), Debbie Rupani (Crew), Tareeq Rupani (Walker). Front Row from right to left are Azra Rupani (Crew) and Laila Rupani (Crew)

Training...



How much training does one do for a 50 mile walk? I actually don't know!

Every one seemed to be concerned about whether or not I was training. I was mainly concerned about how long I had to be outside in the Florida humidity.

The first day I decided to train, I walked 4 miles. It was a long 4 miles. Basically I went from home to the closest Wal-Mart

store. I then called home and asked Debbie to pick me up from the store. The drive home was refreshing.

For the next two weeks I walked 4 miles almost every morning before going to work and before the sun came up. On the weekends I adventured to 5 miles.

Now, this was not enough if I had to do 20 miles in one day, I had to pick the pace up. For

the next 6 weeks, I walked 5 miles almost every day before going to work and 10 miles each day of the weekend. I felt this was a good training schedule. It also gave me a chance to break in the shoes I was going to walk in.

The strangest part of training in Florida is that I felt like a vampire - I had to get home before the sun came out, or else it would be too hot...



Day I— Mile 1 to Mile 20

Upon arriving at the Hyannis Greens (a Park near Main street) at 6:30 AM, we waited, drank coffee, filled the water bottle, took pictures, watched others and mingled. Azra got a kick out of watching the Police arrive on their Motorcycles. After the opening ceremonies we did some stretching exercises—now, I did not realize that I was actually going to “exercise”, before exercising! The stretching was good. We left the starting point at about 8:30 AM on Friday, September 9, 2005.

I started walking with the crowd of 750 other walkers. Not knowing where the other Florida Walkers were, I decided to continue walking.

About one mile later, I caught up with Kristine Parker from St. Lucie. Since neither one of us knew

where the others were and we were both first time walkers, we decided to walk the route together.

There were a lot of people wearing orange shirts—these were the “Crew” shirts. Among many other things, they followed us on bikes, met us at intersections, directed us at turning points and stood in the middle of the road so that cars would not hit us.

It was not long before the first rest stop. As we approached the rest stop, we heard cheering and clapping. People sounded like they were welcoming movie stars. I had to look behind me to see if there was one there. It turned out, the Crew at the rest stops were cheering us—the Walkers. It felt great! As we passed the first Crew member, they put a

sticker on our Walker Tag.

At the stop they had water, snacks and sports drinks. We really didn’t need it since it had only been an hour since we started walking. So we continued to walk.

Soon we were at the second rest stop. This time it seemed like the water bottle was a little light—the crew was more than happy to refill it. We were now at the 7 mile mark.

Our stop was brief and we started walking again. Now we were heading for the lunch stop. By now, I was thinking of lunch. I wondered what would be served and how much time I would have to eat it. I could not believe I was actually on a journey to walk 50 Miles!



10 Miles and Beyond...

At the 10 mile mark, we stopped for lunch. The Crew cheered as we approached the stop—a sun tent setup on the side of a Bike Shop.

Sandwiches, pasta, cookies, chips and drinks. All that food and all I could think of was, I have to do another 10 miles. If I stop now, will I be able to continue? Well, it was the enthusiasm of the Crew, the Staff and all the support that got me through the next 10 miles. Having teamed up with Kristine helped us motivate each other to make it to the next stop. Each time we got tired—we

looked down at the ground and saw words of encouragement written by the Crew. “You can do it!” Walkers are the greatest.” “Go South FLA Walkers.” The words went on and on... There was not a single street that did not have words of encouragement.

Each rest stop had a different theme—the one on the right was called “Bedwalk”. Every crew member was dressed like the Flintstones. There was also a “Med Rock Station”.

Most of the last 10 miles took us

along a bike path. Shaded by trees and away from the sun. The mid-70s’ temperature and cool breeze helped keep us cool too.

It seemed like miles 16 to 20 lasted the longest on the first day. Every time I took a turn, I thought, this must be the last turn... Then there was another long stretch. As we walked and met others, we also realized that every person walking that route had one goal—reaching the camp! It seems like a trivial goal, but after walking so many miles...



Mile Marker 20...

We actually got to turn off the bike trail on to a street—we could hear cheering and cars honking!!! This was it—this was the last stretch of the first 20 miles—we were almost there!

As we walked toward the finish line for the 20 miles, we heard cheers, people blowing horns, people with balloons and most importantly, I saw my family waiting for me 150 yards from the finish line so they could

walk the rest of the way with me.

Despite all the anticipation, nervousness and other mixed feelings—I actually completed the first 20 miles and lived to tell the story!

For those that know me, even though the word “exercise” is not a four letter word, it has been for me. So when I decided to accept the 50 mile challenge, not only was I challenging my body, but I was also challenging my mind.

ONLY 30 miles to go!!!





Taking a load off...

After walking 20 miles, the best feeling was soaking my feet in cold water and Epsom salt. Who would have known... As a kid I played soccer and did other sports, but I don't remember soaking my feet in Epsom salt.

Any way—it felt great!

After a shower, it was off to the massage tent, unfortunately, no amount of massaging was going help those aching muscles. I guess it helped psychologically.

After mustering up enough strength, and dumping all my gear at the cabin (actually Deb and the kids carried it for me from the finish line), we made our way back to the main tent where there were snacks and drinks. Lots of beer, but I wasn't having any, so I stuck to a sandwich and soft drinks.

As I approached the tent, I real-

ized that the kids and crew had spent the day decorating it in a Mexican Fiesta theme. Hot Tamales, Cactus Trees, Sombrero Hats etc. Everything looked great!

Of course, the tough part now was walking around. Every part of me screamed. All I wanted to do was lay down, but the enthusiasm and excitement kept me going. A couple of hours went by and dinner was being served.

We "walked" down to the dining hall where they served pasta. For those of you that exercise, you know how important it is to eat those carbs... and I did!

We then "walked" to the beach and spent a few minutes there... Very different from FL beaches.



Day 2—Mile 20 to Mile 40

We had already done 20 miles! We can do 20 MORE! I still hurt in the morning. We were told that we would get wake up calls at 5:30 AM. Kristine and I decided to start walking at 7:00 AM in order to finish a little earlier, or to be able to pace ourselves in case it got harder.

The wake up call came at 6:00 AM and I did not make it to the dining hall until 7:00 AM. Since Kristine was doing stretches, I went ahead and ate some breakfast. I was not sure how this day



was going to go since I was in a lot of pain.

The important thing was to try my best!

The family came to see me off at the starting line as we started our 20 mile hike. I waved as I thought "I have to do this! Look at all these people counting on me. I have to do it for me. I have to do it for the cause. There is a cure out there and if walking helps us find it, then walk-on!!"

Finish line—here I come!

As I limped forward...

Walking on...



We were now ready to start our 20 mile day. A test of our endurance to see if we can actually do it. As we started walking, we met Annie, a local resident walking for her Mom. Much to my surprise, Annie was the talk of the camp the previous night as she had run the entire first 20 miles. Deb and the kids talked about this "girl" that ran the entire route and was the first person to come back to camp. Well, I was impressed. As we walked and talked, Annie explained that she is a

runner and running the route was actually easier than walking.

On the first day, Annie ended up arriving at all the rest stops before they were ready and reached the finish before the welcoming party was setup. In other words, the first day was boring for Annie. So, the three of us decided to walk together. Of course, the first thing that came to my mind was "how am I going to keep up with Annie?"





Making it to Mile Marker 30!

The first 5 miles of the second day was all adrenalin. I was on a "I can do it" high. I ignored the pain and for a while the pain went away.

On the route, there were rest stops with themes to help us stay "on track".

The first picture on the top right of this page shows the "Hawaii 50" stop. Quite appropriate, considering the "5-0" miles we were walking. In charge of Crew #1 and all Crew/Volunteers is Brenda, affectionately known as "Mother Hen" (second picture on the top right).

After making past the first two stops, we were headed for mile marker 30. Yes, more than half way there! The route seemed to get harder. As I continued walking, I realized one very critical aspect about the route - there

were HILLS!!!

Training in Florida meant there were no hills. The closest thing we have to hills are the bridges across the Intercoastal water way. So the hills of Cape Cod seemed like mountains!

As I walked some more, it seemed like the hills were getting steeper - we should be at the top of Mt. Everest by now!

At mile marker 30 was the lunch stop, but getting there was difficult. I'm not sure why, especially since the first 5 miles seemed to go so fast. As we came closer to the beach, we could hear cheering, which meant we were close to the lunch stop - NOT! It was Dori's crew cheering the walkers as we went past them to walk another 2 miles before the lunch stop. Finally, the lunch stop! I never

thought we would get there. Time to rest the feet and get a change of socks.

No wonder my feet hurt! I had blisters that developed over the last 10 miles. The "hot spots" at the end of Day 1 decided to promote themselves to the next stage of "blisterhood".

Oh well! No pain, no gain! Put some tape on, fresh pair of socks, some pain killer and I was ready to eat.

Once done eating, it was time to do the 10 miles leading to mile marker 40 which took us back to the Camp.

These 10 miles would be the hardest of the entire route. With the blisters and the muscles aching, the 10 miles seemed like 100. Every time it got harder the cheers made it easier...



Getting to Mile Marker 40!

The mission... a cure! My contribution, a mere 50 mile walk. So why was this so important that I would continue even with all the aches and pains? Simple, with 400,000 Americans effected by the disease and an unknown number effected globally, what is one person's pain?

There are so many things that went through my mind as I walked. We also discussed many topics as we walked. The Walkers we passed and the Walkers that past us all had stories about why they were walking. Some

walked for Mom, some walked for Dad, some walked for a friend, some walked for a co-worker... no matter why any of us walked - the one thing we had in common was that we were giving back to the community and at the same time, we were giving **hope** to large group of people effected by MS.

So, every time I hurt, all I had to do was think about why I was walking. Part of this route took us to the Cape's Seashore. This was a breathtaking view of serenity. No time to take in the scenery, we need to

keep moving. Off to the 40 mile marker!

As we walked back to camp, we past three more rest stops. The stops seemed like they were 10 miles apart but the cheers seemed 10 feet apart.

This was the day we proved our selves. This was the tough day. Tomorrow would be easier. We can do it!

We were DETERMINED! No matter how we felt, our spirits were high as each one of us kept the others going...



End of Day 2 - 40 Miles and Counting!

As we approached the end of the route for this second day, I came face-to-face with "The General". The General is one of the Crew members responsible for keeping the walkers motivated. He stopped me at mile marker 36 and said, "Look behind you..." I turned around and looked behind. He then proceeded to say, "You have left 36 bad 'A-' miles behind you! Now look ahead..." As I turned to look ahead, the General said, "Only 14 more to go!" I smiled, as he said "Now get

out of my LZ!!!" For those not familiar with the term, LZ = Load Zone. The General and I spent most of the day with him telling me not to eye-ball him.

We walked to the finish line proudly as we completed the 40 miles! Annie, Kristine and I became a team during the day. We supported each other and helped each other make it through the day. We were 80% DONE! I could not believe it.





A Solemn Night...

After soaking my feet in cold water and Epsom salt, getting my blisters looked at, a massage and a shower, we "walked" to the dining hall for dinner. Now you will notice that walking has become a chore.

As we ate the lasagna and chicken, I decided that one plate of each was not enough. Mind you, the servings were small since the staff there are used to serving kids at a summer camp. Deb and the kids played the waiting game as I played the client. That was a lot of fun, they brought me all my food, drinks and even the dessert.

Dwight even joined them and brought some dessert for me! I felt like I was at an upscale Palm Beach Restaurant, not that I

know what that feels like...

After dinner it was time to head back to the main event tent where every one gathered in the evening as the National MS Society put together programs for each night. This night began with a slide show of the pictures from the past two days. Some excellent shots!

After the slide show, a choir performed for a packed tent. There must have been 1,100 people, or more.

After the choir, there were speakers that talked about their lives and how MS has effected them. It is hard to hear and see how people have to suffer and that helped me understand why I was there that weekend.

Then came a tough part of the program for many that were there. A candlelight vigil. Every one was given a candle and was thanked for being there. The walkers were thanked for accepting the challenge. The speaker was then going to say phrases and if the phrase pertained to you, you were to stand up and light your candle. The first phrase was "If you have MS and you are a Walker, light your candle." About 75 people stood up (10% of the walkers). If you have a spouse with MS, light your candle, more people stood up. Soon all 1,100 people lit up the night...

The Start of the End...

"ONLY 10 miles to go...!" Never in my life did I ever think that I would say that.

As we picked up the route sheet for the last day, the final 10 miles, the finish that took us home, we realized something strange... The route sheet had printing on ONE SIDE ONLY! To top that, it was only printed on half the page! This was significant since the previous route sheets filled one-and-a-quarter pages!

I am not going to lie to you - my feet hurt, my legs hurt and I was tired - BUT I was ready to go! I knew that I only had 10 miles to go and that I had already done 40 miles!



That is 40 miles more that I had ever done before!

Deb and the kids were excited to see me survive the two days and now they were thrilled that I was actually going to finish the 50 miles. Through out the weekend, every time I mentioned the pain, Laila, my 8 year old daughter responded, "Daddy, that is why it is called the..."

C-H-A-L-L-E-N-G-E..." She was right. If it was the 50 mile breeze, I'd be driving it. So, we were set to go, water strapped around our waists and route in hand...



The Delirious Path Home...

The last 10 miles took us through the residential side of Cape Cod. Multi-Million dollar homes, charming cottages, excellent clubs and more.

It was on this day that I started taking more pictures with my cell phone. I realized that I was going to finish the 50 miles! Nothing was going to stop me now.

As I walked, I found myself walking faster and faster. Kristine yelled out "You realize some of us are

going on pure will power!" Annie yelled out "Are you speed walking today?"

I realized that I hurt so much that walking faster made me ignore the pain. I also thought that the faster I walked, the sooner I'd finish and that meant the sooner I'd get off my feet. I realized I was having too much fun. I really did want the walk to end, but at the same time, I met some incredible people and made some great friends. Most

of all, I was making a difference. So, I kept clicking away with my cell phone and walking. Kristine had more will power than any one I know. Despite the pain she encountered, she continued right alongside. Annie wanted to run, she was like Gump. So we finally agreed that she should run the last two miles. So after the last stop we waved and said "Run Annie, Run...!"

We were almost at the end...





The Last 2 Miles

Kristine and I made our way to the finish line. The last two miles went faster than I could have imagined. As I walked, I took some more pictures.

Kristine and I came closer to the finish, we were 1 mile away, when all of a sudden, Annie comes running toward us!

She ran to the finish, checked-in and decided she was going to come back and walk in with us - now that's what I call a TEAM!!!

The three of us walked that last mile like it was the only mile we walked. Every cell in my body



began to feel a sense of joy and accomplishment as I heard cheering in the distance. I knew my family would be there waiting for me. I knew the finish line would be there waiting for us to cross. I knew we were 50 miles closer to a cure!

That's right...

**3 days.
50 miles.
Closer to a Cure!**



Annie and Kristine



Dwight



Dori

The Finish Line...

As we turned the corner to the finish line which was marked by an arch of balloons, Laila (my daughter) joined us to walk me in. She was proud to walk me in and I was proud to have her by my side.

Deb (my wife) diligently snapped pictures so we could remember this moment for the rest of our lives. As she ran up to welcome me and then back to snapping pictures.

Azra (my 4 year-old son) came up to welcome me back and much to my surprise, presented me with a medal. The National MS Society gave medals to the Walkers. Azra presented me with mine. Azra is very competitive and understands that even though I got a medal, we all won. I think the best part about the medal was having him wear it.

Without a doubt, Dwight and Dori from the South Florida Chapter were right there waiting to welcome us at the finish line and to congratulate us. This was an event I will never forget. As a matter of fact, as I crossed the line (we pulled together all the energy we had and skipped over it) and before I sat down, I did something I thought I would not have the courage to do... Read "What's Next" to find out what I did...



"The pain will go away but the memories will last forever..."
- Natalie MacDonald, 2005.



MS Challenge Walk 2005

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The opinions expressed in this publication are solely those expressed by me as an individual and are not the responsibility of any other person or organization mentioned in the publication.

- Tareeq Rupani

Multiple Sclerosis is a chronic, often disabling disease of the central nervous system. Symptoms may be mild such as numbness in the limbs or severe - paralysis or loss of vision. Most people with MS are diagnosed between the ages of 20 and 40 but the unpredictable physical and emotional effects can be lifelong. The progress, severity and specific symptoms of MS in any one person cannot yet be predicted, but advances in research and treatment are giving hope to those affected by the disease.

The National **Multiple Sclerosis** Society is dedicated to ending the devastating effects of multiple sclerosis.

Founded in 1946, the National Multiple Sclerosis Society is a non-profit, voluntary health organization guided by a single mission: to end the devastating effects of multiple sclerosis.

Through its home office and 50-state network of local chapters, the Society funds research, provides services, furthers education and promotes public policy development on behalf of the third of a million Americans (plus their families) living with MS. Since its founding, the Society has invested \$460 million to find the cause, treatments and a cure for multiple sclerosis.

The Society supports more research and serves more people with MS than any national voluntary organization in the world and is the only organization that meets the standards of all major agencies that rate not-for-profit groups in the U.S.

Since 1953, the South Florida Chapter of the National Multiple Sclerosis Society has provided funds for research to find a cure while offering programs to enhance knowledge, health, and independence for individuals with MS and their families residing in South Florida. The 10 county territory including Broward, Collier, Miami-Dade, Glades, Hendry, Lee, Martin, Monroe, Okeechobee and Palm Beach. The Chapter is committed to the philosophy of wellness, offering those living with MS the encouragement, materials and skills necessary to achieve and maintain meaningful, productive lifestyles. The National Multiple Sclerosis Society, South Florida Chapter is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization registered in the State of Florida. All contributions to the chapter are tax deductible to the fullest extent allowed by law.

What's Next...

As I walked into the building that housed the medical Crew and the sign-in for the Walkers, I glanced to the left and saw a table full of forms. I kept walking.

It took all my strength to get to the Medical Crew... but the feeling was INCREDIBLE as we walked on I thought I should do what I am going to do now, before I sit down and before I take my shoes off...

I said to Deb "Sign me up for next year!"

Deb looked at me and said "Are you serious?!?"

"Sign me up now... please..." I replied. She did. I would not give up the experience for any thing in the world!

From the support of all my sponsors to the support of all my friends and family, I have but one thing to say to every one of you -

THANK YOU! Even though it may seem like two simple words, they come from the bottom of my soles, the bottom of my heart and on behalf of every person and family that is effected by Multiple Sclerosis, **HOPE** is what keeps them going.

While many may think I am crazy, Just remember...

**You Can
Talk the
Talk.
Can You
Walk the
Walk?**

If you are interested in being part of this great event and feel that you want to either Walk,

or Crew for the MS Challenge Walk 2006, contact me, or the National MS Society.

If 50 miles is too much, try a 6 mile walk... There is one coming up in March 2006.

I heard some one say something very interesting, "In order to receive, you must give, for it is when you give that your hand opens to allow you to receive."

So, I CHALLENGE any one of you to join the 6 mile, or the 50 mile walk...

I will be wearing a shirt that says "**CHALLENGE ACCEPTED - AGAIN!**"

If you are unable to accept the challenge, I hope you will continue to support me as I accept it on your behalf... Until next time—I hope you enjoyed this journal.

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3 Days. 50 Miles. Closer to a Cure.



ms
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