John Doe

Mrs. Messerole

Speech

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Manuscript: Interview Speech

Sue cannot peel a potato, has trouble putting on her makeup, and needs a special key holder to turn the key in her car’s ignition. For the past 15 years, 47 year old Sue Johnson, my aunt, has been living with rheumatoid arthritis, a painfully debilitating disease in which the joints of the body become intensely inflamed due to the immune system’s activity. Yet, despite the daily torments of this disease, Sue has kept a strong attitude.

Not a moment passes that sue is not confronted with this disease and reminded of her disability through the pills she takes and the pain she endures. It hurts her to stand, it hurts to walk, and it hurts to sit. After an infinite amount of failed medications, Sue is now undergoing her most aggressive treatment, which includes weekly chemotherapy. After half a dozen surgeries, her frail body is in need of more therapy.

During our interview, Sue still found energy to keep a smile on her face. She explained to me that she volunteers at non-profit organizations that helps people less fortunate than her. She explained that she enjoys volunteering at the food pantry, and local homeless shelter. This past thanksgiving for example, she helped organize a dinner for over 500 poor and homeless families in her area.

Sue stands at 5 foot flat and weighs, maybe 100 lbs., but she has the spunk of a teenager. In fact, she introduced herself as “Crazy Sue”. When I asked about how she handles her disease, she said that she “uses humor” to combat the hard days. She said, “I try to laugh on the hard days instead of crying”. When I asked her for an examples, she explained that on days when it is hard to walk and she limps, she tells people that she was hurt from her weekend hobby of trapeze performing. Of course this is sarcasm because the reality is that her ankle became deformed and the arch of her foot completely fell. Most people would allow in misery of this disability, but Sue calls her it her “cartoon foot”.

Although it is difficult living with such a debilitating disease, Sue has a positive outlook on life. So, I asked Sue what advice she has for young people, she explained that young people today need to appreciate their lives more than they do, and hopefully then they will “enjoy the time they have here on earth”. Sue may not be able to do the simplest tasks in life, but that does not bring her down. Thank you.