



**Far left: Andrew Ferenc has a moment of thought during one of his visits home. He travels home on Sundays to spend time with family.**

**Top left: Ferenc has lost most of his ability to be physically independent.**

**Top right: Victoria Ferenc shares a moment with her son before heading home.**

**Left: Leslie Ferenc chats with her brother Andrew during a visit at the McCall Centre.**

**Bottom: Due to his deteriorating condition, Ferenc has to be hoisted into his wheelchair at the beginning of each day.**

# Not Afraid of the End

Photos and Story by Andrew Lahodinskyj

Sixty-two-year old Andrew Ferenc, thin and pale in the face, sits in his black motorized wheelchair at the McCall Centre for long-term care staring out the window watching as the cars pile into Sherway Gardens shopping centre in Etobicoke.

“It didn’t even enter my mind – multiple sclerosis (MS) wasn’t part of my vocabulary. I didn’t think about the disability whatsoever,” says Ferenc, who was diagnosed with MS in his early 30s. Multiple sclerosis is a disabling disease of the central nervous system. Despite ongoing research, scientists have yet to determine the cause of the disease.

“I didn’t really know what MS was,” Ferenc said. “I didn’t do any research on it and I left it alone and just kept on working and doing the things I enjoyed.”

While recalling his symptoms Ferenc said, “I felt helpless. I felt as if I was losing control of myself, and that I would never be able to do the things that I loved to do. That was my reality – I’m losing mobility. I started to do a lot more research about what MS was and realized that I had to do something about it to try and stay ahead.”

After trying out a handful of health recovery programs, Ferenc joined the Taoist Tai Chi Society. He found that the exercise helped retain movement in his body. After spending a few years with the society, he became a spokesperson going to grand openings and speaking of the benefits he received from tai chi.

Some days are better than others, even though the future may look

bleak. In early 2013, Ferenc was diagnosed with throat cancer. He knew there was a problem when one day he found it very difficult to swallow food or any kind of fluids. The radiation treatments took a major toll on his body and MS.

“It was really difficult. . . . I wasn’t able to move anything. I wasn’t able to speak at all.”

After receiving 25 of his 35 treatments, Ferenc decided enough was enough and stopped his treatments. He told the doctors that he couldn’t take it anymore, that he wasn’t able to move anything.

“I was actually looking forward to it [death],” Ferenc admitted openly.

“I thought it was the only way that I would be able to overcome all of the pain and suffering I was going through with the MS and cancer. I thought death would have been a welcome friend at that time.” Even though he has been through so much, Ferenc still has a great outlook on life.

The off-white walls and smells of cleaning chemicals and hospital food have sadly become a norm for him. He spends his days watching the television in his private room at the McCall Centre.

“It was kind of unusual the first time I came here. I thought it was some sort of a freak place. I wasn’t used to all the noises – the sounds of people yelling and screaming,” said Ferenc. “I said to my wife, ‘Susan you have to get me out of here. I think I’m in a nuthouse.’”

After living at the centre for a year now, Ferenc has gotten used

to the routine and the staff. He shares a laugh with the nurses, talks about current events, and even family life.

Despite not living at home, Ferenc feels safer that he has 24-hour care.

“It’s much easier, especially for my wife too. I don’t want Susan to worry about taking care of me at home.”

Even with the rapid progression of his MS, which has led to Ferenc losing movement in his legs and slowly losing motion in his arms, leaving him confined to a wheelchair, and bouts with cancer, he always manages to see the good side of life.

“I think it’s just knowing that there are others out there that are worse off than I am. They always say that. It’s true though. I look around and see people worse off than me. So I’m just happy that I am where I am. When the time comes, I’m ready to do my thing.”

Although Ferenc doesn’t quite know when his time will come, he says that he will be ready for the end – whenever that may be.

“I don’t know what the future will hold other than that there is a beginning, middle, and end to everything. It’s probably got something to do with the end. I’m ready for all of that too. It doesn’t depress me, I’m not afraid of it. I know lots of people say you should be afraid, but afraid of what. Everybody has their time, and when mine comes up I’m hopefully going to be ready for it.”

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