

Pamela Mastrota's Welcome and Introductions
Annual Meeting
December 1, 2003

Good afternoon. I'm Pam Mastrota, President of the National Multiple Sclerosis Society, Long Island Chapter. We're pleased to welcome you to our Annual Meeting. It's wonderful to see so many people here today.

We're bringing you an all-new meeting format today--with a very full program. Lunch will be served to you at the table during the program, and you'll find goody bags at each place. We truly hope you enjoy everything.

At the Long Island Chapter, we are proud to promote a better quality of living for the 38,000 Long Island residents who are affected by multiple sclerosis. We do so with the full support of a dedicated board, a community of excellent care providers, and a devoted staff. Our board members and staff are wearing red ribbons today. If one of them can assist you or answer a question, don't hesitate to let them know.

As President of the Long Island Chapter, I've met hundreds of

people who have amazed me with their knowledge, their compassion, and their ability to embrace life. . . and many have made a difference in **MY** life. My first month as President, I met **Sal and his wife Lenora** at a self-help group luncheon. He's a captivating man whose progressive MS has advanced to the point that he is quadriplegic. For most of us, that alone would be devastating.

Not Sal, who calls me on a monthly basis to ask what he can do to help the Chapter and people with MS. Sal plays a tremendous role in our crisis support program by answering calls from people in need. He demonstrates compassion and understanding in everything he does, and he makes me want to do everything possible for the Chapter's clients.

We can improve their lives by finding a cure for multiple sclerosis, as well as new treatments. The Long Island Chapter is proud to sponsor cutting-edge national research, and to be associated with some of the world's most brilliant scientific and medical minds. Their determination to discover the cause and cure for multiple sclerosis is without limits. Their commitment to finding new treatments is just as strong.

On a national level, the National Multiple Sclerosis Society has invested more than \$380 million on research in the last 56 years. This year alone, they will devote more than \$30 million to critical projects that investigate potential causes, cures, and treatments for MS. These new projects hold incredible promise for advancing our understanding of MS.

You'll find more information about those projects, as well as other important information, in the Long Island Chapter's Annual Report (show) that is at your table.

Of course, research is just one way we can improve the quality of life for people with MS, their friends, families and caregivers. The other way is by providing local programs--and in 2003 we offered more than 60 different programs to the local community. If you've participated in our programs, you know how beneficial they can be. If you haven't joined us yet, please do so in 2004--we have some new options that will be very exciting.

Now, it gives me great pleasure to welcome the our keynote speaker, Dr. Richard H. Blanck. For more than 20 years, Dr.

Blanck has served as one of our area's leading neurologists, specializing in the treatment of MS. Dr. Blanck serves as the Chapter's research advocate, sits on a clinical advisory committee, and volunteers his time to speak at various Society events. He has also presented workshops for people with MS and their friends and families. Despite a packed schedule, coupled with the daily responsibilities of running a successful clinical practice, Dr. Blanck has forever maintained a clear vision that above all things, clear and open communication with a patient is always paramount. To those under his care, Dr. Blanck represents much more than a medical professional able to provide answers to so many questions. He is a caring neurologist who listens attentively to their individual concerns, often prescribing a good dose of hope into what can sometimes be an overwhelming situation. Dr. Blanck is a friend to the men and women with MS, to the Long Island community and to the entire National MS Society.

Please join me in welcoming Dr. Richard Blanck. . .

Blanck speaks.

Thank you, Dr. Blanck. If you'd like to read Dr. Blanck's presentation, you'll find copies on our programs table at the back of the room, after the meeting.

Our next speaker is someone whose life has been touched by MS in many ways. Amy Paston is a daughter, a sister, a wife, a mother, and a hero. Amy lost her mother, Marlene, who had MS, this year on Mother's Day. Despite that, Amy threw her heart and soul into fighting this disease—by participating in Team MS, the MS Walk, and as a Committee Chair for the WAMS luncheon. And if that isn't enough, Amy was also there to cheer on her brother Art, who also has MS, when he jumped out of a plane this summer. Please welcome Amy Paston. . .

Gary will introduce himself and can turn the mic over to Edith.

Closing

Once again, we'd like to thank you for joining us—we know it has been an intense two hours. I'd like to personally acknowl-

edge all of our speakers, and our honorees. Two hours isn't long enough to salute you. Please know that we are proud, grateful, and honored to have you on our team. For those of you who live with MS every single day, we are here for you and we encourage you to call us. Anytime.

Please be sure to take your goody bags--and if you would like, the flower in front of you is yours with our compliments. The glasses or vases, however, belong to the Hilton, so please don't take those. Thank you again for giving us your attention today. We'll see you again soon.

