Special Occasions

by LEEANNE LAPUM

Special Occasions with MS

I used to enjoy planning and executing special events. When I taught pre-K/kindergarten that was always my job in addition to teaching.

After I got married and we had children, I used to take so much joy in doing the same thing. I made detailed lists in order to keep myself organized. I cleaned the house, mowed the lawns, baked and decorated cakes and decorated the house. By the time I was done everything was perfect. We were ready for our guests. I could relax and enjoy entertaining.

After I was diagnosed with MS, all of that eventually came to a screeching halt. My husband had to do everything. By the time his workday is done the last thing he wants to do is spend hours doing everything involved in planning and executing a party.

That's especially true now. I am bedridden and unable to help. I can make lists, or at least dictate them to someone, because I've lost the ability to write. Beyond that I'm useless. I no longer plan anything that would require major preparation.

I can't even begin to explain how depressed I get... especially during the holidays. I dread them. I guess my mind mentally skips over them. It's the only way I can make it to the beginning of the next year.

I am blessed with a loving family that tries to make things special when it comes to birthdays and other occasions. They go out of their way to prepare special meals. Because I am bedridden we eat as a family... in our bedroom.

One of them, usually my husband, gets the joy of feeding me while at the same time trying to eat his meal while it's still hot. None of them ever complains. They even assist me in opening cards and gifts. Due to spasticity I am unable to do that for myself. Disappointing and discouraging, but true.

A Night Visitor

After one such occasion, I found my dresser full of cards and gifts. Although I couldn't touch them because they were out of my reach, I could enjoy them visually. There was everything from cards to plants, and the ever-present helium balloon. They helped keep the memories fresh in my mind.

After the passing of time, helium balloons tend to lose their ability to float. This was one of those times. My beautiful helium balloon began to wrinkle a bit, and sink closer to my dresser. Because I didn't want one of our cats to eat the sagging string I had my husband cut the string, and the balloon slowly floated up to the ceiling.

During the night my husband woke me up. "Listen," he said. "I think we have a rat... shhh!"

Next page: LeeAnne's night visitor revealed, plus her tips for keeping positive.

A Night Visitor

I did as he requested. I could hear it too, especially when the heater came on. He thought it might be in the heat vent located directly above my head. That's a comforting thought!

Eventually we went back to sleep, and in the morning we discovered what it was – that helium balloon scraping on the ceiling.

My husband moved it into our office which is right off of the bedroom. Problem solved, we thought. Believe it or not, during the next night the balloon traveled back into our bedroom.

I woke in the middle of the night and opened my eyes to find the balloon hovering about six inches from my face. Scared me to death!

My husband poked a hole in it with a pair of scissors. That was the end of the night visitor!

Keeping Positive

When special occasions approach, I have to grit my teeth, hide unpleasant feelings and let whatever happens happen. I can't change it so I might as well live with it. I'm going to smile and be as pleasant as I can in spite of circumstances that I can’t change.

I'll do what I can to lift others up who are facing difficult and sometimes heartbreaking circumstances. So many are worse off than I am. That gives me purpose. I have developed an outreach to others who are also sidelined for one reason or another. I'm shut in so I might as well make the most of it.

I've developed a routine. It helps keep me positive, or helps me get there when I'm not. This is what works for me:

- Take time to pray and meditate on God's word.
- Start each day by finding out what my family’s plans are.
- Find out what kind of research I can do on the internet to save them time.
- Call people that I know I can count on to have a "giggle session” with.

End the day on a positive note. Be thankful for what you've accomplished. Don't dwell on negative things. It helps you get a good night's sleep and awake up ready to tackle another day.