

The funny page

by David Lander



Odd, isn't it, but if Squiggy was going to rediscover his sense of humor, he was going to have to learn to turn his MS into a gift.

Dealing with something you've never dealt with before is like learning anything new. At first it's scary. Can I handle it? Does everyone else know how to handle it and I'm the only idiot? And I'm just talking about Algebra.

Okay. I got it. MS, I mean—physically. That was the easy

part. The only easy part. And though I got it, I'm still working on getting it. What it really means, I mean.

It took a little time to accept. A whole book, actually (**Fall Down Laughing**). To be honest, that was kind of the condensed version. It actually took about 20 years.

Owning up to a disability that you're fearful will take away your life, let alone your career, would seem to be, in itself, an onerous task. But the facing up would become only the first of many steps I'd have to take before I would find anything close to peace.

As I've found out since, thousands who aren't in the public spotlight

face that challenge each day. Telling your boss that all those days that he and your associates thought you were drunk was really one of the symptoms of MS is a harrowing mission. I've heard from many who found themselves looking for another job soon after.

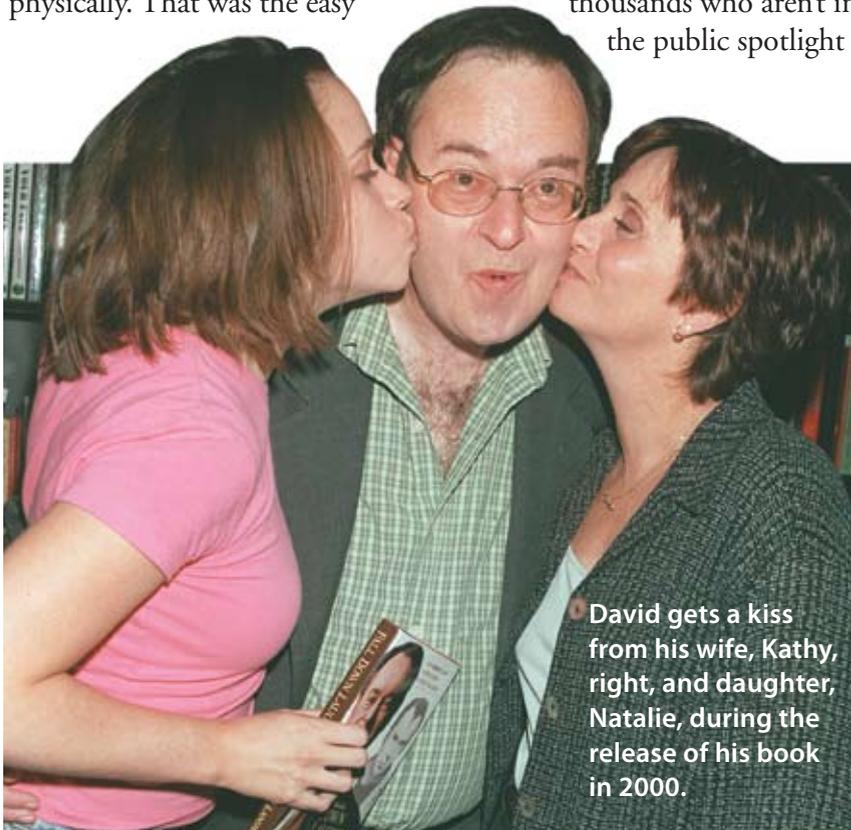
Yes, MS changed my life, but it also it changed my way of looking at life. As I learned, many times painfully, I had to take control and turn my disability into an asset. It's about taking every bump in the rocky road and using them to build the kind of superhighway you'd wish you could drive on.

Enough with the road analogies. If I was going to learn how to enjoy life again, I couldn't let MS be the boss of me, but I could make it my friend. And as in any good team, the sum should be better than the two separately. It would take a complete overhaul in how I always thought things worked. But leaving old habits behind and making MS my new partner was not a choice. It was an absolute necessity.

Sorry Lenny. Sometimes you just have to move on.

For more about what Squiggy is up to these days, visit davidlander.com.

Fall Down Laughing: How Squiggy Caught Multiple Sclerosis and Didn't Tell Nobody (Tarcher, 2000) is available on Amazon.com, Barnes and Noble, Books-A-Million, or it may be in your chapter's library.



David gets a kiss from his wife, Kathy, right, and daughter, Natalie, during the release of his book in 2000.

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