

# At Age 57 This Woman is Still Defiant

By Steven Slosberg, Day Writer, Published on August 8, 2006

From her hospital room in New Britain, where she, a mute quadriplegic in the care of the state, has abided for more than 20 years, Linda Solsbury still fights to alert the public about the hazards of chiropractic manipulation. Today is Solsbury's 57th birthday. Friends from Solsbury's days as a licensed practical nurse at Lawrence & Memorial Hospital are gathering at the Hospital for Special Care in New Britain to celebrate with her. Solsbury's daughter and son-in-law, Stacy and Sean Madden, and their two sons, who live in New London, also plan to be there.

Several months ago, Solsbury, filmed in her hospital room, was featured as part of a Channel 8 TV news report about a group vexing the chiropractic industry. The Chiropractic Stroke Awareness Group was behind a billboard-sized sign on a Greater Bridgeport Transit Authority bus that asked: "Injured By A Chiropractor?" A similar ad was placed on a Waterbury transit system bus. The group's phone number in Rocky Hill is also listed. Various chiropractic groups, crying foul, and at least one alleging the ads were "shameless and legally libelous," sought to have the ads removed. However, the ads continue to be displayed on the buses. The ad manager for the Bridgeport transit buses confirms that.

In 1985, a civil jury in New London Superior Court awarded Solsbury \$10 million in a malpractice suit she brought against a Waterford chiropractor after she claimed the chiropractor's manipulations of her cervical vertebrae – her neck – caused a stroke that left her unable to speak and a quadriplegic. At the time, it was the largest judgment awarded by a civil jury in New London County. The chiropractor, Thomas B. Goulding, declared bankruptcy, and Solsbury collected virtually nothing of the settlement. Some of the chiropractor's assets eventually were sold and a small trust fund established for Solsbury. However, Solsbury, who had been a dancer as well as a nurse, is indigent and has been a ward of the state for two decades.

She has been able to communicate by computer, methodically using a finger on one hand to type, and, with mobility limited to a motorized wheelchair, has managed through the years to campaign for mandatory malpractice insurance for chiropractors and warn about potential dangers of manipulations. This from a perceptive and spirited woman who has spent the last 21 years irrevocably trapped inside a listless body.

Jean Swanfeldt of Uncasville, Marcia Graham of East Lyme, Alma Dougherty of Ledyard, Betsy Keeney of Mystic and Debbie MacDonald of Niantic, all retired nurses, are among the women who have remained close to Solsbury. Several are to be in New Britain today for the birthday celebration. Another woman, Janet Levy, from the stroke awareness group, recently bought Solsbury a new laptop, though Solsbury still uses what today has to be regarded as an antique – a heavy, portable computer made for the handicapped that she's used since the early '90s, running on the original battery.

Solsbury, in a sense, is running on the original battery. She lived, fully, one life, and, since 1985, has lived inside a shell of that life, able only to move her head and a couple of fingers and yet make herself heard.

She remains a formidable adversary. On her 57th birthday, her fortitude is a wonder, as is she.

This is the opinion of Steven Slosberg.