

Former Lawrence & Memorial Nurse Paralyzed In 1985 Dies

By Steven Slosberg, Day Writer, Published on 8/25/2006

New London - Linda J. Solsbury, the former licensed practical nurse at Lawrence & Memorial Hospital who was left a mute quadriplegic in the care of the state after a chiropractor manipulated her neck in 1985, died Wednesday afternoon at New Britain General Hospital. She was 57 and her death was due to complications following gall bladder surgery.

Solsbury, who had been a patient at the Hospital for Special Care, formerly New Britain Memorial Hospital, virtually since she was paralyzed, was awarded \$10 million in damages by a New London Superior Court civil jury in March 1991. At the time, it was the largest judgment by a civil jury in New London County. However, the chiropractor she sued for malpractice, Thomas Goulding, who did not carry malpractice insurance, declared bankruptcy. Some of his assets eventually were sold and a small trust fund established for Solsbury.

Unable to speak, she did have limited use of her right hand and, through the years, communicated by methodically typing on a computer. She became an advocate for mandatory malpractice insurance for chiropractors, and was interviewed by national network news programs. She also belonged to the Chiropractic Stroke Awareness Group, based in Rocky Hill, that has placed billboard sized ads on transit buses in Waterbury and Bridgeport. Last spring, Solsbury was interviewed in her hospital room by WTNH-TV Channel 8 about the ad campaign.

"She was probably one of the strongest people I have ever known," said Betsy Keeney of Mystic, a retired registered nurse at L&M who worked with Solsbury on the pediatric floor. "She was a model to me, an inspiration through the years. I often think about Linda and what she overcame. She always kept herself fit, took dancing lessons, had great pride in her work and the children loved her.

"Many's the day when I've had a bad day, and think it's the end of the world, and I think of her. She's truly been an inspiration."

Born in Norwich and a 1968 graduate of Norwich Free Academy, Solsbury received her nursing degree at what was then called Mohegan Community College in Norwich. She also studied dance at Connecticut College. She is survived by her daughter and son-in-law, Stacy and Sean Madden of New London, two grandsons and a brother, Louis Solsbury.

A committal service will be at 11 a.m. Sept. 2 at St. Joseph's Cemetery in Norwich. The Labenski Funeral Home in Norwich is in charge of arrangements.