



Early on, Jerry Chiplock believed his love for Dee would protect her

# The Family Curse

Twenty-four of her relatives had this deadly disease. Dee Chiplock, the 25th, is determined to fight it.

BY JAN GOODWIN

ON A SUNNY DAY LAST JULY, Dee Chiplock hoisted herself into her Honda Odyssey, equipped with hand controls instead of foot pedals. She pulled away from her Saginaw, Michigan, home and headed toward the Canadian border. On the seat next to her was a plastic bag containing a deadly dose of prescription pain medication and tranquilizers. Eight months earlier, the 40-year-old mother of two boys had been diagnosed with ALS, a degenerative nerve disease with no known cure.

Dee wept as she drove. She thought back to the day 18 years before when her husband, Jerry, proposed to her. At an elegant restaurant on the Florida coast, a waiter served Dee her dessert: a velvet ring box containing an exquisite marquise diamond. Amused diners looked on as Jerry got down on one knee, but their smiles faded when Dee started to cry. "I love you so much, but I can't say yes," she said. She was certain she would one day end up with ALS. "I don't want to put you through that."

Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, also known as Lou Gehrig's disease, which