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Remember Squiggy? He's still walking tall

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His entrance on Laverne & Shirley rarely changed. The door to their apartment would burst open and there would stand Andrew "Squiggy" Squiggmann, saying "Hello, girls" in that high-pitched voice.

All these years later, David L. Lander appreciates the irony of that entrance.

"There can be a tremendous loss of confidence," he said, "when you are not sure you can cross the street."

Lander (aka Squiggy) will be crossing the continent to speak Saturday at the Portofino Bay Hotel at Universal Orlando about how he has lived with being afflicted with multiple sclerosis since he was diagnosed in 1984. Part of his story is how he kept knowledge of his MS a secret to everyone but his family for 15 years but now believes the truth helps set you free.

Lander, 58, is hardly inactive. Along with his work to raise awareness of the importance of early and sustained treatment of MS, including his courageously named autobiography *Fall Down, Laughing* (Tarcher/Penguin, \$22.95), Lander is a longtime baseball scout, currently working for the Seattle Mariners.

"Scouting is enjoyable," he said by phone from a speaking stop in Oklahoma City. "You get into a lot of games and get to sit in the third row behind home plate. Those ain't the cheap seats."

Hey! Watch it!

His book is a great read regardless of your interest in MS. It reminded me of the classic rock group, Lenny & the Squigtones. And I shivered while reading the chapter about how Lander and friends got fired from a radio station in the '70s because, they were told, "the times are just too serious for satire."

Way too many people believe that right now.

But Lander's primary message is about the ongoing battle against MS, an insidious disease that can strike at any moment in a lifetime.

To those who fight it now, he has this message: "We are not alone."

To those who do not worry about it now, he says: "Find out about it. And understand we are not a handicapped people per se. I wrote my book while having MS."

Squiggy is a fond memory. David Lander is an impressive work in progress.

If you go: The free presentation is open to the public and begins at 9 a.m. in the Portofino Bay Hotel. Registration begins at 8 a.m., while pre-registration is going on now by calling (866) 955-9999.