Aisle Chair

October 1, 2013 By Nicole Lemelle

I was excited from the very moment I was asked to speak on a panel of WEGO Health activists. The other panelists represented cancer, diabetes, and organ transplant patients; I of course represented multiple sclerosis. The conference was to be held in Boston. That's a seven-hour flight and one layover from my home in New Orleans, Louisiana. This in itself did not pose a problem for me. I've traveled by airplane multiple times in the past. I see disabled individuals in the airport all the time.

But this time was different.

Tommy, my husband, wheeled me to the gate. Then both the airline representative and Tommy escorted me down the jet way to the airplane. In the past, I would then stand and wobble to my seat. This time it was deemed necessary for me to use what they call an aisle chair. I could no longer even wobble to my seat!

The aisle chair fits between the rows of the airplane. Can you imagine being wheeled between the two rows of seats? I was worried if I could even fit. They strapped me up like Hannibal Lecter. I had to ride with my arms crossed to ensure I passed. The plane wasn't even empty as I missed pre-boarding thanks to bladder issues! I was forced to ignore all embarrassment issues. Once I made it to my seat. I was sad of course. I let a silent tear fall. Then pushed my seat back, closed my eyes, and relaxed. After all, what else could I do?

It was very humbling to say the least. It confirmed my disease had progressed. But it cemented that I could handle it.

I continued to move forward anyway and instead of saying my planned speech at the event I told this aisle chair story, which gave the conference attendees a glimpse at how it is to live with MS.

Have you ever seen an aisle chair?

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