

You can
see it in
her
eyes...



TV judge Amy Brenneman's right eye appears half-closed

JUDGING AMY STAR'S TRAGIC DISEASE

ACTRESS Amy Brenneman was absolutely terrified to learn she was suffering from Bell's palsy, a devastating disorder that causes sudden paralysis of the face.

The Judging Amy beauty was first stricken when she was a 17-year-old freshman at Harvard University and rehearsing for a school play, reveals a schoolmate.

But judging by her recent appearance, which is clearly captured in this dramatic photo, the 36-year-old star of the hit CBS drama looks like she may still be plagued by the condition, whose symptoms include facial droop, difficulty making facial movements and closing one eye.

About 20 percent to 40 percent of Bell's palsy cases result in permanent facial disfigurement, damage to the eye and chronic spasms of the face muscles or eyelids. It's an acute form of nerve damage that strikes suddenly and has

no known cause or cure.

"Amy was known for her great big smile," the schoolmate recalls. "But one day, she showed up at school and could only smile on one side of her face. We were shocked to realize that half of her face was paralyzed. The director of the play gathered some people together and told

them Amy was suffering from Bell's palsy."

The former NYPD Blue star, who's expecting her first child with hubby-director Brad Silberling, bravely endured the partial

paralysis for several weeks.

"Amy kept covering her face with her hand - she was so self-conscious," her schoolmate adds. "It took a lot of courage for her to continue rehearsing. We knew she was inwardly very scared, that she thought her face might be like that forever.

"But she sang and danced her heart out, in spite of her debilitation and the play went on as planned."

- ROBIN MIZRAHI

**'Amy
looked
very
scared'**