On the spot repairs for a modern day polio survivor in Ethiopia

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Post Polio Support Society NZ (Inc)

AGM and Mini Conference

Wednesday 8th & Thursday 9th September
The Airport Inn, Hamilton

Programme

Wednesday 8th
4.00 pm Board meeting Observers welcome
6.30 pm Dinner Guest Speaker: Mr Doug Woolerton “Working the Contacts”

Thursday 9th
Registration
9.30 The year in retrospect
10.30 Morning Tea
11.00 Annual General Meeting
Guest Speaker – Jeni Hawker from Age Concern Hamilton.
12.30 Mix and mingle during finger food lunch
13.15 End Polio Now – “What has been achieved, and what needs to be achieved?”
14.00 Advocacy Issues – Orthotics, Health Professionals’ Knowledge
14.30 Questions from the Support Groups
15.00 Mini Conference ends

Costs
Wednesday Dinner $ 50 per person
Thursday Mini Conference and AGM $50 per person to help defray overhead cost for lunch etc

Accommodation
Please contact Edith Morris 0800 476 546

Travel
Each local group or Branch is responsible for each delegate’s travel, registration, and accommodation costs.

Registration
A registration form is on the next page. They can also be downloaded from the website (see below). Registrations close on Wednesday 1st September 2010 with Mrs Edith Morris P.O. Box 12 357 Hamilton3248

A Conference Registration form, and a Board of Management Nomination form, can be downloaded in pdf file format from www.postpolio.org.nz/conference_2010. The links are at the bottom of that page.
Dinner Speaker:
Doug Woolerton

The Lobbyist
Change is an integral part of our lives. Unfortunately some political changes can disadvantage citizens, their businesses and local organisations.

The skills needed to mitigate damage to you and those dependent upon you in the political environment are not those found in other professions.

The political system has procedures to follow, true anyone can have their say, however in order to do so you need to understand who to speak to and when. This is where 'the Lobbyist' comes in. With over 12 years experience within parliament I am able to help.

http://www.thelobbyist.co.nz/

Conference Speaker:
Jeni Hawker

Age Concern
Age Concern Hamilton is part of the Age Concern New Zealand network of 34 councils throughout New Zealand.

Jeni Hawker from Age Concern Hamilton promises to be an excellent speaker coming from a background of twenty years of field work in the community. Her presentation is entitled “Determination, Friend and Foe”.

Age Concern is a community based not-for-profit organisation dedicated to enhancing quality of life for older people. Each council offers a variety of services and information to help meet the needs of older people, families and communities in their area.

http://www.ageconcern.gen.nz/
Post Polio Support Society NZ (Inc)
AGM and Mini Conference

Wednesday 8th & Thursday 9th September
The Airport Inn, Hamilton

Registration Form
Please complete and return with cheque

Name: ____________________________________________
Mr/Mrs/etc Surname Preferred Firstname

Address: _______________________________________________________

Phone: ______________________ E Mail __________________________

Have you had Polio Yes / No

If not what is your interest? (Carer, Family, Job) ____________________________________

I plan to attend the Wednesday Dinner at a cost of $ 50.00

I plan to attend the AGM / Mini Conference at a cost of $ 50.00

Attached please find a cheque for : (or bring to conference) $ _____.

Do you wish to stay overnight at the Airport Inn YES / NO

If YES do you wish:

An accessible room – YES / NO

Single / Twin Share / Double (Cross out as necessary)

Name of the person with whom you wish to share: __________________________

Registrations close Wednesday 1st September 2010 with Mrs Edith Morris.

Signed: ____________________________ Date: _________________

Please post to:
Mrs Edith Morris
President
Post Polio Support Society of NZ Inc
P.O. Box 12 357 Hamilton or Phone 0800 476 546
or email edith@catchword.co.nz
From the President’s Chair

Hello from misty, musty, wet Waikato. Interspersed are a few glorious sunny days to give hope that Spring is on the way. It’s a bit like that with our Polio Society. We wonder if we are making a difference and then along comes the results of our nation-wide questionnaire to encourage us to continue being of service to you, our members.

I am amazed when I see that 78% of us can still walk. We are a determined lot and with the help of sticks, walking frames, braces and by any other means, we are still up on our feet and contributing to our family and community activities. Even those in wheelchairs are still stirring up the dust.

Another interesting fact from the questionnaire is that the average age of a New Zealand polio survivor is 71 years. So our Annual Conference will have the focus on ageing with confidence and with a sense of well-being. Do plan to attend this one day conference and AGM to network with other polios and to learn how you can actively embrace the latter season of life.

Other conference highlights for you to be part of:
- Our dinner speaker is Doug Woolerton formerly of the NZ First Party
- More fascinating facts from the questionnaire
- Election of officers to lead our society into the future

My visit to the South Island showed me how difficult it is for some members to attend support meetings. I was surprised though, how many did come to meet with me. In spite of a cold, wet day in Nelson we had a lovely lunch at the Port. I had a brief evening meeting with our Patsy Bell. Oamaru was barely dry after major flooding so it was good to meet on a sunny day and enjoyed lunch. The Dunedin group was attended with four from Balclutha plus their regulars making 18 for lunch. Everyone enjoyed being together and felt it was worth the effort. The questionnaire reveals that 14% of you would like a support group in your area, so there is room for expansion. Interest has been shown in re-establishing a support group in Invercargill. Please contact me on 0800 476 546 if you are keen.

However it is sad to see many faithful and active members die. They leave a huge gap behind, and my sympathy goes to each family. As well, some members are moving into residential villas and often don’t keep up their membership. Through various means: radio interviews, articles in magazines and newsletters, and personal contact via the 0800 number, new members are benefiting from information our Society can provide.

I’m hoping to see many of you at our one-day conference and AGM.

WE ARE STILL HERE

From my wheelie friendly chair

Edith

0800 476 546
edith@catchword.co.nz

Punakaiki Rocks, West Coast
Regional Events

Nelson

Hello everyone,

It's good to be on the right side of the shortest day and be able to look forward to warmer days and spring flowers.

Our midwinter luncheon was brought forward to 28th May when our president Edith and her husband Noel were able to visit us. In spite of the departure from our usual sunny weather we had a lovely time together and 18 of our members enjoyed meeting up and sharing the usual good fare. A special welcome to those members who had not been before and I do hope we shall enjoy your company again.

As I write this Rex and Anne Wastney will be arriving in Holland to visit their son who is living there. We wish them well and safe travelling.

To those of you who are having difficulties and recovering from adversity keep your spirits up, you are not on your own, and do ask for help and support. Keep well and keep warm.

Jenny. Kissane

Christchurch

With the shortest day past, can summer be far away? We eagerly anticipate warmer days and lower power bills but are certainly not inactive in the meantime, as cold weather did not deter local members from a variety of outings and adventures over the past few months.

Disregarding the rain and wind-chill outside, a good number of our stalwarts braved the even greater wind-chill in the storm room at the Antarctic Centre, where -40 degrees could be reached. If you are wondering if that is -40 C or -40 F it doesn’t really matter as the two are equal at that point on the scales! The little blue penguins were a delight to watch also.

A winter bus trip to Methven was another popular expedition with informative stops at a museum and a seed processing plant, the whole outing being enhanced by a clear, sunny day and a good meal. At least one more bus trip has been planned for later this year.

Speakers at our monthly meetings have maintained the usual high standard but special mention must be made of athlete Dick Tayler who kept us attentive with his tales of preparation for the Commonwealth Games, the race itself and some of the after events.

George Ross

Otago

A recent highlight for our group was the visit of our National President and her husband who joined us for a very early mid-winter dinner at the Shiel Hill Tavern. An added pleasure was the company of a small group who drove up from Balclutha to meet Edith.

Edith spoke to us after dinner focussing on the need to keep looking to the future. I was interested to find she was looking towards technology to help. She pointed out that as our numbers became fewer it would be harder to organise group meetings so interactive computer programmes could be the answer. Certainly our Otago/Southland members are scattered and we know it is not easy
to assemble a group south or west of Dunedin for a meeting.

As a solution for keeping in touch it is still some years off and there will always be members who prefer meetings and newsletters.

In the meantime we commend Edith's forward thinking and wait to see what the future brings.

Diane Jackson.

North Otago

A very enjoyable lunch was enjoyed by a good attendance of our members on June 1st at the Brydone Hotel to meet our National President Edith Morris and husband Noel.

Edith spoke about the need for people to write their personal stories and asked members if they would think about it and send some in for the National Polio News magazine.

Also she asked that members think about attending the Conference which is to be held in Hamilton this year on Thursday 9th September. You will have received forms in the post by now.

Anyone wanting to attend please let us know at the meeting on August 8th.

Some members of North Otago

Wairarapa

We are an active group, with 27 members - not bad, given Wairarapa's 38,000 population.

Sixteen of us met for lunch in July, at a cafe between Masterton and South Wairarapa.

Not only did we all enjoy our meals, we chatted until after three o'clock. What did we chat about? We started with socialising, especially with a couple of new members. However, then our meetings seem to cluster, chatting about polio problems and topics related

PPSS Wairarapa is lucky to include members of a wide range of ages, occupations and interests.

Of recent years we have preferred social to formal 'medical' meetings, because of our supremely competent Field Officer, Julia Squire.

Julia helps us all with everything - polio knowledge, getting through 'The System' for assistance, and sheer loving support.

Liz Falkner (Pres, PPSS Wairarapa)

Waikato

Waikato Post Polio Support Group

The Waikato Branch of the Society has reorganised and elected a new committee after many years of functioning informally. One of the reasons for formalizing the Hamilton group is to better represent the needs of its members to those medical providers and services, which are becoming harder and harder to access.

Our new president John Forbes is one of the younger members of the group. As he has been confronting the effects of Post Polio Syndrome in his own life, he has
become increasingly involved in the Society. He also serves on the National Board of Management. The other committee are Jean Cotter (Vice President), Alan McAllen, Laura Ladkin, Jack Norton, Helen Cook and Noel Morris (Secretary - Treasurer).

We appreciated Laura, Edith, and Jean Coe for running the group for the last 10 years.

Our guest speaker at the July 24th meeting was Margaret Holroyd who gave us a thought-provoking talk “The Joys and Challenges of Aging”. Margaret has lived with a disability and has learnt some of the secrets of how to age with enthusiasm. She left us with lots of ideas and challenges.

The Waikato group’s web site has had a facelift, and can be viewed at http://www.catchword.co.nz/pps.html

The newly elected Waikato committee

Questionnaire Bytes
July 2010

The next Bytes from the Questionnaires look like this:-

- 45% of respondents can now be contacted by email
- 89% of replies came from New Zealand Pakehas
- 2% of respondents are Maori
- Respondents contracted polio in New Zealand, UK, Australia, Canada, India, Ireland, Ukraine, USA, Papua New Guinea, Egypt, the Pacific, Ceylon, Chile. South Africa, Northern Ireland, Yugoslavia, Kenya, Germany, and at sea en route to NZ.
- Age when polio was contracted
  - 58% of people got polio between birth and 10 years
  - 22% of people got polio between 11 and 20 years
  - 11% of people were aged between 21 and 30 when they got polio
  - 9% of people were over 31 when they got polio
  - The youngest got polio at birth and the oldest respondent got polio at 53
- 77% were hospitalised when they first had polio, and 44% were too sick to remember their first weeks with polio
- 7% needed an iron lung
- 39% had Kenny treatment
- 64% had regular physio
- 16% had other members of their family who also polio
- Peak years for contracting polio were 1948, 1952, and 1956
- 16% had no treatment for polio
- The average age of respondents is 71 years and most have had polio related surgery of various kinds

It is great to have personal information from so many of you which allows us to produce NZ specific statistics on which to base the future work of the Board, so stay well and warm, and please stay in touch.

anne@specialneedscoaching.co.nz
susanvm@clear.net.nz
Sleeping Well

The National Questionnaire revealed that 57% of polio survivors often have restless sleep. A further 48% woke a lot and 45% have restless legs at night. 32% woke up even more tired in the morning. These hints on Sleep Hygiene may be helpful.

No matter what your age, sleeping well is essential to your physical health and emotional well-being. As we age, a good night’s sleep is especially important because it improves concentration and memory formation, allows your body to repair any cell damage that occurred during the day, and refreshes your immune system which helps to prevent disease.

Many complain about sleep problems such as:
- difficulty falling asleep
- frequent waking during the night, and lighter sleep
- waking up early and not feeling rested
- a urge to go to bed in early evening
- being tired in the daytime
- needing naps during the day

To feel your best, you need a good night’s sleep, and you may be surprised that keeping yourself active and engaged, eating a healthy diet and exercising regularly can improve how well you sleep.

Causes of sleep changes as we age

Aging may bring unwelcome changes in your sleep, such as more fragmented sleep (more rapid sleep cycles), a decrease in deep sleep, and more awakenings between sleep cycles. You may also find yourself wanting to go to sleep earlier in the evening and then waking up very early in the morning unable to go back to sleep (a change caused by a decrease in certain sleep regulating hormones).

Consider some common causes of sleep problems

1. Poor sleep hygiene
The most common cause of insomnia is poor sleep habits or a poor sleep environment. Examples of poor sleep hygiene are irregular sleep hours, consumption of alcohol before bedtime, and too much daytime napping.

2. Pain or medical illness
Pain can keep you from sleeping well. In addition, many health conditions such as, a frequent need to urinate, arthritis, asthma, diabetes mellitus, osteoporosis, night-time heartburn, menopause, and Alzheimer’s can interfere with sleep.

3. Medications
Seniors tend to take more medications than younger people. Combinations of drugs, as well as the side-effects of individual drugs, can impair sleep or even stimulate wakefulness.

4. Lack of exercise
If you are too sedentary, you may not feel sleepy or feel sleepy all of the time. Regular exercise early in the day can promote good sleep.
5. Psychological stress or psychological disorders
Significant life changes like the death of a loved one or moving from a family home can cause stress. Anxiety or sadness can also keep you awake, which can, in turn, cause more anxiety or depression.

6. Sleep disorders
Restless Legs Syndrome (RLS), insomnia, and sleep-disordered breathing such as snoring and sleep apnea occur more frequently in older adults.

To nap or not to nap – what is the right answer for me?
If you don’t feel fully alert during the day, a nap may be just what you need. For many people, taking a brief nap can provide the needed energy to perform fully for the rest of the day. Experiment with napping to see if it helps you.

Some tips for good napping:
1. Short
Make sure your nap is only 15-30 minutes. You may feel groggy and unable to concentrate after a longer nap.

2. Early
Nap early in the afternoon. Napping too late in the day may disrupt your night-time sleep.

3. Comfortable
Try to nap in a comfortable environment preferably with limited light and noise.

Tips for Reducing Mental Stress to Improve Your Sleep
• Keep a journal to record worries and concerns before you retire.
• On your to-do list, check off tasks accomplished for the day, list your goals for tomorrow, and then let go!
• Listen to calming music.
• Read a book that makes you feel relaxed.
• Get a massage from a friend or partner.
• Use a relaxation technique to prepare your body for sleep.
• Seek opportunities to talk with a friend of therapist about what is troubling you.

To promote good sleep, pay particular attention to your pre-bedtime diet.
• Avoid caffeine (from coffee, tea, soft drinks and chocolate) late in the day.
• Don’t use alcohol as a sleeping aid. It might seem to make you sleepy, but will disrupt your sleep.
• Have a light snack such as crackers, cereal and milk, or yoghurt or warm milk.
• Large or spicy meals may lead to indigestion or discomfort. Try to eat a modest-size dinner at least three hours before bedtime.
• Limit what you drink within the hour and a half before bedtime.

http://helpguide.org/life/sleep_aging.htm
“I Don’t Get Around Much Anymore” by M E Wilson

I’ve driven in many cars during my life
Mostly for pleasure but sometimes in strife
I wonder sometimes what life would have been
If a certain four wheeler I’d never seen

It all started and I think I am right
When I was sixteen and not very bright
A young man I met with a Hillman thirty five
And he asked me so sweetly to go for a drive

Eventually I married the car and the owner
And in due course a large family took over
With our family of children growing to five
We could still take them all out for a drive
With four in the back seat and one on my knee
We went to the bush, the hills and the sea

One day driving back from the shore
We felt the air rush in through the rear door
‘Slam on the brakes’ I hastened to shout
“One of the kids has fallen right out”
There back on the side of the road
Lay our little daughter just five year old
“My god” I said “I hope she’s not dead”
But then she got up and hurried ahead
What a miracle was all we could say
And we knew for certain we’d remember that day

One Autumn day when the children had grown
The two of us took a drive on our own
We sat by the river and relived the time
We’d travelled the roads in the Hillman thirty five
He seemed to know on that bright Autumn day
That his time on the road was fast passing away
Swiftly as the river flowed out to the sea
So was his life flowing away from me
I wonder if that little thirty five
Knew what would happen when I took that first drive
One event I omitted to say
Was that I contracted polio along the way
Now at 87 my mode of transport is very slow
‘cos’ I have to push that damned walker wherever I go
When I look back I think I should cheer
For when all is said and done I am still here
Polio Survivor Registry

Memorial Medical Centre of Johnstown, Pennsylvania is interested in gathering information to support research specific to polio survivors.

They will look at the age of polio survivors, their symptoms, and other traits common to polio survivors. They may also use the information you provide to develop new research.

The survey questions will take approximately 5-10 minutes to answer. If you are a Polio Survivor and interested in participating, please go to https://www.conemaugh.org/apps/postpolio for more information.

Website update

Our polio website has been up-dated during the week, thanks to Noel Morris spending some considerable time on it.

The conference information is there as well as the questionnaire. So do use the site to direct conference enquiries to, or to print off additional copies of the conference registrations.

http://www.postpolio.org.nz

NZPPSS Subs Now Due

Please renew your PPSS membership if you have not already done so.

$10 per annum per member

Send your membership subscription to:
Post Polio Support Society of NZ Inc
P.O. Box 249, Oamaru 9444

Or pay by internet banking:
Westpac acct no. 03 1598 0038007 00
Use your surname as the reference.

Donations always most welcome.
Please advise any change of address.

Liz Falkner

I'm Dr Liz Falkner, Medical Advisor for Post Polio.

I'm a 'polio' too - 1950 - now mainly in powerchair.

As we age, our polio problems get worse.

We probably all accept that - though our doctors/family/carers may not.

We are also all aging, so it is hard to know whether changes are due to polio, other conditions, or maybe even combinations of medications.

I'm available for Polio queries.

Dr Liz Falkner, Masterton
Email preferred - mefalkner@gmail.com
or 06 378 6725, before 9 pm.
Editorial

Questionnaire
The Bytes on page 8 are a slice of us as a group. It is apparent that many of us have some difficulty or other with sleep. There are two articles in this edition dealing with sleep issues. Although one of the articles has a couple of cartoons embedded, disturbed sleep is no laughing matter.

Every one of us is unique. And I am sure that individuals will have found unique solutions to some of their sleep problems. If you have found something that works for you, why not share it with other members? If you wish to send me a brief description of what your sleep problem is, and how you deal with it, I will try to put it in a future newsletter.

Conference
Pages at the front of this newsletter deal with Conference 2010. Such events allow for the exchange of ideas which often don’t occur in other ways. Also the opportunity to catch up with old friends, and form new acquaintances is a good reason to be there. In another life (at least that’s what it seems) I regularly organised in-service courses for teachers. The lesson I learnt from those years was that the networking over lunch was the most important part of any course. The exchange of ideas at the table far outweighed the value of the presentation. In fact, I occasionally thought “Why not do away with the formal part and just meet together for the meal?”. I doubt the Ministry would have understood.

I look forward to having dinner at conference.

Take care.
David

About Us

The Post Polio Support Society of NZ is an incorporated society dedicated to seeking support for people who have had poliomyelitis. It does this through information sharing and where possible, assistance to polio society members and their families, whether or not they are experiencing problems at present.

The Society’s Board of Management meets regularly either physically or by telephone conference, and the annual general meeting of members is held in September.

The Society’s newsletter, Polio News, is published four times a year (March, May, August, and November) and is sent to all members.

Contributions are welcome and the deadline for copy is the 15th of the month before publication.

Disclaimer: Opinions expressed in the newsletter are those of the writers and not necessarily those of the Society.

Acknowledgement: This newsletter has been paid for by a grant from the Lottery Grants Board and the JR McKenzie Trust, to whom the Society expresses its thanks.
Breathing Problems Caused By Post-Polio Syndrome

Abridged from an article by Lisa S. Krivickas, MD

As polio survivors age, they may experience accelerated strength loss both in muscles that were initially affected by polio but seemed to recover fully and in muscles that did not seem to be affected by the acute illness. These muscles may include those necessary for breathing such as the diaphragm, chest wall (intercostal), abdominal and even neck (sternocleidomastoid and scalene) muscles. If these muscles lose enough strength, the ability to breathe is impaired. Early difficulties with breathing may not be recognized by the patient. In addition to muscle weakness, scoliosis (curvature of the spine) and other superimposed lung diseases, such as asthma or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) caused by smoking, can contribute to breathing difficulties.

In patients with polio who have breathing difficulties because of muscle weakness and do not have an additional form of lung disease, the problem is purely mechanical, i.e. due to inability to completely fill the lungs with air. One can think of the lungs as balloons that need to be fully inflated in order to work optimally. Muscle weakness can make it impossible to fully inflate the lungs.

Symptoms that suggest difficulties with breathing often occur first during the night because patients with muscle weakness frequently have a lower ability to inflate their lungs when lying down than when sitting up. These symptoms may include poor sleep quality with frequent awakening, early morning headaches, excessive daytime fatigue or sleepiness and frequent nightmares. Other signs of respiratory muscle weakness are inability to sleep lying down, frequent sighing and a weak cough with difficulty raising secretions. A sign of more advanced respiratory failure is shortness of breath with exertion or when eating or speaking.

Of course, polio related muscle weakness is not the only cause of any of these symptoms, so other medical problems should be excluded. For example, heart disease is a common cause of shortness of breath.

Patients who had respiratory or bulbar (speech and swallowing muscles) weakness during their acute polio illness are most likely to develop problems with breathing years later, but all polio survivors are at risk.

Sleep apnea is a second type of breathing difficulty that may be experienced by polio survivors. Sleep apnea refers to brief episodes when one stops breathing during sleep. If the episodes are long enough, they usually wake the patient. Oxygen levels fall abnormally low during the episodes of apnea. Patients with sleep apnea often feel fatigued during the day and un-refreshed by their sleep. If sleep apnea is severe, serious medical complications such as heart rhythm disturbances, pulmonary hypertension and congestive heart failure can develop. There are 2 major causes of sleep apnea in polio patients. The first is weakness of the throat muscles that allows the airway to collapse when one lies down. The second cause is a direct effect of the polio virus on nerve cells in the brainstem that help control breathing.

The full article can be read at http://www.gbppa.org/krivickas1.htm

A Study in Crutches
Learning to Live with Achievements that are Attainable...

Coral and Ted’s story

This is a story about both my parents, as my Dad plays an integral role in the continued well being of my Mum. She contracted polio in November 1952, seven months after they married. Mum was whisked away without Dad. He wasn’t allowed on public transport after visiting her. Such was the general fear of this disease.

No visitors, she felt just sheer terror as to what was going to befall her, and fear of being half conscious, paralysed from the neck down and not being able to breathe properly. The iron lung was already in use! And the PAIN. Those were dark days.

Now the treatment - She started to exercise her arms, as she hated being man-handled. (This has not changed!) Hours and hours of hot woollen packs all day. Hours and hours of intense, painful exercise and a sadistic physio added to her day.

Then a lovely nurse trained in Kenny treatment changed things, and the healing began.

Talk about right place, right time, as far as treatment was concerned. A stay in Duncan hospital especially set up for polio and we had progress. They were properly educated, treated their patients with dignity and progress was steadily made. Mum had to teach her legs to move again, just like a baby. All this time Dad was holding down a job and spending weekends wheeling Mum all over Hospital to give her a change of scenery.

Having the children presented its own challenges. They anaesthetised Mum and pulled us out with forceps. Ouch! I love to tell my friends, that I’m a miracle, as my parents didn’t think they would be able to have a family at first.

Of course being the eldest it soon dawned on me that I had a role to play as well, so I learnt to cook doing things step by step, running from the kitchen to the bedroom, where Mum would be forced to rest her legs which had given out. Savoury mince was my speciality! I used to chop wood and mow lawns regularly from a young age, not to mention fetch and carry. The saying in our house was “What’s the matter? Are you paralysed or something?” This was a catch phrase in Duncan Hospital I found out later.

Our life was pretty normal though and Mum was keen for us to do everything, and I can remember her, with a couple of library books, a flask, blankets and a hottie at the bottom of Mt Ruapehu, waiting while we climbed it, or went tramping or sliding on plastic bags in the snow. I just thought everyone’s Mum had funny legs.
Mum and Dad often talk of that day when the staff held her up as he was approaching the hospital to visit, and she ‘staggered’ into his arms as a surprise for him. Of course I have only learnt recently that despite all care she crashed onto the floor badly soon after.

We girls soon learnt how to lift her up. This was normal to us, although a fall often put Mum out of action for days afterward. I recall once we were in a department store and she was having difficulty as usual with the toilets. While my sister and I trying to hold Mum up, we always said stupid things and would end up giggling and being silly so as not to make her feel embarrassed. Who knows what the staff thought of the noise going on in there! Who cares?

My Dad taught us to show affection and concern, do chores, but most importantly he was always available for emotional support for our Mum. I think this is amazing as he came from a background which was lacking in this.

One of things that they taught by example has been to adjust to your circumstances and do your best. This is a hard thing to learn but necessary when life forces you to face things you don’t want to face.

After such a battle to gain mobility which took months, it wasn’t easy to lose it again with PPS after a so called ‘normal life’ for 30 years.

Mum is a redhead of course! What can I say! She is still fighting, still as mobile as possible. Dad is 80 now and they are as together as they can be, in their circumstances. They are a source of inspiration to their many friends and they are much loved by their 3 daughters and their families.

Directory
Information about membership and local support groups

Free phone 0800 4 POLIO (0800 476 546)
Website: www.postpolio.org.nz

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