

2005 Memories: First Time to Branson

Alice French

This is a little long, but it's my journal entry for the day after we arrived home from Branson. I know that sometimes we all forget what things can be like for newcomers, so this is my way of saying a heartfelt thank you to all!

Monday, June 13, 2005

The three-day Bransongoes Post-Polio Reunion was the best \$35 that I have ever spent in my life. Rich and I attended the reunion this past weekend (June 10-12, 2005). It was an important event for me in several ways:

Medical Information

- Assistive Devices Information
- Opportunity to interact with about 35 other polio survivors
- Opportunity for Rich to interact with polio supporters and to meet and hear other polio survivor
- Opportunity to meet in person those with whom I have communicated on the Internet
- Most significantly for me is the fact that somehow during the course of the three day event I was able to let go of the shame and humiliation that I have felt about having had polio and having post -polio now.

Not only did I learn to adjust to hearing and using the terminology, but also I met people who had succeeded in the physical and emotional adjustments. I feel that I now have a group of friends who are able to be supportive --not just because they know me, but because they know what I am going through. There is a huge difference.

My family and friends love me and want to see me adjust happily to my new lifestyle, but they have no way of understanding why it can be so hard sometimes. Their confusion about my emotional crisis only caused me to question and punish myself even more. Their attitude was: "So". You can't do as much as you used to. That's not so bad. Many other people are worse off than you are. Just be happy that you can do what you do." I kept telling myself that they are right and criticizing myself for feeling upset.

Now, I am saying to myself that my friends and family are doing the best they can at understanding, that they are trying very hard to be helpful in every way, and that they love me. I can accept that now because I know at least thirty other people who do understand why it is so hard --because it has been hard for them, too. Now, I can let up on myself a little and say, okay, not everyone is going to understand but they don't need to. I will get through this period of adjustment and will come out on the other side a lot stronger than I have been thus far in my life.

A second change in me as a result of the three -day experience is that I am not embarrassed to "come out of the closet" as one polio survivor stated it. It is okay for me to be up front about my post-polio syndrome. I have PPS, and I have certain limitations. I am not going to win every challenge. I don't have the endurance or the strength that others may have. I may be resting while they are out having fun or cleaning house, gardening, shopping, or whatever. However, I am going to learn new ways of contributing to our world, and I'm going to feel good about it. I will use the "good" time that I have to concentrate on the quality of my life instead of the quantity.

- I will gladly use a wheelchair when possible;
- I will gladly accept physical help when offered;
- and I will gladly use my rest periods to seize time for emotional and spiritual renewal as well as physical renewal.

All that for just thirty-five bucks! Not bad.

And, thank you again.
Alice French

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