

country peaked in the mid 1950s which means my class very likely could have been the last one that was threatened by the polio virus because the Salk vaccine, and later the Arthur Sabin vaccine, effectively eradicated its threat in this country. I was treated at the Fort Polk Military Hospital in Louisiana. In those early days while I was there, my parents thought they were about to lose me to the virus. But with the good treatment I received, I survived and recovered. I now have Post-Polio Sequelae (PPS) which laymen refer to as Post-Polio Syndrome. And now, my class may be the last one to be diagnosed with PPS. So, in a way, we may be bringing up the rear for all of you who have been leading the way for us. I hope I can do my part and represent you well. I have come to call PPS. My Companion because it is always with me and communicates to me, in one way or another, from hour to hour and from day to day. I am still learning how to live with this little trinity of weakness, pain, and fatigue. My Companion reminds me it is with me when I hurt, when I run out of juice, when the temperature is cold, when I am having trouble sleeping, and when I choke on food. It clamps down on my legs and won't let go. It taps on my arms with ticks and tremors. It grabs hold of my body in its heavy grip and lays me down with a force more powerful than gravity. When I am rested it may retreat to whisper from a distance. But it always returns with a rush to voice its loudest cry. While my paralyzed arm was the most visible result of polio, and my arms are my major concern with PPS today, I am also having PPS symptoms in my legs. When my neurologist told me I have PPS he explained that there is nothing we can do to stop it, that we can treat the symptoms with medication, but we can try to slow down the progressive nature of PPS. Which brings me to this lesson: If you have PPS, get to the acceptance stage of receiving the diagnosis as soon as possible and get busy learning how to manage it right away! PPS progresses in my body gradually but the progression is often manifested suddenly and without warning, or with little warning, in subtle and sometimes startling ways. It is a maddening experience. Just when I think I have slowed the progression of PPS down, or maybe even found an early plateau, something else becomes a physical, and mental, challenge for me. Through First Coast Post-Polio and books they recommended, I learned about lifestyle changes I should make in these books and PPS has forced me to make such changes because seemingly simple activities can cause fatigue and pain through overuse of my body. The good news is that little changes can make a difference. I learned a few things about mobility and have learned to accept my cane, crutches, and scooter because they help me to comply with the PPS mantra: Conserve to Preserve. These assistants keep me more active and engaged. Unfortunately, many of you with PPS had to stop working while you were at the pinnacle of your careers. I am one of the fortunate ones with PPS because my employer, Chrysler Financial, has made it possible for me to continue working under a work from home accommodation with a flexible schedule making it possible to enjoy an extended work life! I first began showing signs of PPS with weakness and pain in my left arm, between the shoulder and the elbow, when it was overworked. But it was the pain in my legs that motivated me to go to my doctor for help. The pain set in and did not release for days. I was experiencing this kind of pain along with cramping in my legs with increased frequency between episodes. But this bout of it motivated me to get help. With me, the pain (and muscle spasms) resultant to overuse of my body is most severe at night. Often, it prevents my ability to sleep. If I

start the morning with pain, I know that I am about to face an intense day and night. This sets up a tight cycle of pain, fatigue, weakness, pain, fatigue and so on. More pain and fatigue means more reliance on medications. So, I am learning to pace myself so that I can prevent the triggers, become less reliant on medications, and suffer fewer adverse side effects from them. Like I said earlier, I recovered from polio. And I lived a normal active childhood. In fact, I was an athlete in high school and lettered in track, cross-country, and wrestling. Polio survivors are often driven and commonly have Type A personalities; traits that are attributed to the therapies we received in our formative polio years. I believe any success I have achieved in my thirty two year marriage and home life, my thirty year career in finance and in my service to my church and community came as much by God's grace and determination and enthusiasm as by intelligence or education. My wife and I have enjoyed a fitness lifestyle but with the onset of PPS In late 2006 and early 2007 I was forced to stop my exercise routines because they became increasingly more difficult and I started to become weaker and required longer recovery periods between workouts. I am learning to stop over using and abusing my body to slow down the progression of PPS. Rather than ignoring the signals my body was sending me, toughing it out, and pushing on despite of them I have had to learn a new kind of self discipline holding back! It is ironic that a slower and paced lifestyle is our prescription for better health. I still grapple with that! &nbsp;It goes against everything I have learned about health and fitness. I have since learned some of the simple fluid movements within Tai Chi Q igong and to adopted aqua therapy as my forms of physical therapy. All said; I had a great go of it during the span of years between recovering from polio and the onset of PPS. With the adjustments I am making and with the love and support of my wife and family, my friends and church, an accommodating employer, the care of my doctors, and locking arms with my peers at the First Coast Post-Polio Support Group I have much to be thankful for and much to look forward to! Most of my PPS peers are well down the PPS trail. If you are one of them, thank you for leading the way and press on as my class joins you and begin doing our job of bringing up the rear! Charles W. (Bill) Hamilton, Jr. country peaked in the mid 1950s which means my class very likely could have been the last one that was threatened by the polio virus because the Salk vaccine, and later the Arthur Sabin vaccine, effectively eradicated its threat in this country. I was treated at the Fort Polk Military Hospital in Louisiana. In those early days while I was there, my parents thought they were about to lose me to the virus. But with the good treatment I received, I survived and recovered. I now have Post-Polio Sequelae (PPS) which laymen refer to as Post-Polio Syndrome. And now, my class may be the last one to be diagnosed with PPS. So, in a way, we may be bringing up the rear for all of you who have been leading the way for us. I hope I can do my part and represent you well. I have come to call PPS My Companion because it is always with me and communicates to me, in one way or another, from hour to hour and from day to day. I am still learning how to live with this little trinity of weakness, pain, and fatigue. My Companion reminds me it is with me when I hurt, when I run out of juice, when the temperature is cold, when I am having trouble sleeping, and when I choke on food. It clamps down on my legs and won't let go. It taps on my arms with ticks and tremors. It grabs hold of my body in its heavy grip and lays me down with a force more powerful than gravity. When I am rested it may retreat

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