

I would like to introduce myself to the group. My name is Phyllis Sands. I was born June of 1954 in Gainesville Florida and lived in Brookler Florida. At 3 months of age I was diagnosed with polio. I was then taken to Jacksonville Florida and admitted to Hope Haven Hospital, who had by then an extensive program for victims of polio. I stayed at Hope Haven for several years. I was in an Iron lung for a while. I had multiple surgeries and the "hot blanket" treatments, one of the things I do remember, is the smell of hot wet wool, and the smell of liquid ether being dripped onto the gauze over my nose and mouth to put me to sleep. I think the hardest part of being at Hope Haven was being separated from my family for such an extended time. I never had a chance to bond with them. This separation has followed me and had an effect on relationships to this day. When I was 3 or 4 I was transferred to Shands Teaching Hospital in Gainesville for my treatments. This was the first time I moved home to stay. I had been given passes from Hope Haven for a day or two to visit my family, Yet Hope Haven was like home. Once at Shands I had a surgery every June until I was 17. I remember being taken into this auditorium like room and my doctor pointing at me and telling the people sitting in the chairs what he was going to do. I hated it. I did not like being in a hospital gown on display. I was a typical preadolescent girl; I was modest and shy about anyone seeing so much of me. Also I knew this meant I would be in surgery the next day and that meant pain and cast and a miserable couple of months. At 17 I was old enough to say no to more surgeries. That was the turning point for me. I was no longer a captive of the cycle of school and hospital. I graduated high school and went to work in a Furniture Store as a Bookkeeper. Within a Year I had worked my way up to assistant manager. Next I was married to my first husband who just did not work out; I was blessed with my first child a son. It was at this time I was diagnosed with Post Polio syndrome in 1976 at the age of 23. A signal parent for a couple of years, Then I had a second marriage which I was blessed again with my daughter. The stress of the marriage ending and the two pregnancies seemed to accelerate the Post Polio. It took me some time and a lot of hard work to regain a portion of the mobility I had lost. I gave my children the energy I had, to give them the best child hood I could. I knew I only had so much to give, raising the kids and being in a relationship was stretching myself to thin. I waited until my children were in their early 20's. Then I had time and energy for a relationship. I was super blessed for my time and patience with my husband John. He is a blessing and a gift. He brought with him my step-son who I treasure as well. I have 5 grandchildren and a full life. Who would have dreamed that the small infant reliant on such a big machine (the Iron Lung), would have persevered and be blessed with so much. As I look back I know everyone in the line of medical professionals thought they were doing the best thing. The best thing varied from region to region. I am past looking back with regret or even anger for the experimentations the medical profession put us through. I have been through years of the up's and down's, the good days and the bad. At times feeling like a fish forever swimming against the current. Well this little fish has learned to stop turn around and go with the current. With my PPS, I am just getting to the place where I can accept some things and am always searching for answers for others. I even will admit I still am in denial over issues that I just cannot face yet. I have sought the group to gain the knowledge and insight to make the most informed decisions possible. I hope to be able to give back to the group and be as much of an asset as I can in return.