

Dear Joan,

I write this letter to help some of our polio associates to know that it may take a serious gamble to improve one's physical condition and mobility.

In mid-2000, my wife, Peg, and I moved to Florida from Missouri to be closer to our two sons. There, after nine months of physical therapy for a hip condition, my new primary care physician, a pulmonary specialist, referred me to an orthopedic surgeon. After reviewing my x-rays, he determined that I had a deteriorating condition of the entire right hip (including the lining) due to polio in 1937 at the age of 18 months. It seems that my abnormal gait and severe scoliosis, combined with years of baseball, softball, basketball, and hunting, had worn out my right hip and had severely affected my left hip.

The orthopedic surgeon felt I needed a more extensive hip replacement than he was comfortable doing, so he referred me to Robert T. Snowden, MD, in Pensacola.

Dr. Snowden felt that the right hip should be replaced as soon as possible and the left hip as soon as I had recovered from the first surgery. My primary care physician thought the surgery too risky for my weakened physical condition. In 1988, I had heart bypass (5) surgery and take medication (Cardizem and furosemide) for my heart. I use a BiPAP® ST, with supplemental oxygen, at night for restrictive and obstructive lung disease. But, my condition had deteriorated to the point where I had to use a wheelchair fulltime, so I felt I had no choice but to have the hip surgery, and I insisted on it.

In March of 2001, my right hip was replaced with no serious side effects. Following eight weeks of rehabilitation with the help of Peg, my surgeon told me I could proceed with typical walking activities as best I could, but that I should use a cane for stability. When I returned for my three-month check-up, Dr. Snowden asked if I was ready for the second hip replacement. After taking all of one minute to think about it, I agreed.

In August of 2001, my left hip (which had completely deteriorated while I was going through rehab for my right hip) was replaced. Although, the rehab took longer for the second surgery, in three months, I only used a cane for support when walking outside and no support inside the house. (I do use grab bars in the bathroom.)

After the second operation, I had a total central vein occlusion (problem of getting blood to my left eye) and have had two vitrectomy surgeries resulting in a very slight improvement in my sight. I am able to read the letter "E" on the first line of the chart.

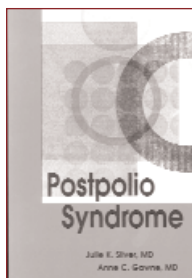
After two years of rehab, I am on my own walking anywhere I wish. I am almost free of pain except for minor sporadic arthritic pain, and, occasionally, I do become short of breath while walking due to my pulmonary condition. I regained a lot of strength, which I had been losing for the last 15 years. I reduced my glucose and cholesterol levels to the lowest they have ever been by paying attention to my diet and taking supplements.

I have not felt this good since 1985. It seems that polio can have potential devastating results over one's lifespan, but, in my case, a gamble and my faith has allowed me to continue my life as I wish.

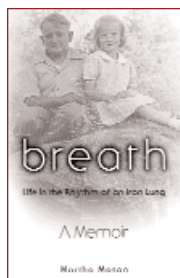
Your friend always,
Thomas Skinner



New Books — Reviews in next issue of *Post-Polio Health*



Postpolio Syndrome (ISBN 1-56053-606-3) by Julie K. Silver, MD, and Anne C. Gawne, MD, has been released by Hanley & Belfus (www.elsevierhealth.com). The book (336 pp.) retails for \$29.95.



Breath: Life in the Rhythm of an Iron Lung (ISBN 1-878086-95-2) by Martha Mason is published by Down Home Press, P.O. Box 4126, Asheboro, North Carolina 27204 for a retail price of \$24.95.