



ALIVE and Well In Spirit. . .  
by marie oden

My friend the Oak lives just outside my bedroom window, hugging the eaves, dispensing his cheer with lush greenery in the summertime; ever with me when I'm snug in bed pursuing rest or enthralled by a good book like *CIDER WITH ROSIE* by Laurie Lee. His moods and mien speak volumes regarding the time of year, the change of seasons, the direction of wind. The cedars and firs are lovely, but less communicative. I could recline forever without any news from the outside world and my tree would inform and educate. For instance, today with his leaves looking like they've been dipped in gold with touches of bronze and copper all lit up by the sun; and when a seasonal forest breeze blows through, a dozen or so ride off on the wings of the wind, and I know: Thanksgiving is almost upon us! I also know that his autumn finery is deceptive. My friend's golden leaves are actually prelude to a time of stark leafless nudity. But nothing, I exclaim nothing is more beautiful than those very nude branches cradling diamond studded fallen snow on a moonlit night, come winter. My friend the Oak after losing all of his golden leaves stays in place without complaint and waits as nature sends its beautifying effect. Then when I look out my window after Thanksgiving, it is as though my friend the Oak has truly *become* an extraordinary masterpiece, something you'd see in the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Thanksgiving! Every year I take several minutes or more and muse on the fact that I had polio on Thanksgiving in 1947. Mother always likes to say that even though I was a preemie at birth, only nine inches long; nevertheless, I was perfect in every way, until polio.

I suppose I'm one of millions of *Polio Survivors* who sought to embrace a normal life and gain acceptance by transcending the symptoms, impairments, limitations and I must admit growing up, girded with a huge cache of grace, I managed to fling off every hint of stigma, laughed off any and all shame; and even on Thanksgiving didn't give in to morbidity, never gave it any leeway. When I saw pity forthcoming, I skirted around it like a hiker dive bombed by a wasp. But these days, I'm facing my *chink in the armour*. It isn't pity by any means, it's rather like embracing reality; and I'm strangely consoled by other defenseless creatures who manage to thrive and bestow blessing like my ol' Oak who indeed imparts autumn joy!

A senior now in life, I find I can't mask my defects: No longer able to stand on either leg; it's the scooter and me, or a personal acquaintance with the floor. Nor am I able to carry on unabashed when fatigue hits like a two ton tom turkey in the gut. Ah, that's probably why I find comfort in close association with nature. Plopped down on this earth with imperfect yet lovely flora, fauna, gosling and gander, I revel in the company of vulnerable things like the trees of all sorts who teach; deer, doves, squirrels, honey bees and butterflies; the primrose certainly knows vulnerability and the mushroom, how much there is to learn from a mushroom hiding out in shadowy places and lily-of-the-valley! Big and little dogs, Lhasa apso and St. Bernard, they teach. My Lhasa says, "Okay, what you need now is some fun ball playing time!" And he's right! The panda, camel, quail; all of them including my friend the Black Oak with his gorgeous (falling) leaves teach-educate how to manage when things are rough and tumble and changes inundate!

For one thing, my ol' friend the Oak is at peace. He sees the growth he's made, likes the way his branches reflect life within. His noble intent to thrive and use the elements at hand, inspire. His roots have found nourishment, exerted force, and this force has enabled expansion and development so that he is solidly rooted, steadfast, not likely to topple in a storm! He claims that losing gilded-golden leaves is just part and parcel of purposeful action; a necessary preparation for the next stage and realm of functioning.

It bolsters courage to know that one is not alone in this world, that vulnerability often gives birth to teachable wisdom, unforeseen transformation, and that shared experience unites hearts. It's a fact: we're in this together! We learn from one another. That's a comfort for certain. So, the ol' Oak and I want to take this opportunity to wish you, my friends, a delightful autumn and a lovely Happy Thanksgiving.

## Announcements



### Meeting Dates:

Mark your calendars:

- **November: 11-15-08**
- **NO DECEMBER MEETING**
- **January: 01-17-09**

### Meeting Donations:

At each meeting a “hat” is passed to give members an opportunity to contribute whatever amount they wish to help cover the Newsletter costs and our PHI Association Membership. *But Note!* There is no obligation to contribute at every meeting.

**Newsletter Submissions:** The Deadline for submitting information for next month’s Newsletter is December 5, 2008. Contact Mary Ellen Stan (via phone or email).

## November Birthdays



Fenia – 11/23



John – 11/04



## Acknowledgements



### Thank You!:

Our thanks go to member, Dick Stoney, for writing and submitting a letter to his newspaper about the “We’re Still Here” campaign. A copy of his letter is enclosed with your Newsletter. As a result of his letter, we may be welcoming several new members. Additional thanks go to Dick and Kathy for accompanying member, Mary Ellen Stan, to the Claremont Rotary Club meeting at which she delivered a speech about her own Personal Story and about the “WSH” campaign. And appreciation goes to Mary Ellen and her sister, Patty Ragan, for proudly wearing their “WSH” badges on their recent trip to Texas. An enthusiastic and sympathetic Southwest gate attendant announced on the PA system all about the campaign. This information was broadcast to about 500 travelers!!!!

If any of our other members have “WSH” campaign stories to share, please let your Editor know so that you can also be acknowledged.



## Education

**This Month’s Web Link:** From the PHI website – “The John P. Murtha Neuroscience and Pain Institute, Johnstown, Pennsylvania, launched an [online registry of polio survivors](#) to track polio survivors.” When you click on this link it takes you to this page. For those of you with internet access, please take the time to participate in this survey.

### **“Polio Survivor Registry**

Thank you very much for showing interest in our survey! We are interested in gathering information to support research specific to polio survivors. We will look at the age of polio survivors, their symptoms, and other traits common to polio survivors. We may also use the information you provide to develop new research. Our survey questions will take approximately 5-10 minutes to answer. “

### **This Month’s Book Review:**

Due to space limitations, there is no book review this month.

## Polio Survivors Ask...

**Nancy Baldwin Carter, BA, M Ed Psych, Omaha, Nebraska, (n.carter@cox.net)**

**Q:** I've never attended any of these conferences. What should I expect?

**A:** Expect fun! Expect excitement! Expect a conference like no other! There is nothing to compare with what you are about to experience.

Where else can you be thrust into the center of discussions of today's post-polio scene, along with around 350 other polio survivors, all of us privy to the knowledge being shared by maybe 40 doctors and other medical professionals?

You'll hear experts; you'll ask serious questions and get serious answers about serious issues—every session is participatory, interactive or followed by Q&A's. Polio survivors as well as docs and pros participate, with everyone working as a team.

You'll make life-long friends from exotic places and exchange views and laugh together. You'll breathe the pine-scented air of this historic site in Georgia, a first time location for a PHI Conference. And if you are a graduate of Warm Springs rehab, the reunion with these buildings may infuse you with the will of spirits past.

The IMPACT of being there, being caught up in the swirl of heady conversation, creating solutions, meeting goals, and doing it all as one—goodness—simply thinking about this fills me with anticipatory joy!

### WHAT GOES ON?

Take a look at the agenda on [www.post-polio.org](http://www.post-polio.org). So many sessions call out to me—which to choose? I want to know the secret to how our groups can be more effective. And what about boosting energy and maintaining weight? And bracing, exercising, managing fatigue, what to do about pain. There's yoga and acupuncture and dealing with families and assisted living communities. All about breathing. And so, so, so much more. And who could resist a gathering with story telling and pizza?

There are some fascinating innovations this year. A handful of historians will paint unusual, as yet untold, pictures of the polio past for us.

Plus, because of the special facilities available at Warm Springs, a three-day Post-Polio Wellness Retreat precedes the Conference. Although

enrollment to this additional feature is limited, many will be drawn to the experience.

### TESTIMONY

I asked a friend who has attended a number of PHI Conferences (and who is already registered for this one) why she keeps going back.

"I learn so much," she said. "I get *answers* at these Conferences. They offer an unbelievable variety of information. There's something for everyone. Not to mention this year's added incentive of the Wellness Retreat.

"I get to choose the agenda that meets my needs. I'm picking my topics for this one already. I definitely won't miss the sessions on current research, aquatics, alternative medicine, surgery, and equipment. I wonder what 'film night' is about.

"These PHI Conferences are unique. Professionals and lay people working together like this—that just doesn't happen other places. My daughter even went with me one year—family members should get in on these things. There are so many seminars, so much to learn.

"Besides, I love chatting with the people there. I like to hear how they do it. I always want in on the breakout groups. And I've made many friendships over lunch."

### WHAT'S UP?

PHI's current "Post-Polio Health" newsletter adds to the information. As time goes by, even more details may be revealed. Keep your eye on the website.

PHI has been doing these exceptional Conferences a long time, since the early '80's. They know how to make them work. It's all about networking, served up on the most palatable platter imaginable. That's what I'd expect, if I were you.

As the blurb says—It's an experience of a lifetime!

*Nancy Baldwin Carter, B.A., M.Ed.Psych, from Omaha, Nebraska, is a polio survivor, a writer, and is founder and former director of Nebraska Polio Survivors Association.*

Source: Post-Polio Health International ([www.post-polio.org](http://www.post-polio.org)) PHI Communiqué No. 26



# San Gabriel & Pomona Valley Polio Support Group Newsletter

[www.post-poliopartners.org](http://www.post-poliopartners.org)

Editor: Mary Ellen Stan      Volume No. I    Issue No. 10    Date: October 31, 2008

## Next Meeting – Saturday, November 15, 2008

Meetings are usually held once a month on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday – 1:30 to 3:30 PM at Casa Colina Centers for Rehabilitation (Tamkin Education Center Room A) – 255 E Bonita Avenue, Pomona, CA 91769  
**Call (909) 465-0742 for Specific Monthly Meeting Details**

**Group Officers: Mary Ellen Stan (Chairman), Dick Stoney (Treasurer), Elizabeth Lamar (Secretary)**

### Agenda

There will be no formal meeting agenda in November.



### From the Chair

This month we are gathering for our annual NO HOST lunch at the Acapulco Mexican Restaurant (see details under “November Program” section). **You must give your RSVP to Dick Stoney no later than Wednesday, November 12.** His number is 626-332-3772 or send an email to [dstoney@dslexreme.com](mailto:dstoney@dslexreme.com).

In addition to enjoying each other's company, during the lunch, we will discuss how to organize and run our future meetings, so your attendance and participation are important to the future existence and success of our group.

In October I submitted our Newsletter to the Director of the Post-Polio Health International

so that it can be included in the future on their website in the “Networking” section ([www.post-polio.org](http://www.post-polio.org)). I cannot stress enough how valuable this website is for all of us.

**Submitted By: Mary Ellen Stan**

### From the Editor – October Highlights

Your Editor was unable to attend the October meeting, but it was later reported to your Editor that following the business part of the meeting, the group engaged in supportive conversation.

### November Program:

Lunch Location:  
Acapulco Restaurant  
998 E. Alostia Avenue  
Azusa, CA 91702  
(626) 969-8818

