

A Polio Love Story

UPDATE: Carole and Wilf Tiefenbach are now living in Winnipeg. Carole is the President of the Post Polio (Manitoba) Inc. Board of Directors and Wilf is the Secretary.

Peer support groups are a place for polio survivors to share their hopes, dreams, fears, and experiences of living with post-polio syndrome (PPS). Meetings provide a safe, secure and comfortable environment where friendships can bloom, and sometimes, even more. Carole and Wilf Tiefenbach are the President and Vice-President of their peer support group and a true polio love story. They met in 2001 at a Polio Regina meeting. Carole says she noticed Wilf right away, thinking, "Ooh, what a handsome guy." Wilf also noticed his lovely wife-to-be but the couple didn't begin their relationship until March 15th, 2005. They had made plans a year before to spend their birthday together, sharing a birth date of March 15th — and it turned out to be their first date. It was a very successful first date — they have been together ever since and married in September, 2008. Carole and Wilf have the easy manner of a long-married couple, often thinking of the same things at the same time, and finishing each other's sentences. Carole explains that previous bad relationships had made her wary of getting involved, but a shared attraction and time spent working together on various Polio Regina events helped convince her to take a chance on Wilf. "I am certainly happy I did — I guess love always wins out in the end," says Carole with a laugh. Carole and Wilf also believe that both being polio survivors, and having the shared experience of living with post-polio syndrome has helped their relationship. "There is an understanding there," Carole explains. Having supportive family members, caregivers, friends, and loved ones are invaluable and necessary when living with PPS. Having a spouse who also has PPS provides even more understanding and empathy of the challenges of living with the condition. "We've been really fortunate," says Carole. "We don't need assistive devices yet, and so we really believe that we should be involved in Polio Regina. As part of the executive committee, we have helped, together with the rest of the team, plan polio picnics, meetings, Christmas banquets and more over the years," she continues. As part of this involvement, in November, 2009 the couple attended the L.I.V.E. Conference, a three-day information and training session held by March of Dimes Canada. They gave a short presentation on the activities and events of their group and how these are strengthening the polio survivor community in Regina. The two also briefly shared how Polio Regina brought them together. Their message of love and hope was inspirational to those in attendance. "I guess if there is anything that can be learned from our story, it's that love can be found at any age and any circumstance," say Carole and Wilf.