

New Movie *Breathe* a Great Opportunity to Let the World Know that *We're Still Here!*

Robin Cavendish was a problem solver.

As a polio survivor in Britain who depended on a ventilator to breathe he tackled the problem of being tied to an unwieldy breathing machine, a tie that severely restricted his ability to move around about his environment.

So he made a way to break that tie. He was an innovator who in 1962 [developed a method](#) of putting a ventilator on a battery powered wheelchair.

Cavendish's story is told in the new movie *Breathe* that is hitting theaters this month.

His innovation opened the way for Cavendish and many other similarly situated polio survivors to get out of institutions and live their lives more fully.

Polio is mostly forgotten in the developed world today, thanks to the polio vaccine introduced in the mid-1950s. It's getting harder to find a doctor who knows much about polio or treating post-polio syndrome.

But hundreds of thousands of polio survivors still live across North America. We're in all walks of life, actively participating in community life. Most of us are aging now, and many of us are having more polio-related problems.

Some of us are developing problems with breathing and are using ventilators throughout all or parts of the day and night.

Nobody has counted how many people are using ventilators today, but people across a range of neuromuscular diseases are users, while CPAP use is suddenly spiraling in the general population.

But, like Robin Cavendish, we too have been creative adapters. We, by necessity, can claim to be among the world's greatest innovators. Polio survivors have continued to confront problems and find ways to focus on the positive aspects of our lives, living fully and independently, contributing to society, challenging discrimination and the myths of weakness and dependency. In that way, we are, in the notion of the late scholar and polio survivor Paul Longmore, a model for anyone growing older because we know how to adapt and thrive.

Robin Cavendish's story as told in *Breathe* offers a great opportunity for polio survivors, members of support groups and others in the wider polio survivor population to:

- Go see the movie with friends who don't know much about polio.
- Get your support group to go see the movie together.
- Talk to your local media as well as service groups and anyone who will listen about living with the effects of polio, including post-polio syndrome, especially about using a ventilator.
- Tell them that Post-Polio Health International is here to help, support, and inform about all things polio – past and present.
- Keep *Breathe*-ing and remind everybody that "We're Still Here!"