



Dianne Dych-Sachs

It was the summer of 1952. There was a large outbreak of polio that summer. There were three children in our family. We lived in the Detroit area. My brother was 2 years old and had a bad cold two weeks before my twin sister and I were stricken with polio at 13 months of age. My mother noticed that I would cry when she changed my diaper. This persisted along with the crankiness.

My parents took me to the doctors who recommended immediate hospitalization at Children's Hospital in Detroit where the polio virus was confirmed. The doctors asked if there were siblings at home. My sister was confirmed on a later date to have contracted a lighter case of polio. My mother is a very strong woman, but she did cry when the doctor told her that her baby had polio and that I would have to stay in the hospital. Later, I was transferred to Farmington's Children's Rehabilitation Hospital and given the Sister Kenny treatments.

Being an infant, the nurses restricted movement by strapping me down with a cotton-like strap around my waist, tied to the crib. Mom and Dad could not visit very often because of caring for my bother and sister and Dad worked six days a week. However, my mother would call and remembers the nurses commenting on me being a good baby. Because I was so young when contracting polio, I have no memories of my hospitalizations. We were very fortunate the March of Dimes took care of all our medical bills.

After being released from the Rehabilitation Hospital, a physical therapist visited the house on a weekly basis. Debby and I were fitted with braces and amazingly learned to walk. When we moved to Macomb County, Easter Seals helped with our medical care. My sister and I became Poster children for the March of Dimes and later Easter Seals.

My parents treated my sister and I no different than our unaffected siblings. We had chores, responsibilities, and were always encouraged to do our best. If there was any teasing, and our feelings were hurt, Mom explained to us that they were rude and didn't know any better. She also taught us never to feel sorry for ourselves, and that that there were people much worse off than us. Mom often said, "You can do anything in life that you put your mind to". I will always be grateful for those words.

One of my fondest childhood memories is attending a handicap camp during the summer months. My sister and I attended Camp Grace Bentley located in Jeddo, Michigan. We were just six years old when we started attending camp, and spent many summers there. I think it gave us a good perspective on life. We met many friends and still have kept in contact with some of the campers throughout all these years.

We attended regular school. It was initially recommended that we attend handicapped school. Mom would have nothing to do with that recommendation. She said there was nothing wrong with our minds, so off to regular school we went. We did just fine. We were not the first kids picked for team sports and we were not the last. I missed most of my high school years, due to surgeries, but was home schooled.

I had five major surgeries on my right ankle trying to stabilize it so that I could walk without the brace. I was finally able to get rid of the brace in my twenties. Debby and I both attended college and made the Dean's list. We ended up with good jobs. I worked at a local hospital for 30 years. We both married and have lovely families. I have been blessed with lots of grandchildren to love.

About 1995, Post-Polio arrived. It is very hard to slow down when my brain is telling me differently. I did have to go on disability in 1998. I am back in braces and a cane. I have a scooter friend that definitely conserves energy. I keep busy with our local Polio support group, secretary and board member of Michigan Polio Network, and volunteer as a greeter at St. John's Polio Clinic in Warren, Michigan.

My husband Bruce is also a polio survivor. We have discovered this wonderful place called Bay Cliff Health Camp located in Big Bay, Michigan. We have met other polio survivors at this wellness camp and look forward to the event in each fall. I cannot forget to mention that Bruce and I travel every year with the Boca Raton Polio Group. We are about to go on our eleventh cruise in February to the Western Caribbean. My sister hasn't done so well. She developed Multiple Sclerosis many years ago. She has maintained a positive attitude through all this. She is legally blind and confined to a wheelchair most of the time. However, she is still able to make beautiful greeting cards.