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Polio Survivor 1949 Age 2.5 Buffalo, NY

My experience with polio seems different from those who hailed from Michigan. After several days of fever, pain, and fatigue, I was taken to the Buffalo Children's Hospital for a spinal tap. The diagnosis showed I had polio, but it was not in the "active" stage so I was told to be taken home. During the next few months I was given the following treatment as expressed by the hospital physician: keep her comfortable, don't allow stress and hope for the best.

My mom gave me regular stretching exercises to loosen up the tightness in my legs and my grandmother gave me daily warm baths. I wore orthopedic shoes most of my school life. They were the brown and white or black and white saddle shoes. I was always scrutinized by my family to make sure that I had no relapse of fever, pain, or fatigue and well into my teen years, pretty much what I said or wanted to do I did. I was allowed to "boss" my family around, they giving in to my every request and expectation. This kept me quiet and happy and very spoiled. (I don't think the doctors mean the spoiling should last so long.)

I did not suffer many after affects of polio except for a limp when I walked while fatigued and atrophied right leg. While in high school, my mother heard about a successful, but experimental surgery that could help control my limping. I had a tendon transfer in the right foot. The outcome was not favorable. March of Dimes would not pay for the surgery, which my family could not afford, because I was never officially diagnosed with polio. In my early twenties, I had neuromas removed from my right foot and bracing was used for the first time. I wore a spring-type brace that was permanently affixed to my right shoe, but after many trials and adjustments, it was thrown away and I never wore braces after that initial trial run. (1972)

It was determined by my family at an early age that I should not partake in ballet, dance, or any activity that consisted of longstanding, complete exhaustion, etc. I never did ballet. But I did dance and was notoriously famous for dancing the night away with any man who showed an interest and knowledge of dancing on any floor. Hence, my ability to glide to a waltz, cha-cha, rhumba, or "dancing with the stars" style ensued well into my late 30's. It was here that I first noticed that I was having difficulty walking off the dance floor after the music stopped. Was this the first signs of PPS? I am the mother of two boys and married to the most wonderful caregiver 31 years. Ron saw no limits to my living a full life until post polio set in, in 1996. It was as if the rug had been pulled out from under me. My life whirled, spiraled downward and I was no longer "in control" any longer. When fatigue, pain, and weakness wrote my life, I spent a lot of time with physicians who could not even conger up any reasonable explanation for my physical changes. A psychiatrist concluded the I had a "post polio syndrome: and assured me that I could control my life and that mentally I needed a shift change in what I believed was important in my life.

It took my years of research as the Michigan Polio Network librarian and hours of talking to other polio survivors to know that what was going on in my body was also going on in other who had thought they had conquered a horrific disease in their early years.