

and I invited a boy in my seventh grade class. The ride took us to the city park out by the lake, where we stopped to drink from the park fountains. It had been a dry year, and the nearby creek, which received some overflow from nearby septic tanks, had apparently seeped into the water supply feeding the park fountains. At least, that's what the doctors later surmised. Two weeks later I came down with a sore throat and high fever. But, then I got worse. My dad's first wife had died of encephalitis, and he was truly frightened. I remember him and my mother standing together just inside the door to my bedroom lecturing me on taking care of myself, I laid there looking at them. My right side was paralyzed, as was my throat. When I tried to swallow anything it would come out my nose. I was so sick I could barely focus, and they were lecturing me as if I were doing something to make myself sicker? I could see on their faces how scared they were. We lived two blocks from the hospital, and the doctor's office, and those were the days of house calls. The doctor came every day. He gave me a shot of penicillin, but it didn't go anywhere, it just stayed in a big knot where he injected it. It was painful. It seemed to me that it took some time for them to figure out what was wrong with me. Perhaps it was days. Finally, the doctor did a spinal tap. The phone was right by my bedroom door, so I could hear when the call came. It's what we thought it was. The lady who had been staying with me left immediately. Mother quit her job and became my physical therapist as well as my full-time nurse and caretaker. I don't know why I wasn't hospitalized unless it was because I didn't require an iron lung, Our house, of course, was quarantined for the duration. The doctor showed my mother how to do the Sister Kenny exercises and she was faithful in insisting on regular sessions. I owe a great deal to my mother. I was a stubborn, but affectionate child, and I did not make her life easy, being 12-years-old. When I began to recover and could swallow even minute bits of liquid, I would beg for chocolate milkshakes. Later it was pumpkin pie. My mother called the doctor. He said, Give her whatever she wants. I loved my doctor. My junior high teachers began sending my lessons home when I began feeling better, and I was able to keep up with the rest of my class. We didn't have a television set yet, so I read our complete set of Books of Knowledge from cover to cover, and my mother and sister made frequent trips to the city library. Books covered my bed. After a lot of hard work I was essentially recovered except for my right arm which would not straighten. Day after day, my mother would have me sit with my elbow on her knee and force my arm back to try to straighten it. It was very painful, but eventually it worked. The only problem was, there was a residual tremor in that arm, especially when the muscle was a little tired. Later on my children would shriek when I would try to cut their hair. As I began climbing in the career ladder in public school administration I would hide my hand in my pocket or keep it in my lap under the table for fear someone would think I was nervous or an alcoholic. I never did regain my stamina to the degree I had before polio. I could play tennis and ride bikes, etc., but I couldn't keep up or be competitive, and I would get frustrated, and sometimes angry. Having blood pool in my feet until they turned purple (polio feet) and becoming lightheaded when I stood still for too long, was always a problem. The insidious deterioration of my strength and stamina began to show in my late forties and progressed over the years to the point that grocery shopping was a major effort. My mind was going in circles, from what's wrong with me? to spending weeks and months doing research, to, oh, yes, it's post polio, and then a year later,

what's wrong with me? and starting all over again. I've finally come to terms with using my crutches and wheelchair to conserve what strength I have left. The part I haven't come to terms with is feeling like people are seeing me as a fraud, or a hypochondriac. No one can see the exhaustion, or the feeling that my muscles are going to puddle right into the floor. It's been such a joy to find this group and others who were having similar experiences. I hope you all will continue to be a part of bringing hope, encouragement, and understanding to your fellow polio survivors. and I'd invited a boy in my seventh grade class. The ride took us to the city park out by the lake, where we stopped to drink from the park fountains. It had been a dry year, and the nearby creek, which received some overflow from nearby septic tanks, had apparently seeped into the water supply feeding the park fountains. At least, that's what the doctors later surmised. Two weeks later I came down with a sore throat and high fever. But, then I got worse. My dad's first wife had died of encephalitis, and he was truly frightened. I remember him and my mother standing together just inside the door to my bedroom lecturing me on taking care of myself, I laid there looking at them. My right side was paralyzed, as was my throat. When I tried to swallow anything it would come out my nose. I was so sick I could barely focus, and they were lecturing me as if I were doing something to make myself sicker? I could see on their faces how scared they were. We lived two blocks from the hospital, and the doctor's office, and those were the days of house calls. The doctor came every day. He gave me a shot of penicillin, but it didn't go anywhere, it just stayed in a big knot where he injected it. It was painful. It seemed to me that it took some time for them to figure out what was wrong with me. Perhaps it was days. Finally, the doctor did a spinal tap. The phone was right by my bedroom door, so I could hear when the call came. It's what we thought it was. The lady who had been staying with me left immediately. Mother quit her job and became my physical therapist as well as my full-time nurse and caretaker. I don't know why I wasn't hospitalized unless it was because I didn't require an iron lung, Our house, of course, was quarantined for the duration. The doctor showed my mother how to do the Sister Kenny exercises and she was faithful in insisting on regular sessions. I owe a great deal to my mother. I was a stubborn, but affectionate child, and I did not make her life easy, being 12-years-old. When I began to recover and could swallow even minute bits of liquid, I would beg for chocolate milkshakes. Later it was pumpkin pie. My mother called the doctor. He said, Give her whatever she wants. I loved my doctor. My junior high teachers began sending my lessons home when I began feeling better, and I was able to keep up with the rest of my class. We didn't have a television set yet, so I read our complete set of Book of Knowledge from cover to cover, and my mother and sister made frequent trips to the city library. Books covered my bed. After a lot of hard work I was essentially recovered except for my right arm which would not straighten. Day after day, my mother would have me sit with my elbow on her knee and force my arm back to try to straighten it. It was very painful, but eventually it worked. The only problem was, there was a residual tremor in that arm, especially when the muscle was a little tired. Later on my children would shriek when I would try to cut their hair. As I began climbing in the career ladder in public school administration I would hide my hand in my pocket or keep it in my lap under the table for fear someone would think I was nervous or an alcoholic. I never did regain my stamina to the degree I had before polio. I could play tennis and ride bikes,

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Frances Powell