

I REMEMBER WELL..

I can remember well when getting polio. It was the summer of 1946 in July, between 7th and 8th grade. An article in the Florida Times Union stated it was the 9th case of polio in Duval County that summer. I was spending the night with my best friend and after riding our bicycles all day I started feeling bad. My mother was called to come get me and by the next morning I had a very high fever and my neck was stiff. The doctor was called and he said not to worry about my neck, it was just caused by the high fever. The next morning, still with the high fever, I could not move my left arm. The doctor came out and as soon as he saw me he called for an ambulance. After the isolation ward at St Lukes for two weeks they took me to Hope Haven Hospital in Jacksonville for seven months.

The hospital included an accredited school so the staff would roll our beds into the school room and one teacher taught all grades. There were kids at Hope Haven from all over Florida with polio, several in iron-lungs. The nurses were very prompt in changing the Sister Kenny heat packs to keep them as hot as possible, wrapped around us. That along with physical therapy and a heated pool was all they knew to do.

I went back to Hope Haven in three years for surgery on my arm and hand and have five scars as a result. Once the incisions were made and the doctors saw that all the muscles and nerves were gone, They were unable to do what they had planned. Some doctors say they waited to long to operate. I can use some fingers a little, but cannot use my thumb at all. Of course, over the years I learned my own way to do things. Some people do not notice anything wrong, although my arm is much smaller and my fingers curl.

When my children were growing up I did lots of sewing. I made five beautiful quilts and many gorgeous porcelain dolls. Nine years ago the Post Polio Syndrome started bothering me and my arm and hand have become much weaker. I know I overdo and still do too much. The faithful heating pad gets wrapped around my arm each night. My husband rubs my arm with my oflex or biofreeze when it is hurting badly and that helps to relax it. Some days I wear a sling on my arm. That also helps and reminds me not to use it when it is hurting.

We can only hope and pray that one day the doctors will know more about the PPS and can help us in the years to come.

Betty L