

THREE OUT OF SIX AND I MADE THE LIST

Polio was a list I would gladly passed on. Now I thank God it was me and not one of my brothers or sisters. The picture of me as a child was used on a polio poster for March of Dimes when I was five in Lansing, MI. My story starts when I was almost four in 1952. I am one of six children, the third in line. I do remember being really sick with a fever that lasted a long time. One morning as I was getting up I remember falling and crying because I could stand. I lived by a small lake in Lansing, MI. Where us six children used to swim and play.

I was told that was where I got my polio from, the water of the lake. I lay under the shade of a tree with a high fever. It was cooler than our trailer. I was taken to the hospital after falling where they diagnosed me with Polio. I remember being afraid. The other children in my ward were worse off than me. Some children where unable to move at all. At the time I did not think of myself as lucky.

At this time my Mother, Bernetta was pregnant with my youngest sister. The sixth child. She was scared too. You can read her story on this link. "What it was like on the other side of Polio".

My treatment was the Sister Kenny hot packs. I remember screaming because they were so hot. I was also put in a hot whirl-pool tub for therapy. I was then given my first braces and taught to walk all over again using parallel bars. By the way I liked my shoes because they were new and I didn't have to wear my sisters worn out ones. As I got older I hated them....

As my therapy for Polio continued over the years I went from a full leg brace, to a half brace up to my knee on the right leg. I was ten years old when I had my first surgery. The doctors put staples in my left knee to slow down the growth of that leg allowing for the right polio leg to catch up its growth. At the age of twelve I had surgery again This was to keep my right foot from flopping when I walked. At age sixteen I had my staples removed from the left leg now that the polio leg had caught up with the length of the left leg. Making my knees uneven. Each Surgery I acquired a new set of crutches. I didn't like those either. Am I complaining too much? The surgery I hated most was the summer of my seventeenth year. Doctor Harris who treated me all through my years with polio, did a new surgical procedure to help me use my right hip to stabilized my walking. He did a muscle transplant on my hip, this would keep my leg from swinging to the right as I walked. I spent two and a half months in a body cast. With a bar between my knees to hold the right hip at a slight internal rotation, I was able to go home for one month. The cast was removed and I spent a month in the hospital for treatment therapy. It was very painful. I was able to go home and spend my senior year on crutches.

For a seventeen year old girl I was very upset by this next move.

My mother moved us to a little town by my grandfather. Because of this move I was starting a new school for my senior year. My friends were back in the other town. Only fifteen miles apart. But it did seem like a whole state at the time. The last thing I needed was a set of crutches .Making new friends was not even an option. Who would want to befriend me on crutches? But then God can send us friends when we are in need.

This was a small town and most every one in it was friendly and willing to help if I needed it. The first day I had two guys help in carrying my books from class to class. I

think they just wanted to get out five minutes early. I was just happy to have a couple of new friends on the first day.

I did however after a year of therapy, walk across the stage without aid to receive my diploma. It worked!! I was so please to have done it alone. My class clapped and I was headed for college. I went to Lansing Business University and found problems with the stairs. Back when we are younger you figure away through or around most obstacles. I left class early so I could climb the stairs before it was crowded with other students.

I Married had a son and moved to Florida where I still live today. I divorced from my first husband and went back to work. I later remarried and raised my husbands two children.

For thirty-two years I walked without aid of crutches or a brace. When Post Polio Syndrome first started affecting me I was in my 21st year of marriage and 46 years old. I tired easily and fell a lot while working for a flora company and it became difficult to handle my job after braking my foot. My foot did not return to being like it was before the fall. It was weaker. After a couple more falls I finally went to a doctor and he examined me and I was told I had Post Polio Syndrome. Now I am back in a brace with the use of one crutch.

A friend told me about a Personal Assistant job opened where she worked at a real estate office. I applied and got the job. I work there for seven years until my leg started giving me trouble in the strength department. I found myself praying I would make it to the car without falling at the end of the day. Fatigue was increasing big time.

I have since retired because working because it was becoming more difficult for me. I started finding myself using the carts at the stores. Something I said I never would do. Now after ten years of PPS I have my own cart. Use my crutches. One crutch at home on most days. I use my Scooter in the stores always! I do what I can to prevent anymore falls and fatigue.

I know most of you, the men mostly, do not want to give into PPS. We need to listen to our bodies. If we are tired and slow down. Do not think of it as giving in. Just a little compromise.

Your Vice President, Janice Askwith
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