



**From:** Claire King  
**Date:** 03/21/05 13:37:19  
**To:** jfcask@comcast.net  
**Subject:** Polio Story From Claire King

Hi Janice,

I receive the First Coast Post Polio News, but do not come to the meetings. I enjoy the newsletter. Here is my polio story:

At age two, (1952) here in Jacksonville, I was unable to reach the radio in our living room to turn it on. My mother made me show her why I couldn't raise my right arm above my shoulder high enough to reach the knob. My mother dressed me for a trip to Riverside to see my pediatrician, Dr. Hugh Carithers almost immediately. We caught the city bus, a trip that took the better part of the day. After an examination, the doctor had us exit out of the rear of his office and off I went to Hope Haven Children's Hospital on Atlantic Boulevard. My father was away on business and eating dinner with a friend in Atlanta when he received a telegram telling him I was in the hospital asking him to come home. He flew back to Jacksonville that night.

At Hope Haven I was placed in isolation and unable to see my parents. My nurse's name was Rainy Pickett. She was young and beautiful. During my three week stay at Hope Haven, my parents were not able to enter my room. My mother and father talked to me while standing outside the open hospital window watching me struggle to lift a fork and spoon. My father told me to just pick up the bowl and drink it. While in the hospital, I fell out of my crib and cut open my chin. My parents fought with the hospital to come inside. They were finally allowed to see me, but only from outside in the hallway on the other side of a glass observation window. I left the hospital and returned home without the toys and dolls that kept me company during my hospital stay.

This story was never easy for my parents, Dorothy and Bill Fleming, to tell me. Our house was quarantined with a large sign, the milk and laundry service men refused to deliver to our house. When I was little, I used to ask them to tell me the story many times over. I have no recollection of this major event in my life. I do remember as a child laying in my bed at home fearing an iron lung and wondering why I couldn't (?) wear braces. My pediatrician never mentioned polio to me again.

I had a wonderful childhood and great parents. They saw me through all of the diseases a kid caught in those days. I had the mumps, measles, chicken pox, whooping cough, ring worm, pin worms and whatever else was floating around in puddles or in the air. I played with mercury, ate lead paint, stuck bobby pins in electrical sockets, got thrown off my bicycle and was slammed in the face with a baseball bat while being catcher. I was able to use my arm with no problem. I had full use of my arm, played in the high school band, got married, had a child and retired from BellSouth after 34 years.

Sometime around my 45th birthday, I became curious about my polio, where it was, did I really have it and what kind of drugs were pumped into me while at Hope Haven. My mother's memory began to fail her. I began to experience problems with constant pain in my neck, weakness in my arm and right side. I had several bad falls, became very clumsy, drug my right foot and could not reach the dishes from the top shelf in my kitchen cabinet anymore. I was worried about the after effects of my polio.

I decided to try and track down my hospital records from Hope Haven so I called Nemours Children's Hospital and much to my surprise only had to make one phone call to locate them. After returning a consent form to Nemours, they sent me my entire hospital records from 1952. The only thing that was given to me at Hope Haven was Vitamin B, a spinal tap and stitches on my chin. The doctor determined that the polio was confined to my right upper arm.

In 2000, after several months of falling, and numbness all over my body, I was diagnosed with spinal stenosis due to degenerative disk disease. For awhile, I was unable to walk without a walker, could not feel my full bladder or bowels, underwent a laminectomy from C-3 through C-7 at Shands-Jacksonville. After recover, I actually returned to work for a short time before I retired. My right side is weak and I still fall occasionally if I'm not paying attention. My right leg drags. My reflexes are exaggerated and not normal. After my surgery, I regained feeling in everything but my right thumb. I have trouble sleeping and suffer from Restless Legs Syndrome which has plagued me my entire life. My neurologist is working with me now to find some relief from RLS. I am still undecided as to whether I have had these problems as a result of PPS.

I am currently taking Spanish at FCCJ and I am planning a trip to Cusco, Peru in May with my classmates. I plan to see Machu Picchu and the wonders of ancient Incan civilization. I'm taking my cane and going broke. I'll let you know if the stubbornness and drive that all polio sufferers seem to possess will get me through this adventure. Wish me Luck!

Claire King

Thank You Clair for sharing your story