

Mother: We lived behind my sister at Jones Lake in Lansing, Michigan at the time and I went up to her house to call the doctor. We couldn't afford a phone. Doctor Harris was the doctor at the hospital who was treating people who came to the Sparrow Hospital with polio. He came to the home and checked you and your older sister because she now to was running a fever. The doctor said he felt you had polio and to take you to the hospital. He treated Patty, your older sister at home and she recovered with no lasting effects of polio. Polio was everywhere in the city. Its all you ever heard about on the news from our radio. We had no television. We heard of people dying and being paralyzed. Not being able to move arms or legs. I was scared to death that if I got polio who would take care of the other children and I was pregnant? How could I cope? Where would they take the babies off to? What was going to happen to my family? What happened next after I was in the hospital? Mother: They took you from me and you were examined and after what seemed like hours but only minutes they confirmed you as having acute flaccid paralysis (AFP) polio. You were put in a room with three other girls all with polio; two of which were completely paralyzed. We could only watch you through the glass doors for the next 3 to 4 months. I walked every day three miles to see you until the 6th child was born. At that time your Aunts and Uncles would come to see you. Tell me what you had to do once I came home. I imagine six children kept you pretty busy. Mother: Looking back I don't know how I coped. I just had to do what was needed at the time and move on to the next child. You came home in a brace on the right leg to the hip and a strap going around the waist. The brace buckled at the hip and knee and hooked to your army shoes as we called them. You were proud of those shoes because they were the first pair that wasn't handed down from your sister or a cousin. I had to continue putting hot packs on your legs and every month you went to see Doctor Harris. You eventually went to a special school for early kindergarten at age 4 so you could swim in the warm pool and have therapy. You were picked up at the door by the yellow cab company to and from school the next 3 years. You had to have been stressed out with so much going on and six children. Was I more trouble to care for than the others? Mother: I didn't have time for stress or anger. You just had to move on and not look back. After awhile we settled in to our regular family routine of everyday living. No I wouldn't say you were any more trouble. What ever came up I dealt with it. Like dressing six kids and putting on six pair of shoes and six pair of socks. Yours just took a little longer. After I got your foot into the shoe your older brother and sister helped buckle you in your brace. I would move on to the next child. How difficult was it for me in the winter? Mother: You played just like the rest of the children. I however would only allow you to stay out for a hour a day because your leg would get really cold from poor circulation. I would remove your brace and wrap your leg in warm towels from the oven. It was the only way to heat them up. You had a little more struggle climbing up the snow covered hill to slide down but it was worth it. The joy on your face showed how much fun you were experiencing from the speed of the sled. You always seem to be wanting to go fast at everything you did. You pretty much did everything the other kids did. As you got older there was rough times after surgery but you never seemed to let it get you down long. You recovered quickly and could not wait to get back to your friends. How would you summarized your feelings today with what happened at the time of the Polio outbreak? Mother: Polio was everywhere and you heard about it all the time. Most

all families had someone who they knew or one of their own who had the disease. I was scared like everyone else. You just learned to cope with it. I am just glad it did not get any worse on us. Some children at the hospital could not even move. My oldest daughter your sister Patty recovered from the fever with no disabilities other than she lost some weight and the doctor said that was good for her. We could walk and talk and we were alive. And I thanked GOD for that. Thank you for reading my mothers story. I wanted to find out how she handled all that took place when I was a young at age of 3 1/2 and struck with polio. I was luckier than most and had a great family base to fall back on. All my mothers sister and brothers, always came to see me for the four surgeries I had and at our family reunions when we played baseball. My Uncle would pick me up and run the bases with me on his shoulders. I remember laughing and cheering with the rest. I did not feel left out and never more special than anyone of my other sisters or brothers. It starts with LOVE. I was truly blessed by God.