

My Polio Story

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I got the Polio Virus in August of 1955, but I don't remember a lot because I was only 3 years old. My Mom (who has since passed on) didn't tell me much of what happened, because not unlike so many mothers of her generation, she didn't like to talk about it.

I was swimming in Rancocas Lake, NJ with my 5 sisters. The way the story goes, I tried to do a silly movement in the water and went under. The lifeguard who was there at the time, ran into the water to save me and took me into a small room. From that point on, I had trouble walking and no one could figure out why I was having so much trouble. Eventually, my family doctor, Leslie Miller diagnosed me with Polio.



I spent a lot of time in various hospitals. Approximately 7 1/2 years slipped away. I had (we think) 5 surgeries during this time to help me walk and repair the damage that was done to my body. Some days were OK and other days? Those were so very lonely.

When it was time for me to attend school, my mother went to the school office and discovered they would not admit me because of my disability. My mother fought the school system, and she wouldn't take "No" for an answer. I attended School #1 in Belleville, NJ.

My handicap never seemed like one to me, and I was still able to play with my sisters – riding my bike and jumping rope. The years moved on – at times needing casts, leg braces or orthopedic shoes on my legs; but I went through my 4 years of high school with minimal issues. After high school I went to vocational school and took a course called Business Machines and graduated at the top of my class and got a job at National Newark and Essex Bank.

Most of my surgeries were done at Children's Hospital of Newark (NJ). I can remember having to walk back and forth in front of several doctors, dressed only in my underwear. Imagine just how embarrassing that had to have been for a teenage girl. Up until that time, I didn't know that disabled people were treated much differently than people who were your average regular person. When I grew older, I used to think that it was a blessing for me to have had Polio because it made me special and I would be a totally different person if I had never had the virus. The truth (that I understand now) to having been treated differently was a rude awakening for me, but the key here is that I am a survivor; and I wouldn't let myself down.

Growing up, I attended the youth group at Watsessing United Methodist Church. I met my husband at that youth group, but we didn't actually connect until he went into the Navy. There's nothing more handsome than a military man dressed in uniform! Bob and I married in 1975 and this past April, celebrated our 40th Wedding Anniversary.

Although it took longer than we would have liked, our daughter Kellie was born in 1981. Motherhood was difficult for me, but even so, our second daughter Audrey was born in 1988. After Audrey was born, we were able to buy a house. That's when we moved across the river to Pennsylvania and settled in the beautiful Pocono Mountains. We have lived here ever since.





In 1990, I was told that I was starting to have the symptoms of Post-Polio Syndrome. Well, I didn't know what to do at that point, since I no longer wore braces or special shoes. Then a friend told me about a PPS support group in Allentown, Pa. I was a regular attendee until the group stopped meeting. Even so, thanks to that group, I learned a lot about Polio and PPS. I have spoken to several friends who also had Polio. I am a member of both the Polio Networks of New Jersey and Pennsylvania. I attend the NJ Conference each year.

Thanks to the help I've received, I am still mobile. I just had knee surgery. It took a little while to recover, but I did. Neither troublesome knees, PPS or having to use a walker kept me from having a fabulous time at my 45th High School Reunion. I danced standing at my table.

What matters most? I still dance!



Like everyone else, I don't know what the future holds. Until I am unable, I will continue on, because without question, I have a purpose in this life. I am a Polio "Survivor".

