"It’s not over. The survivors exist, and we’re real."

POLIO: Pain and progress

A century after the first major U.S. epidemic, worldwide eradication is eyed this year.

By JERRY MARIN

It caused hard the day before Nick Havemeyer came down with polio in the summer of 1952. All the kids in Fanwood, New Jersey, neighborhood were out in the street, splashing in the water, just being kids.

The next day, 8-year-old Havemeyer developed a high fever and couldn’t stand as well. His mother called in an ambulance, but the crew was reluctant to take him.

"They waited in and took one look at me and said, ‘This is polio. And at that time, you were afraid to touch people because it was contagious,” said Havemeyer, who is 79.

Fear prompted the anxiety each summer in the early part of the 20th century when thousands of children caught the polio virus before two types of vaccines were developed in the 1950s. Many were paralyzed, left with disfigured limbs and experienced other physical and emotional pain. For some, the virus was fatal.

No one knew what caused it or how to prevent it, only that it was contagious. Health and humanitarian organizations kept the debilitating disease — and the fear it still creates around and among survivors — will be eradicated worldwide this year, the 100th anniversary of the first major polio outbreak in the U.S.

But just because we may no longer see new cases of polio doesn’t mean it will no longer affect people. Decades after they had polio, survivors like Havemeyer have developed post-polio syndrome or post-polio syndromes, and are experiencing pain and fear once again.

Reading his own experience, Havemeyer said the ambulances crew who responded when he became ill took him to Morristown Hospital in Trenton — thanks to his mother’s plea. From there, he was transferred to Downtown Memorial Hospital in Hamilton, New Jersey, where he was a patient for three or four months.

See POLIO Page A10
Polio

Continued from Page 26

However, the mother was not aware of yesteryear's polio activities, mostly because her home was located in an area where the disease was not common. She said that her parents were not aware of the disease because it was not prevalent in their time.

In the meantime, the polio epidemic continued to spread throughout the country. The disease was now known as epidemic in many parts of the world, and efforts were being made to control it. In Washington, D.C., a group of prominent doctors and scientists formed the World Health Organization (WHO) to combat the disease.

In the United States, the government established the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis, which later became the March of Dimes. The foundation raised funds to support research and treatment for polio patients. It also provided financial aid to families of children with polio.

In 1955, the Salk vaccine was developed and was later approved by the Food and Drug Administration. The vaccine was given to millions of children, and it proved to be effective in preventing polio.

Polio was declared eradicated from the United States in 1979, and the March of Dimes was dissolved. However, polio continued to be a major health problem in other parts of the world, especially in developing countries.

In recent years, polio has been eliminated in many parts of the world, thanks to the efforts of organizations like the WHO and the Rotary International. But the disease is still a threat in some areas, and the fight against polio continues.

Resources and Information

Polio: An American Pandemic

Polio: An American Pandemic

Sources

1. History of Polio Before the Salk Vaccine

2. Polio: The Great American Epidemic

3. The March of Dimes: The Foundation That Hawked Hope

4. The Polio Epidemic in the United States

5. The History of Polio in the United States

6. The History of Polio in the United States

7. The History of Polio in the United States

8. The History of Polio in the United States

9. The History of Polio in the United States

10. The History of Polio in the United States

11. The History of Polio in the United States

12. The History of Polio in the United States

13. The History of Polio in the United States

14. The History of Polio in the United States

15. The History of Polio in the United States

16. The History of Polio in the United States

17. The History of Polio in the United States

18. The History of Polio in the United States

19. The History of Polio in the United States

20. The History of Polio in the United States

21. The History of Polio in the United States

22. The History of Polio in the United States

23. The History of Polio in the United States

24. The History of Polio in the United States

25. The History of Polio in the United States

26. The History of Polio in the United States

27. The History of Polio in the United States

28. The History of Polio in the United States

29. The History of Polio in the United States

30. The History of Polio in the United States

31. The History of Polio in the United States

32. The History of Polio in the United States

33. The History of Polio in the United States

34. The History of Polio in the United States

35. The History of Polio in the United States

36. The History of Polio in the United States

37. The History of Polio in the United States

38. The History of Polio in the United States

39. The History of Polio in the United States

40. The History of Polio in the United States

41. The History of Polio in the United States

42. The History of Polio in the United States

43. The History of Polio in the United States

44. The History of Polio in the United States

45. The History of Polio in the United States

46. The History of Polio in the United States

47. The History of Polio in the United States

48. The History of Polio in the United States

49. The History of Polio in the United States

50. The History of Polio in the United States

51. The History of Polio in the United States

52. The History of Polio in the United States

53. The History of Polio in the United States

54. The History of Polio in the United States

55. The History of Polio in the United States

56. The History of Polio in the United States

57. The History of Polio in the United States

58. The History of Polio in the United States

59. The History of Polio in the United States

60. The History of Polio in the United States

61. The History of Polio in the United States

62. The History of Polio in the United States

63. The History of Polio in the United States

64. The History of Polio in the United States

65. The History of Polio in the United States

66. The History of Polio in the United States

67. The History of Polio in the United States

68. The History of Polio in the United States

69. The History of Polio in the United States

70. The History of Polio in the United States

71. The History of Polio in the United States

72. The History of Polio in the United States

73. The History of Polio in the United States

74. The History of Polio in the United States

75. The History of Polio in the United States

76. The History of Polio in the United States

77. The History of Polio in the United States

78. The History of Polio in the United States

79. The History of Polio in the United States

80. The History of Polio in the United States

81. The History of Polio in the United States

82. The History of Polio in the United States

83. The History of Polio in the United States

84. The History of Polio in the United States

85. The History of Polio in the United States

86. The History of Polio in the United States

87. The History of Polio in the United States

88. The History of Polio in the United States

89. The History of Polio in the United States

90. The History of Polio in the United States

91. The History of Polio in the United States

92. The History of Polio in the United States

93. The History of Polio in the United States

94. The History of Polio in the United States

95. The History of Polio in the United States

96. The History of Polio in the United States

97. The History of Polio in the United States

98. The History of Polio in the United States

99. The History of Polio in the United States

100. The History of Polio in the United States