

# “Twice He Went Down, Twice He Got Up”

John Fallon



John was a WWII baby, born in Philadelphia; in February, 1941. He was so jaundiced, that everyone thought he was Japanese! (Given that it was wartime, this was difficult for his parents, for sure.) 74 years later, he still has the scar on his neck from where they took out the gland. That summer of 1943, John was 2 ½, and had a newborn baby brother (James). A month after James was born, his Mom took them into center city for her checkup. It was a very hot day. When they passed Logan Circle she let him play in the water fountain. That’s the day they believe he caught polio. The next day, they blocked off the entire area.

He was taken to the Contagious Disease Hospital (Castor and Wyoming) and was put in an iron lung for 15 months. John remembers his Mother only being able to see him on Sundays – and only by looking into a mirror which shone on his face.

In 1946, during his brother’s birthday party, the kids were running around the street. A man turned the corner and hit 5 year old John. His mother took him to Germantown Hospital to have his arm fixed. He remembers them saying: “Why bother? He couldn’t use it anyway.” (It was weak from the polio). That’s why his arm is now crooked and is positioned in front of his body. Sadly, shortly after the accident, John’s father died, as a result of injuries from the War.

John’s happiest memories, as a boy? His fun summers from 1949 to 1955, at the Variety Club Camp. He fondly remembers his favorite counselor, Dan Dougherty. (Dan went on to coach basketball at Army and most recently retired from teaching and coaching at Episcopal High). At the camp, Dan was in charge of the athletic program. He convinced the 9 year old, that he really *could* play sports instead of just spending the entire day reading. John has always been grateful for that lesson from his trusted camp counselor. It was probably the biggest game changer of his life.



In 1955, John was unlucky once again. He got Polio for a second time, at age 14, after receiving the initial Salk vaccine. He spent *another* 9 months in an iron lung, recovering.

In 1956, 1957, and again in 1959; John was operated on, by Dr. Depalma at Thomas Jefferson Hospital; to give him movement in his left arm. Post surgery, each time, he was in a body cast for 6 months at a time. After his second surgery, John’s grandmother took him to Wildwood, where he did what any teenage boy would do – he went swimming in the ocean. John split the cast into two pieces. The life guards were *not* happy with him, and neither was Dr. DePalma !



John went to the Widener School for Handicapped Children. When he was in 8th grade, he decided to try out for the football team. During the team checkup, he had Chorea (St. Vitus Dance) a neurological disease. So, no football. John was hit by cars 2 additional times! Once during a snowball fight (resulting in a trip to Chestnut Hill Hospital) and the 3<sup>rd</sup> time on Snyder & Passayunk Aves (ending up at St. Agnus Hospital this time).

**None** of this stopped John Fallon.

## John Fallon (Continued)

After graduating from LaSalle University, he taught Math at the Philadelphia Public High School for Girls (“Girls High”). He feels as though he was very fortunate to have received 11 different grants to continue his education. In 1966, he and Julia were married. They had 3 children - 2 daughters and one son.

Professionally, John fell in love with not only teaching students, but being a student himself. He was passionate about incorporating writing into the Math classroom, and this became his field of expertise. As a result, he made various presentations on the subject at educational seminars at the University of Chicago, U.C. San Bernardino, Columbia University, York College and Chapman University. In addition, for 20 years, John taught 2 Computer classes each year at Thomas Jefferson and he taught for 5 years at Drexel.

Still, nothing stops John. He’s had both hips replaced and watched 3 of his grandchildren on a daily basis for 8 years. Now fully retired, one of his most favorite things to do, is to travel to Clearwater and watch the Phillies Pre-Season matchups.

John has been active helping at the Villanova College of Nursing for the last 2 years. You can see John dressed in his hospital gown, in the article on our website: A New Standard [http://www.papolionetwork.org/uploads/2/7/7/2/27726699/villanova\\_article\\_-\\_a\\_new\\_standard\\_by\\_glenn\\_coyle.pdf](http://www.papolionetwork.org/uploads/2/7/7/2/27726699/villanova_article_-_a_new_standard_by_glenn_coyle.pdf)

John and Julia have been married for more than 50 years, and have been blessed with 6 grandchildren. They still live in the Philadelphia area.

