IFE IS A GIFT TO YOU. THE WAY YOU LIVE YOUR LIFE IS YOUR GIFT TO THOSE WHO COME AFTER. MAKE IT A FANTASTIC ONE. LIVE IT WELL! ENJOY TODAY! DO SOMETHING FUN! Be happy! Have a great day! Remember “It is health that is real wealth and not pieces of gold and silver.” LIVE HAPPY IN 2014!

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THE 2014 ELECTION OF MPN BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Included in this issue of Polio Perspectives is the 2014 annual Election Ballot of the MPN Board of Directors.
All members of the Network are asked to fill in the Ballot and mail it back no later than April 30, 2014.

Michigan Polio Network 2014 Board
Meeting Dates
January e-mail or US mail up date
March 15
May 17
July 19
September 20
November 15
All meetings are scheduled to begin at noon and will be at Cassel's Family Restaurant
43003 7 Mile Rd, Northville, MI 48167

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Polio Perspectives is the newsletter of the Michigan Polio Network, Inc. It is published four times a year. (January, April, July, and October)
Send articles, information, personal accounts to:
Vera Hazel, Editor of Polio Perspectives
15235 Ackerson Drive
Battle Creek, Michigan 49014
FROM THE CHAIR

Winter 2013-14

We hope everyone had a good Christmas and are having a Happy New Year. The weather has not been very nice with all the snow and cold which has limited outdoor activities.

One of our members was interested in hearing from any polio survivors that have experienced “work place discrimination”. This person worked under a union contract for many years. About 10 years ago, while looking for a new job, felt discriminated against. If you have had this type of experience, please send me your comments.

We continue to hear of polio cases in Syria and the fear of polio spreading to other countries where the vaccination rates have dropped. We must remind our children to have their children vaccinated against polio. The polio virus is in nature and will always be there.

In this issue you will find a ballot for the annual Board of Directors election. You will note there are openings on the board. We are always looking for new members, so if you are interested contact me. Our web site www.michiganpolionetwork.com continues to be up dated, so check for helpful information from some local vendors and other sources.

In the Library section, there is an extensive list of books, DVD’s and other materials to be borrowed. Also check the Library Corner in this issue for the latest information.

Now is the time to plan to attend Post-Polio Health International’s 11th International Conference “Promoting Healthy Ideas” Saturday, May 31 – Tuesday, June 3, Hyatt Regency St. Louis at The Arch. For more information go to www.post-polio.org The registration deadline is May 1, 2014.

Stay safe.

Bruce

FOR SALE

2006 Chrysler Town & Country Van- $21,000
Braun kneel van- ramp with lowered floor, Power doors, power handicapped-driver seat.
65K miles- Florida winters, no Michigan winters. Garage kept. call CHUCK 810-938-0763 (no call after 8PM)

ALSO: Rascal 4 wheel scooter power lift seat -on board charger $150.00
Happy New Year to you all out there in wherever this finds you. I hope that you're well. I won't mention enjoying winter, as those of us who are here in Winter-land just might still be wondering what hit us!

**NEW ITEMS**

Frank M. Lee was a long-time member of MPN, as well as the editor of this very newsletter for awhile. His memoir, entitled *Nekkid*, was just published by Cincinnati Book Publishing. Calling it a remembrance of "childhood tragedy & triumph," the publishers go on to describe it as "the story of a small town boy's struggle with polio, a disease that once dominated the landscape of America, poverty, and complicated familial relationships."

We also have a copy of *The Man He Became: How FDR Defied Polio to Win the Presidency*, by James Tobin. Tobin posits that Roosevelt became President because of polio rather than in spite of the disease.

Thanks to a donation from Sharon and Rick Kugel, we now have a DVD of the movie "Sister Kenny," which stars Rosalind Russell as the Australian nurse whose controversial polio therapy techniques met with much criticism during the 1940s.

**READER REVIEWS**

As you know, when MPN members borrow library books, I ask that they return them with their comments regarding what they read (with their permission to publish same in this space). Well, here's the latest reader reviews for you:

Sue Blakely read David M. Oshinsky's Pulitzer Prize-winning *Polio: An American Story*, and found it was a "great History Book. Everyone should read [it]-especially our doctors, family members, and caregivers. They would have a better understanding & knowledge of history and what the world was like years ago."

Ginger Ford read *Living, Laughing, and Loving Life* by Dan Miller. She commented, "Starting with the cover picture labeled 'Priorities! Priorities!' to the last page, Dan Miller made me smile. This is an inspiring read."

After reading *Polio: An American Story*, Ginger wrote that the book, "informed me and filled in a lot of blanks for me on the history of polio. Having polio in 1950 as a child of four--I now have an adult perspective on the subject."

Ginger also read *Breath* by Martha Mason, and wrote, "this story gave me cause to pause many times when I thought about all the things this woman went through during her sixty-plus years of living in an iron lung after contracting polio at 11 1/2 years of age. Her story astounded me."

Pat Smith borrowed *Epidemic! The Battle Against Polio*, as well as *Paralysed with Fear*. About the latter, she wrote "Probably the most thorough history of polio, the epidemics, and the research leading up to the vaccine I've ever read. I learned a lot."

Finally, Dee Stadler read *The End of Plagues*, and called it an "interesting book--loaded with good information."

**BOOK-BORROWING**

Should you be interested in borrowing a book, a CD, and/or a DVD from the

*Continued next page*...
Michigan Polio Network, Inc. library, contact me (aka The Librarian) and let me know of your interest. I will pack up whatever you requested and send it to you via US Mail. After reading/watching/listening to your chosen items, you will be expected to return everything to me in the addressed envelope provided for this purpose, with the postage cost being borne by you. A book review form will have been sent along with the borrowed items, and it’s hoped that you’ll send your filled-in review sheet along with them.

You may call me at the MPN phone number (magic phone message shows up on my inbox list...amazing!), which is 989-739-4065. I can also be reached at my own home phone, 248-853-5465(with voicemail), or at denlaur@sbcglobal.net. The materials you wish to borrow will be sent to you as soon as possible.

For those of you with Internet connections, the MPN website contains a book-list which may be of help in letting you know what’s available in the collection. Rick Schwendenmann and I will be working on updating the list and, with the help of the computer fairy-dusters, attempting to make it more "user-friendly." Wish us luck!!

MY BOOK REVIEW

Ronnie Morris is a polio survivor who lives in the area of Metro Detroit known as "Downriver." He wrote a novel entitled Cate and Eric, which was published in 2013. He sent a copy to Vera Hazel, and she forwarded it for me to read and review.

I write a lot of comments about books which are printed in this newsletter, but being a "real" book reviewer isn't quite my line of work, so my comments here shouldn't be thought of as professional ones.

I will say that I enjoyed Mr. Morris's book. Sitting and reading almost-500-page-long books isn't easy on either my eyes or my bones, but I kept at it, and found myself interested enough in the story being told that my physical "issues" weren't quite so important. I was interested in many of the characters in this story, particularly (but not limited to) the ones who were close to my own age group (they mid-fifties, I mid-sixties). Maybe because I'm on my high school class's Fiftieth Reunion Committee and am hoping to see as many classmates as possible at next September's Reunion, I found the main characters thinking of their high school years and their long-lost friends quite close to my current mind-set.

Lest you think that Cate and Eric is simply a long tome filled with "Gee, I wonder what happened to...??" there is quite a yarn provided to keep readers interested. Those fifty-plus people I mentioned previously stumble upon a terrorist plot, as well as a certain not-very-healthy hospital ward, and how the day is saved and a fairly happy ending achieved kept this reader, anyway, page-turning right along!

Downriver Detroit is an important "character" in this story...at least, I thought it so. Having spent almost sixty years in suburban Detroit, the mention of many real places in that area helped make the story more interesting to me. In fact, I'm thinking that a long-overdue exploration of Grosse Ile is on the cards for next summer!

Is this a "polio book?" and, therefore, worthy of being in our library full of...
MICHIGAN POLIO NETWORK, INC.
UNREACHABLE MEMBERS
DURING YEAR 2013

Bock, Barbara M.                         Matheny, Erik W.
Bueter, Catherine                       McCatty, Marjorie
Cavill, Shirley                         Seeley, Larry
Gabriel, Juan Carlos                    Sturges, Sandy
Hubble, Phillip W.                      Sundberg, John I.
Huber, Elaine M.                        Ufom, Eric N.
Hurwitz, Gloria

During the past 12 months, mailings that we have sent to the members listed here have been returned to us by the Post Office as undeliverable. We would appreciate any help our membership is able to provide in reaching them in order to update our records. Please contact:

Laura Barbour, librarian@michiganpolionetwork.com, (248) 853-5465, or,
Tim Brown, treasurer@michiganpolionetwork.com, (313) 886-6081.

LIBRARY CORNER continued....

books about polio or by polio survivors? Not exactly, I suppose, but, as mentioned above, its author, Ronnie Morris, is a survivor. One of his main characters is also a survivor (and his name in the story is also Ron-nie....hmmmmm...). I think that Cate and Eric can safely join our small collection of novels not entirely on the subject of poliomyelitis. After all, it's fun to read stories. Sometimes, we learn a lot from fiction, too!

   Well, that's it for the Winter "Library Corner." Next time we meet, with any luck at all, it'll be spring. Ahhhhhhhh.....!!!
Take care, be healthy, stay warm (even you Snowbirds!), and all the best.

Laura Barbour
Librarian
CDC reports: Fewer Michigan Kids Get Vaccines

Immunization rate in state below national average, by Gary Heinlein Detroit News Lansing Bureau Lansing — Too few Michigan children are immunized against common diseases, a situation that is leading to increases in whooping cough and other maladies, the leader of the Michigan State Medical Society said Thursday.

About 5.9 percent of Michigan kindergartners don’t get vaccinated because their parents seek immunization exemptions for medical, religious or philosophical reasons, the fourth-highest rate in the nation for the 2012-13 school year, according to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention data. It represents a rise from the state’s 5.5 percent rate the year before.

The number of youths who aren’t immunized consequently grows. Less than 72 percent of young Michigan children and 63 percent of adolescents are fully immunized, said Kenneth Elmassian, president of the medical society.

William Ridella, director of the Macomb County Department of Public Health, said he has seen an increase in applications to waive immunizations. The county does not give blanket approvals and checks into the requests.

National immunization rates for childhood diseases are in the 90-100 percent range, federal data show. Infants who haven’t yet been through the full course of immunizations are the most at risk of getting sick. They can contract the disease from an older person who didn’t get immunized and become seriously ill.

The state’s lower immunization rate has led to recent outbreaks of pertussis — whooping cough, Elmassian said. Rises in other diseases once considered eradicated also have been occurring in Midwestern states. According to the federal figures, there were more than 124,000 kindergarten-age children in Michigan who needed the immunizations in 2012. Parents of 6,626 children eschewed the vaccine for philosophical or religious reasons; the rest, 699, didn’t receive it because of medical conditions. The largest share of children, 5,540, a little more than three-quarters, were opted out for philosophical reasons. Michigan is one of 13 states that allow a philosophical exemption; it’s part of the health code adopted in 1978.

“We do want to encourage people to get immunizations now, especially children just starting school,” Ridella said, adding they help prevent the contraction and spread of diseases.

Dr. Keith Roach writes in the Detroit News. 8-31-13

Dear Dr. Roach: You write much about vaccines. I’m of the opinion that we take far too many of them, and they upset normal body chemistry. I’m not a zealot about this, but I don’t plan ever to get another vaccine. Does this get under your skin? J.B.

Dear J.B.: It doesn’t get under my skin, but I’d like you to reconsider. Vaccines are one of medicine’s greatest achievements. I don’t know if you were around when polio was epidemic. In those times, hospitals filled with young and old, immobilized by the polio virus. Some had to be encased in an iron lung in order to breathe.

Vaccines prepare the immune system to make antibodies against illness-producing bacteria and viruses. When a germ attacks, the immune system is ready to attack the invader with antibodies. Without a vaccination, it would take the body weeks to mobilize an attack. By then, the infected person would be either terribly ill or dead.
MY POLIO STORY

By Karen (Wade) Potts

I am now 57 years old and got polio in 1957 when I was 6 months old. In 1957, the polio shot wasn’t given until babies were 6 months old. My family took me to West Virginia to show me off to their parents and when I came home, I got sick. I thank God that I still have my Mother so I could ask her about what happened.

My Mother shared that my sickness started with a fever and cried all night. She said even touching me caused me to cry. My parents took me to the doctor and he said I was cutting teeth and they sent me home. After I wouldn’t stop crying, Dr. Joseph told them to take me to Ziegler Hospital on Michigan and Livernois and they diagnosed Polio. I was then sent to Harper-Grace Hospital where I was in isolation and Mom and Dad had to look at me through a window. I was the youngest child there. I spent a year (and my first birthday - sad picture) in the hospital. They were able to take me home on weekends, and she remembered I had a bar connecting the bottom of my shoes that I hated. It was so hard on them to leave me there every Sunday. She said that the nurses used the Sister Kenny method of wrapping hot wool blankets and exercised my weak left leg; the nurses weaned me at 9 months old using suckers, and the nurses gave me my first haircut. It was very hard for Mom to remember, being 78 now, but I told her I appreciated the pain of trying to recall those days.

My earliest memories are found in lots of pictures, being the first-born child, of my little white brace that I got when I was around 2 or 3 years old. My polio is in my left leg, and the muscles are weak and atrophied. Back then, the brace and shoe were one piece and the shoe was one of those ugly Brown high-top boots (I now realize the boot was to stabilize my ankle). But the brace made me able to walk and I grew up a happy child in the city of Detroit, close to Michigan and Central Ave. I climbed our cherry tree in our backyard, usually beating my brother to the top. I rode a bicycle, played at the park, and had friends on the block. I remember the nice German man that made my braces when I was little -- can’t remember the office name but it was on Michigan Ave and Oakman in Dearborn.

Mom drove me to see Dr. George Pendy at the Rehabilitation Institute for my polio care at least once a year. I had to get a lot of leg braces made to keep up with my growth. Dr. Pendy recommended a surgery to put a pin in my good right leg to stop it from growing so my left leg could catch up. That was my first surgery and it worked! My Mom said she collected dimes for the March of Dimes since they were very helpful with expenses when I was little.

My Mom and Dad didn’t talk about my polio (maybe on purpose so I wouldn’t dwell on it?). They treated me like I wasn’t any different from my brother, who was born when I was 2 years old. My whole life, I’ve grown up being able to do anything I wanted, except run!

At age 5 in 1952, I started Kindergarten at Oakman School in Detroit on Wadsworth Street. It was a special school for handicapped children, and I was better off that most of the kids in the school. Some of them were in wheelchairs, some just looked different and I wasn’t sure what kind of medical problems they had, but we became friends and had a good time. If anyone reading this attended Oakman School from 1962-1967, please email me! I have some pictures from back then I’d love to share. I was there until 5th grade and the riots in Detroit forced my Dad to flee Detroit, so we moved to Dearborn Heights. I got double-promoted to 7th grade before leaving Oakman. I was finally able to attend a regular school in 7th grade and we walked to school (about 3 blocks) and home every day. I was a straight-A student for the most part, never in trouble, played the flute in high school, attended band camp and was in the marching band! I couldn’t march on the field so I got to announce during the half-time show! That was fun! They say people with polio are type-A personalities and I thoroughly fit that mold! I graduated from...
Potts Polio Story continued...

Taylor Center High School in 1974. There was another girl in my class (Sandy) that had polio also and we were friends all through school. I took a Civil Service test in my senior year and scored the highest (who remembers a “block” class that taught typing, filing, short-hand and mimeographing)? Three months after graduation I got a call from the IRS Personnel office offering me a job (sight-unseen, I might add) as a Clerk-Typist, grade 3. My ever-wise Dad counseled me to stay with the Federal Government, even though I had gone to Carnegie Institute and became a Certified Medical Assistant in 1975 after attending school during the day and working full-time for the Government on the afternoon shift.

I got married in 1976 and gave birth to my baby girl, Michelle, in 1980. My Dad (according to my Mom) never thought I could have a baby due to the polio. He was very proud of his first Granddaughter, showing her off at every opportunity. Unfortunately, he died before she was 2 years old. He was the rock of our family, almost ready to retire from the General Motors Fleetwood plant on Fort Street and I-75, but he died of a massive heart attack at age 49. Because of his death at that early age, I have taken great care of my health and see doctors when necessary.

In 1982 before my Dad passed away, I broke my “good” right leg above the knee because of oil on the parking garage at work. I had the best Orthopedic Dr. at Detroit Receiving Hospital - Dr. Little! He put bars and screws in my leg to stabilize the bone and I was back to work in 8 weeks! Overuse of my good leg caused very painful osteo-arthritis in my knee and every step was painful. Unfortunately, in 2008, in preparation for a knee replacement on my good leg, I had the bar and screws removed and three weeks later, I passed out at work and my good leg hit my brace and broke it again! This started my journey with new doctors and blood clots. I was put on Cumadin, had blood transfusions and a Greenfield filter installed in my Vena Cava (big blood vessel taking blood up from the legs to the heart). I retired in December, 2011 after 37 years of Service and got my new right knee in March, 2012! I now walk pain-free! My husband was able to retire also!

I began seeing Mark Taylor at the UofM Orthopedic Center on Industrial Drive in Ann Arbor for my braces in 1994. Dr. Ann Laidlaw is my Polio doctor now (also at UofM). Mark also has polio and he and Dr. Laidlaw have been involved with the Polio Perspectives group. They are a great team and I am so happy that since 1994 I can wear regular shoes that match! That may seem like a little thing to most people, but I wore those clunky brown high-tops for 38 years and to be able to buy a regular pair of shoes is a blessing! Dr. Laidlaw diagnosed me a few years ago with Post-Polio Syndrome based on my wrists, shoulders and arm weakness that seem to get worse each year. I’m not agreeing or disagreeing with her diagnosis, but there is nothing I can do to change it. I try not to overdo it to save my muscles.

I was remarried in 1995 to my soul-mate, David, and we have 5 children combined and ELEVEN grand-children! We bought 10 acres in Erie, MI as a retirement home and we are enjoying our retirement every day! I love gardening and have a large perennial garden, I love scrap-booking, I am a huge BIRDER and amateur photographer, and we LOVE attending Church at Abundant Life Ministries where we have been since 2012. In 2012, we bought a trailer and took off in January 2013 for six weeks to be “winter Texans” (not snow-birds:) in the Rio Grand Valley of Texas for an awesome birding vacation! Check out my new birds and butterflies from this trip, and other interesting birds, butterflies and bugs on my website birdladyboppinsnaturephotography.zenfolio.com We will be taking off again January 2014 and we are blessed to be able to go anywhere we choose (haven’t decided yet!) God has been good to me and my life hasn’t been easy, but I know when I die that I will get a new body and won’t need that brace any longer!

Karen (Wade) Potts
ladypotts_1@netzero.net
TIMOTHY P BROWN is a survivor of paralytic polio since 1953. He retired in 2008 after a career spanning forty years working for three companies in executive financial management positions. Tim has been a member of the Michigan Polio Network for many years, and, since having been elected to the MPN board of directors in 2010, has served as Treasurer and Membership Chairman. Tim would be pleased to continue to contribute his efforts to the MPN as a member of its board of directors.

VIRGINIA BROWN (Ginny) retired in 2008 after a 40 year career in elementary education with a specialty in Reading Recovery. Ginny has served on the MPN board since 2010 and also holds the position of MPN Assistant Secretary. Ginny is the spouse of Timothy Brown, who currently serves as the MPN Treasurer and, along with him, is very active in network activities. In addition to her involvement with MPN, Ginny was appointed to the board of trustees of the Grosse Pointe Garden Center and is currently the president of the Deeplands Garden Club in Grosse Pointe.

MICHAEL W. R. (MIKE) DAVIS of Royal Oak, Michigan, had just turned 13 in the summer of 1944 when he was struck down in Kentucky's second largest polio epidemic--from which he has a partially paralyzed left arm, luckier than some polio survivors, not as lucky as others. His business card says "Author-Journalist Historian" and his 12th published book, a photographic history of Chevrolet, is under contract for release in July. In his 54 years in Michigan, he has been a journalist; corporate public relations and marketing executive; executive director of the Detroit Historical Society, and has served previously on several local and national boards. Presently, he is a long-standing trustee of the National Automotive History Collection at the Detroit Public Library.

CARL FENNER contracted polio in 1952 at the age of 14. Carl has been involved in many voluntary endeavors, most of all at the Disability Network in Flint, Michigan. He is involved in housing for the disabled and transportation for disabled. Carl has been on the Michigan Polio Network Board of Directors since 1992.

CONTINUED PAGE 10...
TAMARA L TREANORE I have been an orthotist for over 20 years and still find the field fascinating and my patients more so. Working to understand and address the challenges of the polio population has been one of the best parts of my job over the last 4 years that I have spent in the Polio Clinic. I believe that my role as an orthotist as well as my involvement in the Clinic provides me with unique perspectives that lend themselves well to the Michigan Polio Network Board of Directors.

RICHARD KUGEL Served on MPN board from 1993 to 2006, as Treasurer from 1994 to 2002. He is currently Assistant Treasurer of the network. Retired from General Motors Audit Staff in 1998, currently working as a consultant for Bartech at General Motors. Is currently living in Shelby Twp. with wife Sharon. They have six grandchildren. Rick did not have Polio.

RICHARD (RICK) SCHWENDENMANN. I am married to my wonderful wife, Gwen, of 28 years and have one daughter Heather. I have been a member of the Post Polio Network for about five years. I retired from United Airlines in 2005 after 28 years with the company in many different roles. One of the last was helping to establish our Aero Medical desk which was responsible for helping our disabled passengers with their travel. Prior to that I held my first job as clerk/office manager of a Standard Oil, (remember them?), fuel oil terminal in Livonia, Michigan. I have an Associates Degree in Accounting and Data Processing from Schoolcraft College.

BRUCE E SACHS I have served on The Michigan Polio Network Board, since 2003, and have been a polio survivor since 1940. I was a public elementary school teacher for 42 years and have a masters degree in Educational Leadership. Presently I am Chairperson of the Michigan Polio Network, Co-facilitator of The Southeast Michigan Post Polio Support Group, a MPN representative on the Chronic Illness Coalition and a greeter at the St. John Post Polio Clinic in Warren. Since being elected to the Board, I have attended International Post-Polio Conferences in St Louis, MO, Miami, FL, and Warm Springs, GA. I also have participated in the annual Bay Cliff Health Camp’s Wellness Retreats in Big Bay, MI. I believe with my background and my interest in Post-Polio I would be a positive influence as a member of the Board of Directors of the Michigan Polio Network.
MICHIGAN POLIO NETWORK, INC., BOARD OF DIRECTORS
OFFICIAL ELECTION BALLOT TWO YEAR TERM 2014-16

You may vote for a total of TWELVE (12) persons, including any write-in which you may add below the ballot. Please provide the required information for any write-in candidates, as well as a brief biography stating your/his/her intentions and interest. Place this on a separate sheet of paper and place it inside the ballot envelope (you will need to tape the sides of the fold-up envelope).

The 28TH ANNUAL MEETING of the Michigan Polio Network, Inc., will be held on Saturday May 17, 2014 at Cassel's Family Restaurant 43003 7 Mile Rd, Northville, MI 48167. We encourage all interested in the future of the Network to attend.

THIS YEAR’S NOMINEES ARE AS FOLLOWS

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<th>Name</th>
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<tr>
<td>Timothy Brown (PS)*</td>
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<td>Ginny Brown*</td>
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<td>Michael W. R. Davis (PS)*</td>
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<td>Tamara L. Treanore*</td>
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* = Incumbent  (PS) = Polio Survivor

WRITE-IN CANDIDATES (PLEASE PROVIDE STREET & E-MAIL ADDRESS, AS WELL AS ABOVE-MENTIONED BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION ON A SEPARATE SHEET OF PAPER AND SEND ALONG WITH YOUR BALLOT):

NAME ________________________________ (PS?) Y/N
NAME ________________________________ (PS?) Y/N
NAME ________________________________ (PS?) Y/N

Please mark your ballot and remove this page from your copy of “Polio Perspectives.” Turn the page over, write your return address in the appropriate place, fold the page in thirds according to the lines, tape the newly-made “envelope” closed, put a stamp in the upper right corner, and mail the ballot. It must be postmarked no later than April 30, 2014 in order to be counted.
Michigan Polio Network
Gwen Dyc–Schwendenmann
31100 South Hill Rd
New Hudson, MI 48165
My wife and I are very pleased with Elder Living Construction’s complete remodeling of our bathroom. From the initial planning through final clean-up, ELC demonstrated a clear understanding of the needs of the elderly and disabled. Their crews worked closely with us to customize the end results to exactly meet our needs, yet, minimized our inconvenience during the process.

Tim Brown, Treasurer-Michigan Polio Network, Inc.

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mscharl@mjscsi.com
In 1944, when I was ten years old, I contracted polio, an event that would change my life. Until that summer, I was the oldest of four children and played in the neighborhood with the other kids and watched over my two younger brothers and sister. My ordinary life and the war were forgotten as I struggled to survive this experience. As a child, I always loved visiting my older half-sister Margot’s house. She married at age 17, only a few years after coming to this country. She lived with her husband, Fred and in-laws Hank and Madelyn Curry, in a modest three-bedroom, red-brick Tudor home on Detroit’s northwest side. I thought it was very grand compared to our smaller and much shabbier rented frame house in the inner city.

On this day, however, I sat disconsolately on the staircase wishing I could go home. I felt sick and my throat was still very sore from my tonsillectomy a few days before. I was sent to Margot’s house to recuperate from my operation but I wanted my Mama. Finally, after I languished without improvement for several more days, Margot called Mama and told her I needed to see the doctor. She told her my temperature was 103 degrees and I couldn’t eat but a few small bites. Finally even that was too painful. Vernor’s ginger ale, always a treat when I was ill, now burned my throat and I could no longer swallow anything but sips of water.

At last I was home in my small room, in the brown iron bed I shared with my sister, Lucy. I don’t remember the ride home or who drove me. Probably my father came to pick me up in our old black 1934 Chevy. Our family doctor, Dr. George Sippola, came to the house. His tall, thin form loomed over my bed and his deep voice was solemn as he gave my mother a bottle of sulfa pills. “Give her two of these every six hours.” I could not swallow the enormous pills though I tried. The bitter taste lingered in my mouth long after I spit out the remains. Soon I was unable to move my arms and legs and my neck was very stiff when the doctor tried to raise my head from the pillow. Later that day two men dressed in white carried me out of the house on a stretcher to the waiting ambulance. I was on my way to Herman Kiefer Hospital for treatment of polio, which by then was raging throughout the country in one of the most severe epidemics of that disease. I remember the somber faces of my siblings and neighbors as they watched. I was too sick to be frightened or to realize the gravity of what had happened. All of that would come much later. I would not return to my home for eight months.

A yellow quarantine sign was placed on the front door of our house and the family was not allowed to go anywhere for two weeks. No one would come near them for a long time. Generalized fear of polio among the entire population was endemic. Children were kept out of swimming pools and movie theaters. I did not know until later that Margot was pregnant with her first child. However, she did not contract polio and my nephew, John, was born in November of that year. He was perfectly healthy.

I was placed in an isolation room so my parents could see me only through a window. I saw my mother’s tears as she stood there but I didn’t cry. I remember that I was very hot and I wanted to turn on my side and curl up in a ball. Instead, I had to lie perfectly flat with no pillow on a very hard mattress. My feet were supported by a wooden board that held them upright. I only cried when they put the needle in my arm twice a day to give me intravenous fluids. I was unable to eat or talk for those first few weeks. My only entertainment was looking out of the window at the sky. I imagined wonderful creatures in the cloud formations. I felt grateful for the window. I realized only much later that the iron lung next to my bed was there in case I stopped breathing. Fortunately I did not. However, I disliked being suctioned. I don’t remember feeling frightened only frustrated at being in bed and subjected to treatments that were not very comfortable. The treatment for polio was hot wool packs applied to arms, legs, back and chest twice a day. This treatment, invented by Sister Kenny, was called the “Kenny Method.” The sounds of the wringer washing machines being pushed down the hall announced the beginning of the application of hot moist wool packs. They were applied the then covered with sheets of oilcloth and

Continued next page...
dry blankets to keep the heat in. They were left on for 20 to 30 minutes. The washing machines were used to heat and wring out the pieces of wool so they could be placed while still steaming on our limbs. This prevented contracted muscles from becoming deformed.

The physical therapist came to my bed every day and stretched and exercised my tight muscles. I didn’t like her because she patronized me and wouldn’t answer my many questions. One day she said to me, “I’ve been working out in the field this morning. You probably think I was out picking flowers.” But I knew exactly what she meant by “working in the field” and felt insulted by her implication. At that moment I determined that I would become a nurse so I would have answers to all my questions.

Gradually I recovered some movement and began to sit up and eat. I choked on a green bean during my first meal and coughed it out so hard that it flew across the room. I was so happy that I could eat and drink, as I no longer needed the intravenous solutions every day.

Soon it was time for the next stop on this journey. I went by ambulance to Sigma Gamma Convalescent Center in Mt Clemens. There I continued physical therapy and learned to walk again with the help of a brace and crutches. My parents and siblings came to visit on weekends.

I was in a large room with other boys and girls and sometimes we played practical jokes on the nurses. Somehow we managed to put a bag of water where it would fall on whoever walked in the door. Someone tall who could walk easily must have placed it there. I think it was the janitor who was a jolly fellow who sang to us and told us jokes. The opera, Figaro, was part of his repertoire.

One evening I got out of bed by myself to get a glass of water. I was sure I could do it but I slipped in some water and sprained my ankle. Usually I followed all the rules but I wanted to try. As polio survivors we were told that if we tried hard enough we could bring back movement in paralyzed muscles.

I was allowed to go home for a Christmas vacation, which was wonderful, but I remember vividly that I was again in an isolation room upon my return. The center was in the country and each night mice skittered and squealed around my room. They terrorized me and I couldn’t wait to get back with all the other boys and girls.

A teacher came to the center to make sure we kept up our studies. When I finally went home in March of 1945, I was enrolled in Oakman School in Detroit, a special school for crippled children. A big yellow school bus picked me up every day. Fortunately, I did not fall behind in my studies through all of this. I stayed in that school until 8th grade.

In 1945 I had surgery on my left ankle to stabilize it and prevent foot-drop. After that I no longer wore the left AFO and began to feel more normal though I still walked with a limp. I was determined not to let the polio stop me from doing whatever I wanted to do. I learned to ride a two wheeled bike sometime in my twelfth year. I walked a mile to Mackenzie High School when I entered the ninth grade. I became a reporter on the school newspaper and joined the Future Nurses Club.

Vocational rehabilitation paid all the expenses for my four year college education. I graduated from Mercy College of Detroit in 1955 with my bachelors degree in nursing. I finally retired from nursing in 2008. I had a wonderful and challenging career in nursing and never regretted my decision to become a nurse. I earned a masters degree in nursing in 1973 and worked as a nursing instructor or administrator in later years.

I married in 1957 and had three children. They are now in their late 40’s and 50’s. I have four wonderful grandchildren. I became an avid gardener. I learned to downhill ski and eventually, to cross-country ski. Now I snowshoe when we have enough snow. Those days are becoming rare. In the mid nineties post-polio syndrome crept up on me. I was still working full time and exercising several times a week. I began having pain and fatigue that just would not go away. Finally, after a few visits to a polio clinic in Tampa, Florida, where I lived, I was advised that I needed to again wear an AFO on my left leg. This was a blow but I adjusted to it. I have learned to manage the fatigue and pain.

Continued on next page...
CONTACT AND SUPPORT GROUPS

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Meetings 3rd Tues. of August and December.

CLIO AREA POLIO SURVIVORS SUPPORTGROUP
The New Clio Area Polio Support Group is held at the Clio Area Senior Center
2136 W. Vienna Rd. Clio, MI 48420
On the third Friday each month at 9:00-10:30am.
Facilitator is Dennis Hoose.
To join our group call (810) 687-7260

HARTFORD, MICHIGAN - PPSG
Jeannie Wessendorf
Support group meetings at Hartford Federated Church,
Hartford Michigan for meeting times please call Jeannie at 269-621-2059 or email jeanniew@provide.net

LANSING AREA POST POLIO SUPPORT GROUP
Meets at 1:30pm on the second Monday of spring, summer, and fall months - April through November.
Held in the lounge of Plymouth Congregational Church,
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Meeting twice a year. June and Nov.

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Dianne Dych-Sachs (586) 465-3104
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THUMB AREA PP SUPPORT GROUP
Rita Wall (989) 673-3678
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Loewenhardt POLIO STORY continued..

Now I am retired but still active. I wear a DBS brace on my left leg. Dynamicbracingsolutions.com
I learned about this unique brace from an article in the Michigan Polio Network News. It was and continues to be a learning process. I have had my DBS now for two and a half years. I use a forearm crutch for walking any distance outdoors or indoors. I also have a scooter for those occasions when the distance is too great to walk. When traveling by air, I ask for a wheelchair when I make my reservation. I have found this to be a big help getting through security and to travel the long distances to the gates. I have relatives in the Netherlands and have traveled to Europe several times. My days of walking all over London or Paris are probably over, but there are still many wonderful experiences waiting as I enter my eighty first year.
POLIO SURVIVORS SHARING

This is a one-on-one e-mail list so you can mail only to the selected name; an e-mail list of Polio Survivors who wish to communicate with other Polio Survivors and discuss your concerns, ideas, fun, jokes, as well as sharing information of what is happening to each other. I would like your permission to add you on this list. Please email to Hazel3SGS@comcast.net to get on the list! Also include your city and state. Happy Sharing!! ☺ Vera Hazel, Editor

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