

ANNUAL REUNION BRINGS POLIO SURVIVORS AND FRIENDS TOGETHER

October event featured speaker and entertainment

More than 40 people gathered at the Field Club of Omaha on Sunday, October 2, for the fifth annual Nebraska Polio Survivors Association reunion.

The afternoon's events began with a social hour and registration, followed by introductions of the NPSA board members and a brief performance by Master of Ceremonies Cameron Logsdon.

The luncheon featured the attendees' choice of chicken or salmon entrees, rice pilaf, salad and dessert.

While enjoying their meals, attendees were entertained by a local vocal group, Voci per Voi, which is translated from Italian to "Voices for Others".

The program began with a brief speech by Nebraska State Senator Gwen Howard, a strong advocate of disabled rights in Nebraska since her days as a social worker.

Sen. Howard spoke about the abuse of handicapped parking laws. She said that people often abuse handicap parking laws, by illegally parking in handicap stalls without a parking pass or a passenger in their car who is handicapped. This can be an impediment to a truly handicapped person, who then must use a mobility device or walk a longer distance to the entrance. *(continued to Page 2)*

NOVEMBER 6 MEETING TOPIC: ROTARY AND POLIO

Rotary International has joined forces with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to help eradicate polio worldwide,

On Sunday, November 6, NPSA's guest speaker will be **Gretchen Bren, Executive Director of the Rotary Clubs of Omaha**. She will talk on the Rotary's "Polio Plus" campaign and on her upcoming trip to Africa.

"I've been invited to be a part of the 'Peace Week' delegation to Mali, Africa the week of November 20 (and to take part in their polio immunization campaign) and to continue on to Chad, which is a current 'hot-spot' for polio outbreaks. I should have a lot more information on this in time for the meeting," Bren said.

The NPSA meeting is held from 2-4 p.m. in the Community Room of the Bloomfield Forum, 9804 Nicholas Avenue, north of the Westroads Mall in Omaha. For more information about the NPSA meetings, please contact npsa.org@hotmail.com or visit our website: www.ne-polio.org

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In February 2011, Sen. Howard introduced the LB438 in the Nebraska legislature but the measure did not pass. If it had passed, LB438 would have increased the maximum penalty for handicapped parking infraction to \$1,000.

Sen. Howard says that she will still continue to fight for this issue. She believes it is a real problem

that needs to be addressed and handled appropriately. There is much more to it than just parking illegally; it truly can affect someone's health when they are not capable of walking or navigating far distances.

NPSA member Penny Jewell donated a beautiful quilt for the raffle. A total of \$120 was raised for the NPSA.

To wrap up the reunion event, the audience enjoyed Tom Roth's performance. He sang four songs, including hits by Glen Campbell Songs and Rascal Flatts. Roth has sung for the group at past reunions.

Nebraska State Senator Gwen Howard, featured speaker at the NPSA Annual Reunion, announced her candidacy for the 2nd District Congressional seat a few days after her appearance. This seat is currently held by Representative Lee Terry.

I REMEMBER...

A daughter remembers growing up with her polio survivor mother

My mother, **Eleanor McKeever**, was three years old in 1919 when she contracted polio.

Her grandmother retrained her to crawl, walk, and talk. She told of trying to talk with marbles in her mouth. She was able to "make a come-back", even playing basketball in high school.

When I was in junior high school, she was in her early 40's and teaching. She started noticing more muscle tiredness. Her doctor referred her to the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota. It was there that they tested her muscles with probes and came to the conclusion that it was "Post-Polio," but they did not understand the dynamics of it at that time (early 60's).

She taught several more years but took an early retirement. Even then, she found

fulfillment in tutoring children coming from Vietnam, etc. Sometime around there, they started her on ACTH which, over time, created symptoms of hypoglycemia. A new doctor took her off that, saying she should not have had it for that long. The hypoglycemia disappeared.

I think her biggest frustration was that, since she functioned so well, her tired muscles (including her tongue, from talking) weren't as evident to people, so they didn't understand her need to slow down & rest.

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I REMEMBER... (continued from page 2)

As she got older, she fell several times, breaking an ankle, her knee, the other ankle, a hip and the other hip.

Rehabilitation therapy was a challenge, since the therapists didn't understand the need to balance "pushing" with letting the tired, over-worked muscles rest. She learned to be ready with articles on post-polio to educate the therapists. I'm sure she was one of the oldest polio survivors when she died at 89 in 2005.

I was born with incomplete hip sockets. After casts and braces until almost four, I was "running wherever I went." My mother used her experiences with early polio to encourage me, and she gave me the impression that there was "no particular reason" to not do something.

[Contributed by Mary McKeever, a campus minister at Purdue University of Indiana. Her late mother, Eleanor McKeever, was from Davenport, Iowa.]

Top Seven Tech Breakthroughs that Empower People with Disabilities

(from the Website: [Mashable Tech](#))

1. The **DynaVox EyeMax system** gives individuals with paralysis, cerebral palsy and stroke victims the ability to participate in spoken communication using only their eyes.
2. **Kapten PLUS Personal Navigation Device:** a very small GPS locator designed to be carried on one's person.
3. **The Car for the Blind:** The aim is to integrate several computer systems, sensors and cameras to observe the environment around the vehicle and provide alternate forms of sensory input, including sound and vibration.
4. **Google's Driverless Car** could not only serve as a means of independent, safe for any number of individuals with physical and mental handicaps that prevent them from operating a motor vehicle. The Google car is already "street legal" in Nevada and could one day be a liberating, potentially life-changing device for disabled individuals everywhere.
5. **DEKA Robotic Arm:** A less-than-eight-pound prosthetic arm with such precision and control that it can peel a grape.
6. **Cochlear Implant:** It's not new, but this little device is still pretty amazing and only grows more so as the software and hardware continue to improve.
7. **The iBot Stair Climbing Wheelchair:** The iBot is a self-balancing, stair-climbing wheelchair for the physically disabled.

I REMEMBER... is a new feature in Gleanings. Most of you have wonderful stories that others would like to read.

If you'd like to share a memory from your childhood as a polio survivor or as a family member or loved one, please send us an email at Npsa.org@hotmail.com

Or mail it to

NPSA

PO Box 6076

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We will publish your stories as space allows.

IT'S FALL BUT TRY NOT TO...

By Millie Malone Lill, *Gleanings* columnist

People are forever telling me, “Now, be careful, don’t fall.” As if this were in my control. I’m an old lady now, having just turned 70, so forgive me if I get on with my agenda of being a crotchety old person. It has long been my goal. So, if you warn me not to fall, be prepared for a snippy answer. I might just reply, “But I want to fall. I love having contact with Mother Earth. And I just got new underwear that I want to flash to all and sundry.”

These people are just being nice and trying to show their concern. I know that. But I’m too busy trying not to fall, to spare the effort of being nice in return. When I do fall, I would prefer to be left to find my own way up. I am the only one who knows what my various limbs will still do in a pinch and which ones have figuratively left the building. I now have no working knees. One is polio damaged and the other one has been landed on so many times, it has fluid on it. I am speaking of fluid under the skin, but sometimes that fluid is blood on the skin. That knee really deserves a medal for all it has done for me. Is there one called the Purple Knee? My heart is fine, it doesn’t need a purple medal, but that knee really should have some recognition.

If I have something to push myself up with, like a cement block, or an elephant or something equally immovable, I can usually manage to get upright. Please do not watch

this proceeding. I say this for your own peace of mind and to prevent at least a week’s worth of nightmares. It involves some very unlovely thrashing around and occasionally some words you would not expect to hear from a dignified old lady such as myself. Of course, if this fall happened in the middle of a busy street, it would only be polite of you to at least try to prevent my getting run over and to warn the drivers and other pedestrians not to look. Think of it as a Public Service Announcement.

Once I have regained my feet, you may once again face me. Try to pretend that I was just practicing my break dance routine and that the leaves and dirt in my hair and on my person are part of my costume. In some cultures, a cup of hot sweet tea would be offered as a way to fight off shock, but if you saw me land, it’s probably too late to prevent that for you, at least. A cup of hot coffee and a sour cream doughnut would be appropriate at this stage, I think. Or some nice dark chocolate. Chocolate is always appropriate. And remember to share that with me, as you would not have gotten it if I hadn’t had the foresight to fall down.

To reach Millie Malone Lill, you can send a message to her email address:

mil.lill@gmail.com

Or send your comments to:

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GATES FOUNDATION CEO SPEAKS TO OMAHA ROTARY

By NPSA Member Chip
Mackenzie

Nebraska native and president of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation Jeff Raikes talked to a combined group of 12 Omaha Metro Rotary clubs on September 16 in La Vista, Nebraska. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and Rotary have been major players in the campaign to eradicate polio in the wild.

Raikes's background included growing up on a farm in Nebraska, where he learned important values, including:

1. having a passion for what you do
2. internal competitiveness
3. living up to who you could be
4. honesty
5. integrity
6. a sense of community.

He also learned work balance: some days you work on the tractor; some days you scoop the manure.

Collaboration between the Gates Foundation and Rotary International is making a difference in polio eradication efforts.

Eradication of polio has been the top priority of the Gates Foundation. "It is astonishing what Rotary has accomplished in the campaign to get rid of polio over the last 20 years," Raikes said.

"The fight has been harder than expected; the last mile is always the hardest. "

He explained that some people have gotten polio despite getting the vaccine. A new bivalent vaccine for the Types 1 and 3 polio virus is helping make the vaccination programs more effective. For example, in Lehar, India, this last year was the first year with no polio cases reported.

Raikes said that the Gates foundation is funding 25 strategies and is contributing up to 2 billion dollars a year. The top priority is eradication of polio in the wild.

They are also involved in improving high school

graduation rates, and are looking into what can be done to improve the effectiveness of subsistence farmers.

When Raikes accepted a job at Microsoft, the late Apple co-founder Steve Jobs yelled at him, telling him Microsoft would go under. Raikes became one of the founding leaders for Microsoft. In 2008, Gates asked him to lead the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, which focuses on helping all people to lead healthier lives. As for why he took the job, Raikes reflected that to whom much has been given, much is expected.

The Nebraska Polio Survivors Association is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Your gifts are tax-deductible.

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Contributions made from August 1 – December 1, 2011, will be acknowledged in the December 2011-January 2012 issue of **Gleanings**.

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NPSA Mission Statement

The mission of Nebraska Polio Survivors Association is to educate the public and the health care community concerning polio and post-polio syndrome and to respond to the needs of individuals who suffer from the syndrome through group meetings, educational programming and newsletters, financial and other support of research concerning the syndrome and the circulation of research results.

NPSA was founded in 1984 by Nancy Baldwin Carter.



Gleanings

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