

# GLEANINGS

April - May, 2014

## DR. OBERST TREATED POLIO VICTIMS DURING 1952 EPIDEMIC

By Elaine J. Allen

One of the founding physicians of Children's Hospital in Omaha spoke to NPSA members at the April meeting. While a practicing pediatrician, Dr. Byron Oberst treated hundreds of polio patients

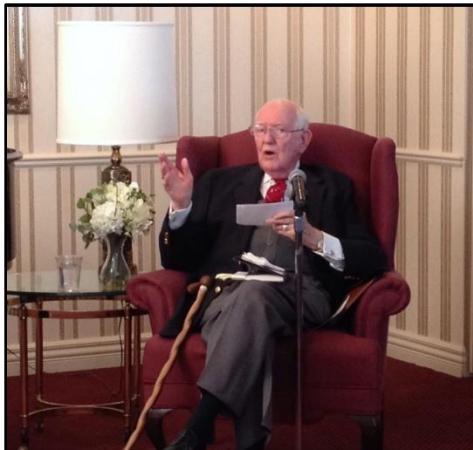
in the early 1950s and was a pioneer in Rh factor transfusions and ADD research.

During his

medical training, Dr. Oberst treated his first polio patient in Japan while he was serving in the Army Medical Corps from 1949 – 1950 under General Douglas MacArthur.

Dr. Oberst read from his book: Miracles and other Medical Experiences. "In the summer 1952, all hell broke loose. People lived in fear. The entire state of Nebraska was in panic mode. Children did not congregate in pools or theatres." He explained polio didn't respect anybody. Before the Salk and Sabin vaccines, no age group, and no time of year was exempt from the polio threat, although summer was the higher risk time for large outbreaks.

While the 1952 epidemic raged in the U.S. he was one of 22 pediatricians at Children's who treated 360 children infected with polio. "We



always at least 13-15 in iron lungs at a time all summer," he said.

Reading from his book, Dr. Oberst recounted the story of Connie from Columbus, Nebraska. "Out of the blue, the polio epidemic arrived in Omaha," he read. Connie was his first medical miracle, "a 10-year-old girl who should not have survived. She was brought to Children's in critical condition. Her grandmother and sister had already died from polio before she was brought to Omaha. "She ran a 105-108 degree fever for several days, one so severe her brain should have been fried." Connie survived and grew up to have a family and a career.

Pulling out a handkerchief from his rear pocket, Dr. Oberst told the group about his encounter with Connie about 30 years later. He was grateful to learn she had recovered and was living a full and active life. "She was a medical miracle," he said as he wiped his eyes.



During the question and answer period, Dr. Oberst gave the group "food for thought." He read an article about incidents of children who have been treated with "polio-like symptoms in California" since 2012. Twenty children, who had been vaccinated with the polio vaccine, were diagnosed with a rare enterovirus that caused flaccid limbs and other symptoms similar to polio.

He also cautioned that the world is not free from polio infections, citing the recent outbreaks in Pakistan, Syria and in a couple of African nations.

Dr. Byron Oberst's book, Miracles and Other Unusual Medical Experiences, is published by Trafford Publishing ([www.trafford.com](http://www.trafford.com)) and is also available at Barnes and Noble and online at [www.Amazon.com](http://www.Amazon.com).

## HEARING ACCESS LOOPS ADVOCATES SPEAK AT MARCH NPSA MEETING

By Elaine J. Allen

As an ordained Unity minister, Mary Dyer was a strong advocate for the disabled in her congregations. But, she admitted she truly didn't understand the difficulties people with disabilities experience until she completely lost her hearing.

After routine knee surgery several years ago, she woke up to find she was completely deaf. Her surgeons had theories but could not completely explain why she lost her hearing. She eventually underwent surgery for a cochlear implant to help her regain some of her hearing.



NPSA Members listen as Reverend Mary Dyer uses a smartphone as her microphone during a demonstration of a temporary hearing loop installation. Reverend Sheryl Butler, a hearing loop engineer, is standing to her right.

Reverend Dyer described herself as a "loop evangelist." Her partner, Reverend Sheryl Butler, is a certified loop engineer. Together, they began working with Hearing Access Solutions. They spoke to NPSA members who attended the March 2 meeting at the Bloomfield Forum in Omaha, Nebraska.

Dyer and Butler discovered hearing loss education advocacy was their calling after Mary's

cochlear implant. And since 2009, it has been their ministry. "This has been an unexpected blessing. When I started seminary, this is not what I had in mind," Butler said.

Just as people in wheelchairs and scooters and people who use crutches and walkers, a person with hearing loss has a right to access.

"People with hearing loss are invisible, not like someone with crutches or in wheelchairs or scooters," Dyer said. "I'm tired of being the only hearing-impaired person who is deaf in Iowa and Nebraska! If you can't hear, complain! And if your family members are hearing impaired, you need to encourage them to learn about hearing loops and to speak up for them."

Through their ministry, they have installed 13 hearing loops in senior centers, churches, audiologists and doctors' offices, auditoriums and theatres. Most of their installations have been in Iowa, Nebraska and Missouri. So far in 2014, six loops have been installed so far, including the latest one in Salina, Kansas. Butler estimated they have installed 30-35 hearing loops since they began.

Butler told the group that hearing loops one of the best kept secrets in hearing aid technology. Many people with hearing aids thought if you got a hearing aid that took care of the problem. But people who use hearing aids still have problems with background music, reverberation in churches. However, "audio frequency induction technology", more commonly referred to as T coils have been installed in most hearing aids since 1960s. "It's estimated about 70% in US but might not be activated," Butler explained.

In Europe, all hearing aids are required to have a T-coils. Many audiologists don't activate T-coils in hearing aids when they're installed.

"Part of the challenge we have in educating audiologists." In the U.S., Michigan is widely looped, as are some government sites: Congress and the Statue of Liberty, for examples. Hearing loop technology is "trying to catch up in the Midwest."



HAS Loops, (continued on p. 3)

## BURLY AND THE SURVIVOR

By Millie Malone Lill

Long time followers of my column might remember my mentioning my guardian angel, Burly. If you do, feel free to go get a cup of coffee while I tell the newer readers about him.

Back in the late '90s, my Canadian friend Carolann and I lost our minds to the extent that we traveled all over the US and Canada in a van, sleeping in that van and cooking our meals at rest areas. Neither of us had any money to speak of, but our expenses on the road were minimal. We split the cost of gas and groceries, planned our trips so that we could meet the maximum number of polio friends and family members, and blithely ignored such things as getting mugged or car jacked or the van breaking down or other such minor possibilities.

On one of our first trips, we had visited Eddie Berry and his wife in Houston. Eddie B is a worrier and asked us to please let him know where we were on our trip back to Iowa. We did. From Houston, we spent a couple of night in the Dallas/Ft. Worth area with David Brock and his family. There we ran into snow. Bear in mind that I am an Iowan and Carolann was from Ontario. We did not realize that one inch of snow was considered a paralyzing blizzard, so we just continued north.

Our plan was to stop and visit a friend of mine who lived in the Ozarks. By the time we got close to her place, we were in white out conditions. In stark contrast to the Texan attitude toward snow as being a fearful thing, the people in the Ozarks disregarded it completely. Have you ever driven in the mountains there? True, they are smallish as mountains go, but hairpin turns with 20' or more drop offs on both sides of the road, white out conditions and people blithely passing you at speed on those aforementioned hairpin turns caused a certain amount of anxiety for Carolann who was driving at the time.



By the time we reached our destination, Carolann's hands were so tightly gripped onto the steering wheel that I was wondering if we'd have to bring it into the house with us. We were plied with hot tea and food and given a place to sleep. We forgot to tell Eddie B that we had arrived safely. The next morning, there was an email from him, frantic as to where we were.

"I like to be able to focus my Worry Machine," he told us. "You girls need a guardian angel, so I am sending mine. His name is Burly. He'll watch over you."

*Millie's column (continued on p. 4)*

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## HAS Loops (*continued from p. 2*)

Butler installed a temporary hearing loop in the Bloomfield Forum meeting room where NPSA members gathered. She demonstrated how it works: Wire is connected to a loop amplifier, similar to "Wi-fi" for hearing aids and cochlear implants. It can be used with headsets or earbuds as well. A personal hearing loop can be customized for your hearing loss with little maintenance. One can be installed in ceilings or under the carpets. Building design is a factor when installing a hearing loop where a lot of steel and concrete are used.

One member asked about the cost of installation. Butler said it depends on venues, on cost of labor construction, and size of facility. She quoted a range of \$2,000 to \$10,000 on a commercial installation. She said a facility with lots of steel costs more. Portable loops can be set up for board meetings or special events for about \$495. Temporary loops can be installed for \$500 a day, depending on travel expenses. Some companies charge \$1500 a day with a minimum of 3 days. Personal loops can be installed for home theatre/TV use: \$225 and an analog digital converter for \$70.

Butler and Dyer conduct site surveys for free. They will also demonstrate the technology for Sunday services. "One of our most installations was in a Quaker meeting where they installed microphones in the ceiling."

Millie's Column (*continued from p. 3*)

Eddie was true to his word. Burly followed us, protected us for the next years while we traveled both countries. He got us parking spots in convenient places before people really complied with the ADA consistently. He made sure we slept safely at night and did not have any accidents on the road. He did not tell us we should take the van along on the ferry to Vancouver Island, however, and we ended up having to walk a lot further than was good for us, but I guess he thought we should learn to think for ourselves now and then.

I am finally coming to the point of this long, rambling story. My point is that Carolann and I survived polio, survived the recovery period, and survived all the problems that disability creates. Burly made sure of that.

I think that survivors do what they do best: They survive. Often things get hairy and I wonder if I'm going to make it through. I lost five of my six brothers, two of my three sisters, my mom, my dad, my ability to walk. But I'm still here. Of course I am! I'm a survivor and that's what we do. The more things you plow through, the stronger you become.

Perhaps you don't believe in angels like Burly, but I'm pretty sure you do believe in the kind of love that made Eddie B consign him to us. We've been part of the greater polio community for many years and the love and support of our fellow survivors have kept us going. As long as we have that, we will survive.

Thanks, Eddie B, if you are reading this. Burly has been doing a great job! He has not yet retired, as I found out yesterday when some speed demon nearly caused a three car pileup of which my van would have been the centerpiece. It was such a near thing, that I'm sure Burly was on the job.

**Millie's e-book, Hot Water, Orange Juice 'n' Kids...** is now available online.

All proceeds from its sale support a fundraising project for the International Centre for Polio Education.

To learn more, go to this website:

<http://www.postpolioinfo.com/index.php>

## DOCTORS STUDYING POLIO-LIKE ILLNESS FLOODED WITH CALLS

(*Editor's note: This is the story that Dr. Byron Oberst referred to during his talk to NPSA members. It was published in USA Today, February 26, 2014*)

California doctors investigating cases of polio-like illnesses in children have been "flooded" with calls but are no closer to knowing what is behind the illnesses.

"We're working with the California Department of Public Health to go through the cases, to look for a cause and to figure out how many patients are affected," said Keith Van Haren, a pediatric neurologist at Lucile Packard Children's Hospital in Palo Alto, Calif.

He will present the cases of five of the children at the American Academy of Neurology's upcoming annual meeting in Philadelphia.

The initial report about the cases was released on Sunday (February 23) and since then doctors and patients from around the country have contacted the hospital and the state's department of public health.

(For the rest of the story, here is the link:  
<http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2014/02/25/polio-like-illness-california-more-cases/5816865/> )

### Mark Your Calendars! 2014 NPSA Meeting Schedule

**May 4:** Siebert Mobility      **June 1:** To be announced

**July 13:** History of Polio Website & Ice Cream Social      **August 3 and September 7:** To be announced

**October 5:** 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration      **November 2:** To be announced

Except for the Annual Reunion, we meet Sunday afternoons from 2:00 – 4:00 p.m. at the Bloomfield Forum Community Room, 9804 Nicholas Ave., Omaha, Nebraska. Everyone is welcome to attend. Coffee and refreshments are served. Please join us.

## DONOR GIFTS RECEIVED FEBRUARY 11 - APRIL 10, 2014

*NPSA wishes to thank the following donors for their generous support of our mission:*

Donna D. Garwood, Burwell, Nebraska  
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## CONSIDER NPSA FOR MEMORIALS, HONORARIUMS OR PLANNED GIFTS

In addition to annual and matching gifts, there are other ways to give to the Nebraska Polio Survivors Association. You might want to honor a polio survivor who you admire or respect. Memorial gifts honor a family member or friend who has passed away.

You may make one through your estate plan without giving any money right now, or you can make a gift that will return an income to you, such as an annuity. All of these gifts are referred to as planned gifts, because you are planning to

### Nebraska Resource Services for People with Disabilities

In Omaha, **dial 2-1-1**: United Way of the Midlands Community Resource Directory

Nebraska Client Assistance Program (CAP)  
Hotline for Disability Services  
301 Centennial Mall South, Box 94987  
Lincoln, Nebraska 68509  
**Hotline Phone:** 402-471-0801  
**CAP Phone:** 402-471-3656 V/TT  
**Toll-free** (in Nebraska but outside Lincoln):  
800-742-7594 V/TT  
**Website:** <http://www.cap.ne.gov/>

provide the gift at a later date. If you would like to consider a planned gift to NPSA, please contact one of the NPSA board members listed below:

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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.

NEBRASKA AND WESTERN IOWA POLIO SURVIVORS, FAMILY AND FRIENDS:

**SAVE THE DATE!**

**SUNDAY, OCTOBER 5**

**TO CELEBRATE OUR 30TH YEAR OF HELPING POLIO SURVIVORS**

NPSA was founded in 1984 by Nancy Baldwin Carter. Our program will include a historical video featuring our founder and interviews with a few of our members.

**Watch for your invitation in August.**