



GLEANINGS

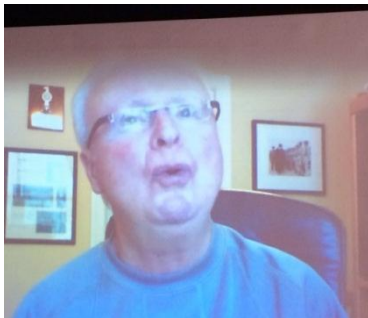
April - May 2015

Three Quick Steps

By Elaine J. Allen

Robert Emmett Klem was nine years old when he got polio. As he began to recover from the infection, he crawled around on the floor until he could start physical therapy.

The author of Three Quick Steps, published last fall as an Amazon book, Bob met with NPSA members via a Skype video call during the March 1 meeting.



Author speaks via Skype

With the help of the physical therapy and an operation to stretch his leg muscles, Bob gain strength in his legs and was able to get rid of his crutches by the time he graduated from high school. By his junior year of college at Fordham University, he decided to fulfill his dream to play a sport. He learned to play tennis with “three or four quick steps” as he hit tennis balls against a wall. “Because of my strong arms, it allowed me to hit the ball really hard and far,” he said.

During graduate school, he started playing tennis doubles with a friend. “That probably was one of the best experiences in my life,” he said. During his long scientific and technical career, Bob worked an engineer in a paper mill in Pennsylvania, and in the mid-1970s, at the GPC (grain processing) plant in Muscatine, Iowa. He is now retired on St. Simons Island, off the coast of Georgia.

Bob had a bad fall about two years ago and cannot walk with a cane any more, instead he

uses a power chair or crutches to get around on his acreage. He explained that he’s beginning to experience more post-polio symptoms.

On the Skype video connection, Bob asked the group if their polio experiences changed their personalities. Most all of the members agreed, although a couple of people said they were too young to know if it changed their personalities or formed them to be the way they are. He said writing the book helped him to understand how pushy as he was as a younger man and how valuable his relationships have been throughout his life.

Three Quick Steps (continued on p. 2)

The Nerdling and Me

By Millie Malone Lill

Back in the day, I was a computer nerd. Thus the term “nerdling” which I stole from a techno-geek friend of mine. If anyone wanted a computer upgraded or hardware replaced, help with a software

problem, I was their man... er... woman. I usually worked for my children. My usual pay was that they would



take me out for supper. I was going to have a T shirt made with the slogan “Geek for Hire, Will Nerdle for food.” It was fun and I got to spend time with some interesting people. I also taught a class for seniors to introduce them to the Internet.

That was then. I loved being online, and I still do. I got on the Internet in the summer of ‘96 and an entire new world opened up for me.

Millie's Column (continued on p. 2)

Three Quick Steps

(continued from p. 1)

On the review page of the Amazon book's website, Bob commented: "It took me about two years to write this memoir. Besides the family chronology, I reacquainted myself with many friends who I have not had contact with for some years...this was a real joy. I also got to know myself better, and preparing this memoir, has despite my post-polio syndrome challenges, brought me inner peace. Many neighbors and local friends did not know about my early years. This has led to some fun conversations. Finally, writing a book is far different than writing a research report. It was a very steep learning curve for me and was a real treasure, most of the time, to experience."

Full book title: Three Quick Steps: An Inspiring Account of Struggle and Recovery by Robert Emmett (Link to Amazon book: www.amazon.com/Three-Quick-Steps-Inspiring-Struggle-ebook/dp/B00NMRQJ12/ref=asap_bc?ie=UTF8); \$9.95 paperback on Amazon Prime, \$2.99 for Kindle edition. Contact the author at this email address: RobertEmmett@3quicksteps.net

Millie's Column

(continued from p. 1)

My husband had died three years before and my vocational rehabilitation counselor was adamant that I learn to use a computer so I could earn a little money to supplement my laughably tiny, cute little Social Security Disability check.

I'd never worked outside the home, unless you count raising three sons, caring for a very sick husband, running a farm, babysitting with 10 kids, milking cows, nursing sickly calves back to health and avoiding having to take care of hogs as work. Social Security did not.

I always had little sidelines to earn spending money. I baked and decorated cakes, made leather items, made and sold jewelry, things like that. At the time of my husband's death, I was designing knitting patterns for Knitting World magazine. Using a typewriter meant that if I made a mistake, I had to start over. My counselor told me that a computer would be perfect for that because it isn't printed till it's exactly right. Once I got the computer, however, I became too involved with other things and quit designing my patterns.

I loved that computer, pitiful though it seems now. I went online at the first opportunity. I immediately did a search for Post-Polio. Wow! That was amazing. I'd never knowingly met another polio survivor, so when I discovered an email list for polio survivors sponsored by St. Johns University, I was thrilled. As I discovered later, I had probably met many polio survivors in my life, but since we were taught not to mention that we'd had polio, I didn't realize.

I went from being a total outsider, misfit, oddball who just did not quite match her peers to a relatively normal woman with a bunch of soul mates within the polio community. I struck up many friendships, one in particular with a Canadian woman who was, like me, a mother of

three sons, living alone on a farm, and a polio survivor. We met with several other polio survivors in a polio chat room at 9:00 every evening. Carolann and I became very good friends.

When she was invited to travel from her home in Ontario, Canada, to Louisiana to be a guest in another polio survivor's home, Carolann asked me if I wanted to go along. I have no idea why I agreed, as that was totally opposite to my usual very conservative, plodding way. We planned to leave the day after Christmas. When I told my kids about it, they said, "Do you know anyone in

Louisiana?" I said that I did and that I'd be traveling with Carolann. "Carolann who?" was

"I went online at the first opportunity. I immediately did a search for Post Polio. Wow! That was amazing. I'd never knowingly met another polio survivor, so when I discovered an email list for polio survivors sponsored by St. Johns University, I was thrilled."

their question. I told them I'd get back to them because I didn't at that point know her last name. Do you wonder why my children thought I was crazy?

That began about 4 or 5 years of traveling with Carolann. We would go into the chat room and say, "We are going to..." and name our final destination, giving our route. "Do any of you want to meet up along the way for coffee or a meal?" And we would plan our trip from there. We met polio survivors all over Canada and the U.S. and it was the best fun of my life. I'd been writing for Gleanings for about 10 years by then, so a lot of the people we met felt as if they already knew me. I must say it is an odd feeling when a perfect stranger comes up to you and talks to you about your life and your writing as if you were neighbors or at least acquaintances.

Traveling by van is not as easy for me now, but I still travel all over the world via my computer. When my grandson Evan was born in Denison, Iowa, I was in Canada. I saw his nursery picture online and sent it to South Africa to a friend of mine there before his parents held the picture in their hands. Every day I open Facebook and see the sweet faces of my family on the West Coast, my family in New York state, my sister-in-law in Canada, and my family here in Denison. I write an online newsletter, Polio Perspective and continue to write my column for Gleanings, all sent to be published by way of my computer.

Technology has left me sort of in the backwaters lately because it has developed so rapidly. I now have a "Smarter Than Me phone", which I don't use to its full abilities, as well as a 7" tablet that I mainly use as an e-reader, a desktop computer and printer/scanner/copier, and a small laptop for when I travel. I could still change out a CD reader or a hard drive, but most pre-schoolers are far more proficient with new electronics than I am. My great-granddaughter could take her mommy's phone, find the music, and dance before she was two years old. I don't even have music on mine, don't know how to put it on there, and don't care. I know enough to get by. After all, by the time you are as old as I am, your brain is stuffed to the brim with information.

For every new thing I learn, I have to forget at least one other thing in order to make room.

I may not be able to keep up with technology, but my computer and I are best buds. I don't think it makes me less sociable at all. How could that be, when I have friends online that I have met in person as well as those I have not? Letter writing did not make us less sociable, so I don't believe computers do, either.

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Readers Respond to "Could I have gotten polio from the live vaccine?"

Dear Gleanings Readers:

While I am not a doctor, or maybe because I am not a doctor, this was a question that I personally wrestled with for quite some time. I cannot give Phoenix Caladrius any advice on if her symptoms were actually polio, but I thought I could answer the question posed in the headline.

Answer: Yes, you can.

Approximately one in every 2.7 million first doses of the live attenuated vaccine can cause paralysis.⁽¹⁾ And it is possible for the person who contracts polio through the vaccine to spread the virus it to others - this is known as circulating Vaccine-Derived Polio Virus (cVDPV).

So why use the live virus? Three reasons:

1. It is easy for volunteers to give; I'm living proof you do not need to be a trained health worker to administer the vaccine!
2. It's cheap; cost per dose ranges from 60 cents to \$2.00, depending on what other costs you add in to calculate the price.
3. And the biggest advantage in being used in an area actively affected by polio: the protection can spread from one person to another!

I'm going to quote the Polio Eradication website (www.polioeradication.org) directly, because I can't say it any better:

"For several weeks after vaccination, the vaccine virus replicates in the intestine, is excreted in the feces, and can be spread to others in close contact. This means that in areas where hygiene and sanitation are poor, immunization with OPV can result in the 'passive' immunization of people who have not been directly vaccinated."⁽¹⁾

While the IPV (Inactivated Polio Vaccine) is used in countries where polio is considered eradicated because of the slight chance, it cannot stop an outbreak like the OPV (Oral Polio Vaccine) can. Again quoting the website:

"IPV induces very low levels of immunity in the intestine. As a result, when a person immunized with IPV is infected with wild poliovirus, the virus can still multiply inside the

Excerpt from a letter in the February-March issue: "I'm hoping that, as polio survivors who are familiar with what happens during the illness, maybe you can give me some insight as to whether my symptoms at the time did match up with having polio. " Phoenix Caladrius

intestines and be shed in the feces, risking continued circulation."⁽²⁾

Until I learned the whole facts behind the use of the oral vaccine, I admit I was wondering if the work that I was occasionally helping with was going to cause more harm than good. When I know that in Nigeria, where they try to immunize all 30 million children under 5 in every campaign -- that possibility of contracting polio from the vaccine seemed startling. But, repeating that first line of my answer: *Approximately one in every 2.7 million first doses of the live attenuated vaccine can cause paralysis.* "First doses" is the important distinguishing mark.

The WHO and CDC, who collect the statistics shown at [the Polio Eradication website](http://the-polio-eradication-website) show that last year in non-endemic countries (countries excluding Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Nigeria), there were 19 poliovirus paralysis cases caused by the wild polio virus, and just three caused by the oral polio vaccine.⁽³⁾

In India, where polio was eradicated polio only four years ago, polio workers are starting to use IPV as the first dose of the vaccine, but then are following up with OPV later on for the other benefits, including its better protection against all three polio virus types. By using both types of the vaccine, they will continue to keep polio out of India.

Again, my best to everyone in NPSA - and thank you all for continuing to educate me about the personal effects of polio and post-polio syndrome!

Gretchen Bren
Club Administrative Director
 The Rotary Club of Omaha

Responses (continued on next page)

Dear Phoenix,

It is a known fact you can get polio from the live vaccine. I am sorry you were not treated as a child and that your parents were not responsible enough to get you help when you first needed it.

In 1964, I received the oral polio vaccine and contracted polio. I had a high fever and my left leg stopped working. I was placed in isolation for several weeks until I was given the dead vaccine. The polio stopped its progression at the left hip. To this day my left leg is 90 percent useless. The leg is more than half the size of the right leg, including the left buttock. It was also shorter than the right leg. I say was because the orthopedic doctors tried several operations on the right leg to stunt its growth so the left leg could catch up. Due to a broken right leg, their efforts backfired and I now have a longer left leg than the right leg. I truly believe that if I had not received the dead vaccine, polio would have taken over my entire body and I would probably not have survived.

I have begun showing signs of post-polio syndrome and have a very difficult time finding a doctor who understands this problem and is willing to do the research.

I wish you luck and strongly suggest you keep on your doctors to do the research needed in order to help you navigate the side effects of having polio may/have caused you. It is a very serious matter and as medical professionals, it is their duty to research and provide proper care.

Sincerely,
Linda Sue Jasa, Omaha, NE

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No matter the amount contributed, each gift helps NPSA achieve its mission. All gifts are fully tax-deductible because we are a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.

Please consider NPSA in your charitable giving for 2015.

IN THE NEWS & RESOURCES

Polio Eradication website referenced in Gretchen Bren's letter:

www.polioeradication.org

Polio Health International's Post-Polio Directory: www.post-polio.org/net/pdirhm.html

Hotline for Disability Services

301 Centennial Mall S, Box 94987

Lincoln, NE 68509

Toll-Free Number: 1-800-742-7594

Web: www.cap.ne.gov/hotline_services

Email: shari.bahensky@nebraska.gov

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History of Polio website:

<http://86735198.nhd.weebly.com/>

NPSA's 30th Anniversary Video:

<https://vimeo.com/105055161>

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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.

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