

Bill Cross



"Bill, you and Jim come in here and watch this. See that. Is that what you boys want to look like?" Dad was showing us some kids on TV. Most of the kids were about our same ages, I was 9. They were dressed in the regular way just like Jim and me -- Levi blue jeans, white T-shirt, black and white Red Ball tennis shoes and a major league ball cap. "What's wrong with that?" I asked. "Bill can't you see the leg braces that little boy has on? Look at that poor little girl. She will never walk again.....All right you boys go on but listen to me. If I take you boys to grandma's house the Polio bug is in those creeks; so DO NOT go swimming in those creeks!!! Of course we saw no polio bugs so we went swimming anyway!

A few days later, we went home and back to playing with our friends. We ran around Warren's house several times chasing each other. I started feeling a little sick to my stomach and my head was starting to hurt something awful. I asked Warren's mom for a drink of water. She must have seen how flush I was and told me to come in and lay down on the sofa. Soon I fell asleep. "Bill, wake up. Your mom wants you and Jim home for dinner." I awakened with a throbbing headache. I started to get up but couldn't move my legs or arms!

Even moving my head to see who was setting on my arms, chest and legs was extremely difficult. This was one of those crazy nightmares ---- IT HAD TO BE!!!!

I remember very little after that. The prods and pokes; the needles, sticks and pain; doctors and nurses; someone saying, "Relax, let the machine help you breathe"; and, above all, being scared to death. I do not remember leaving the hospital and coming home or who even told me I had Polio. For months thereafter I remember very little, only certain isolated events that stand out for one reason or another. Naturally, I had to have round the clock nursing care and since Mom and Dad both had to work to meet the expenses of running a home with three other kids, I moved in with grandma and grandpa Cross on the farm. I can't remember, but I'm sure I thought that that was something I could live with. Every dark cloud has a silver lining -- you just have to look harder sometimes.

Mom, Dad, and the other kids would come out on weekends to be with me and gradually, very gradually I got my movement back. The only residual I had was scoliosis and a weaker left leg. When I was 13, I had Harrington rods placed. These lasted for 25 years then I had them replaced when the horse I was riding fell on me and broke them. Even then Liz said they had to use jackhammers to get it out there was so much arthritis. My "disability" had not prevented me from riding whatever I wanted -- motorcycles, horses, gates at rodeos. I worked as an ambulance driver, nursing technician, orderly, short order cook, etc.

When I was working at the University Hospital, I met the love of my life Liz. We got married about 6 months after we met and had a son a year later. All my escapades finally caught up with me in December of 1988. I finally found a doctor that recognized what all my symptoms represented and got on disability in 1989.

To keep me from driving Liz crazy, I learned how to do stained glass which kept me occupied until the last couple years when my arms got too weak to do that much. I even get tired when writing much on the computer and Liz bought a laptop so I could work on it while propped up. (I think she had an ulterior motive though -- she uses it more than me!)

We started coming to Branson about 5 years ago but missed last year due to family emergencies. Hopefully this year we will get to see everyone again. I know this is long but you wanted my story and you know how much we all like to talk.

