

Gerry Grummons



The fall season in North Eastern South Dakota is a beautiful time of the year. The air is dry. The trees are starting to turn color. The nights are turning cooler with frost in the air. The small crops have all been harvested (oats, barley, wheat, and flax). Soon the farmers will harvest the corn and beans. Pheasant season starts mid-October. Same day as HOBODAYS at the South Dakota State University in Brookings, South Dakota. The year was 1954, and I was just beginning my Freshman year of High School, in Rosholt, South Dakota.

None of these things have anything to do with polio. Other than the fact that this was the time of year that I became ill and for a while the doctors couldn't figure out what was going on as I was so weak. The nearest doctor was some thirty miles from home and this was a trip to the big city (well, for this area anyway). Any town that had a population of more than 2500 people in the Dakotas was a big deal.

So for several days of going back and forth to doctors visits and being poked and prodded, the doctor did a spinal tap. This was a scary thought because all they would tell me was that the doctor was going to insert a BIG needle in my spine. Actually, I don't remember the procedure being all that bad after all.

But, it wasn't long after that procedure, when I was sent off the hospital. I was put in a private room and a quarantine sign was put up, so no visitors. All I knew was that I was diagnosed with polio, whatever that was.

I was confined to bed, and told to stay in bed. No visitors were allowed. I don't remember feeling really sick, just weak. The problem I had was that in order to feed me, the process was

kinda interesting. A devise with a funnel and a hose was rigged up and the hose lubricated and inserted down my throat and into my stomach. Breakfast, lunch and dinner was then poured into the funnel and the funny sensation of my stomach filling up, but I could not taste any thing!

My hospital stay was only 12 days. This was the last time I have ever been a hospital as a patient. Looking back, I was one of the lucky polio victims. Many others have had experiences far beyond what I went through.

Looking back, I must give credit to my parents and friends in that after the hospital stay, I pretty much went about my business and normal school routine. My strength returned, although for several months my legs would give out suddenly but never caused any problem other than oops, gotta stand up again. Living in a small town, we walked most every where we went and this was good for the rehabilitation. No mention was ever made that rehabilitation was part of the recovery. Also, every summer I worked as a flagman for a crop duster and this necessitated long, long walks through wet dew laden crops swatting mosquitoes and running to get out of the way of the airplane. At the time, I did not think of this as rehab, but just a job that needed to be done. After years of learning more about polio, this activity very likely helped me to live a busy active life.

The only residual that I have is and has been if I am not careful with my eating, I have difficulty swallowing and this is scary. Do I have PPS? I really don't know, I do get fatigued more easily. Could be the aging factor or maybe it really is PPS. I can tell my wife it's PPS and this gives the reason why it takes ten years to build those shelves! Sometimes I think she does not believe me, but with the support of others it does become a real possibility. Come on you BransonGoers, help me out on this will you. Overall, I feel blessed and have been able to pursue many endeavors in my life and have had many memorable experiences. Now, I can take some time to share with others and be able to volunteer to help those who may have a need to fulfill that is not possible without a helping hand.

In 1978, I met the love of my life, friend and companion Beverly and we have been able to travel the contiguous 48 States and Mexico and Canada. I would still like to be able to buy a Piper Super Cub, or an old Champ then fly to all 48 contiguous States and then write a book of the experiences of sleeping under the wing at some of the old grass strip airports around the country. Age does have a way of creeping up on one though and now I am becoming concerned that I may not be able to pass my airman's medical. Maybe I can go by ultralight instead!!

Being introduced to the BransonGoers has made me more aware of the polio issue and given me the opportunity to meet many wonderful people with a mutual interest. We are in good company, and in spite of the polio we all have been able to go on and enjoy life and be able to share our talents with others.

