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Overway, Cherry Oral History Interview: Polio Survivors in Holland

Matthew Nickel

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Oral History Project 2003
Joint Archives of Holland
Polio

Interviewee:
Cherry Overway
(edited)

Conducted by:
Matthew Nickel
20 June 2003

2003 Oral History Interview: Polio
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(Chronological Order)

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MN: When did you get polio and what age were you?

CO: I was 18 months and it would be 1942.

MN: What can you remember being so young?

CO: I don't remember a thing. The only thing I can tell you is that I was there just short of a year. I had the Sister Kenny treatment, which consisted of hot packs and physical therapy.

MN: You were there short of a year—what hospital were you at?

CO: Mary Free Bed, in Grand Rapids.

MN: Are there any stories that you have been told over the years by parents or siblings about your polio?

CO: Well, the one that has been around for decades, was that I was bit by a horsefly. The doctors don't quite agree with that. It is a virus. But sometime past I told the doctor that was the story I was told. He didn't think there was too much truth to that story. It was back in World War II, before polio really had done an awful lot. There were probably a lot of old wives' tales and misinformation and I think that the horsefly was just one of them.

MN: Do you remember there being any other kinds of wise tales or mythologies that came from polio?

CO: No, that was really the only one.

MN: Were there any other stories that your parents told you about yourself during that time?

CO: Well, I had my second birthday there and apparently I stuck my fingers right into the frosting of the cake. And the nurse that I had up there, one of the regular nurses, was from, Lakeview, north of Grand Rapids. Her family and our family have remained friends all through the years. My older daughter is named Kathleen after the nurse Kathleen Burlisen. [Pause] Because of the gas shortage and everything else, it was difficult for my folks to get back and forth to Grand Rapids all the time to see me. At one point there was an infection running through the hospital and the general community. There was a period of time when they could not come at all. The nurse just took over. There were never many stories, I think because it was probably too traumatic. There was never said a lot about it. It was during World War II, there was a gas shortage. The one thing I do remember hearing about was this infection. None of the parents were allowed to come to the hospital.

MN: So they closed visiting hours. It must be hard not to be able to see your child.

CO: I am sure it was extremely difficult and I think that is why I didn't hear an awful lot about it. My uncle was in the war, and came home when I was probably two or three. He had been in Africa. He came home and said that all he could understand of the Africans was gibber gibber jabber, and he came home and Cherry was going gibber gibber jabber. He couldn't understand any more of what I was saying than he could the Africans. I had a normal childhood. When I was 16, I had major surgery at Mayo Clinic / St. Mary's Hospital. My ankle was stabilized, with four screws and two staples. It's permanently fused together. I still have got the crutches. I put plastic mystic tape, I candy cane striped them in red and white. Those were Holland's colors. I was on crutches from April until probably July. I had a long time to be on them. They look like they have been well used. For my stay at Mayo, I flew from Rochester into Chicago. Then I took the train from Chicago to Holland, and that didn't go so fine. I was at that hospital for about a month.

MN: What was difficult about the train?

CO: It was bumpy. Big time bumpy. And you figure that by that time I was tired, I was getting ornery. My dad had taken the train up, and then we took the train back. My uncle lived in the Chicago area, so he came. They each ordered a wheelchair for me, the pilot also radioed ahead for a wheel chair so here I was at sixteen years old with three wheelchairs waiting for me.

MN: Isn't that funny.

CO: It is. Everybody just did it without anyone else knowing. That was 40 years ago. But it was funny. For years I have said I flew into O'Hare Airport. This same uncle corrected me a few years ago, and said "O'Hare Airport was not there. You didn't fly into O'Hare, you went into Midway." But for years I told everyone I flew into O'Hare. No one ever corrected me and I didn't know. I flew into Chicago and everyone was talking about O'Hare Airport. So as far as I knew I flew into O'Hare until my uncle corrected me. But you know, he is probably one of my favorite uncles so we go back and forth, have for, probably since I went jabber jabber jabber at two or three.

MN: Sounds like quite a character.

CO: He is. At St. Mary's / Mayo's. I was in a four-bed ward. There was a gal in there also 16. We were not exactly the model patients. We would end up with the hypodermic needles and we would have water fights across the room.

MN: Trouble makers.

CO: Yeah, I suppose, but we did keep the place a little livelier. She got caught in a manure spreader. She had one leg in a cast clear up to her hips. I had the other leg. It was her left leg and my right leg. We got wheelchairs one day and we went roaming the hospital. We belonged on the fourth floor and when we got down to the second floor that was OB/Gyn, they threw us out. But we also went up to the seventh floor, and there was a beautiful little chapel. To get two wheelchairs on and off these elevators took a little bit of ingenuity. We each had one foot sticking straight out in front of us. So one would hold the button the other one would get on, and wiggle around and then hold the inside button while the other one of us got on. And then we had to reverse it getting out. You figure how many times we had to do that going from the second to the seventh floor; we got pretty good. It was the surgical ward, so nobody was sick, which made it much nicer. There is a difference between the surgical ward and a medical ward. Surgical you are just recuperating, medical you are sick.

MN: So you were not quarantined?

CO: No, we could roam and do what we wanted. We used to drive the nurses nuts. We would take these pills. We had vitamins, antibiotics, who knows what we were having. We would swallow them without water. So the nurse would bring in this little paper cup with a couple of pills in it, and then she would go back and fill up the water. Well, the pills were gone by the time she got back. They finally figured out that no, we weren't hiding them under the bed or under the mattress or under the pillow because after a while they stood outside and they watched. I had absolute faith in the doctor I had in Rochester. I think a lot of that is due to that year in Grand Rapids in the hospital. You develop, even at two years, a repor with a doctor, with a nurse, or with somebody.

MN: Did you ever face any kinds of social problems or stigmas from other people?

CO: No, I really never did. I didn't make a big case out of it, it was just there. There were things I could not do. Roller-skating was one of them. That just simply did not work. I could ice skate because my dad found some sort of training blade that hooked on my ice skates. When my kids were little we had gone out on the ice. We had a bunch of teenagers so they were a big help. They got me up on my feet and all this other stuff, but I managed to ice skate and I didn't kill anybody and I obviously didn't kill myself. These teenagers said they had been taking bets whether I'd make it or not. I don't think they ever made any money on the deal. It was fun. I'll never be a primadonna on ice skates, but it worked once, and that's all I needed. I played in the orchestra. I played cello. When I had the surgery on my ankle, I just left the cello at school. I had one there that I used for practice. When you only live a couple blocks from school, it is not a big deal. With crutches, when it rains you can just scoot right over the puddles. You didn't have to go around like everybody else. So, yes, there are a lot of things I cannot do. A lot of things I choose to not do. Simply because, I hope I have gotten a little smarter in the last 30 years. There is a possibility I could break something and it is not worth it. The gardening, between the walker and the go cart, gets done sooner or later. The weeds grow high, then you pull them out. I have phenomenal neighbors now. The one next door, I asked him last night if he wanted to be a "muscle man" for a couple of minutes. I had a flower pot here on the table and he puts it out where I wanted it.

MN: That's great.

CO: They shovel me out all winter. They mow the little bit of grass I have got all summer. And the whole bunch of them, quoting scripture, "Ask and it shall be given." But that is what I have got with neighbors. Neighbors and friends will make a big difference in anything.

MN: That idea of community, helping each other out, to know we're needed.

CO: I have a friend, and we have been friends since kindergarten or before. She is always there whenever I need anything. It is really neat. And I can call different people for whatever I need. And the two next door they are six foot and six foot five.

MN: Oh dear.

CO: Oh dear. So when I need my red punch bowl off the top shelf, its "help." At Thanksgiving it's "I am going to make a turkey, what are we going to do about it." Here they come over, one or the other. The neighbor across the street dug a hole and planted my little Japanese maple. You get this, that, and the other thing, which is why there's leftovers today. I love to bake and I love to cook. So then the neighbors all get a little too. So we have torte, carrot cake, German Chocolate cake, rice pudding, brownies, and fudge or whatever I happen to decide I am going to make. I have these little plastic containers that I painted little cherries and leaves on the bottom because these containers go all over and I never know where they are. Eventually it all comes back again. Eventually.

MN: Eventually?

CO: It make take several weeks or a month or two, but they will come back.

MN: Do you think polio has changed how you see community? Do you think it has influenced how you see community?

CO: I do. [Story about Lakeshore Center for Independent Living edited out]. I do get tired. The gal that that newspaper article is for, her husband fell off the ladder and broke his leg. She was saying too, it makes a big difference on their outlook on life. He can't do what he used to do a month or two ago. How do you change a lightbulb in the ceiling? How do you get a turkey roaster down? Well, you call your neighbors. So she said, it gave them a whole new outlook on things.

MN: What about, you have talked a little bit about community, talked about people helping each other out in need, I guess as a result of polio, what have you learned about community?

CO: I think it is phenomenal. I think, without a "network," you are really isolated. And everybody is without a network of some sort. Within the last five years or so, I have four new, five different neighbors and it has changed the whole aspect of the neighborhood. These two, Kevin and Esther, they both work out of the house, they are in sales of some sort. You mentioned community, about a year and a half ago, she contracted lymphoma in her early 30s. That is a unusual. They were having work done in the house and they have a little white lap dog. So I ended up with the house and the phone and the carpenters and the whole nine yards for about a month. So that meant walking all the way out and all the way back so I would bring the dog over here. Kevin would leave at 6 in the morning and get back at 10 or midnight the first three or four weeks. So he didn't want this dog at midnight saying "play with me" I have been sleeping all day, so I would take the dog over here and throw a ball down the basement steps. A few times I found the dog sleeping on my bed; the dog was just exhausted. It really worked extremely well, this was October, November and Kevin was saying, what happens if it snows, Cherry with a broken hip isn't going to do any good. I said, oh I fixed that already. I was going to call our resident Mr. Fix-it to knock a section of the fence out and just go right through there. But you know, it is this give and take. The neighbors across the street and around the corner, there is so much give and take right now it is just fantastic. But back to community, it is a phenomenal help, and just knowing that I can call for anything I need, and just simply knowing that I can call, just knowing that the help is there. A friend of mine, growing up together, when her parents died, I was always there. When I went through my divorce, she was the one who was here. When her boyfriend of thirty years or so died; he lived in Grand Rapids and she lived in Holland and every other day one would come here or the other would go there. It was just a very long standing relationship. But you know, like there too, you have to be able to give as well as to receive. And I use this friend for this, and that friend for that. The couple across the street have been married shortest time, and Matt is telling me that I need to stop "waffling," (his word) between all these men. I need to decide which one of them I want. They are all married! We had a meeting at city hall, I rode with Kevin. My mother died at the end of February and I needed a ride to church so I called Matt across the street.

MN: It seems like in this kind of community you are talking about, no one is afraid to ask.

CO: No they are not, and with Esther and her lymphoma, it was not so much that they asked, it was just something that needed to be done and I was here. I am not sure how much was even asked. They never expected it to be lymphoma and they never expected her to be in the hospital for a month. They were going to go and find out what it was, get a few pills and come home and get better. Well, it didn't work that way. I did what I needed to do. When you have got give and take, it does work. [Pause]. Switching, I have two girls. Kathy is down in Texas, and Kris is in town. They both have little kids. The one in Texas has five. I went down there this winter, I took the Greyhound down. I went handicapped. So I put the luggage on in the first place and it goes all the way down, I put it on there and it goes all way up. I never touched it all the way. I sat in the front seat right behind the driver, or behind the door. I could see everything. Of all the drivers I had down and all the way back, there was only one driver, I didn't think was right. I was sitting crossways and I had my feet a little into the aisle. [End Tape 1 Side A] Whatever, she didn't think she needed my feet out there. [From notes] When we got to the next rest stop there were several passengers came up to me and said that they thought she was out of line. The people on the ADA Greyhound, and the people on the Greyhound, they are the neatest bunch of people. They answer all the questions. That was nice to know. Of course, I missed a few buses in between, so I spent about six or seven hours in the grand and glorious Chicago bus terminal. It isn't anything like the one we have here. It is neat, it is clean, it is ugly as all heck. But what are you going to do with an old cement building, it is huge, it is big it is ugly.

MN: It sounds like they have got good people though.

CO: They do, and whether I asked security or anybody else, they were always polite, pleasant and very helpful.

MN: The kind of community you have been describing is so positive, have you seen community change at all since you were younger, in high school, till now?

CO: I think it has changed in as much as you have to be much more choosing, much more selective of your community. People are too busy in their own lives, because between TV and internet and everybody working 14 jobs a piece, there is not the time to be a community. When I was growing up we had our neighborhood. I don't think my folks or any of the rest of the parents had any idea where we were 99% of the time. We were either at my house or at the neighbor's house. And we were all close enough together that somebody would just go out and call for supper. We had an open lot next door to us. We played with bows and arrows and baseball. One time my dad had gotten a tandem bike, a bike for two. He was six foot four and he was sitting in the front, and he decided to pedal that bike I just put my feet out and let him pedal it. There was no way I could keep up with him. So he did all the work. There was no way I could keep my feet moving as fast as he does. He had a lot of power behind those feet.

MN: So you grew up in Holland?

CO: We lived on 13th street before they build the library.

MN: How did your growing up with polio, with the effects of polio affect your family?

CO: I don't think it affected it after the first of being in the hospital. My parents sort of said, do it. I was in the orchestra from grade school all the way through senior high. We went to the band and orchestra conferences in Ann Arbor and Lansing. High school, junior high, always took the first division. You were in the various solo and ensembles and dragging that stupid cello. I could have taken the violin or flute or something, but for whatever the orchestra director said in junior high said "you are going to play cello" so I played cello. Everyone knew and I knew that some things I am not going to do, I can't do, but it was basically you went to the football games and you froze to death, you dragged the cello wherever you needed to be. We lived four blocks from grade school, two blocks from junior high. A block from church. A library was in the old city hall building, so you could cut across the neighbor's empty lot and you were basically there. I loved to read. Still do. I have books. In the bookshelf here and the bookshelves there and I have another shelving unit in the basement which is five foot wide. And I still have got more boxes of books that are sitting down there. And this about after I got rid of 12 banana boxes full of books at the AAUW several years back. I had way too many books.

MN: Did polio have any affect on your household duties growing up?

CO: I don't like housework. I never did like housework. My sister loved to do housework so, she did that and I read a book. But as far as, you had your chores, the dishes. Dad was in the furnace business and was also a Jack-of-all-trades and master of all of them. So we were always remodeling the house. I don't think it had anything to do with polio per se, but he would say it has to be this way. My first reaction is: "Why?" Every other word was "why" and the opposite was "why not." It is still that way. If you put a flower in, and you are going to bake something, what are you going to do, it is the "why" and the "why not" that are the first things that I have to wrangle through.

MN: Do you remember later, after you had polio, maybe later in the forties or the early fifties, do you remember the big, do you remember any hype about polio? Was it a big talk in town?

CO: I don't think I ever paid that much attention to it. Given it was a small town and at that point it was a small town. Hope College was just a blip over there, and the seminary was an even smaller blip. There were only the three TV stations. I don't remember there being a lot of hoopla. There may have been and I may have been aware of it at the time, I don't remember.

MN: Do you remember any kinds of fundraisers or things like that, like the March of Dimes or—?

CO: There was always the March of Dimes, and there was one time, I think with the March of Dimes, they gave you a little card of some sort and you put a dime in each slot and then you turned it in. At that point polio was supposed to have been eradicated, it was not supposed to come back with this post-polio stuff. Most of the third world countries, and United States of course and the Western World, it has been eradicated. My description of it that you basically fall apart faster than a normal person. I got this walker when I was close to fifty. A fifty-year-old isn't supposed to be walking with a walker. This is the fifth one I have had. I am rough on them. But I had polio in my right leg and also in both arms. For some reason it never affected my arms, just my one leg; it is about two and a half inches shorter and my feet are different sizes so I have to buy two pairs of shoes every time.

MN: What about when you were younger, did you have to do any kinds of exercises or anything like that growing up?

CO: I probably could have and should have. Did I? Not really. People didn't know that much about it. My right leg is extremely weak. And I don't think that the exercises would have done an awful lot of good because there is just no muscle matter there below my knee. I can raise my whole leg backwards, but I can't raise my foot that way. I had the surgery done on my ankle to stabilize it. I had what they called a drop foot so that every time you walked you sort of had to pick your whole leg, and put your foot back down. You sort of had to flop it and go and flop it and go. At least it kept the foot level on the bottom. Things like volleyball, softball, where you had to run, I didn't do. I have to admit, it really didn't slow me down an awful lot. Except for every other day, it still doesn't now. When we had the garden tour last year, the next day I took a nap in the morning, another one in the afternoon, another one at night and then I went to bed. But back to grade school and gym, recreation time, recess, there were things that I didn't do. Nobody had a problem with it. Everybody is so class conscious, status conscious now. Everybody has to be better than everybody else, nobody has time for the odd duck out. I didn't have that when I was growing up. If I couldn't run the races, so what. "We don't want her on our team because she can't do it anyway, she'll just slow us down." It wasn't so much that. It was simply, they knew I could not do it. So it was never a problem. Fortunately. And if it was my experience in Grand Rapids or my upbringing or my personality, or combination of everything, I don't know. I would guess it was probably a combination. And, I went to school, I went to church, it was all part of growing up. And, because there wasn't anyone else around to compare or to commiserate with or feel sorry for the two of us or it wasn't so much me against the world, but me just part of the world as it was. Today, we have got all the media coverage now that we didn't have 60 years ago. I think it makes a big difference, because now you can look up anything on the internet. I had polio and it was no big deal because nobody made a big deal out of it. And I think that is what has helped me. Even now its, yeah I am talking to you or whatever, but on a normal basis I don't bring it up or even think about it. It is just there, and maybe because I got it when I was very young, I didn't know any different. Basically I did because I was already a year-and-a-half old. And was probably walking at 18 months and because I don't remember any of it and I don't have to words to describe it if I did remember it, I think that is where it comes through.

MN: How would you describe your attitude about growing about with what you have been talking about, how would you describe your attitude towards polio, towards living with polio, living a life with polio?

CO: I think it was just simply, it was part of me. I knew there were things I couldn't do, there were things I could do. TV came along. I didn't like TV. I still don't. I'd go upstairs and read. The family would watch TV. But I think it was just there. I mentioned straight hair, curly hair; you either have straight hair or curly hair, you have polio and you just keep on going. It was just that nobody ever harangued me in school, in the neighborhood or at church or anything.

MN: So you didn't ever feel isolated or become isolated because of polio?

CO: Both my folks were very outgoing, my dad in particular. I think that that has helped me because I didn't have this mentality that "oh poor me." It was the heck with the polio, I'll do what I want to do. That is what it boiled down to. And this garden, with the garden tour last year. This year, Ann Van Lente of the Holland Horticulture Club, wanted the HHC to see what could be accomplished in a handicap assessable garden. And so, yeah, I got fifty people here. [Pause] We have widened the doors, it is all handicap accessible, wheelchair accessible.

MN: Going back to when you were real little, when you were in the hospital, was there anything that you remember, any vague memories that you have of a smell or a voice?

CO: No. I have to admit, I do not remember anything of being in the hospital. I would guess there is something because when my kids went through this one and a half, two and a half, they didn't go anywhere. Not really, but there was this tension, and the only thing that I can relate it to is that was when I got polio. So when Cathy turned a year and a half, and when Kris turned a year and a half and then after they turned two and a half things were fine again. So I have to assume, I do anyway, there is something in the subconscious for that timeframe, and other than saying it is in the subconscious, I cannot explain it. [End Tape 1] I guess what I was going to say was that as rough as it probably was, with the Sister Kenny treatments, with the blistering hot packs, I am guessing that I probably had as good a time as I was going to have being in the hospital. This nurse, she must have been very stabilizing on my stay in the hospital.

MN: Do you remember there ever being that there were houses around Holland that were quarantined?

CO: I don't know, I would assume that there probably were, because there were other cases of polio. I don't have a clue why I ended up in the hospital for a year. Other houses were probably quarantined. I just don't know. I have never asked. It was just, I was there and that was it.

MN: What about fear? Were people afraid?

CO: Yes, there was basically a morbid fear of it because they didn't know where it came from. They didn't know how to cure it. I think it's in some respect like this SARS that is going around right now. It just sort of comes out of nowhere. Polio had probably been around for centuries and they never had a name for it. And so I think when they finally discovered what it was and they finally put a name on it. I would bet that there was still a morbid fear. They didn't know where it came from, they didn't know what to do with it. I think that is one reason why I ended up being in Grand Rapids for a year, because they didn't know what else to do. Something in the paper the other day, this woman died a number of years ago. She had spent her entire life in an iron lung [Marjorie Cooper]. I look at that and I think she had been struck probably in her mid-20s. But I look at that and I think, I haven't really had it so bad. There are articles in the paper and in the news magazines and on the TV, whatever, and there are people who have it so much worse that I do. I dwell on that there are things I can't do, but there are other things that so many people cannot do. And even like this meeting the other night with this Center for Independent Living. They are in wheelchairs. The one young fellow, I think it was a motorcycle accident, and he is in his early 20s confined to a wheelchair. He has got one of these electric ones that you can make move and that is about all he can do. I can get around. And if you notice, I don't walk with this walker the way other people do. I don't push it in front of me and walk behind it. I walk on it. I have calluses. [Shows hands]. There are many people that can do so much less than I can, and it puts things into perspective, at least as far as I am concerned.

MN: Is there anything else? Are there any topics or ideas that I have not asked you about or stories that you can remember?

CO: Not right offhand. I think that it's the way I was raised. That you have got this and the next door neighbor doesn't. There were a lot of things I couldn't do, but there were a lot of things I could do. You know I was right in there with everybody else. Being in orchestra, being in choir, I think, not Girl Scouts; Campfire, Bluebirds, church, Sunday School, it was just part of the way of life.

MN: Can't let it stop you.

CO: No. I mentioned reading. One time my neighbors called my folks and asked if somebody was sick? Not that they knew. The upstairs lights were on until about 2 o'clock. Oh, Cherry is reading again. But when you have got an upstairs bedroom and they can look right over, the neighbors all knew when I was up late reading at night. But now here too, I'd forgotten, when I had gone to this meeting the other night. The little widow lady a couple doors over, we were talking yesterday. She said "you went away Monday night." It took me a minute to realize what she meant. I said, "Yeah, I'd gone to a meeting." She said, "We watch you." But she is probably about 85, and I had left probably 5 o'clock or something, and I take Dial-a-ride. So it is real obvious when one of the buses is sitting out there beeping on their horn. But you know, the neighborhood watch is the neighborhood, not so much what are they doing—

MN: Not nosey but personal.

CO: It is that neighborhood watch, community watch attitude. Not so much that we have an official tag out here that says community watch, but, everybody just sort of keeps and eye out. So it is neat.

MN: Oh, before I forget, you told me on the phone to ask you something about a hotel.

CO: [Points to photograph on her wall] That is the old Central Park hotel. When they knocked it down, they didn't just bulldoze them and haul it to the dumps like they do now. They recycled the wood. So all the two by fours in this house are original two by fours. The well for this hotel and then these three houses was originally here. The septic tank for the hotel was in the neighbors yard, and all these houses were hooked up on a single septic tank. There is a gas line coming in right next to the fence right here. That originally was for the hotel. And now it splits off and goes to these other houses. As close as anybody can figure out, that was at least

100 years ago, 110 years ago. There was a piece of old gas line that snaked through the house, ran the gas lights. Down in the basement is a sign. It said originally "Central Park Hotel" or something like that in there. You can still read it a little bit. But I would let, I would like to bring it up here and get some acid free cellophane and wrap it. I don't want to repaint it or anything. Then you just have a board with paint on it. But that is the old hotel. And in places around here you can find, parts of the old foundation. They had cement laid in the ground about that big in diameter. That is what they built it on, just huge troughs of cement. And there was some, there is stuff in the basement, right through the basement wall. There used to be a garage at one point for these old Tin Lizzys. You couldn't get a car in there now because the cars are too big. There is now just a passage door and a window Dr. Bruins may have more pictures than I have. Talking about pictures, you need to take a look at the one on the left, just on the other side of the hutch. That was taken up at the hospital. [Photo of Cherry with a birthday cake, moving around to show] I have other pictures but I like this one because it is typically me I think.

MN: I guess if there are any other stories you can remember, about the polio or the experience, or life since then because of it.

CO: If there are any other stories we have missed, I will let you know.

MN: Thank you very much.

CO: Yeah. Just above Marie there, there is a sign I used to have out here. I says, the H fell off of it, so is says, the "Cherry Tree –ouse." But back to the polio, which is where we started in the first place, I have never been severely hindered. I have always been able to do the better part of what I wanted to do either one way or another way. Like with the garden, how I have got the go-cart thing out there. I am not going to get down on my hands and knees like anyone else might have done or like I might have done 30 or 40 years ago. But I do it, and I enjoy it. And everyone else seems to enjoy it too. Now that I think of it, its about attitude. [End of Tape 2 Side A] I think my attitude helped, and I think a lot of my attitude come through from my dad. One of my neighbors years ago, said, "you enjoy whatever you are doing." She said that to me. Well, housework, there are some things that are exceptions. I do. If I am talking to you I am enjoying this, if I am reading a book I am enjoying it, if I am working outside I am enjoying it. If I have got all these neighbors looking at the flowers, I think that is neat, I think it is great that they enjoy the flowers. The last few years I started putting more of them out around the car port so they will see those and then they look farther in. I just assume that they saw them. Because for me to look that them, that is fine and dandy, but I just assume share them. But there too, my parents never said poor Cherry, she can't do that. You never got this from my folks, from my grandparents, it was always, do something. I was not pushed, but I was not held back. That is probably my biggest advantage, the fact that I was not in an iron lung, I wasn't in a wheelchair. I could go and I could come. I could do basically what I wanted to do. The fact that I could do most of what I wanted to do, I think is one reason why there was never much stigma attached to the fact that, oh poor cherry, she's got polio, she can't do that. I never heard that, either from my family or the neighborhood, or from school. I am sure that people had said that that I did not hear. I am relatively sure of that. But I didn't hear it. My parents always said get up and do something, if it was no more than reading a book. And I think that one reason I like to read a book, any book was the fact that a lot of the more physical things I could not do. I think that was my escape.

MN: Did you ever know other people with polio?

CO: No, not while I was growing up. There was no sense that I didn't belong where I was.

MN: No need to connect you to other people with polio. Let you be a part of the environment. It is positive.

CO: I really think that has really shaped a lot of my attitudes towards life.

[End of Interview]