5-12-2003

Souter, Ray and Doris Oral History Interview: Polio Survivors in Holland

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Oral History Project 2003
Joint Archives of Holland
Polio

Interviewees:
Ray and Doris Souter
(Edited)

Conducted by:
Matthew Nickel
12 May 2003
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DS: This of course was a picture that went into the paper of the children, just about a month before they had polio. The three of them.

MN: So Art was 10...

DS: Art was 10, and Ken was eight I think, and then Jan was two and a half.

MN: And three of them got polio at the same time?

DS: She had it first.

RS: A neighbor girl pushed her on the three wheel bicycle, and she fell and injured her mouth, and we think that’s probably where the—

DS: She knocked one tooth out and cracked the other one.

RS: So that is probably what started that one.

DS: Because at that time, Holland was full of what they called non-paralytic polio. And families weren’t reporting it.

RS: It was new business.

DS: It was new, and they knew they were sick and running a temperature and things like that. This little girl had happened to have had that. And that is where they think it came from, because at the time, because at the time, Dr. Ten Have, Dr. Ten Have I think his name was from Grand Haven. He was head of the health department. And he came and he went through everything, and every place we had been and what kind of food we had bought and where we bought it and where our milk came from and he just went through everything, and that is where they
RS: The doctors were not aquatinted with this polio business yet either.

MN: Roughly, when did this happen, what year?

RS: The doctors were not aquatinted with this polio business yet either.

MN: So it was still pretty early—

DS: She hadn’t slept all night, and then neither did we then, you know. Dr. Aiken called in the morning, I would say it was probably about 8:30, he says “I hate to tell you this but I think Jan’s got Polio.” Well, then of course we had to go to the hospital and she had a spinal tap. And it said that she did have it. So then he got to work trying to figure out where he was going to send her. And she got sent to St. Mary’s Hospital in Grand Rapids. And the doctor took her our arms, he looked at her and said, “a thousand to one.”

RS: Her temperature was really high.

DS: It was over 108. And we had the feeling that if she did survive, she would be mentally off or there would be something off. She wasn’t. Of course she was very self-conscious of herself because when she developed. Well, first of all, we had to have these two teeth taken care of. And then it was from that she had the upper part of her upper jaw removed. They just cracked that all out, and they put in a full plate in there, and finally she has a false put in there now. But she, oh no, I think it is either four or five operations that she has had on her face. [MN begins
to zip his sweater off] Take it off, it is hot in here. [Pointing to Ray] He is probably cold. But anyhow, when we left from there, we didn’t expect her to come out alive. She seemed to come back, and she was getting a little bit frisky, and about that time that was when the boys went wrong. They were going to send the boys to different hospitals, and our doctor said no. All three of them at one. Because we could not be split up like that where we had to run from this one to that one, to the other one, see. So they all got sent to St. Mary’s, and the first thing the boys heard was her trying to call them. She heard them, she was way at the other end of the hall. But she heard them and she was trying to call to them. Well, I guess Ken, well, one of them, got to go down and see her and the talk to her, but not right away. Because they were simply not themselves. Well, when all three of them came out, outside of Jan. Jan has had an awful lot of problems with their face, and I think the boys have got back problems. Yeah.

RS: She went through all this schooling and everything else with this

DS: Deformed face.

RS: anger of, you know, I am not looking so good. So it affected her mentally as well. But she has done really well we think. And she became a nurse and she is a registered nurse and she has been working at Holland Hospital now for, well, she is the second oldest one in the hospital. She is head of one of the floors at the hospital. You want to see her?

MN: Eventually yes.

RS: You’ll know who she is. Jan knows that. Her husband writes in the Sentinel.

DS: Every once in a while.
RS: These articles about public posts. So the boys have developed more or less weak backs and this is going to show up more and more as they get older, effecting both boys. But otherwise, they have done pretty good too. Ken worked for the Ottawa County Road Commission for most of his life. For 39 years. He is retired now, and Art, the oldest one, lives up in the Upper Peninsula. He is retired too.

DS: He served seven years in the Navy, and before that he was at Hope College for three years.

RS: There are other ones in Holland, there are probably the more paralytic. I know one case, Case VanLeer, he’s, he was given some schooling from the Polio Foundation. He lives in Zeeland, if you want to contact him, Case VanLeer is his name.

DS: In this article, this does not put our, but our kids are mentioned in it. There is a list in here of those who had polio, and those who died with it. And this little gal, evidently she, they were on their way to Grand Haven I think, and from Estonia when she developed it.

MN: So did you ever, how much later did the boys contract polio?

DS: It was about 10 days.

RS: All three of them had it in—

DS: Well, one of them, we came in from the hospital one night and of course Art, I don’t know what we would have done without our neighbor. She just took over and she did everything for us. So anyhow, we come in and she says, “I think Art has got it too, he has got a terrible headache.” And I went in there and his head was just, what do they call it, splitting? It was so bad. So I called the doctor the
next morning. And he had to have a spinal, and then they gave Ken a spinal too, because Ken was running a temperature. So actually the two of them came down with it in you might say the same time. And so then they took them to Grand Rapids too.

MN: Do you think the boys were self-conscious as well?

DS: Not as much because their face wasn’t affected. Jan had bulbar, and they had it in their backs. And bulbar effects the face and the head. It was all polio so.

MN: Were there a lot people in the neighborhood who were coming down with polio?

DS: No. It was the neighbor kids who had bulbar, or had non-paralytic polio. There was a lot of it around that we did not know about. But as far as anyone who they had come in contact with, because he was out of work, and he was home all the time. I guess I was working at the laundry at the time. That was something too, that comes into this. Of course I was only making 18 dollars a week. That’s normal. I came home with my check or the money or whatever it was, I think it came by cash then, but never-the-less, came home with it. And he says, now, what do we want to do with this. Do we pay the insurance. We paid the insurance. That was before the kids had polio. So, that really helped out a lot.

RS: Of course later on the Polio Foundation paid for a lot of the hospitalization for people who couldn’t afford it. Roosevelt started it because he had polio himself. He started springs down south there that people would go to for treatment.

DS: Hot springs.

RS: Hot springs.

DS: Frankly we were so fortunate with the whole thing.
RS: Turned out pretty good.

DS: They all turned out all right. None of them are crippled. Jan’s mind was alright, which we didn’t expect. In that way, you know, we have been blessed that way.

MN: Do you know how they were treated?

RS: Hot packs and hot cloth. Wool, Doris, gathered a lot of this wool up.

DS: It was at that time when this Australian woman discovered that hot packs on their legs would keep them coming from being paralyzed or would relax the muscles or did something to them. Well, they couldn’t have wool at that time. You could not get wool, because we were in the war. Or just getting out of the war. You know so we didn’t have, so I started collecting old clothing, ripped it all apart. Took the wool pieces and washed them, and I took a car load of boxes of wool material to Grand Rapids, but at that time, by the time I got this collected our boys were all ready in St. Mary’s Hospital. So I have got a thank you card here from them.

MN: Where did you find this wool?

RS: Old clothing.

DS: All I did was mention what I was going to do, and I had more old clothing that you could shake a stick at. My mother who lived way up north, she lived on an island, and she sent a box of wool material. Remember what an old Northern Tissue box used to look like. Well, alright, it was one of those. So no it, they just, well everybody was helping out.

RS: Oh yeah, community effort, everybody helps out.

DS: They did anyway, I don’t know if they do anymore, but they did anyway.

MN: Was there a lot of polio going around in the town. Was it a big topic or a—
DS: It was a big topic but I don’t think there was that much and here it kills, I think there was more in Grand Haven than there was in Holland. And then there was a woman in an iron lung at that time. She had it, she had it before, but I don’t know what year she came down with it.

RS: Her husband built an iron lung. He built it out of barrels—

DS: Oil barrels.

RS: Oil barrels, I can’t think of what his name is.

DS: It is in here, it’s in here I saw it the other day.

RS: Maybe he would like to copy that whole list.

DS: Well, if he promises to bring it back to me he may use it.

[Laughter]

MN: Of course.

RS: Mrs. Larson, wasn’t it?

DS: That’s right her name was Larson, because it was the same as mine, my maiden name. Its in there someplace, I saw it yesterday. I can’t see it today. But anyhow, you may take that along.

RS: You can take it along as long as we get it back.

DS: See, I am a pack rat.

RS: You may take the whole thing along if you want to look at it.

DS: No, this isn’t all polio related, there are just these other little clippings that I have got too. These only pertain to every third day they reported in the Sentinel, how the kids were getting along. This is more or less what that is about, so, but it’s, I’d
just say that we just had so much, and of course I’ve saved all the letters, a
Sentinel reader here people wrote who didn’t know who she was.

RS: People have sent us a couple of bucks. But then a dollar was that big.

DS: Yeah it was.

RS: The dollar we have got now a days, that is a ten cent dollar now. Those were
rough times too—

DS: If you have got any questions to ask, maybe we can answer those better. I guess
that’s about, this is just a little book, receipt, and then more or less going into
Jan’s life.

MN Were there any kinds of, how did it affect your family socially, the children’s
polio—with neighbors, friends.

DS: Well, one of them was there all the time. She and her husband, Mr. and Mrs. John
Ver Schure. They were there, they were there on call no matter when, where,
didn’t make any difference.

RS: The kids call him grandpa and grandma, because they were right next door and
they were helping us out really good. All the neighbors were helping.

DS: And the day the kids were taken to polio, to Grand Rapids, I stripped everything.
The drapes off the windows, everything. Now nobody told me to do this, but this
was what I did. I washed all the walls and the floors and the beds and I did the
whole house got a house cleaning in the middle of the hot summer. But I washed
this stuff and poured Lysol into the water. Well everything smelt of Lysol. It came
time for me to head out for Grand Rapids, because I usually went there two or
three times a day depending on, well, how things were the day before. And the
clothes were all hanging on the line, the curtains, the drapes, the bedspreads the blankets, everything was out on the line. A woman across the street she came over and got it all. And ironed it. Her son said to her, and he must have been about 11 or twelve, he says “Mom aren’t you afraid of getting polio?” She says, “The way this stuff smells, nobody would get it.”

RS: They didn’t know where the germ came from.

DS: They had no idea where they came from and they didn’t know exactly how it was contacted. So, but one woman came to the door one time, I asked her if she wanted to come in, she said, “no, I don’t want to come in, I just wanted to tell you we’re thinking of you.”

RS: Right, they were scared because we only began to know how it was spread.

DS: How is was spread, and who was going to get it from there.

MN: So was it difficult to make connections sometimes with people?

DS: No, I just didn’t pay any attention to it.

RS: Stuff like this SARS now, people don’t know how that is spread either. If you don’t know about something then you are scared of everything.

DS: The neighbor woman, she didn’t care, she was right there with us.

MN: Where did you live at the time?

DS: 18th street. 18th street and Van Raalte.

MN: Oh, okay.

DS: So, down the street a little ways, but that was a good local for us.

MN: And were you, it was just you family, you immediate family that lived there? [DS nods her head].
RS: It was quite a story about this one person, that was previous to our having polio, this Mrs. Larson. They did not have these iron lungs. There was no manufacturer I guess, but they knew how to make them, but this person was mechanically inclined and he made one of these things. I don’t know, is there a story in there about that.

DS: No I haven’t got that.

RS: Oh, well you could look that up in the Sentinel, they would have that in there. They would have pictures of it and everything else.

DS: She later got a manufactured one, you know, things like that. I don’t know if she is still alive.

RS: I doubt that. She was even middle age at that time.

DS: I wouldn’t quite call her that. She was not a child.

MN: Did the polio, how did the polio affect your family, work wise? How did it affect your daily lives? Did they change?

RS: It is a traumatic experience, it is like going through something you don’t understand. You don’t know where it came from. You don’t know why it hit some people and not other people and so, it is like I said, this SARS, people don’t know how that is spread either. People run around with masks on till they find out how it is spread, it is kind of an influenza, there is a certain fear, people travel all around the world now, and they are bringing in new bugs that they don’t know anything about. It was a traumatic experience for us. Besides being out of work and everything else.

DS: Some of that would be in that other album.
RS: We all turned out pretty good. Kids all had their jobs and everything. We are in pretty good shape I guess, for what we went through.

DS: I think we did extremely well.

RS: Yes, especially our daughter too. A lot of difficulties we didn’t like, but now she is one of the head nurses at the hospital.

DS: She got teased, very badly. Shunned.

RS: Being a girl, your facial features are important. You know.

DS: And of course she was very sick. You know, she knew what she looked like. So, it was hard on her, and she had a hard time in school. Anyway, she is going fine now. Couldn’t ask her to accomplish any more than she did.

MN: Do you think perhaps, it might have encouraged her to be stronger?

DS: Well, of course I think she, in the back of her mind, without her even knowing it, she wanted to prove she could do something that her teachers said she could not do. Her teachers told her to forget trying to go to college for this that or the other thing. Whatever it was, I don’t remember, they she wouldn’t make it anyhow. She might just as well plan on working in the factory. Well, she worked in the factory for a little while. She went to school.

RS: It was pretty difficult.

DS: It was difficult for her, but other girls helped pull her through it. So, we are proud of her.

MN: How did it affect you guys?

DS: Made us nervous. You know, we didn’t know what was going to happen to our kids. It was just a nerve racking time. Instead of having three kids in the house,
you had nobody. It was just the two of us. We didn’t talk because we would make
the other one feel bad. So, in that way, why, of course we didn’t, as soon as we
came home from work you might say we took off for Grand Rapids again. But
they, Jan never did go to Mary Freebed. But the boys, both of them went so. But
they were not there as long as I thought they would be. I was rather surprised
when they got out of there as quick as they did. But that has been the life they
have had.

MN: Did it make it difficult working for you guys? Socially speaking? Did it make it
difficult to have a job or keep a job?

DS: No, that had nothing to do with it. No, it was just that jobs as that time were few
and far between.

RS: It was more or less a depression, and we were depressed with our problems
besides. Those were times when we were brought up with not too much, so it
didn’t effect us that much. As it is nowadays, people have got to have so much
that they can’t get by otherwise, but in those days, why you got to by with as little
as you had to.

DS: You didn’t need the way they needed now.

RS: For a long time I worked for the Holland Furnace Company. I made 16 dollars a
week. Now people only work for 16 dollars an hour. I am telling you this, but you
don’t understand what I am telling you.

MN: I have never experienced that.

RS: Because you are in this time, see.

DS: Our granddaughter says, you can tell me all about it, but I don’t understand it.
RS: To understand it you need to go through these things. Well, we could understand our forefather's problems a little bit more. We had an inkling of what they went through, because we went through it see, now kids are being brought up with everything, right away, so if they don't have it, well then there is a rebellion you might say. Every generation has it's own problems that they have got to work through.

MN: Were there, I guess, were there any kinds of rumors, what kinds of things did people talk about in the community?

DS: I have no idea. We were by ourselves. I don't know what people talked about. We talked to a few people on the telephone, but we didn't go anyplace. The only place we went to is, he went to work and I went to Grand Rapids. And, I would come home from Grand Rapids and nine chances out of ten, there would be several of the women waiting for me to see how she was doing.

RS: Oh yeah, a lot of lot of help. People help each other now-a-days too, but we had more help in those days I think, because, well, everybody was, there was nobody rolling in riches. Everybody had their own struggle.

DS: This is how they, [pulls out a list on green paper] one fella, he gave us five dollars and a loaf of bread. Another couple gave us a meal, they brought a meal. My grandmother, she sent us two dollars. There was another fella, he gave us gas and oil for the car. Well, we got two of those. There was another one, she made us two cakes. Another one, hot rolls. There is another one with pie. And then the neighbors, one of the neighbors went around the block, and just by going around
the block it got known at a couple of other places. [The neighbor took a
collection]

[End of Side A]

DS: Now that was a lot of money. $112.57 and then there was another one who sent us
$25 and—

RS: That was a rich person.

DS: And then there was another one that sent us five dollars twice. Then there was
another one that sent us five dollars twice. Another one gave us two, another one
gave us five dollars. And there is one that gave us ten. And here was a big family,
they had more children than we had. They came to the door with a great big
basket of fruit. I just never got over that because of the big family they had, and
here they come with a big basket of fruit. Here is another one with five, one with
two. Here is an aunt of Ray’s in California, she sent us a dollar. So. Here is
another one, a dollar. That is a dollar for each of the children, so that must have
been two dollars, or three dollars, maybe Jan got one too. One of our old
landlords, a letter in here on that. We lived in an apartment and she was
downstairs and she sent us, no she sent a letter because she didn’t want to keep
the telephone tied up, and told me to stop at her place and pick up a dollar, and
then stop at a five and dime store and pick up something for the boys. So, just
things like that you know, and of course, well, what can you say. All you can do
is say thank you, but it doesn’t amount to much, but it was a thank you.

RS: Well, later, later on around Christmas, the school brought us a—
DS: Oh, that was kind of cute. At that time, the school, that is the high school, fixed up boxes for Christmas for the person or persons in Holland that had the toughest luck through the year. Not the ones who needed it the most, the ones that had the toughest luck. And here they came. There again was a Northern Tissue box, full. Two boys couldn't hardly carry it. Plus there were other things, there were toys for the kids, there was a basket of food. I don't know there was so much stuff. And I said to the teacher at that time, I said “Isn’t there someone who needs it worse than we do?” She said “That is not why the kids do this. You had the toughest luck.” That was a shocker. To think that, yeah we got on the list for the kids at the school to help us out. And they were the nicest kids who came in. So that was about the last time that, of anything like that. And of course, Ray was one who didn’t want to accept charity. And that is what that seemed to be.

RS: It hurt feelings because I didn’t want to be accepting charity.

DS: Can I have a Kleenex Ray. I have got sinus trouble.

RS: So, I don’t know what else we can tell you.

MN: Did anything change in particular, when the kids came home from the hospital?

RS: No. We just went on living. They went back to school. Oh lets see, say Art came home in the middle of the week, I don’t remember when it was and he was back to school, I shouldn’t say back in school because school just started a while back. He went to school. Ken followed suit. You know, it was not long before he went too.

MN: So they weren’t treated for very long, they didn’t—?
DS: No, well, they went in there around the first of August sometime. I don’t exactly know what date it was. It looks as though it says 21 on there. So it was in August. I don’t know the date. But no, the kids didn’t shun them, and they didn’t try to stay away from them. I think more, they joined around them to find out what happened. I would think that happened more than, no the kids didn’t shun them because of that.

MN: So were people curious about their experiences?

DS: No. Unless the kids were, oh, curious when they were just together, that is a possibility, but not as far as we were concerned. We didn’t notice anything.

RS: Well Jan had a rough time all her life because it affected her looks. She can’t chew, she has to go like this [Demonstrates by putting his hand on the bottom of his chin and opening and closing his jaw] in order to chew.

DS: She still does.

RS: She gradually withdrew herself from being friendly with other people and stuff like that. Otherwise—

DS: You can more or less see, this of course was all broke out then, at that time [points to front teeth and gum area]. That was the artificial plate showing there. And then,

RS: It effected everything she did then.

DS: They were trying to get a picture she like. She didn’t like any of them.

RS: She’d of looked more like Kenny, except for that operation that she had. They tried to—
DS: She would be mad if she knew I was showing this. She doesn’t know I have got them yet either.

RS: Oh, it doesn’t matter, she’d have torn them up.

DS: Oh these would be gone.

RS: Have you got one before she had polio as a little girl. Oh, maybe you can compare her looks. They did the best they could with the plastic surgery, I’d say.

DS: Yeah, they did all they could for her. It started out with just the, of course the two front teeth were gone, because she knocked one out and broke the other. Then we had a little plate made to go in there, but then they decided they had to take this part out too [Motions to gum area] because it was twisting. Oh, I felt so sorry for that kid that day, I could have, because they took all this out. Cracked it all out. And he had a plate ready and sewed it up with the plate right in there. Oh, I felt so sorry for her. She came out, she had kind of a dazed looked on her face you know. Nothing I could do about it. We were doing the best we could for her.

RS: But she didn’t have any strength in her lower jaw either.

DS: This, this is always the right—

RS: And then we had to come back.

DS: And then after she had the plastic surgery and had something else done, and then they had a permanent front in her. Then her big thing then, was to bite a half of circle in a slice of bread, because she could never do that. But she could remember see. She couldn’t remember before two and a half years old. That was the big thing for her. She came home and she took a slice of bread and she bit into it and she made a half a circle. So, no, it was hectic, but, and then of course she
had all the, oh dear what kind of treatments were those? [Pause] Shock treatments.

RS: They thought that would bring back—

DS: the deadened nerves.

RS: But that didn’t help anything.

DS: And I think they will usually go for I think it was one year, they went on her for a year and a half.

RS: It was not very happy either, to deal with that part, the poor girl.

DS: Let’s see. Half of her face, see, the nerves are all dead. So, where ever they went, you know, and if she jumped a little bit, then they knew that they had gone over the line a little ways, but it never helped because that one side is dead. Is it five nerves? I forgot?

RS: She is the one that was effected most. The boys more or less forgot it I guess.

DS: No.

RS: They went on with their life, when she struggled all her life with that.

DS: And she is still struggling. But she goes on with her work and she never says anything about it, she just, that is the way it is.

RS: She made a good nurse because she went through a lot of problems herself so that she has this empathy for people that her suffering taught her. It made her a better nurse. I don’t know what to tell you, what are you looking for.

MN: This is kinda what I am looking for. Your story.

RS: How it effected her life from having polio.

MN: These sorts of questions, yes.
DS: Well, we went through, lets see now, how do I say that. We tried not to let the
kids know our fear. I had only seen one person who had a brace on his leg before
this happened. I did not want our kids to be afraid of what might happen. So in
that way you try not to show your own anxiety as far as the kids are concerned.
You might have been torn up inside, but never the less you tried not to let them
see it. And I think that was our biggest aim, in not to let them say, well, I had
polio, I can’t do this. I kept on pushing. And I was also pushing with the
exercises. When they came home they were supposed to do such and such
exercises. I said to the doctor and that was Dr. Aiken, in Grand Rapids. I said,
how am I supposed to get these kids to exercise when they don’t want to. I says,
“Am I supposed to hold a baseball bat over their head?” He said, “No, use it.”
That is to say, just make them do it. Well, finally I just gave up on it. I thought,
well, you are playing out there, you are doing everything, making your body
move in every way, why I let it go. Maybe I shouldn’t have, but I did.

MN: Sounds like it turned out okay.

DS: I think they are alright. Sure they are getting old and are getting arthritis and
cramps and what have you, but that is not that bad, everybody else gets it too.

Were you the one who talked to our son in the Uppers Peninsula?

MN: No, that was my boss actually.

DS: Oh, I see, because he is up there and we can tell him, just about everything down
here, so. I think he is doing all right. He has got a weak back, but the whole
family has a week back. I don’t know if it was the polio there, or did it help them
along? Maybe theirs is worse than it should be?
MN: Did you have a sense of relief when the children came home? How did you feel?

DS: Happy.

RS: Jan could have died. Jan could have died because we didn’t think she would come back here. She has such a h—

DS: We had no thought of her coming back home.

RS: She had such a high fever, when you get up that high, it effects something, your mind or something, so, we were very thankful that she came out of it. And she is a productive citizen. What else can you say. We were very fortunate. Some people did die from it you know? Look at how crippled President Roosevelt was. He was in a wheelchair.

[Part of conversation not transcribed on Oral History Process]

RS: This is a good community and the people help each other. But they still do even in these times you know? We are fortunate to be living in such a good place. Look at the world, it is pretty sad the way some people have to get along, they have lived in the dirt all their life. [Pause] Take that along and copy it.

MN: Your children did not try to hide that they had polio did they?

RS: Physically they were not affected. You know, when somebody looked at you, you would not say “I had polio.” They are just like anybody else. They would not go around and say, “I had polio” because it didn’t affect them except for maybe the weakness in the back. Jan of course, her features were effected. So naturally that affected her whole life. But she was a girl, a girl is supposed to be beautiful you know. She wasn’t that beautiful, one might say. When she chews, she has to go
like this, well, you sit there with a bunch of other kids, they say “what is wrong with you?”

DS: She didn’t want to go to the restaurant.

RS: So you don’t associate with anybody then. You are by yourself, you withdraw. So it has been rough for her, but she has overcome it.

MN: What were the boys and Jan like growing up. Did they get along well?

RS: Just like other kids.

DS: Art like to read. Ken liked to go out and get into mischief.

RS: He was into everything.

DS: Jan, she was with everyone.

RS: Ken has tried everything, he tried everything, and I think Jan would have been the same way if she hadn’t had this, this negative business about it. Ken has been into everything, he swims, he does this, he does that, he fell out of a tree twice and the last time he almost broke his neck deer hunting, so it didn’t effect him at all. He just did everything.

DS: I thought I had some pictures in her from around that time.

RS: Just no outward anything, he was just like every other kid.

MN: It seems like the boys didn’t feel any kind of—

DS: They didn’t pay any attention to it. And one of them had to make out an application one time and I said, “now don’t forget that you have got to put down that you had polio.” Oh, didn’t make any difference to him. I have got a couple of pictures but I don’t know where it is. I thought I had the right one but I don’t.

RS: I don’t know how much more we can help you. They lived a normal life.
MN: Were there any sort of insurance problems working with polio?

DS: No. The insurance did very well by us. Let's put it that way. What the insurance
didn't pay, I think the Polio Foundation paid. Now we did get a letter when it was
all over with and they weren't going to any doctors. It was how much the
insurance company had paid out on it. I don't know where that letter is. I know I
saved it. It is probably in the book that Jan has got.

RS: I figure it wouldn't mean anything to people now-a-days. Now it is a hundred
thousand dollars for this.

DS: No, for all three of them, it sounded like a terrible number a month at the time,
actually if you think of it now, they charge more for tonsils than it did for that.

RS: It didn't put us behind financially. We were behind all the time anyway when we
were first married. [Laughter] Small wages back in those times, but everybody
had small wages. We were no different than anybody else.

DS: We didn't buy anything that was not absolutely necessary.

RS: We didn't have credit cards back in those days.

MN: You have answered a lot of my questions and my curiosities. Is there anything I
didn't mention or ask that you can think of?

DS: Well, the only thing is, when it started and we knew she was terribly sick, but that
was it. We had her to the doctor and we had her to the dentist because she had
broke these teeth, a temperature developed and things like that.

MN: Was there any kind of fear or apprehension in the doctors?

DS: The didn't understand polio. There might have been a few cases, but they never
had one.
RS: It took our doctor quite a while to analyze what they had.

DS: At least it seemed like quite a while to us.

RS: He did the best he could with the knowledge in the medical field. It was a quite a few years ago when Roosevelt got polio.

DS: Oh, many years.

RS: And after a while, he developed a vaccine.

DS: The first thing was that woman from Australia.

RS: Kenny. Sister Kenny, yeah.

DS: Sister Kenny, she is the one who got the wool started.

RS: Alleviate the crippling.

DS: Then the kids, did they get drops on a piece of sugar, on a sugar cube.

RS: Oh yeah, what was that? The—

DS: That was for polio afterwards.

RS: That’s right they dropped that stuff on a sugar cube. Instead of a poke on the arm.

DS: They hadn’t started that yet. I didn’t remember all of these things, you more or less forget them, I remember the kid says, one of them said to me, “I don’t have to take it. I already had polio.” I said go ahead and take it anyhow. We didn’t know if would come back again or not. They didn’t get excused from anything because they had polio.

RS: There was no reason to, they weren’t crippled or anything.

DS: We never said “you can’t do this you had polio.” No. At least try.

MN: As parents you seemed very encouraging.
DS: I don’t know if we were or not, we just didn’t take the sympathy angle. We just didn’t let that enter in at all. Try it, and if you can’t do it, you can’t do it, but at least try. I guess that was all their life, try. You know? If you can’t do it, okay, but it is surprising what you can do if you try. But as far as, I don’t think I would go back and change anything if I could.

RS: But you couldn’t change anything anyway.

DS: But even now, knowing what they are doing, I don’t think I would. Of course right now it would probably put them in a hospital faster, but I don’t know if it would have done her any good to have put her in a hospital.

RS: Things always run their own courses. People will be getting new things right along and we will be fighting this and fighting that.

DS: We are just happy that it went as well as it did. And even when I stop and think of it, I still see that one kid with the metal brace on his leg. So, we didn’t have to do anything like that. And at that time it probably would have put a metal brace on him. Now, I don’t think we would do it.

RS: Everybody is pretty helpful.

DS: And this Dr. Aiken. He was very—

RS: Helpful.

DS: He was considerate, I don’t know, he was just someone who was easy to be with. So, and of course at the time would be, I think it was Bill Winter that said, we got the best we could for them. Well, he was referring to Aiken.

MN: Who was Bill Winter?

DS: Dr. Bill Winter.
MN: Okay.

DS: He doesn't practice anymore.

RS: He is probably dead, Darcy.

DS: Bill Winter isn't—

RS: Oh, Bill Winter, he is not dead. Practice anymore, good knight, he is in his 90s too.

DS: Oh sure, that's all right, poor guy.

RS: Probably isn't mentally with it.

DS: Oh, no, not Bill. [Laughter]

RS: His brother is dead, he was a twin. He probably would not even remember us.

DS: After all, we were a drop in the bucket.

RS: Most of the people we knew are in the cemetery.

[End of Tape]