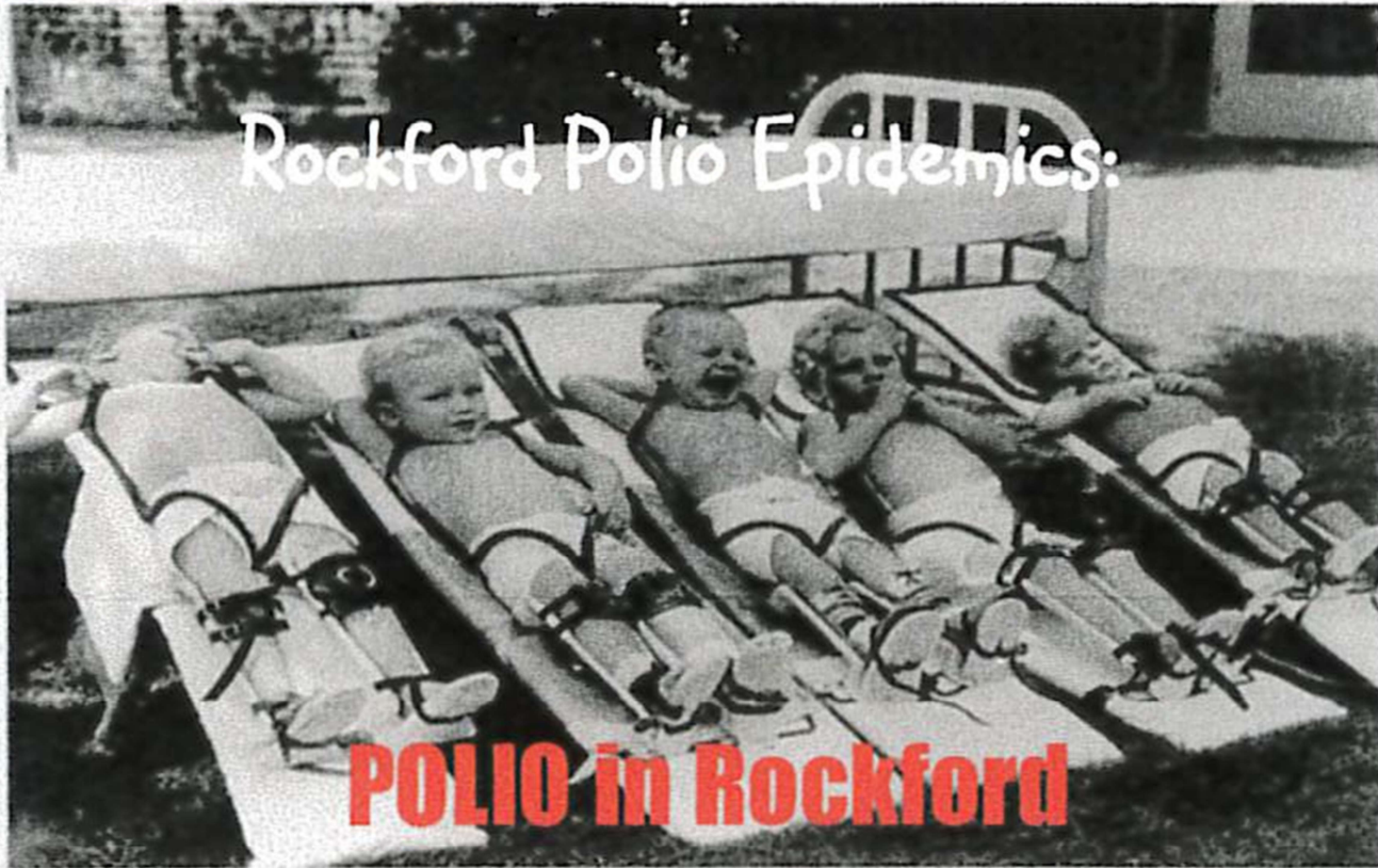


Rockford Polio Epidemics:



POLIO in Rockford

By Don Swanson, Retired Principal of Walker School, Member of the Board of Trustees of Midway Village Museum, and a polio survivor.

ROCKFORD POLIO EPIDEMIC- 1945

DIAGNOSIS

Like many Rockford families who had alternatives, took my sister and I in May of 1945, to our cottage on Rock Lake in Wisconsin.



ROCKFORD POLIO EPIDEMIC- 1945

DIAGNOSIS

My Parents felt that my sister and I could avoid the disease by being isolated in a small lake town.



ROCKFORD POLIO EPIDEMIC- 1945

DIAGNOSIS



In spite of this I contracted a high fever and muscle weakness in August 1945. I visited a doctor in Lake Mills who advised my mom to take me back to Rockford for a diagnosis.

ROCKFORD POLIO EPIDEMIC- 1945

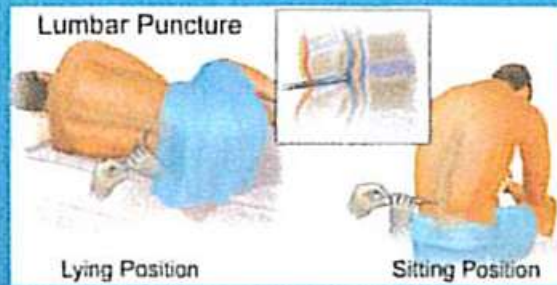
DIAGNOSIS

Like many Rockford parents my dad and mom took me to Swedish American Hospital. I'm sure they looked like these parents.



ROCKFORD POLIO EPIDEMIC- 1945

DIAGNOSIS



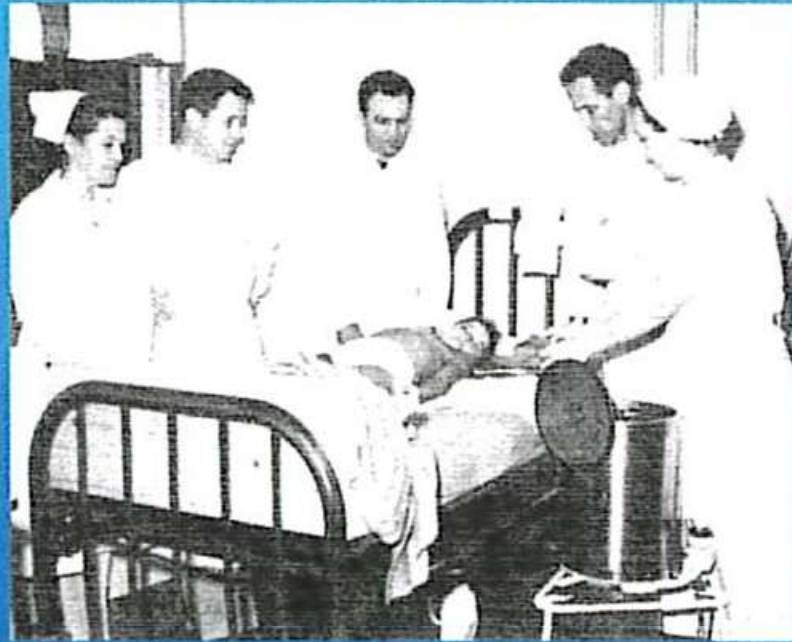
The Doctors at Swedish American did a spinal tap and discovered that that I had contracted Polio.



ROCKFORD POLIO EPIDEMIC- 1945

TREATMENT OF PATIENTS

I was sent to Winnebago County Hospital and placed in one of the Contagion Wards. Immediately I was started on Sister Kenny's Treatment routine.



ROCKFORD POLIO EPIDEMIC- 1945

TREATMENT OF PATIENTS

County Contagion Hospital nurses used Sister Kenny's technique of treatment that used wool hot packs applied to affected parts. The hot packs were administered around the clock. The hospital had 26 Hot Pack machines.



ROCKFORD POLIO EPIDEMIC- 1945

TREATMENT OF PATIENTS

Some of the polio wards included cribs for toddlers. Each patient needed constant care throughout the day.



ROCKFORD POLIO EPIDEMIC- 1945

TREATMENT OF PATIENTS

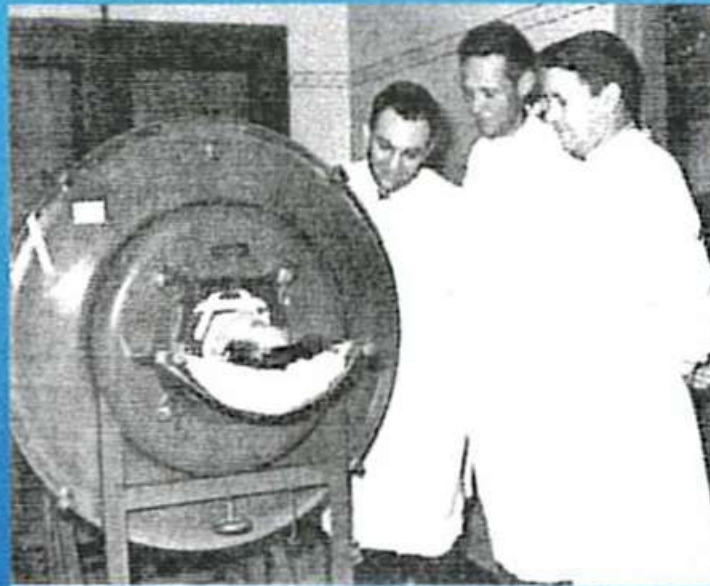
Many children, including me, hated the constant treatments with wool hot packs. There were a good supply of hot pack dispensers of hot-pack machines in the Contagion Hospital.



ROCKFORD POLIO EPIDEMIC- 1945

TREATMENT OF PATIENTS

Here Rockford doctors were visiting with an iron lung patient in one of the approximately 24 iron lungs. The iron lungs were in the same ward as young polio patients.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zZfP2X6wT5Q>

www.youtube.com/watch?v=zZfP2X6wT5Q

ROCKFORD POLIO EPIDEMIC- 1945

TREATMENT OF POLIO PATIENTS ELSEWHERE

In contrast to Rockford's Sister Kenny treatments, some hospital placed polio patients in full body casts to completely immobilize their muscles.



ROCKFORD POLIO EPIDEMIC- 1945

TREATMENT OF PATIENTS

During times of respite from hot pack treatments, patients like me could play games and do puzzles with other bed mates.



ROCKFORD POLIO EPIDEMIC- 1945

PHYSICAL THERAPY

The polio patients were taught to use assistive devices to recover their use of arms and legs.



ROCKFORD POLIO EPIDEMIC- 1945

PHYSICAL THERAPY

Some of the therapy sessions were actually fun.



ROCKFORD POLIO EPIDEMIC- 1945

PHYSICAL THERAPY

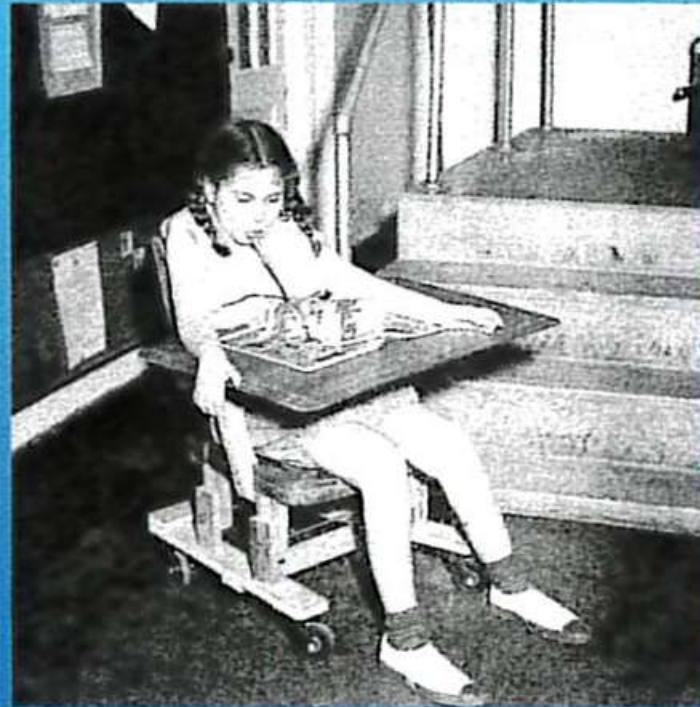
Here a young boy is using a device to turn pages while he shares a story with a friend.



ROCKFORD POLIO EPIDEMIC- 1945

PHYSICAL THERAPY

Here's a girl patient with hand and arm involvement and was learning to use a chin-strap device.



ROCKFORD POLIO EPIDEMIC- 1945

PHYSICAL THERAPY

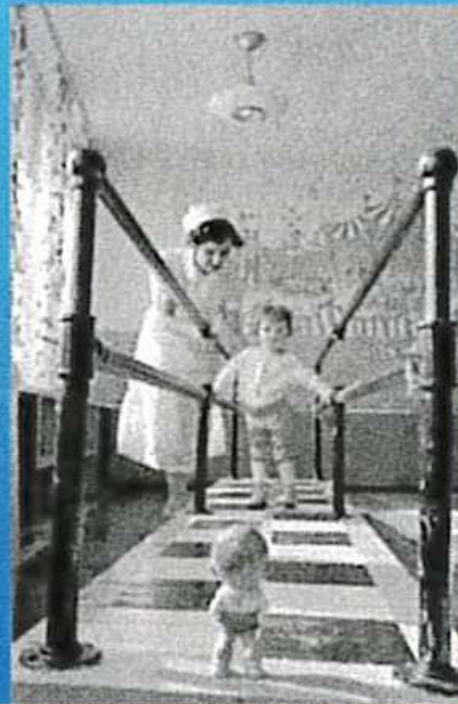
Here is a photo of the type of device that I had to use in therapy and when I left the hospital.



ROCKFORD POLIO EPIDEMIC- 1945

PHYSICAL THERAPY

Even toddlers
received therapy to
reapply muscle use.



ROCKFORD POLIO EPIDEMIC- 1945

REHABILITATION



My favorite exercises during my 13-month hospital stay were my hydrotherapy sessions.