

Middle Aging

Those Passing Years

by Larry Schneider

As everyone grows older, it is natural that physical limitations increase. With polios, the limitations come much earlier and, in these days, it is necessary to cope to the best of our ability and without much assistance from the "medical profession."

It's now 40 years since I contracted polio at 17 and I was fortunate in being able to go to Warm Springs, Georgia. Later, whenever I had a problem or question it was the place to turn to. I could obtain a complete check-up to include special consideration given to the after-effects of polio. But with the switch in the March of Dimes this is no longer true.

During the past few years, I find myself being able to do less and less and tire far too easily. This led to my early retirement when I was no longer able to stand from my wheelchair by myself and no longer able to walk with crutches or get out of bed alone.

Since my last examination over 10 years ago, I have visited different doctors, wherever I happened to be living, with only very minor ailments. To each doctor, I was a strange and different individual because he was totally unfamiliar with polio. They were all more interested in learning from me than with giving me any worthwhile information. Most of them looked at me and said I would be a good ad for polio shots.

As far as I know, there is no longer one center like the old Warm Springs Foundation which has answers to polio after-effects and aging.

I would, therefore, like to suggest that readers of *Rehabilitation Gazette*, which seems to be the last polio link, submit names of doctors they might know in their home towns who can easily relate medical problems (perhaps heart strain, low blood pressure, too much or too little exercise, etc.) to polio problems. In this way, a national directory could be established listing these experienced and "simpatico" doctors to whom we could relate and turn for genuine and honest advice to ease our transition in these passing years.

Address: 811 North Longfellow Avenue, Tucson, Arizona 85711.

Polio Survivors Association

The Polio Survivors Association (first called Totally Disabled Helpers Association) was started in 1975 by Richard Carman, a nondisabled businessman, to assist post-polio

people who have been severely disabled since the early 1950's. There are nearly 100 of them in Los Angeles County — about 10% of those in the nation. They live in their own homes or apartments, most use respiratory equipment and need 24-hour care by family and attendants.

He organized them into a lobbying group which succeeded in getting supplemental attendant care grants and a special van from Los Angeles County. The van, equipped with a lift, is operated by a county-paid driver on weekdays and serves three areas of L.A. In January 1978, he started Polio Survivors Foundation, also a non-profit corporation, in order to raise funds from the private sector.

Both corporations, PSA and PSF, have all-polio boards of directors. The Association plans to lobby in Sacramento for pensions for people who have been totally disabled for twenty years or more, thus saving tax dollars for various programs which are presently administered by the state. The Foundation has set up an emergency fund which will be used for assisting the members in home crises which will have the effect of keeping them free of costly hospital care. More adequate wheelchair transportation is also being planned. A minibus capable of carrying ten wheelchairs and ten attendants will soon be in operation.

In the future, both organizations hope to expand to other California counties and perhaps, eventually, to other states.

Tax-deductible donations to Polio Survivors Foundation or requests for information should be sent to PO Box 3640, Rancho Los Amigos, Downey, California 90242 or to the president, M.H. Fisk, 8913 La Entrada Avenue, Whittier, California 90605.

EFFECTS OF MIDDLE AGE. The *Rehabilitation Gazette* editors asked members of PSA to share their experiences with the effects of middle age. Following is a summary of these effects by some of these "alumni" of Los Angeles County's Rancho Los Amigos respiratory center. They have all been quads because of respiratory polio for more than 25 years; they have all lived with their families and have had full and useful lives in their communities:

"The Good News: (1) Health is better due to better attendant care. (2) More stamina; have gained back to normal weight. (3) More aware of health care and proper diet. (4) Enjoy the stimulation of doing new interesting things; have given up worrying about what is lost and looking for what's left.

"The Bad News: (1) Much more forgetful; have to write notes to self! (2) Neck muscles wearing out. (3) Ache all over from lack of physical therapy; forget need for same. (4) Vital capacity is dropping, maybe due to fat over diaphragm muscles."

ED: We hope that more of our middle aging readers will share their experiences through the *Rehabilitation Gazette's* next issue. Please let us hear from you so that what you have learned can be made available to others.