

Ann Brown LeMaster, Dallas County

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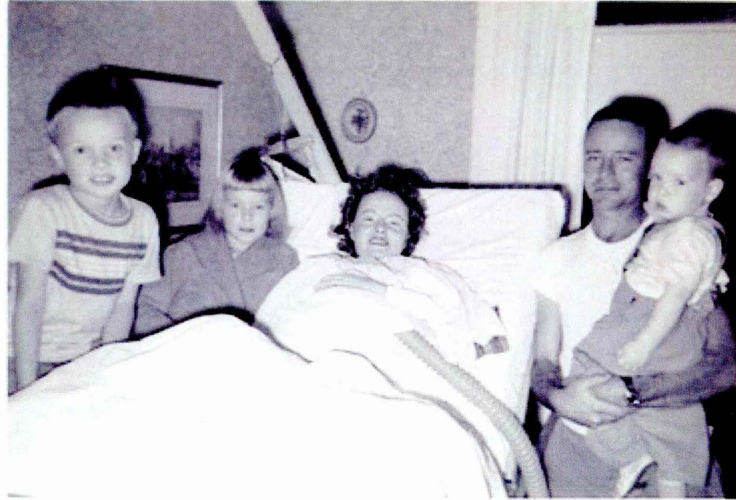
Interviewee: Ann Brown LeMaster

Interviewer: Kate Scott

Date of Interview: November 16, 2007

Location of Interview: Johnston Public Library (Johnston, IA)

Run Time: Approximately 50M



Cassette

Biographical Data Form

Oral History Release

Photographs (9)

Newspaper Clippings (2)

Image of Beth Brown being carried by 14 men in her 600 pound iron lung outside Iowa Lutheran Hospital. Des Moines Register and Tribune, [n.p.], 1955.

Obituary, "Memorial Service for Beth Brown", The Northeast Dallas County Record, Jul 15, 1971, pg. 7.

Unidentified Newspaper Clipping, "Mother, a Polio Patient, Comes Home," circa 1957.

"Power Off, She Uses Portable Respirator", Unidentified Newspaper, [n.p.,n.d.]

The oral history of Ann (Brown) LeMaster, of Granger offers the polio experience from a daughter's vantage point. This interview captures the heartache of a child who, as the eldest of three, acquired new family responsibilities because her mother Beth caught polio in the fall of 1954. For the rest of her life, Beth lived at home with the care of her own mother, her children, and hired help, in a paralyzed state from the neck down. She survived for 17 years with severe kidney and respiratory problems – long enough to see each one of her children graduate.

Beth Cooper Brown earned a degree in Math and Art Education from Grinnell College. It was there she met her husband Evan Brown. Not long after their marriage and the birth of their third child, Beth contracted polio in the fall of 1954. She was treated at Methodist and Lutheran Hospitals in Des Moines and later went to Omaha's Creighton Memorial-St. Joseph's Hospital for rehabilitation. Beth's parents, Raymond and Helen Cooper, sold their stately Andover, Massachusetts home and moved to Iowa when they learned of their daughter's desperate condition. Beth was their only child.

Ann, despite the presence of three maternal figures, a mother, grandmother, and caregiver, experienced complex feelings of abandonment. Ann once saw her mother cry in quiet conversation with a clergyman, but, she never heard her mother complain. Beth Cooper Brown died in 1971 - not long after her youngest child, James, earned his high school diploma.