

Lawrence E. Marsh, Johnson County

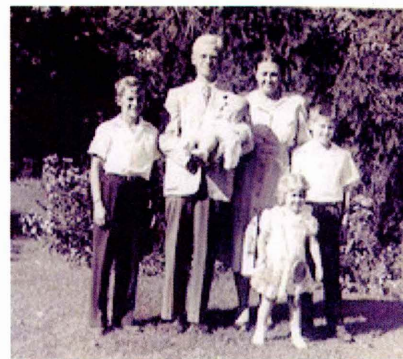
Lawrence E. Marsh

Interviewee: Lawrence E. Marsh

Interviewer: Kate Scott

Date of Interview: October 17, 2007

Run Time: Approximately 45M



Cassette

Biographical Data Form

Oral History Release

Photograph (1) Left to Right – The Marshs: Lawrence, Robert, Marilyn (baby), Martha, Lucy, and Dan Marsh
Transcript

For Lawrence E. Marsh (pictured on left) of Solon, Iowa, polio levied an exceptionally heavy toll. Larry was born in 1935 to Martha (Page) and Robert Marsh. He was a vivacious 13 years old Minnesota boy when he was caught polio in the summer of 1949. He was the third immediate family member to be diagnosed within one week. All three were treated in different hospitals. He reflected, "My sister had gone in and been diagnosed with polio on Saturday. On Wednesday, my father had been diagnosed with polio. Then, on Friday I woke up with a fever and I was stiff. I couldn't touch my chin to my chest. That was the chief tool they seemed to depend on for doing some further probing. They actually put me on a table and did a spinal tap and with the fluid they took out of my spine were able to tell that I, too, had polio."

It was August of 1949 and the University Hospital in Minneapolis was hot, noisy, and loud with intense summer heat and the heavy construction going on outside. "I remember the painful crying in the corridor of the parents of other children who died in my ward and the chuff and wheeze of the iron lungs. I recall my mother coming to visit and the terrible sense of worry and loss she carried while trying to give me support," said Larry.

Larry recalls being in an oxygen tent, being fed intervenously, and receiving penicillin shots. He felt the iron lungs made it difficult to bond with other children. He recalls being isolated on a bed with his legs tied upside down.

For three or four days, Larry was in a coma. During this time, his father died. In his oral history, Larry talked about a vision, or a hallucination, or a dream, that his father came to him. He was walking on a road and beckoning with his arm for Larry to join him. "When I tried to go though, I was unable. So, he gave me a warm smile and waved goodbye. Later, when I regained consciousness, I interpreted his message as his death and told the doctor who was to give me the bad news that I already knew my father had died."