

John Dahm, Palo Alto County

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Interviewee: John Dahm

Interviewer: Kate Scott

Date of Interview: August 27, 2007

Location of Interview: Emmetsburg, IA

Run Time: Approximately 30M

Cassette

Biographical Data Form

Oral History Release

Photographs (3) Contemporary photos taken in Emmetsburg, IA on the day of the oral history interview; (23) historical photos taken from John's hospitalization in Sioux City, IA (St. Joseph's) and photographs from Sister Kenny Institute where he worked as an x-ray technician.

Transcript



John Dahm was the healthiest kid in town before he got polio at the age of 15. He was athletic and played all sports. He earned extra money loading bales of hay for farmers. John said, "We prided ourselves on being able to go all day. We loaded those bales five tiers high. We were strong farm kids." A trip to visit family in Minnesota in 1950 changed all that.

"I woke up and I could not move. I could not move to save me. I went to turn my head; I went to raise my arm. I just could not do anything. So, then they all gathered to try to find the extent of what was going on. And, they thought certainly that I had the spinal type. So, they immediately started...they moved me down into Contagion [at St. Joseph's Hospital] where all the polio patients went. There were about 30 of us down there: men, women, and children. All sizes. And then, of course, there were the endless hot packs. You've heard about those..."