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Iowa Polio Stories
Sample Interview Questions for Survivors

Interviewer:

Interviewee:

Date:

Location:

Run Time:

Format:

Introduction: My name is Jane Doe. I am interviewing John Doe at his home in Des Moines, Iowa on July 13, 2007. This interview is being recorded for the Iowa Polio Stories Oral History Project. This interview will be deposited in the collections at the State Historical Society of Iowa. Thank you for taking the time to talk with me about your story. Let's begin.

Please introduce yourself. Tell me your name, age, and the year you were diagnosed with polio.

When and where were you born?

What do you remember about your childhood years – where did you live growing up and what did your parents do for a living?

Do you have any siblings? If so, how many?

What are some of your fondest childhood memories?

What were your hobbies?

When and where did you go to elementary school? What about high school?

What was your mode of transportation to school?

What year did you graduate? What did you want to be when you grew up?

Before you got polio, what do you remember about the general atmosphere in your community regarding polio (specifically) or public health (generally)?

In other words, can you speak to the awareness of polio *before* contracting it? Was there an atmosphere of fear in the community? Did parents prevent children from going to swimming pools, movie theaters, other public places?

How old were you when you started recognizing the symptoms of polio? What was the first thing you noticed? Can you describe what you recall?

Describe your access to standard medical care? Did you have a family doctor?

Did you live in a rural or urban community?

Did your family belong to a church? If so, what was their religious affiliation?

Were you quarantined (home or hospital) from other children or people? If so, can you describe the room, sounds, or smells?

Did you wear leg braces? And/Or, did you wear an elevated shoe?

Who was your primary caretaker? What are your memories of him/her?

Did you know anything about polio at the time of your diagnosis? Had you heard any stories about anyone else in your community having it?

When and where were you diagnosed? What do you remember about that day?

Some polio survivors recall particular instances where they think they may have caught the virus. How or where do you think you caught polio?

How did your parents respond to the news?

At the time of your diagnosis, how did people explain where polio came from?

Was there ever a time that medical doctors, nurses, or physical therapists made you feel like your body was not your own?

How did other children or people in your community treat you? Can you give some examples or particular instances that you vividly remember? What stands out in your memory?

What do you remember about the standard medical treatment and physical therapy for polio?

Were you familiar with the iron lung? Can you describe it for me? What did it sound like? What did it look like? What did it feel like?

Did you know anyone who did not survive polio?

As someone who already had the virus, how did you feel when you heard about the Salk vaccine?

Did the Salk vaccine make you think differently about the possibilities of medicine and science?

Describe the nature of the physical pain associated with polio?

Describe the emotional pain associated with polio? What are some of the ways you coped?

How did polio change the nature of your relationships?

In what ways did polio affect your sexuality?

2How did polio affect your own sense of masculinity or femininity? For example, were you able to wear high heels?

Did you get married?

Did you have a family of your own?

How do you describe post-polio syndrome – and, have you experienced it? What are the options in terms of treatment and support for those suffering from post-polio syndrome?

How has polio impacted your concept of a "quality of life?"

How do you feel about the status of medical research regarding polio and/or post-polio syndrome?