

I entered Los Angeles County General Hospital on July 17, 1953. I was one month past my thirteenth birthday. On August 6 or 7, I was transferred to Rancho Los Amigos. This photograph was probably taken the first or second week of September. I had regained some strength in my legs by then, and you can see that my right leg is bent at the knee, resting against the inside of my Drinker-Collins tank respirator (iron lung).

My father sitting with me on Ward 60 at Rancho Los Amigos. This photograph was probably taken on the same day as the previous photograph.

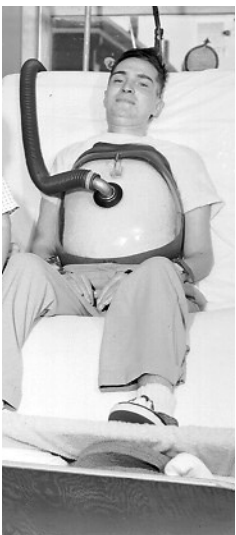


My mother feeding me soup. I was transitioning from the tank (iron lung) to a bed, using a Monaghan cuirass (chest respirator). I spent most of the day on the bed, and would return to the tank in the evening. This photograph was probably taken late September or early October.





I'm on my bed, using a Monaghan cuirass (chest respirator). This type of respirator operates on the same principal as a tank respirator, but covers just a person's torso. There are straps that go behind the back, and a flexible rubber bladder that provides an airtight seal. It was wonderful being out of the tank and able to move around a little bit. You can tell by my neck, face, and arms that I've already lost a great amount of weight.



The illustration at the left is better at showing a Monaghan cuirass.  
(this is not me)





This photograph was taken in December 1953. This was my first visit home. I had enough breathing tolerance to visit home on a four hour pass. Most of the patients were not afforded this luxury because they lived too far from the hospital. I was very fortunate because it was just two miles from Rancho Los Amigos to our house.

In addition to my parents, my two brothers Robert and Rodney are in this photograph. Rodney had just arrived from serving four years in the Army in Europe, so this day was very special for all of us. My sister Ann took this photograph so she is missing from this scene.





This photograph was taken during my second trip home; on another four hour pass.  
We lived two miles from Rancho Los Amigos, in the middle of an orange grove.



This photograph was taken during my third trip home; on another four hour pass.

A week later I developed a severe respiratory infection and my breathing was compromised. I returned to my tank respirator full time as a precaution. I remained in the tank for about a month, and then began transitioning to a bed. I no longer needed to use any type of respirator. In May 1954 my tracheostomy was closed and I began getting up in a wheelchair. I was fitted for leg braces and began walking short distances. I still used my wheelchair most of the time. My arms were not strong enough to propel it “normally” so I used my right leg.



By the summer of 1954 I was able to stay at home every weekend. I would leave the hospital on Friday afternoon, and then return on Sunday afternoon. Here again, few other patient could do this. They lived too far away. Rancho Los Amigos is in Los Angeles County and some of the patients lived hundreds of miles away. Some lived in other States.

This photograph was taken a few days after my fourteenth birthday, but I look like a ten year old ghoul.

During the week, in the hospital, I had very intense physical and occupational therapy, including three trips a week to Rancho's indoor therapy pool, and walks with a therapist around Rancho's corridors and up and down the stairs of the administration building. I wore leg braces but didn't need crutches. I couldn't have used crutches anyway, because my arms remained very, very weak.





Late 1954. Another weekend at home enjoying a backyard barbeque. I was walking most of the time by now, while at home, but I still used my wheelchair for eating, reading, and doing homework.

In the hospital a wasn't allowed to walk, except when accompanied by a physical therapist. As we walked, the therapist would occasionally give me a shove to test my balance and my ability to recover my balance.



Summer 1955. This was a staged photograph taken for the March of Dimes. I never actually used this type of reading frame, and had forgotten this episode until I saw an enlargement of this photograph again in 1996. I participated in the filming of a documentary on polio. It was called *A Paralyzing Fear: The Story of Polio in America*. The enlarged photograph was the background for my interview. I had appeared on television before, but my interview in 1996 was the first time I was before a real motion picture camera.



I hesitated to include this photograph. It was taken in preparation for my spinal fusion. Karen Whitaker, a girl on our ward, had photographs taken at the same time. To say it was embarrassing for both of us would be an understatement. I was just a month past my fifteenth birthday and Karen was about six months younger. We were together in a small room, wearing nothing but very loose loincloths that had strings at the corners that were tied around our waist. I hadn't had an opportunity to see my whole body since contracting polio and it was pretty discouraging to see these photographs. Here I was, fifteen years old and almost literally nothing but skin and bones. It was a real blow to my ego. I looked like a corpse that had died from malnutrition. It reminded me of the pictures taken of bodies in the World War II concentration camps. I was fifteen years old, five feet nine, but I weighed barely ninety pounds.