Father contracted a paralysis, a mystery at the Polio Scare. In 1926 when I was not yet a year old, my arm and especially his thumb and forefinger no longer were very usable. He was unable to drive a team of horses, so necessary to farm operation in 1927-28. A man was hired to help but profits were not enough to keep him on past six months. A farm auction was scheduled and my parents and I moved to a bungalow in Tripoli. ... Two years later I also contracted infantile paralysis. ... In the 1930s University Hospitals had a statewide program called State Services for Crippled Children in which physicians, nurses and therapists came to small rural hospitals. ... In Oelwein I was seen by Dr. Steindler, the famous orthopedic physician who long operated out of Children's Hospital in Iowa City. He did recommend a surgery in which a triangular piece of instep bone would be removed to make my feet look better and to make shoe fitting easier. Unfortunately, the surgery was not done. “The fear of polio” was so intense, dogs were killed; they sprayed for mosquitoes, play grounds and swimming pools were empty. Some thought spiders from bananas, or the fuzz from peaches caused polio. Any large group gatherings were almost unheard of.” —Virginia Mickey

“In 1926 when I was not yet a year old, my father contracted a paralysis, a mystery at first to the hometown physician in Tripoli, Iowa. ... The [polio] ran its natural course and therapists came to small rural hospitals. The outcome was a slow recovery in which my father’s left arm and especially his thumb and forefinger no longer were very usable. He was unable to drive a team of horses, so necessary to farm operation in 1927-28. A man was hired to help but profits were not enough to keep him on past six months. A farm auction was scheduled and my parents and I moved to a bungalow in Tripoli. ... Two years later I also contracted infantile paralysis. ... In the 1930s University Hospitals had a statewide outreach program called State Services for Crippled Children in which physicians, nurses and therapists came to small rural hospitals. ... In Oelwein I was seen by Dr. Steindler, the famous orthopedic physician who long operated out of Children’s Hospital in Iowa City. He did recommend a surgery in which a triangular piece of instep bone would be removed to make my feet look better and to make shoe fitting easier. Unfortunately, the procedure would cost $350 for each foot, money my parents just did not have. So the surgery was not done.” —Irma P. Johnson

“The accepted treatment to keep muscles stretched and limber was to wrap the arms and legs with wet hot packs. ... One day a nurse asked me if I was ready for physical therapy. ... I was taken to a room with a huge tub of water, maybe something like a hot tub. I soaked in the water for awhile and then was taken to a bench where a therapist started exercising my limbs. ... The hospital was so overwhelmed with polio patients that they allowed my parents to take me home. ... We didn’t have indoor plumbing or a bathtub. My parents borrowed a portable bathtub from our neighbors. It was made of canvas stretched over a frame. I think my mother spent much of each day heating water on the cook stove, putting me to soak in the tub, and then working with me on my exercises. ... Mom was unrelenting; no amount of whining on my part got me out of doing my exercises. Sometimes we were both crying during our sessions but we kept going.” —Marilyn Bode

“My memory of the day my aunt went to the hospital was of men in white coats coming through the front door and asking her to allow them to assist her to the ambulance ... but she refused and said she would walk out on her own. She lived less than 24 hours. ... About six years later, I remember my mother standing in the doorway of our house and yelling out, ‘They’ve found it! They have a vaccine for polio!’ She was not a woman given to such outbursts and shortly after that, she took me, my sisters and brother to a doctor [and] we were given our first dose.” —Ann Fisher

These vivid accounts are excerpted from longer personal stories now being collected as part of All Iowa Reads for 2007. For the complete stories, or to add your own, visit www.iowapolostories.org.