



Rancho Los Amigos

Post-Polio

Support Group

Newsletter - April 2013

Jacquelin Perry, MD

May 31, 1918 - March 11, 2013

Physician – Mentor – Advocate – Friend

A personal tribute by Richard Lloyd Daggett

I join with others of the polio community in mourning the loss of an irreplaceable treasure, Dr. Jacquelin Perry, who died at her home in Downey, California on Monday, March 11, 2013. She had no immediate family, so I believe I may have known her longer than anyone. I'd like to tell you a little about her life, and why she had such an impact on polio survivors.

Dr. Perry joined the Army in World War II and trained to be a physical therapist. She later said, "When I started out, I had to convince the Army that I was completely unable to write, because if they thought I could write they would have made me a secretary." She said she enjoyed being a therapist, but her real desire was to become a doctor.



After the Army, she used the G.I. Bill to enter medical school, completing a residency in orthopedic surgery. Dr. Perry wrote the Foreword to my autobiography, and in it she wrote, "*Dr. Affeldt, as director of the (pulmonary) unit (at Rancho Los Amigos), also had concern for loss of limb and spine function and, especially, the patient's inability to sit erect. He recruited an orthopedic surgeon and former classmate to assume the task of*

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finding a solution. Dr. Vernon Nickel agreed to come to Rancho but, because of his busy private practice, he would need help to accomplish this goal. His brother, Eldon Nickel, also a physician, recommended one of his classmates who was just finishing a residency in orthopedic surgery and was not inclined to open a private practice. I was that person. I was pleased to join the orthopedic staff at Rancho in July 1955, and my involvement continues.”

I was a fifteen year old patient at Rancho when she joined the staff, and I can tell you that she scared the bejeebers out of me. It was obvious that she knew her craft, and that her goal was the improvement of her patients, but she was completely focused on the task at hand. I was apprehensive around all orthopedic surgeons, but Dr. Perry was at the top of my “avoid at all costs” list. When she added instructor to her many talents, Dr. Perry continued to be an intimidating presence. Many of her former students, including doctors, therapists, and allied health professionals, have remarked on her insistence for perfection.

In November 1955, Dr. Perry and Dr. Vernon Nickel operated on my spine, fusing most of my vertebrae. This was before these two doctors perfected the “halo” apparatus they designed for spinal fusions on polio patients, and now used on many other patients. Their halo device allowed surgeons to stabilize the spine of the patient and provide for some correction of a curved spine. The photograph below shows Dr. Perry, left, and Dr. Nickel, right, operating on the spine of a young polio patient wearing a halo device.



Without the halo they could not correct my curvature, but they stabilized my spine sufficiently for me to walk unaided. I described the surgery in my autobiography: *“As I was wheeled into surgery I saw Dr. Nickel and Dr. Perry. I vaguely remember someone feeling my arm and asking for a size 18 needle. In my sedated state it sounded to me like he asked for a needle 18 inches long. I thought, ‘Where could they put a needle 18 inches long in my body that wouldn’t stick out the other side?’ If I had been able, I would have run out of the operating room so fast that nobody could catch me.”*

When Dr. Perry read this, she smiled and told me, “Richard, if you had gotten up from that operating table and started running, I would have run out of the room with you.”

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During the 1960s and 1970s, Dr. Perry would occasionally ask me to be a “model” for various classes she was teaching. She would use me to demonstrate the benefits of a particular treatment. I think she picked me because I lived close to Rancho, and I was so thin that my bones, and what few muscles I had, were clearly visible.

Dr. Perry was dedicated to her patients. We polio patients who were fortunate to have her treat us would sometimes remark, “Once you are Dr. Perry’s patient, you are always her patient.” She remembered all of us, and she remembered every person she operated on.

After the polio vaccines reduced the number of new polio cases, Dr. Perry used the skills she mastered treating us to treat other devastating injuries and illnesses. She studied the mechanism of human movement and wrote several books and articles on the subject. She authored the classic textbook on gait analysis. If you needed to read one book on this subject, it would be her book. She is fondly known among her peers as the Grande Dame of Orthopedics. Dr. Perry’s curriculum vitae (list of professional degrees, honors, and accomplishments), is 72 pages long. She was one of the first medical professionals to recognize the late effects of polio and publish articles in medical journals.

“We didn’t anticipate anything like this,” she said in an interview. “The people who tried hardest to be normal, and pushed hardest, have been hit more with post-polio.”

Rancho Los Amigos continued to evaluate post-polio patients in the outpatient clinics, and Dr. Perry was a constant presence. One colleague was quoted, “She would arrange her very busy travel schedule so that she would miss as few polio clinic appointments as possible. She would have the taxicab from the airport drop her off right in front of the polio clinic so that she could see the patients who were lined up and waiting to see her.”

In 1996, the *Jacquelin Perry Neuro-Trauma Institute and Rehabilitation Center* was opened at Rancho. This impressive three-story, state of the art facility is Rancho’s primary inpatient care and treatment unit. At the dedication Dr. Perry said, “It amazes me that I should be honored for doing the very things I enjoy.”

As Dr. Perry aged, and Parkinson’s disease began to take its toll, she cut back on her activities. But she still saw “my polio patients” in the Friday polio clinic, and she spoke to the Rancho Los Amigos Post-Polio Support Group a number of times. Her presentations were always helpful. Dr. Perry’s *General Information Letter for Polio Survivors* is still one of the best overviews of post-polio.

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Also, as she became semi-retired, I perceived a more open and mellow person. She stood by my side at her 80th birthday celebration, and I invited her to lunch a number of times. She graciously accepted my offers.



In 1996, I was able to arrange a one hour television special about Rancho for Huell Howser's "California's Gold" program. Dr. Perry and Hazel Adkins, a retired physical therapist, agreed to provide the onscreen medical perspective of the polio years at Rancho. This was a very special experience for me.

Many of her friends and colleagues addressed Dr. Perry simply as "Jackie."

I just wouldn't be comfortable calling her anything other than Dr. Perry. She was my Physician, Mentor, Advocate, and Friend.



Another Memory of Dr. Perry by Bonnie Hagy

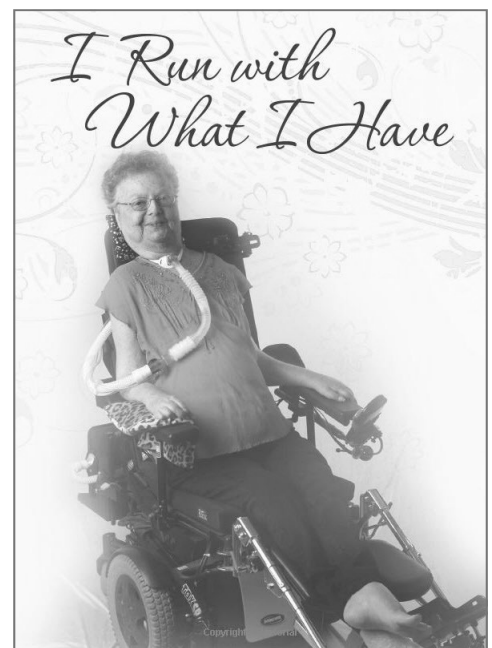
I first met Dr. Perry in 1957. I was 15 years old at the time, having been diagnosed with polio in 1953 at county hospital in San Diego when I was 11. I came to Rancho because of my breathing and it was decided that a thorough examination was needed. I had a two stage spinal fusion previously, at another hospital, but it was causing me a lot of pain because it hadn't been successful.

This gruff looking woman doctor walked into my ward one day shortly after my admittance to Rancho, followed by a stream of young would-be orthopedic doctors. I noticed they almost seemed intimidated by this woman doctor and yet they hung on her every word. She introduced herself to me and began to ask questions while testing my leg strength, torso, and checking my hip alignment. At first I was scared, not knowing what was going to happen. I was also trying to understand this woman. Then she began to explain to me what was happening to my spine because of the botched spinal fusion at the other hospital. I began to see she was caring and thoughtful and realized she knew what she was talking about. Her entourage, as we teenagers saw it, stood in amazement and wrote down everything she was saying. Her compassion, although hidden, was evident to me and I knew I could trust her. I began to see her in a different light.

One day, on "rounds," she pulled a young doctor aside and strong words were said to him because of a mistake he made with my care, but no one heard those words, including me. I only saw his red face as they both resumed the rounds. Another time she came to me alone, unexpected, and explained to me how important it was that I eat better. She was very concerned because of my low intake of calcium. She was endeavoring to correct the previous fusion and explained to me the importance of calcium. I had just had my third and final stage spinal fusion, halo and all. I admitted that I was eating poorly, not being enthralled with Rancho's food. Her concern for my health was valid, especially the calcium intake. She asked me what she could do to help me! It ended with me agreeing to eat better. Besides I was the only one on the ward who got hot chocolate every morning with my breakfast!

Bonnie Hagy

Bonny Hagy completed her autobiography last year. It is an inspirational account of her life and faith journey. You can learn more about Bonnie's book by sending an e-mail to: ranchoppsg@hotmail.com or writing to the return address on this newsletter.



Special Request: As we mourn the loss of our beloved Dr. Perry, some of her constant reminders ring in our ears:

- ◆ “Listen to your body”
- ◆ “Be an intelligent hypochondriac”
- ◆ “Pain is your friend. It tells you that something is wrong”
- ◆ “Conserve to preserve.”

This list could go on much longer, but these are the words we remember the most. “Conserve to preserve” doesn’t mean to do nothing, it means finding ways to minimize the impact on your body when you are doing things you want to do, or that you must do.

Now more than ever, your editorial staff needs to pay attention to Dr. Perry’s “Conserve to preserve” advice, because producing a quality newsletter with original and useful information requires a lot of personal energy. We like to include original articles and information from many sources and then edit, format, and prepare the finished newsletter for printing. Duplicating and mailing are our problems.

For several months we have used a printing/ mailing service which has reduced our physical efforts, but is expensive. If we use a local copy service, the newsletter is printed at much less cost, but then requires a great amount of personal energy getting it to and from the printer, plus folding, labeling, and delivering hundreds of copies to the post office.

We have been publishing the Rancho Los Amigos Post-Polio Support Group Newsletter since 1987 and its predecessor, the Polio Survivors Association Newsletter since 1975 and want to continue but it is a real dilemma. We need more readers to accept our newsletter by email, appeal for donations more frequently, or both. We welcome your suggestions.

Here is where one way you can make a difference! About twenty percent of subscribers have agreed to receive our newsletter electronically, through their e-mail. This saves printing costs and helps conserve our energy. If you have an e-mail address, and agree to have our newsletter sent to you this way, it will be a great help. If you do not have an e-mail address you will still receive your newsletter by postal mail.

The newsletter sent to your e-mail address can be read onscreen or printed from there. If you have e-mail, and agree to this simple step, we just need your e-mail address to match with your postal address. Send both to: **ranchoppsg@hotmail.com**

Thank you for helping us, “Conserve to preserve.”

Rancho Los Amigos Post-Polio Support Group
Meeting Schedule

Saturday, April 27, 2013 - **Saving Your Arms**

Sunday, May 19, 2013 - Joint meeting with Orange County PPSG
No May meeting at Rancho! We meet with the Post-Polio Support of Orange County

Saturday, June 22, 2013 - Annual Picnic

Unless notified separately, all meetings are in room 1150 of the Support Services Annex at Rancho Los Amigos National Rehabilitation Center. Meetings are from 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. For additional information, please contact:

Diane at 562-861-8128 or Richard at 562-862-4508
or e-mail us at: RanchoPPSG@hotmail.com



Post-Polio Support Group of Orange County
Meeting Schedule

Sunday, May 19, 2013 - **Dr. Susan Perlman**

Dr. Perlman's presentation is always special.

The Rancho Los Amigos Post-Polio Support Group will join us.

Saturday, July 13, 2013 - Indoor Picnic

Saturday, September 14, 2013 - HICAP

The Post-Polio Support Group of Orange County meets every other month. All meetings are from 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. unless notified separately. For additional information, please contact:

Marte Fuller at 562-697-0507 or Marilyn Andrews at 714-839-3121

NOTE: Both the Orange County and Rancho groups are open to all polio survivors, their families, and friends. We invite you ... we encourage you ... to join us for our friendly and informative meetings.

Rancho Los Amigos PPSG
12720 La Reina Avenue
Downey, California 90242
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Support Groups are Helpful!

Support Groups are Informative!

Support Groups are Fun!

Visit your local support group.

You will be glad you did.