



Rancho Los Amigos

Post-Polio

Support Group

Newsletter - April 2018

From our Archives

Girl, 4, Struck by Polio at 8 Months, Is Happy

Little Debbie Stone Enjoys Her Books, Dolls, TV as She Strives to Beat Dreaded Crippler

By Gene Seilar – Los Angeles Times, May 1955

Debra Stone, an adorable 4-year-old patient at Rancho Los Amigos Respiratory Center for Poliomyelitis has never known what healthy children should be grateful for. She contracted bulbo-spinal polio when only 8 months old.

Unusual Case

Debbie's case history is unusual. She was admitted to the contagious disease ward at General Hospital in November 1951, and was in critical condition for many weeks. She was transferred to Rancho Los Amigos five months later, and was confined to an iron lung 24 hours a day, with breathing and the use of her limbs impaired. Extreme weakness was general, with muscles throughout her body unable to function.

After three months at Rancho, Debbie was able to be free of the iron lung six hours a day, with aid of a chest respirator. She had started by staying out three minutes at a time and gradually increasing the time each day. Today she only sleeps in the iron lung every other day and doesn't use the chest respirator at all.

Up until six months ago, while at Rancho, Debbie had had three serious relapses requiring intensive treatment to save her life. She never gave up and now stands up in a walker with the aid of a harness and braces and even goes swimming three times a week.

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The information presented at our meetings and/or contained in this newsletter is solely for information. It is not an endorsement of any product, medication, or individual.

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In News Before

This is not the first time Debbie has been in the news. On August 16, 1954, she opened the emergency March of Dimes drive for \$30,000,000. While in her iron lung, she pressed a button with her nose, sending a transcontinental signal to Niagara Falls which, in turn, sent 800 tons of rock into the Niagara Falls Gorge.

Although only 4 years old, Debbie remembers the names of doctors and nurses, even though there is often quite a lapse of time between visits, as a result of temporary transfers of staff to other wards. She was quite proud of her white shoes and requested the photographer not to snap her picture until her nurse, Mrs. McIntyre, got her ready.

It was indeed a pleasure for this reporter to renew an old acquaintance with Mrs. McIntyre. She had cared for me while I was a polio patient at Rancho in 1953, and she had transferred to the children's ward. I talked with Debbie while on my regular quarterly visit to Rancho as an out-patient.



NO TIME FOR GLOOM—Debra Stone, who was stricken with polio at 8 months, listens to nurse, Mrs. McIntyre, as she reads to her at Rancho Los Amigos. Youngster remains cheerful despite her condition.



AT LEFT: Debbie Stone at twenty-seven.

We have many older newspapers in our collection, and hope to highlight them from time to time.

Chromed ‘Halo’ Device Aids Medical Miracles

Steel Ring Helps Repair Polio Victims at County’s Rancho Los Amigos Hospital

Los Angeles Times - September 30, 1957

Miracles in human engineering are performed routinely at Rancho Los Amigos Hospital. With the help of a chromed steel “halo”, a patient may arise and walk a few weeks after breaking his neck. Hands twisted into grotesque flippers by polio or arthritis are restored to usefulness and normal appearance.

Freed From Iron Lungs

At Rancho, heads which refused to stay upright because disease had deadened muscles, are returned to normal position by fusing the spine. Patients are freed from the imprisonment of iron lungs through learning to gulp air by a technique which was developed at the hospital.

“Now that the Salk vaccine is reducing the polio incidence, we can concentrate on repairing its victims with new medicines and surgical techniques developed in the last two years, many at this hospital,” explained Dr. John E. Affeldt, medical director at Rancho, which is part of the county hospital system.

Set No Goals

“We set no goals. We make no promises. We just proceed step by step. Much of what patients are able to regain depends on their own wills and desires,” said Vernon L. Nickel, chief of orthopedic surgery.

People come from all parts of the nation to be freed of various degrees of helplessness and to shed complicated braces. The care of the out-of-Staters is financed by their home chapters of the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis or similar agencies.

One of the Prettiest

One of the prettiest patients wearing a steel halo is Karen Lee Whitaker, 14, whose spine began to curve the wrong way after an attack of polio in 1953. Last September 12th her lower cervical and



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thoracic vertebrae were fused and a halo was set in place to hold the spine straight. The halo is a metal ring screwed at four points into the skull and to which is attached steel bracing which is anchored in a light body cast. Thus the spine, neck, and back are held rigid while the vertebrae fuse.

The fusion is done by scraping the vertebrae and wedging them with chips or pieces of bone which may be transplanted from a donor or from the patient's hip bone. Karen will undergo a second operation to fuse vertebrae through the lumbar region. Dr. Affeldt said this will arrest scoliosis, which often follows polio in youngsters and which can be fatal.

“Karen will wear the halo six to nine months,” the doctor estimated. She will be able to go home soon after surgery, which she couldn't do if she were wearing a heavy cast.

Some patients are able to walk with their halos

The halo originally was designed to hold in place reset broken jaws. Rancho surgeons adapted it to patients with scoliosis, broken necks, and those whose muscles refuse to hold the head in place.

Worn for a Year

In this last-named group, the halo is used to hold the head in a natural position while bones are fusing together, Dr. Affeldt said, “This may restore some function to the arms, due to the head and shoulders being suspended in position,” he added. “It can also improve breathing and swallowing. Also, we may be able to put some bracing on the arm to help it. Each surgical step opens new horizons and we take it from there.”

Can Be Operated On

Dr. Affeldt said that these fusing operations now can be done with iron lung patients, whereas heretofore it was believed they could not stand surgery. Incidentally, thanks to the Rancho techniques, now only 12% of the respirator patients must remain in iron lungs indefinitely, whereas the percentage used to be more than four times higher.

Editor's Note: These two newspaper articles were retyped, whenever possible using the original formatting and language. Words like, “grotesque flippers” and “helplessness” were common at the time these articles were originally published, but they would be frowned upon today.

I knew both Debbie and Karen when I was a patient at Rancho Los Amigos. Debbie was much younger, but Karen was an active member of our teen group. The support of our peers was an important element of our rehabilitation. Sadly, both women are no longer with us.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

JOINT MEETING, HOSTED BY THE POST-POLIO SUPPORT GROUP OF ORANGE COUNTY

Dr. Perlman presents!

SUNDAY MAY 6th

2pm - 4pm

**Villa Park City Council Chambers
17855 Santiago Blvd Villa Park CA**

Dr. Susan Perlman, director of the UCLA Post-Polio Clinic and advisor to Post-Polio International, will report on current PPS research and care on SUNDAY May 6th. Please prepare any questions in writing. She will combine similar questions and address them as a group. Non written questions will be answered only if time permits.

Please note! This is a **Sunday** meeting.

Sundays work best for Dr. Perlman, and we are very appreciative of the time she shares with the polio survivors of Southern California.

A map to the Villa Park City Council Chambers is located on the back of this page. Please keep this page to remind you of the time and location.



Life is not a solo act. It's a huge collaboration, and we all need to assemble around us the people who care about us and support us.

Rancho Los Amigos Post-Polio Support Group Meetings

Saturday, April 28, 2018 - 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. - **Gadgets, Ideas, and Helpful Aids**

Sunday, May 6, 2018 - 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. - **Dr. Susan Perlman**

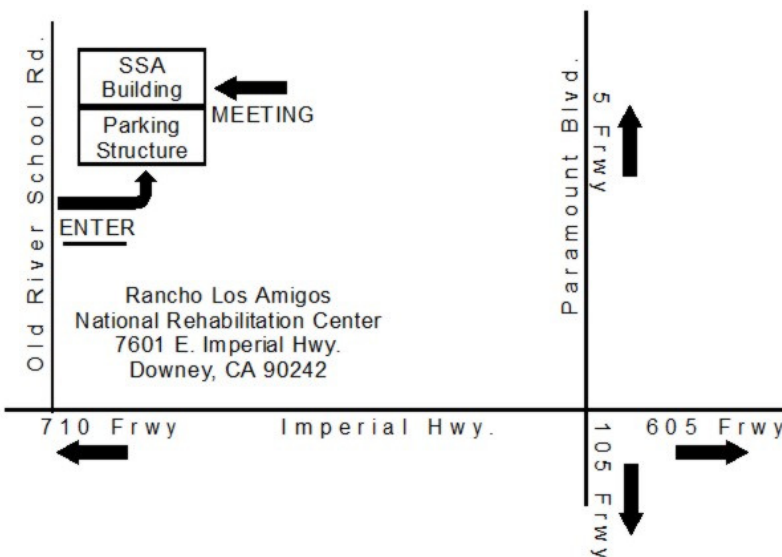
This a Joint Meeting with the Post-Polio Support Group of Orange County
There will be no meeting at Rancho in May

Saturday, June 23, 2018 - 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. - **Annual Picnic** - Details to follow

The Rancho Los Amigos Post-Polio Support Group and the Post-Polio Support Group of Orange County share a mailing list and publish newsletters on alternate months. All of our meetings are open to polio survivors, family, and friends. Our meetings are relaxed, informal, and provide a supportive atmosphere for the exchange of ideas and concerns.

If you live within driving distance we encourage you to attend our meetings. You will learn, and we will enjoy meeting you.

Map to Rancho



Map to Orange County

