

Gleanings

THE OFFICIAL NUMBER ONE NEBRASKA POST-POLIO NEWSLETTER

MARCH

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VOLUNTEERS NEEDED TO MAN OMAHA HEALTH FAIR BOOTHS

NPSA will participate in the 1987 Health Fair of the Midlands in Omaha the weekends of April 4-5 and 11-12.

Since all exhibits must be fully staffed this year, we need volunteers who can answer questions about post-polio and about this organization. We will need to get together ahead of time to work on our answers and the procedure we will follow at the fair.

The booths are open four hours each day. If you can help, call Nancy at 895-2475 before March 1.

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NPSA GARAGE SALE SET FOR MAY--THINGS, HELP NEEDED

May 17 has been set as the date for the Tenth Annual NPSA Garage and Goodie Sale.

Clean out your attic, redecorate the living room--whatever! Bring the stuff to the Omaha area meeting April 5 or May 3. Jeanne Richardson and Kathryn Taylor need your help--start saving now!

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SHIRLEY MARSH: LADY OF THE LEGISLATURE

(This is the third in a series of sketches introducing members of NPSA's Board of Directors.)

Shirley Marsh has the distinction of being the first baby born in Miner's Emergency Hospital in Illinois, a place never meant for maternity cases. It was an emergency, however, as Shirley decided on a spectacular early entry into this world after a tornado interrupted her mother's trip to Illinois.

In 1956 Shirley was in the hospital again--this time in Bryan Memorial as a polio patient. Her oldest son had had polio four years previously. With this experience, Shirley had made an appointment to get her Salk vaccine shot, but instead that day found herself in an ambulance on the way to the polio ward.

At first she did not have the use of her legs or arms, "But the arms came back quickly," she says, "and I left the hospital on crutches." She has since had three major foot surgeries,

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SEN. SHIRLEY MARSH

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the last being last summer.

Now in her 15th year in the Nebraska legislature, Senator Marsh is known for her work for non-smoking legislation and child abuse laws. "People either like my performance in the legislature or they don't," she says. "Hardly anyone is in the middle."

Shirley and her husband Frank, Nebraska's State Treasurer, have six children and two grandchildren, and also still feel very close to four foreign children who lived with them while

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"WINDMILLS" EXPERT SPEAKS OF HANDICAPPED ATTITUDES
by Marlene Orton

IT'S ALL PERSPECTIVE...

"If you can't figure out how to shake someone's hand, can you hire them?"

lifetime are 1 in 7. The program does not teach about THE disabled. "They are all of us. We're here to learn about ourselves--the way we think, analyze, feel," states Pimentel. It is more important to employ someone as a person first, rather than to try to sell employers on a disability first. "We don't place the blind, the deaf, the quadriplegic. We place Mary, Bill, George."

Omaha NPSA member Drew Maxwell cheers us with this story: It was a contest between Russia and the United States of America. The Americans came in first. However, Russians have their own unique reporting system. "What a contest!" the newscaster announced. "Russia came in second! The Americans, alas, were next to last."

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Knowing how to communicate with and recognizing our own biased attitudes toward persons who are disabled were subjects addressed by Rich Pimentel at a two-day conference at Boys Town, January 22 and 23.

MARSH--from pg 1, col 3

Pimentel, a nationally renowned trainer and the primary author of TILTING AT WINDMILLS, a highly successful attitudinal training program for the employment of persons with disabilities, introduced WINDMILLS to approximately 130 participants.

attending high school in Lincoln.

Once told by experts he was wasting his time, Pimentel says, "We found what Don Quixote found. If you challenge biased attitudes, they have no substance. They only become powerful if you don't attack them."

Everyone always reacts to disabilities in some manner. Nothing we can think or know about a disability will be the same for every disability--and, often, those of us who are disabled misunderstand or misinterpret the handicaps of others.

"Of course I'm an over-achiever," she says. "That's why I went back to UNL to get my BA after the children were born, and then went back again for my MBA in 1972."

The odds of having a disability in one's

It is only through honest and open communication that we can learn "how to shake someone's hand." As thinking persons, we can change our actions; then a change in attitudes will follow.

Senator Marsh feels that having had polio made a strong impact on the family. "I wouldn't wish polio on anyone," she says, "but it did seem to help pull us all together as a unit." She also feels she is more understanding of people who have physical problems because of her own experience with polio.

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BOB NEWKIRK, FREMONT NPSA MEMBER, DIES

Our friend Bob Newkirk, longtime NPSA member, died peacefully in his sleep, Friday, February 6, 1987.

therapy treatment. Nevertheless, he kept busy as an accountant until the end. Bob was 56 years old.

Bob had been battling cancer since June and had extra respiratory problems due to chemo-

His wife Mary, can be reached at 1628 E. Frederiksen, Fremont, NE 68025.

"We are an educational tool for the general populace of the state as well as ourselves," Senator Marsh says about NPSA. "Other people need to know the aftereffects of polio. We need to provide a medical support system and the emotional support that goes along with it."

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HOPE ON THE HOME FRONT
by Linda Buscher

After I had polio in 1951, I was fitted for a full leg brace on my left leg. I've managed quite well over the last thirty-five years, using only the brace...not needing crutches. However, about four weeks ago, I began experiencing considerable pain in my left knee. I met with my doctor who diagnosed my pain as arthritis and a knee-joint problem caused by polio. Since then, I have had to use crutches.

I have always felt that I handled my handicap with a relatively good attitude. I've raised a family, worked and been very active. I found myself able to do everything a "normal" person could do. In fact, I never thought of myself as handicapped. But when my doctor explained his diagnosis, I became very angry and fearful, worrying about the future and what would happen to me. Would I be on crutches the rest of my life?

The doctor strongly suggested that I slow down. I realized as I listened to him that "slowing down" would mean I'd have to quit my job. For the last five-and-a-half years, I've worked in the billing department for several anesthesiologists. I'd be up and down all day, going to file cabinets, running paper work, etc.

Knowing that I needed a

job where I could be stationary, I gathered my courage and approached my boss. I explained the situation to him and gave him my two-weeks notice. He became very sad and told me that I just couldn't quit because I was an excellent employee. He made all the arrangements for me to work in my home.

I am now able to do the exact same work at home that I was doing at the office. And, in addition, I was given a raise!

Working at home has been an answer to my prayers. If the weather is icy, I don't have to go out. If my leg hurts or I feel over-tired, I can work at my own pace. I truly believe things happen for a reason. I feel tremendous relief and believe that God answered my prayers.

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LEAGUE OF HUMAN DIGNITY
STUDIES DOUGLAS CO. NEED

The League of Human Dignity is exploring the possibility of bringing its independent living center services to Douglas County.

If you are a physically disabled resident of Douglas County who has unanswered needs in such areas as transportation services, independent living skills training, personal care attendant referral, wheelchair re-

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PRICE BREAK OFFERED FOR
SS DISABILITY SEEKERS

Thinking of filing a claim for social security disability benefits? You have a much better chance of winning if you go into the battle PREPARED!

James W. Ross, author of the highly acclaimed SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS: HOW TO GET THEM! HOW TO KEEP THEM! has agreed to offer the book to NPSA members at a greatly reduced price because of our special need.

Send \$7.50 (including postage and handling) to Ross Publishing, Dept. N, Route 3, 188 Forrester Road, Slippery Rock, PA 16857.

As a former United States Congressional Aide who has challenged SSA bureaucrats on behalf of disabled citizens many times and won, Mr. Ross knows well the pitfalls of this struggle. Take advantage of his experience and knowledge--do yourself a favor.

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pair, or homes modification funding, call or write Peg Westphal, Project Coordinator, League of Human Dignity, 3223 North 45th Street, Omaha 68104, 451-0157.

Peg will discuss the League's services with you, and this will help them determine whether there is enough need for their center to set up shop here.

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WHEELCHAIRS LTD....

We are not supposed to use the term "confined to a wheelchair." We are told it is a somehow demeaning phrase, suggesting that we are perhaps less capable, less real, when in fact, they insist, people who use wheelchairs are simply folks who happen to be in wheelchairs sometimes.

Easy for THEM to say! I don't know about you, but when I'm in a wheelchair, I feel confined.

Right off I'm limited in where I can go--will there be steps, will the doorways be wide enough? Forget places like The Afternoon at the West-

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NOTICE NOTICE NOTICE

Finally, we have a program lined up to help us deal with the emotional aspects of living with what seems to us like a second disability, a problem that many of us face.

On March 1 at 2 p.m., Rejoice Lutheran Church, 138th and Center, members of NPSA's Omaha support group will hear from a doctor who works with this daily at Immanuel.

This one's for the whole family, so bring your spouse, your mother, your son, your daughter...

Please be there! We need your support and your enthusiasm!

roads where the aisles are so narrow it'd be hard to get a roller-skate through there, much less a wheelchair. Don't even think about King Fong's.

Counters are so high that shopping (that favorite amusement of all discriminating women) becomes a chore--can't see, can't reach. My neck and arms are affected by polio in such a way that I can't look up or reach up. The lowered position of the chair reduces my scope even more, makes my world that much smaller. This is confining!

And psychologically, it's not pleasant always to be looked down upon, always to have to depend on others for the help I need in using a chair, always to wait for others to clear a spot for the chair and me.

I hadn't been in a wheelchair since I first had polio, when I used one for about a year. I

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had sort of forgotten what it was like. Now I use the chair only occasionally, but even so it is a huge restriction on my freedom.

O.K.--maybe nobody is really totally "confined to" a wheelchair. We all go to the bathroom, go to bed. We do leave the chair. But I sure as heck feel confined IN one.

Of course using a chair doesn't impair my thinking. Or my ability to type or cook or do calculus or chew. The world should know this.

On the other hand, I shouldn't have to pretend that having to use a wheelchair has no affect on my psyche in order to make that point. And I shouldn't be asked to indulge this game just so other people can play with semantics.

There must be a better answer.

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