

Cleanings

December 2011 - January 2012

BREN SHARES PASSION TO PUT AN END TO POLIO

By Summer Broderick

The executive director of the Rotary Club of Omaha made a bold statement to NPSA members at its meeting on Nov. 6.

"I truly believe that we will be able to wipe out polio," said Gretchen Bren, Executive Director of The Rotary Club of Omaha.

Bren showed her passion to rid the world of the disease as she shared stories, pictures and statistics about her involvement with polio vaccination efforts in Africa.

Actively involved with the Rotary Club's PolioPlus program since 2008, Bren made her first immunization trip to Kaduna, a state in north-central Nigeria, during Nigeria's National Immunization Days. Bren's meeting with team leader and polio survivor Lee Husley was so inspiring that it fueled her passion to end polio.

"Lee is the first person that I knew who was affected by polio," Bren said. "She's had 10 surgeries to treat her polio effects, but she doesn't let her handicap stop her from her mission of ending polio, and that is inspiration for me to continue my involvement with the program."

In 2010, Bren and her team took another 10-day trip to Kaduna. With only four days dedicated to providing vaccinations, they vaccinated more than 10,000 children. However, their volunteering and support in the community did not end there.

They spent the remainder of their trip talking to the Kaduna state government and volunteering their time and services by painting schools and visiting a wheelchair organization. *(continued on page 2)*

First NPSA Meeting of 2012: February 5th

Our featured speaker for the Feb. 5 meeting will be **Jeff Reinhardt, New Horizons Editor and Public Affairs Director for the Eastern Nebraska Office on Aging.**

For more information about ENOA's services, visit its website at www.enoa.org.

Check out New Horizons on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/pages/New-Horizons-Newspaper/333993184226>

The NPSA meeting is held from 2 to 4 p.m. in the Community Room of the Bloomfield Forum, 9804 Nicholas Avenue, just north of the Westroads Mall in Omaha.

For more information about the NPSA meetings, please contact npsa.org@hotmail.com or visit our website, www.ne-polio.org

Bren Shares Passion to Put an End to Polio *(continued from page 1)*

The vaccination trips can be very dangerous for the volunteers. Bren discussed the rules and guidelines they must follow to avoid the dangers that surrounded them. By training the team and making smart decisions, they are able to focus on their primary mission.

Bren wore her vaccination uniform to the meeting to show NPSA members what they wear every day.

“We wear bright, yellow-colored polos so that we can easily find one another,”

Bren said. “It is important that we stick together in groups and never out on our own because of the dangers we can run into.”

During her trip in Kaduna, she met a little girl whose mother did not want her vaccinated. Bren said that most children were always scared of her; however, this little girl approached Bren, held her hand and began laughing and smiling with her. After having a connection with this girl, Bren couldn’t walk away without the girl being vaccinated.

“I couldn’t believe that this mother did not want this beautiful child vaccinated,” said Bren as she began to tear up at the meeting.

After Bren talked to the girl’s mother about the importance of the vaccination,

she decided to let her daughter and son get vaccinated.

“At that moment, I realized that I could have possibly saved this little girl from polio,” Bren said. “This little girl touched me.”

This year, Bren and other Rotary International members spent their Thanksgiving holidays in Mali and Chad to continue their mission to end polio. She left on Nov. 2 and returned on Dec. 2.

The Rotary Club has a goal to collect \$200 million to help achieve a polio-free world. They have currently raised \$190 million.



“WE WEAR BRIGHT, YELLOW-COLORED POLOS SO THAT WE CAN EASILY FIND ONE ANOTHER.”

To donate and help the Rotary Club meet its goal, please visit its website at www.omaharotary.com/polio.

Bring Home Health Care Home:

Doctor calls for more home health care for elderly and disabled:

[Link to New York Times Op-Ed article, Sunday, December 4, 2011](#)

This article will be available as a reprint in the next issue of **Gleanings**.

TO SLEEP, PERCHANCE TO DREAM

By Millie Malone Lill, *Gleanings* columnist

It was 9 p.m. on a cold, late-fall evening. I was told to go to the Emergency entrance of our brand-new hospital and check in for my sleep study. The wheelchair I keep in my van was, of course, not working, so I had to walk.

This was my first time visiting this end of the hospital. I visited the maternity ward when my latest great-grandson was born and I've been to my doctor's office in this building, but I'm not Kit Carson, so no trailblazing ensued either time.

Just inside the door, I was met by the sleep technician. I told him I don't walk very well, so he slowed his gallop to a canter as he led me around several corners, through a door, around another corner or two and into what looked like just what it was: a bed in a lab. There was no cheese for successfully managing the maze.

He explained that he would be putting a number of wires and leads on various parts of my body. He left while I slipped into my sexy sleepwear: a T-shirt and an old pair of satin pajama pants (just in case he was a weirdo who was turned on by flabby 70-year-old grannies; I didn't want him to be tempted beyond his ability to resist).

When he came back in, he had me sit on a chair while he spent the next 45 minutes or so putting marks on my scalp and

measuring my head, finally glopping on some sticky stuff and attaching electrodes. I asked him if this was how they prepped someone for the electric chair - he told me it was close, but that I would not be getting that cap thingy. He also applied suction cups to my shoulders, my calves and various parts of my face. He instructed me to lift my chin for another electrode but was polite enough not to insert a bookmark between it and its fellows. He had already demonstrated the C pap that he would use on me, should I stop breathing through the night.

Once all the wires were in place, he placed two straps around my body. One went just under my arms and the other

SLEEPING WITH ALL
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went where my waist used to be. The electrodes were plugged into that. Then he put something on my face with little prongs that fit in my nose and a

small nozzle sort of thing that went close to my chin. I had no clue what that was for - maybe to suction off the drool?

I had brought my Side Sleeper Pillow that I love and my Kindle, but by then it was late enough that I thought I could drift off to sleep. He arranged my wires in such a way that I could get in bed, turned off the light and left the room. He told me that if I needed anything to just say so, as he could hear me from where he would be watching.

Millie Malone Lill (continued on page 4)

Millie Malone Lill *(continued from page 3)*

Sleeping with all those wires was like cuddling with a family of anorexic octopuses while lying in a nest of spaghetti. I slept, sort of - more like dozing. At 2 a.m., the tech came in and reattached a wire that had somehow come loose. Apparently one of the octopuses had fallen asleep and lost its grip.

At 6 a.m., the tech came back in and spent half an hour or so setting me free from my newfound sea family. More paperwork had to be filled out, and by the time I did that and got dressed, the tech had left.

Did I mention that I was not familiar with the layout of this new hospital? Did I also mention I'm not Kit Carson? Yes, I got lost. There were exit signs pointing every which way, but I didn't want to end up too far away from where I'd parked my van, right outside the Emergency entrance.

Finally, I pushed on a door that warned it was alarmed. At that hour of the morning, there was no one around, but the alarm did finally bring a woman who asked if she could help. I explained that I couldn't find the exit. She hurriedly led me to the door farthest from my van. When I caught up with her, I explained that my van was by Emergency. That entailed another march to the other end of this very much-larger-than-it-looked building.

I really don't walk much anymore. I don't breathe well

when I'm trying to keep up with galloping hospital personnel, either, but I thought I still had a bit too much dignity left to just sit on the floor and cry.

So I soldiered on. I'm a polio survivor, and that's what we do. By the time I got to the van, my back was in spasms and my right hip was composing a nasty letter about bursitis and sciatica.

I managed to get home, and spent the day whining and moaning and watching TV. I won't know the results of the sleep study for several weeks, by which time I should be recuperated enough to find my way to my doctor's office in that maze. It shouldn't be too hard. I left a trail of smoldering motor neurons.

I REMEMBER...

I could have written the article you had in the last Gleanings ("It's Fall But Try Not To" by Millie Malone Lill). I am 68, had polio in 1952, and have started falling the last couple of years. Your article hits on many of the same things I have gone through. Having fallen outdoors twice, I was thankful none of my neighbors saw or heard me, but at the same time I would have sure been glad to have one of them around - just in case. Two surgeries later, I breathe deep and try to stay upright. Time for chocolate!

*Marilyn Q., Sioux
City, Iowa*

To reach Millie Malone Lill, you can
send a message to her email address:

mil.lill@gmail.com

Or send your comments to:

NPSA

PO Box 6076

Omaha, NE 68106

THE LATE CLEO WHITE BEQUESTS GIFT TO NPSA

Dear Nebraska Polio Survivors
Association,

Our mother, Cleo White, passed away June 11, 2011. One of her wishes was to give \$200 to your organization. Enclosed is her donation. She enjoyed reading the stories and informative articles in Gleanings.

She was a polio survivor. During her illness in 1955, she was treated at St. Elizabeth Hospital in Lincoln, Neb. Even though she was pregnant, her treatment required that she spend time in the “iron lung.” The prayers of many were answered when she gave birth to Laura, a healthy baby girl, in December 1955. Cleo’s recovery was amazing and she went on to live a very active and productive life. As she got older, there were post-polio conditions that surfaced, but she still did not let that stop her. She even got a Master Angler Fishing award in 2003 at the age of 72.

Thank you for all you do for polio survivors and their families.

*Sincerely, Cleo White’s Family:
Laura Gormley
Jeanne Massa
John Dahlgren*

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The following donors contributed gifts of cash or gifts-in-kind from Aug. 27 through Dec. 1, 2011.

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We are grateful for all gifts we receive from our donors. If you wish to support NPSA’s mission, please send checks to:

**NPSA
PO Box 6076
Omaha, NE 68106**

The Nebraska Polio Survivors Association is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Your gifts are tax-deductible.

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NPSA Mission Statement

The mission of Nebraska Polio Survivors Association is to educate the public and the health care community concerning polio and post-polio syndrome and to respond to the needs of individuals who suffer from the syndrome through group meetings, educational programming and newsletters, financial and other support of research concerning the syndrome and the circulation of research results.

NPSA was founded in 1984 by Nancy Baldwin Carter.



Gleanings

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