

Remembering Bruce Sachs

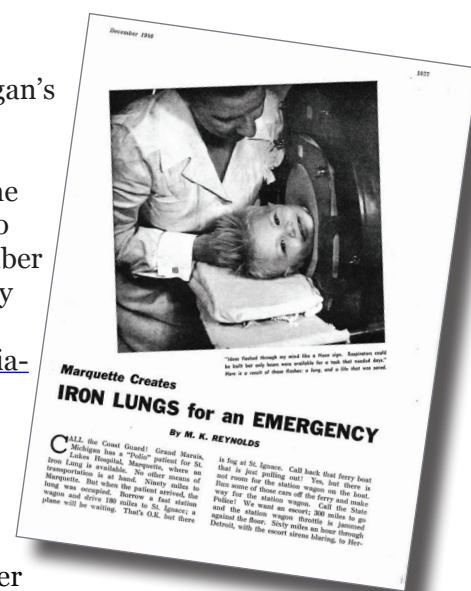
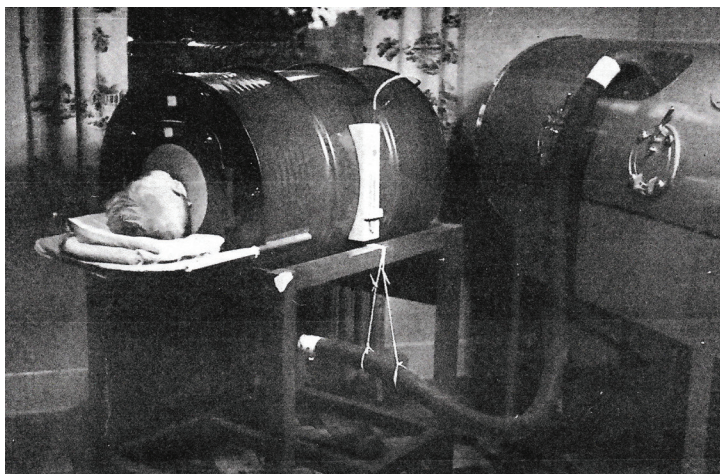
We at Post-Polio Health International were saddened to learn of the passing of Michigan polio survivor and advocate Bruce Sachs on March 7, 2022. Bruce was born on July 15, 1939, in Baraga, Michigan. He contracted polio at 13 months of age and spent the next nine months in the hospital. Bruce eventually learned to walk with the aid of a built-up shoe and long leg brace. Bruce wrote of his childhood, “I grew up in a small town with no handicapped education classes; therefore, I was encouraged to do everything the other children did. I played baseball, went fishing, walked with my dog, and tried to be as good as I could at everything. My dad taught me all the outdoor activities and my parents encouraged me to do whatever I could, with few restrictions.”

After earning his Elementary Teaching Certificate and master’s degree in Educational Leadership, Bruce worked as an elementary school teacher for 42 years for the Livonia School District in the Detroit metro area. Upon retirement, he volunteered at a post-polio clinic as a greeter, helped facilitate the Southeast Michigan Post-Polio Support Group, and was chairman of the Michigan Polio Network for 12 years.

PHI board members Dr. Fred Maynard and Sunny Roller recently wrote a two-part article about Bruce’s early life and later advocacy for *The Mining Journal*, the daily newspaper of Marquette, Michigan. The article can be found at https://www.miningjournal.net/news/superior_history/2022/05/marquettes-early-generosity-reciprocated-in-unforeseen-ways/.

Part 1 covers Bruce’s early life, including his bout with acute polio. An outbreak of polio at the time on Michigan’s Upper Peninsula, along with a shortage of iron lungs, required area residents to improvise some creative solutions. A detailed account by Max K. Reynolds of the effort to construct emergency respirators for area polio patients, including Bruce, was published in the December 1940 issue of *Hygeia*, a “health magazine” produced by the American Medical Association. The full article can be accessed at <https://post-polio.org/marquette-hygeia-dec1940/>.

Bruce himself required the use of a so-called “trailer unit”—essentially a 50-gallon oil drum retrofitted with a sling bed and hooked up by hose to an adjacent commercial iron lung (see image below). Single drums were big enough to be used by infant and toddler patients. For older children, they improvised by welding two drums together. Additional respirators were constructed out of wood.



Part 2 of their article deals with Bruce’s later advocacy on behalf of polio survivors and his own battle with the late effects of polio. In addition to his work with the Michigan Polio Network, Bruce and his wife, Dianne Dych-Sachs, attended 13 post-polio wellness retreats at Bay Cliff Health Camp in Marquette, Michigan. They spent recent winters in Florida and were also active in the Boca Area Post-Polio group. Bruce was 82 years of age. ■