

OBITUARIES

Robert D. Stewart

Robert D. Stewart, Sr., 78 of Hugo, passed away at 9:20 a.m. on Thursday, January 26, 2023, at his residence.

Funeral services will be held at 1 p.m. on Wednesday, February 1, at the Edwards Funeral Home in Arcola. Burial with military rites conducted by the Arcola VFW and the Arcola American Legion will be in the Hugo Cemetery. Visitation will be held from 11 a.m. until service time on Wednesday at the funeral home.

Robert was born on December 20, 1944, in Springfield. He was a son of Clifford H. and Mary Mildred (Hummel) Stewart. He married Mary Virginia Pearl



Stewart

Smiley on April 6, 1979, in Arthur.

He is survived by his wife, Mary; five children, Robin McConnell and her husband

Johnnie of Whiting, Kan., Robert Stewart Jr. and his wife Sherri of Tuscola, Shane Stewart of Tuscola, Paula Stewart and her fiancé Jerry Messer of Green Bay, Wis., and Trina Stewart of Tolono; 14 grandchildren; and 14 great-grandchildren; and a special friend, Bobbie Jo Hatfield of Tuscola.

Robert grew up in Arcola. He attended church at the Arcola United Methodist Church. He was a veteran of the United States Marine Corps.

Robert had worked as a truck driver; he was a good mechanic and spent over 40 years operating Stewart Salvage in Chesterville, and later north of Bourbon. He and Mary owned and operated

Tuscola Recycling Center before they sold to Bryant's and retired.

Robert always enjoyed going to ball games to watch his children and later his grandchildren. He liked being outdoors and enjoyed watching birds; he even had 16 of his own, several parakeets, a couple of cockatiels and a conure. His dogs were special to him as well; he had Pomeranians, his "little girls" as he called them, Baby and Molly.

After Robert retired, he enjoyed tinkering in his shop. He rebuilt lawn and garden tractors; he could fix almost anything.

Memorials may be made to Robert's family.



Published each Wednesday at Arcola, Illinois, 118 E Main St., Arcola, IL 61910 Phone 217.268.4950

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SUBSCRIPTIONS in Douglas, Coles & Moultrie counties: \$50/year. Elsewhere (U.S.), \$60/year. (10% discount for seniors)

ARCOLA RECORD-HERALD (USPS 029820) published weekly in Arcola, Illinois, © Copyright 2023. All rights reserved. Volume 156, number 39 Date of issue: Wednesday, February 1, 2023

POSTMASTER: Please send address changes to ARCOLA RECORD-HERALD, 118 E. Main Street, Arcola, IL 61910

Periodical postage paid at Arcola, Illinois.



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Health

From page 1

open until 6 p.m. so clients can schedule appointments for WIC or Family Case Management (FCM) visits, COVID-19 testing, lab draws, and immunizations.

Households with young children should reach out to DCHD to see if they qualify for FCM services. It's a free program that helps pair struggling households with available resources to help ensure a positive and healthy child-rearing environment.

COVID assistance changing

Federal policy changes that were put into effect during the COVID-19 pandemic to help vulnerable households will be coming to an end soon. Action is required of some folks to help avoid negative consequences. If they haven't already done so, Medicaid recipients need to update their eligibility information online (www.abe.illinois.gov) prior to April 1, when continuous enrollment ends. Not doing so means possibly risking loss of benefits.

DCHD can help with this process. Also, the SNAP emergency allotment will end after February. Beginning March 2023, food stamp recipients will revert back to receiving

the pre-pandemic amount of assistance.

Diaper Drive underway

DCHD is sponsoring a diaper drive to benefit WIC and FCM clients struggling with

this expense. Collection boxes are in place at both DCHD locations, Tuscola and Arcola Dollar Generals, and Tuscola Kirby IGA. All sizes and brands of disposable diapers and wipes, as well as feminine hygiene products, will be accepted.

Polio

From page 1

lance with me. We got to Burnham Hospital and were told the iron lung they had available when we called was no longer available. We then proceeded to Mercy Hospital because they had the only other one that was available.

My parents were told I would have to have a spinal tap in order to confirm Dr. Cunningham's diagnosis. By the time we arrived for the spinal tap I could not bend so they had to go through anyway they could to get the spinal fluid.

I remember the excruciating pain of the spinal tap. The next thing I remember was waking up in the polio ward and it was evening by this time.

Later that night, my best friend Peggy was brought in and put in a bed next to me. Soon after arriving, Peggy had trouble breathing and they did a tracheotomy on her right in the bed next to me.

They took her away on a stretcher and I did not see her for several months. I thought she had died.

Sometime during early morning, the next day, I too had trouble breathing, and my next recollection is lying on a gurney next to an iron lung. I remember begging my parents not to put me in that, I was terrified!

When I woke again, I was in the iron lung. I could not move any of my limbs and I had a rubber collar around my neck under my chin. There was a mirror above my face; it was so close that every time I

breathed, I could see my breath on it.

When the bellows at the foot of the iron lung went in and out it felt like someone was doing CPR on me constantly. The iron lung was breathing for me and the only thing I could do was lay there.

I don't know how long I was in the iron lung, but I was in the hospital over a month. I did not know that I had not made a full recovery until I got up to take a shower before going home. When I put my feet on the floor and tried to take a step, I fell down on the floor hard.

Thinking I had tripped over something, I tried to get up off the floor but had to call for help. It did not dawn on me yet that I could not walk.

When I arrived home, I had to be propped up on pillows at a 90-degree angle because I couldn't sit straight as all my muscles were stiff from laying in the iron lung.

My long road to recovery began with exercise, exercise, and more exercise.

Later I was sent to St. Charles Hospital in Long Island, New York where it took over a year for me to learn to walk again.

While at the hospital on Long Island there were some light moments like Sunday nights when we would watch The Ed Sullivan Show on television. We were a room full of 14-year-old teenage girls. Guess who was on the Ed Sullivan Show, ELVIS! We had never seen anything like that before.

This was a Catholic hospital, and the nuns didn't want us watching Elvis. So, they would come back through and turn it to Bishop Sheen. As soon as they left the room, we would have Elvis back on.

I did make what they called

a complete recovery until 1985 when I developed post-polio syndrome. It has been an interesting and exhausting road, but physical therapy has come to my rescue time and time again.

Polio cost me dearly. I missed all my sophomore year and half of my junior year. I managed to graduate with my high school class despite the setbacks.

I lost my dream of being a professional dancer and half my teen years I missed high school games and dances. However, I was extremely fortunate to have received excellent care and top doctors. My life has been a wonderful one.

When I was put into the iron lung, my parents were told I would not live past 30 nor have any children and I would not walk again.

Guess what? I shattered their predictions. I married and had two beautiful children, two grandchildren, six stepchildren and seven step grandchildren. I will be 85 in January 2023. Talk about shattering their predictions! I did it and then some!

Polio is a lifelong disease. The old damage keeps appearing as we age. I gave blood for the first vaccine and my advice to all of you is please see that your vaccinations for polio are up to date. It is not worth the risk.

Hope this helps to explain the severity of the polio epidemic of 1952. God bless you all.

Note: Phyllis Cunningham Kremnetz is an Arcola High School graduate, Class of 1955. The "Peggy" mentioned in this article is Peggy Phillips, AHS Class of 1957. She too survived polio but as also mentioned, polio is a lifetime disease, and she died at a fairly young age.

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