

REFLECTIONS NO. 36 (August 2, 2021)

The Vaccine Everyone Wanted

By Jerry McKelvy

Many Americans are reluctant to get the Covid vaccine for one reason or another. It is understandable that many might have some concerns since the vaccine was developed more quickly than most vaccines.

I recently read an article in Time magazine by Jennifer Latson entitled “The Vaccine Everyone Wanted”. She was referring to the polio vaccine back in the 1950s. Polio was first discovered in the United States in 1894 in Vermont where 18 died and 132 were paralyzed. Scientists worked to learn more about this new disease and discovered in 1905 that it was contagious and could be spread by asymptomatic people just like Covid. It was identified as a virus in 1908. A worse epidemic of polio occurred in 1916 in which about 6,000 died and thousands were left paralyzed. The disease seemed to mainly affect children and seemed to be more prevalent during the summer months. Symptoms came on suddenly and involved cramps, fever, and stiffness in arms and legs. Soon cities began to close swimming pools, movie theaters, bowling alleys, and other places where young children tended to congregate in hopes of stopping the spread of polio.

Seeing children in wheelchairs crippled by polio was very scary for parents. Many families knew of someone who had contracted polio. Some died and others were left crippled for life. Scientists began working to develop a vaccine. Some looked promising but none proved to be effective enough for widespread use.

Finally in 1952, Dr. Jonas Salk developed a new vaccine which was made by harvesting the kidneys from monkeys and injecting them with the live polio virus. This caused the virus to multiply rapidly. His team then used formaldehyde to kill the live virus and the vaccine containing the dead virus could be injected into humans. In May, 1953, Dr. Salk first injected the vaccine into himself, his wife, and children. In April of 1954, a large field trial of the vaccine was conducted. About 1.8 million school age children were given an injection with about half receiving the vaccine and the other half receiving a placebo. Neither the students nor their parents knew whether they were given the actual vaccine or the placebo. One year later, in 1955, a report on this early trial was released in which the vaccine was said to be 80 to 90 percent effective in preventing polio. The vaccine quickly received approval from the government and a nation-wide campaign was begun to give the polio vaccine to school children all across America.

The vaccine was given as a series of three injections restricted at first to those from age 5 to 14. The greatest fear by many parents was that there might not be enough vaccine available to give to their children. People had seen so many people afflicted with polio that they were anxious to try anything to keep their children safe from the dreaded disease.

Some objected to the vaccine because it contained monkey tissue. Scientists said the amount of monkey tissue in each injection was so small it was determined to have no health risks.

There was one serious setback in 1955. A lab accidentally contaminated a batch of vaccine with live polio virus which resulted in five deaths and 51 left paralyzed. Vaccinations were stopped until this accident was investigated. The problem was corrected and vaccinations resumed.

Albert Sabin developed another polio vaccine in 1959 which was less expensive than the Salk vaccine. This was an oral vaccine given on a sugar cube taken by mouth. This vaccine was first tested on 10 million Soviet school children in 1960 and was approved for use in the United States in 1961. One of the main differences between the two vaccines was that the Sabim oral vaccine used a live but weakened polio virus and the Salk injectable vaccine used dead polio virus.

Thanks to a successful vaccination program, the United States has been polio-free since 1979. There are still a few cases in other parts of the world, but in 2016, it was reported that there were only 42 known polio cases anywhere in the world.

Just as many Covid patients have to be put on ventilators, many of those who contracted polio had to be placed in a breathing machine called “the iron lung”. This machine was developed in 1929 and mainly consisted of a tube in which the patient was placed with only their head sticking out. Some had to stay in the iron lung all the time and others had to use it only at night. It was not uncommon in hospitals to see a room full of iron lung machines containing young children.

I think one of the factors that caused parents to welcome the polio vaccine was seeing all the young children in those machines or confined to wheelchairs from polio. Today, we hear about people being on a ventilator due to Covid, but most of us have never actually seen a ventilator in use. It is not a pleasant thing to have to rely on a machine to breathe for you. Many Covid patients have to spend several days or weeks on a ventilator and many die.

In researching this article, I came across a story about a polio victim who still depends on an iron lung. The man is Paul Alexander and is, I think, the last person in America confined to an iron lung machine. He contracted polio at age 6 and is now 74 years old. Most of his life has been spent in the iron lung machine. He didn't give up. He managed to graduate from high school being the first person to graduate from high school without ever attending class. He got a college education and became a lawyer. He was able to get out of the machine some during the daytime and practiced law from his wheelchair, but had to be in the machine at night to breathe. His health has now declined so much that he can only be out of his iron lung for about five minutes at a time. You can read his story online which has many pictures of him in his iron lung which he calls “his old iron horse”. Just do a search for “man in the iron lung” and you should be able to find the article which is pretty long but well worth reading. He is asked if he is worried about the Covid pandemic since he is more vulnerable than most of contracting Covid. Read the article to find out how he answers that question.

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Comments from readers—

1. Interesting review of some valuable history. – James D.
2. A timely and interesting read, thank you Jerry! – Teresa

REFLECTIONS NO. 37 (August 9, 2021)
By Jerry McKelvy

UNDERTAKING

Many hardware stores once offered undertaking services. Prescott Hardware Co. in Prescott had an undertaking department managed by J. D. Cornish. Mr. Cornish was the man who embalmed the unidentified man known as “Old Mike” who was found dead in the city park in 1911. They kept the embalmed body at the funeral home hoping someone could identify him, but his identity could not be learned. Finally, “Old Mike” was buried in 1975, sixty-four years after he died.

In the days before automobiles, the hearse consisted of a fancy wagon sometimes pulled by a team of solid black horses. A news item in the 1910 paper mentioned that a man was going to Chidester to get a pair of black horses purchased by Prescott Hardware Co. to be used as a hearse team.

In 1912, it was reported that Prescott Hardware had received an ambulance for their undertaking department.

In 1921, Prescott Hardware reported that they had just received a motor funeral car and ambulance combined. The body was mounted on a Moon Six chassis and had a wheelbase of 146 inches. The motor would develop sixty horsepower. The exterior was finished in a new shade of French gray and the interior was dark brown mahogany with matching upholstery.

Another Prescott firm, the Nevada County Hardware Co. (formerly McDaniel Hardware) also offered undertaking services. They announced in 1918 that the store would carry a complete line of coffins, caskets, and robes. H. O. Giles, a licensed embalmer, was in charge of the undertaking department.

Even after the Prescott Hardware quit their undertaking department, people could still pay their burial insurance there. I can remember my folks going to an office in the back of the store in the early 1950s to pay their burial insurance.

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More of the leading citizens of Nevada County in 1900—

Capt. William J. Blake, a gallant Confederate soldier, became a citizen of Arkansas in 1856 and in Dec., 1861 enlisted as a private in Co. I, 15th Regt., Ark. Infantry. He was in this regiment under Col. James J. Gee at Ft. Helman, Tenn. When Grant’s movements against the forts of the Tennessee and Cumberland rivers began, and being transferred across the river to Ft. Henry, took

part in the defense of that post. Marching thence to Ft. Donelson, he took part in the battle of Feb. 15 with the brigade of Col. Joseph Drake. At the surrender, he escaped and went to Memphis, from there returning to Arkansas. Having lost his regiment, he began the organization of a new company in which he was successful and was elected captain. He later was made a prisoner and was held at the prison camps at Alton, Illinois and Johnson's Island, Lake Erie until 1864.

G. B. Jobe, aged 78, was born in the state of Tennessee but since 1857 has made his home in Arkansas. 70 and 8 mark his pilgrimage on earth. His Christian life has been cast with the M. E. Church South and his life is a stainless one. The way came and went, but his life remained without a blur.

O. S. Jones who has been one of our leading populists for a number of years, is one of our best men and has never failed to give full support to every laudable enterprise of our county. He served in our legislature in 1889 and succeeded in passing the Ten Mile Act which freed our county from the sale of intoxicants. Mr. Jones is a native of Georgia, but since 1859 he has made Arkansas his home and in 1875, he came to Prescott where he has successfully run a wagon and blacksmith establishment. He is one of the two living charter members of the Baptist Church at this place and stands high among our people.

A. Monson was born in Sweden in 1841. He came to the U. S. of America in 1869 and to Prescott in 1871. He has watched every development of our city. He boarded the hands while the railroad was being constructed. He has watched her growth and development with anxiety. For 11 years he has been dealing in musical instruments and today has the only music store in our town. His honest dealings have won for him the confidence of our people, and a liberal patronage.

Capt. John Parker of Parker township is from Alabama. He was raised in Mississippi and came from Louisiana to Arkansas in 1853. During the state's strife he was captain of Company C., 20th Ark. Reg. under Col. Dan Jones. For nearly two years he was among our Confederate prisoners on Johnston Island. Since the war he has lived in the same community and met every issue of an honored citizen. He served the county as tax assessor in 1885-1886, and was treasurer in 1891-1892 and was nominated without even soliciting the office. In 1898 he was again elected to the assessor's office which he still holds, and is at present a candidate for re-election. He has passed his threescore and ten years, but is full of cheer, sunshine, and activity. No one who knows Capt. Parker can raise ought against his record. He ripens with a sure and safe footing for a happy eternity.

Reflections No. 38 (August 16, 2021)

By Jerry McKelvy

Initiations

Back in 1957 when I started to high school in Prescott, it was the custom that all freshmen entering high school must be initiated. If my memory serves me correctly, each member of the senior class was "assigned" a freshman, and for one day, the freshman was subjected to whatever humiliation the senior wished to inflict upon him or her. This involved such things as carrying the senior's books or pulling the senior around campus

in a little red wagon. I remember one case of a freshman being forced to roll a peanut down the hallway with his nose.

The senior would also tell the freshman how to dress for Initiation Day. My manner of dress for the occasion was captured on film just before I left for school on Initiation Day. I am looking at that picture as I write this. I was wearing a long sleeve shirt with a bow-tie and an old floppy hat. Over the shirt I wore a long dress. I had the word "Freshman" written across my forehead with lipstick and there is a string of something around my neck, but I can't remember what it was. My brother is also in the picture, laughing at how I was dressed.

The first hurdle was getting on the school bus before someone driving by saw me. Then I had to endure the giggles of the other students on the bus. I felt better when another freshman got on board and the attention was focused on them for a while.

I don't think there was much school work accomplished that day. It was one of those days we wished would soon be over. Some kids enjoyed it and others just endured it. I believe that after lunch an assembly was called and the freshmen had to get up on stage and do a talent number of some sort, either individually or as a group. I can't remember what I did, but I'm sure it was something appropriate for the occasion.

You would think that one of these initiation experiences would be enough, but it was not to be. I also belonged to the Future Farmers of America and they had their own initiation ceremony. The ones who were candidates for the FFA were called Green Hands. Since this was an all-male group, the ceremony was quite a bit different from the regular high school initiation. The first order of business was for the candidate for membership to be blind-folded. Then we were led by those who were already members to the first station. There it was explained to us that we must be branded on our chest or abdomen. Our shirt was pulled up and the blind-fold was taken off so that we could see a fellow with a hot soldering iron, which was to be the branding tool. The blind-fold was replaced and after a few words were spoken, it was time to be branded. At the moment when we were expecting to feel the hot branding iron, a cube of ice was slapped against our body.

The next station was the tank which held some water with green dye in it. We had to place our hand in the tank and our hand would be colored green, since we were called Green Hands. Our blind-fold was put in place and we placed one hand in the tank. They had a little crank-type generator hooked up to the tank which delivered a small tingling shock to the one having his hand in the water.

We were then taken to a station, our blindfold removed, and we were shown a can full of earthworms. We were told we would have to eat some of these earthworms to become a member of the FFA. Our blindfold was put on and we heard the others say that earthworms didn't taste all that bad or something similar. We were then given some plain cooked spaghetti instead of the worms. I believe there was also a similar station where cooked oatmeal was substituted for cow manure. I remember some of the boys had to be held by two or three other boys as they submitted to this part of the initiation.

The next station I remember was a table on which the FFA manual was placed. We were instructed to kiss the manual three times, standing up after each kiss. This was also done while blind-folded. After the second kiss, the manual was exchanged for one with a pile of flour on it, so the third time we kissed the manual, we got a face full of flour.

Later when I started to college, I had to submit to an initiation during a three-week period called freshmen orientation. The freshmen were required to wear “beanies” on their heads as they walked over campus. If an upperclassman requested it, we would have to place our finger on the button of top of the beanie and tell our name and where we were from. There was a rumor on campus that freshmen boys would be thrown into a pond that was on campus and I worried about that because I couldn’t swim. I don’t think that ever actually happened. It was just a rumor.

Almost every night at suppertime, a group of upperclassmen would be waiting for the freshmen as they came out of the cafeteria. The freshmen were subjected to all sorts of humiliating things like having to scrub the sidewalk with a toothbrush. I can remember missing some meals at the cafeteria to avoid all this type foolishness. There was sort of an understanding that if a freshman wanted to avoid all the harassment by the upperclassmen, he could submit to having his hair cut and his initiation would be over. He could choose whatever hair design he wanted—either having all his hair cut off or having some sort of design cut in it. If you check out the school yearbooks, you can see the results of turning an unprofessional hair cutter loose with your hair. You will see some with shaved heads, some with Mohawk haircuts, and some with their beanies on to cover their bald heads. I chose to have the initials SSC carved in my hair which stood for Southern State College. I don’t know what type of initiation the girls had to endure, if any.

Some fraternities in colleges may still have some type of initiation, but I think most initiations have been discontinued and may even be illegal in some states. They were all done in fun, but there have been cases of tragic outcomes to initiations. One such incident happened in 1935 at Ouachita College in Arkadelphia. It was a tradition back then that male students would be ducked in the Ouachita River. James Queen, a sophomore from Prescott, was “captured” as he left the lunch room, taken to the Ouachita River and thrown in. He swam to shore and collapsed. Efforts were made to revive him, but nothing worked. He was taken to the hospital where he was pronounced dead. The doctors said he died from an apparent heart attack brought on by exertion after eating a hearty meal.

According to USA Today, there have been over 250 deaths in American schools and universities since the 1800s from hazing.

REFLECTIONS – No. 39 (August 23, 2021)

**Nevada County Picayune
November 12, 1885**

Common Remedies from 1885

Note: Some of these old remedies from 1885 may not be advisable according to modern medical practices.

Sprains and bruises call for an application of tincture of arnica.

If an artery is severed, tie a small cord or handkerchief lightly above the wound.

For bilious colic, soda or ginger in hot water. It may be taken freely.

A tickling throat is best relieved by gargling with salt and water.

Pains in side are most promptly relieved by an application of mustard.

For cold in the head, nothing is better than powdered borax sniffed up the nostrils.

Nervous spasms are usually relieved by a little salt taken in the mouth and allowed to dissolve.

Whooping cough paroxysms can be relieved by breathing the fumes of turpentine or carbolic acid. Use great care.

Broken limbs should be placed in their natural positions and the patient kept quiet until the surgeon arrives.

Hemorrhages of the lungs or stomach are promptly checked by a small dose of salt and the patient kept quiet as possible.

Sleeplessness caused by too much blood in the head may be overcome by applying a cloth wet with cold water to the back of the neck.

Wind colic is relieved by peppermint essence taken with a little warm water. For small children, it may be sweetened. Paregoric is also good.

For stomach cramps, use ginger ale and a teaspoonful of tincture of ginger in a half glass of water in which a teaspoonful of soda has been dissolved.

Sickness of the stomach is promptly relieved by drinking a teaspoonful of hot soda and water. If it brings up the offending matter, all the better.

A teaspoonful of ground mustard in a cup of warm water is a prompt and reliable emetic and should be resorted to in cases of poisoning or cramps of the stomach from overeating.

Avoid purgatives as they not only do no good, but are positively harmful. Pills may relieve for the time, but they seldom cure. Stomach bitters are a snare and only create a desire for stimulants.

Powdered rosin is the best thing to stop bleeding from cuts. After the powder is sprinkled on, wrap the wound with a soft, cotton cloth. As soon as the wound begins to feel feverish, keep the cloth wet with cold water.

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Comments from readers—

1. No wonder life expectancy was so short in years past. We don't appreciate the miracles of modern medicine enough! – Teresa

2. I recall quite a few of these remedies. But mostly baking soda. And a poultice of softened bar soap. And Carter's Little Liver Pills. Aren't we glad our Creator gave us a brain with the expectation that we would use it. Then, now we have other challenges.—Mary Anna

REFLECTIONS NO. 40 (August 30, 2021)

School Discipline By Jerry McKelvy

Teachers must have discipline in class if learning is to take place. A typical classroom may have 25 to 30 students. Some students come from homes where parents taught them how to behave and others come from homes where they had no discipline at all. In most classes, there are usually a few students who cause trouble for the teacher. It is usually minor things like talking to another student during class, throwing a paper wad, passing notes, etc.

I wonder if the social distancing and mask wearing in schools has helped curtail some of the talking in class. These days, students would probably rather send a text message to another student instead of talking or passing a note if cell phones are allowed in class. Having to compete with a cell phone is a problem for teachers in this modern age. Some teachers require students to turn off their cell phones and place them in a special place in the classroom during class.

Punishment for misbehavior in class was quite a bit different in times past. A student who misbehaved might be told to go stand in the corner. A student who talked too much in class might be required to write a sentence such as "I will not talk in class" maybe 200 times or more. Some clever students would try to tape two or three pencils together so they could write more than one line at a time. I've heard of one teacher who required a student to write a whole page from the dictionary. It was more or less just busy work but it may have helped improve the student's penmanship.

Sometimes a teacher would make a student clean the erasers during recess when other students were outside playing. A student who chewed gum in class might have to clean

gum off the underside of the desks that other students had left there. I never saw this when I went to school, but some teachers made the student draw a circle on the blackboard and stand with their nose in the circle for five minutes as punishment.

Some teachers would give a student a whack with a ruler on the palm of the hand as punishment. Corporal punishment was common in the old days. Most teachers had a paddle they sometimes used for the more serious offenses. Being in class and hearing the sound of someone being paddled out in the hall usually made the other students straighten up in class.

I think I was in the eighth grade when one of my teachers (a lady) used the paddle on a boy who had done something wrong. She made him come up in front of the class and told him to grab his ankles. Most teachers did the paddling outside the classroom. I think all my teachers were women until I got to high school and I only remember two of them ever paddling a student. When I was in high school, it was common for a teacher to make a student who misbehaved stand outside the classroom door in the hall. The principal would patrol the halls about once each hour and if he found a student who had been kicked out of class, the student would have some explaining to do. Just the possibility of being caught by the principal was usually enough to keep students in line during class. A student could be sent directly to the principal for something serious.

Chewing gum in class was frowned upon when I went to school. As I said before, some students would forget and stick their gum on the underside of their desk. One of my teachers would make a student caught chewing gum come up to her desk and deposit the gum in the waste basket which she called "File 13".

It's been almost fifty years since I taught school, so I don't know how discipline is handled in schools today. The old methods of discipline would probably not be considered proper in our modern society, but I think most students from that time period turned out OK.

Like any occupation, there are certain risks that come with teaching school. According to a recent government study, ten percent of teachers reported that they had been threatened by a student and six percent said they had been physically attacked by a student.

Here is a portion of the school handbook directed to the patrons of the Bluff City school in 1912: "*All flagrant violations of good order are liable to be punished by expulsion from the school. So is habitual carelessness in preparing one's lessons. We do not want any idlers in our school. If your children are low, mean, and vicious, we do not want them.... This school is not a reformatory, but an institution for educating and training civil boys and girls.... While mild, our discipline shall, at all times, be firm and our ruling shall be final.*"

A list of students enrolled at Bluff City for the 1912-1913 school year was printed in the handbook. Of the 126 students listed, three have an asterisk by their name showing they were expelled – one boy and two girls.

What were some of the types of punishment teachers used to keep discipline in class when you went to school?

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Comments from readers—

1. I don't remember much about 'discipline' at school. But we knew that it would be worse at home if we got in trouble at school. And with a big family (lots of siblings) and lots of kids in the neighborhood, there was no way our parents wouldn't find out - if we got in trouble in school.

Maybe it isn't that way these days. Seems that the parents side with their kids about the awful, mean teachers. – Mary Anna

2. The rules for punishment when we were in school were the same as when you went. I don't know the rules now but I do know that the discipline at home now is lacking and therefore causes more problems for the teachers. I feel sorry for the young teachers just starting their teaching careers. I have heard of some students that tend to intimidate new or young teachers. When we were in school, if we got disciplined at school, we got disciplined again by our parents when we got home. Now the parents run to school and demand that their child is innocent and should not have been punished. I have even heard of some who demanded the teacher be fired.

I loved every minute that I spent in school. That said, I do not mean that I was a perfect student but I did have respect for my teachers and do not remember not being able to get along with any of them, even when I had received punishment for something that I should not have done.—
Yvonne

3. I have two teachers in my grandchildren. The stories I hear makes me shudder. The parents need discipline as much as the students. Until both are accomplished, I would not be a teacher. -
- Wanda