

## Polio no match for Charlie Hargrove

By Bill Clark  
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In the past 60 years, Americans have all but forgotten the devastating toll poliomyelitis — polio for short — brought to our population before Dr. Jonas Salk gave us a vaccine in the mid-1950s that has all but eradicated polio in our country.

Polio is a highly infectious, severe virus that often ended in motor paralysis and atrophy of skeletal muscles, leading to permanent disability.

In most cases, polio did not affect the mind and very seldom a victim's spirit. If polio knocked you down, you learned how to play the cards you were dealt, how to win without scoring a touchdown or hitting a walk-off home run.

Life went on and you made do with what you still had. The names of very successful polio victims start with Franklin Delano Roosevelt, who survived polio as a young adult on the way to becoming a four-term president of the United States — and Charlie Hargrove, an Arkansas kid who fell victim to polio in the summer between grades two and three in school in the small town of Malvern.

Charlie went on to spend 34 years in a variety of roles in Columbia city government, serving under five city managers, primarily as the assistant city manager, and a guy everyone took for granted because he always got things done.



Charlie Hargrove started out in his life's journey in 1942 in Malvern, one of three children of a plumber/electrician dad and a mother who was the family business bookkeeper.

Life was routine for Charlie until polio took away most of the use of his lower limbs, leaving him in braces, on crutches and now, 60 years later, in a wheelchair. His spirit, however, has never faltered.

Charlie spent two school years in a convalescent center in Jacksonville, Ark., keeping up his schoolwork, and by the fifth grade, he was back in the public school in Malvern.

At 16, he had spinal fusion, missed his sophomore year at Malvern High, was home schooled, and returned to graduate on time in 1960, even playing the baritone horn in the band, "but not very good," he recalled recently over lunch.

His family moved to Indio, Calif., in 1960 and Charlie, by then able to move without a cane, went to California Baptist College in Riverside and it is here he came out of his shell, no longer shy about his body. After a year, he switched to Oachita Baptist University in Arkadelphia, Ark., earned a political science degree and fell under the influence of Bob Riley, his advisor, who later became the lieutenant governor, then governor when Dale Bumpers moved mid-term to the Senate.

Charlie brought his 1964 OBU degree to the University of Missouri where he sought a master's degree in business and public administration, but City Manager Don Allard hired him as a summer intern and, in 1965, as the city personnel manager — and he never finished his master's degree.

"I was in hog heaven," Charlie tells you, "doing exactly the job that fitted me best."

He worked under Allard, Terry Novak, Stuart Campbell, Dick Gray, and 12 years under Ray Beck. He retired in 1999, but not really.

Charlie spent the last 30 years as a member of the Cosmo Luncheon Club and recently was involved in helping another of his pet projects, The Boone County Historical Society. He worked with the Cosmos to donate \$125,000 over a five-year period to build an all-weather parking lot to serve both a city park and the society's museum.

He was also one of 35 citizens brought together by Joe Mayse to buy 120 acres of Peabody Coal land and turn it into a trap range called the Columbia Sportsmen's Club. The range has since closed, but the club is still quite active.

He serves as a goodwill ambassador for the county historical society, where his wife, Marilyn, is an active volunteer and recent past docent coordinator. He is also on the program committee for Osher, the education program at MU for the over-50 crowd. His smile is infectious. He even conned Ol' Clark into a couple of classes.

Along the way, Charlie has been married three times. The first ended in divorce, but produced two sons, Travis, an attorney, and Jordan, owner of a string of central Missouri pawn shops. His second marriage was to Sue Turner and ended when cancer took Sue after eight years.

In 2003, Charlie married Marilyn Sanford, the widow of long-time Columbia health department director, Mike Sanford.

Charlie had been married twice. The first ended in divorce, the second in a battle with cancer. Marilyn, a 1961 Ash Grove High School graduate, had come to the University of Missouri to seek a degree in agriculture, but soon changed to the health world, earning a degree in physical therapy in 1965.

She met and married Mike Sanford in 1964, actually served as Ol' Clark's secretary for several months in the Columbia Parks and Recreation office, then spent 30 years as a physical therapist at MU, where she was department chair in the School of Health Professions. She added a doctorate in 1987, and still works on occasion at MU in her role as a physical therapist.

Marilyn and Mike were married for 34 years before cancer claimed Mike in 1998. Mike had spent his entire career in the Columbia and Boone County Health Departments, starting as an inspector for Columbia Health Department director, Jerry Lemonds, then succeeding Jerry when he moved on to head up the health department in Lincoln, Neb.

The current Columbia/Boone County Health Department facility is named for Mike. Mike's radio handle was "Mr. Clean." He became a local legend.

Marilyn and Charlie had met socially through the years. Both had lost their spouses, both loved to travel, and both were alone. Marilyn's son, Matt, became the matchmaker and brought them together in 2003. Travel was the catalyst. Judge Frank Conley officiated the marriage.

"Mike didn't care much for travel," Marilyn said recently over lunch, "but he did shake hands with Queen Elizabeth in London."

Charlie had owned a motor home for years and marriage meant road time. The couple has motored to 47 of the 50 states, from the Atlantic to the Pacific in Canada and to Guadalajara and Mazatlan in Mexico — more than 150,000 miles since 2003.

In 2016, the couple sold their motor home and now drive a 2006 Honda CRV and fly on occasion. Post-polio has slowed Charlie and makes a wheelchair part of travel these days.

Mike and Marilyn had purchased 3.8 acres on Mexico Gravel Road, just east of Route B in 1976 and named it Hill Haven. The hilltop home is surrounded by more mowing than the Hargroves care to do these days, so they recently made the decision to move to Lenoir Retirement Center in late summer.

Recently, an invitation came to join in what was called "Life — Phase III, Chapter 2 — the Move." It read: "As the saga continues, we find our heroes, Marilyn and Charlie, as they prepare to sell their beloved 'Hill Haven' and embark on a new life at 'Edgewood'."

The invitation was sent to: "The Flatulatus Antiquartus (also known as the old farts)."

No doubt much of what follows was stolen from some online source, but Charlie wrote in part: "That the evening was devoted to three subjects — problems of growing old, good things about growing old and a series of discussions about everything hurting and what doesn't hurt doesn't work; the only thing we do with greater frequency today is urinate and attend funerals; and we now are required to read about Hank Waters' prostate."

The long list ended with: "You know the answers, but no one asks the right questions — and when you fall down, you wonder what you can do while you're down there."

A few good things were noted, like "the things you buy now won't wear out while you're still alive. And you know you're old when getting lucky means you found your car in the parking lot."

Charlie Hargrove has come a long way since that devastating summer in Malvern, Ark., between second and third grades when polio interrupted his youth, devastated his lower limbs, but made his resolve stronger than steel — and ignited a spirit that burns bright in him today.

Hats off to Marilyn and Charlie. May their travels in life be a guide to others.

*-<http://www.columbiatribune.com/news/20170621/charlie-and-marilyn-living-full-life>*

### FACEBOOK POSTS

Charles Hargrove

Being the humble soul that I am, I shouldn't point out how pleased I am about this little article Bill did in today's Tribune. Kudos to Bill for getting it 90% right! It was ok until the third from last paragraph when he spell Jordon's name wrong, said Jordon owned pawnshops instead of overseeing operation of two of them, owned by Brian Mayse, son of my friend Don Mayse, and had my second wife as Sue Turner (coincidentally, Don's mother-in-law) instead of Sue Sterner, of the Mexico, MO Sterners. Oh, well - can't complain too much.

Marielle Holman Barnes

Keep it kicking Charles Hargrove

Guy-marie Sackreiter  
So far a wonderful tribute Charles!

Sharon Lynch A super Great Guy. Pretty fair card player and enjoys a good party!!! Appreciate working with him for 6 years in City Gov and he and Marilyn at BHS. I won't tell

Pat Stephens  
A great guy!

Ruthie Cassity  
Good article!

Cherry Silliman  
Loved reading this!

Kay Sterner  
The best brother-in-law west of the Mississippi!!!!!!!!!!

Martha Koury  
Loved reading it, too!

John Betz Having  
Charlie as my brother-in-law is something I'm very proud of. We spent hundreds of hours together back in the 1970s remodeling houses and building decks. I think we may have also knocked back a few cold beers together also. What physical problems? I sure didn't notice anything. I wouldn't trade these memories for anything. They're something I will treasure the rest of my life.

Mindy Robbins  
Excellent! Happy I've known this man as long as I can remember. I like it when triumph over adversity is celebrated. Kudos Charlie.

Patty Scheurich-Gilpin  
Wonderful article Mr. Charles Hargrove. I know my Dad Charlie Scheurich enjoyed working with you at the City. I have found some of City articles Mom clipped out of the paper about accomplishments you all did for the City.

Dick Malon  
I'm happy to say that I have been friends with Charlie for about 38 years. Certainly long enough to be wary when I hear the words "I've got an idea!". :) A very good article on a very good guy!

Rod Green  
Charles Hargrove was not a bad guy as my son Scott Green's step-father either! Thank you for all that you've done for him over the years and for treating him as one of your own. Well done.  
(6/20/17)

Dan Blasingame  
Yep, that's Charles Hargrove, a good friend of mine.

Charles Hargrove  
Thanks, Dan! We go back a little over 60 years! Had some good times!

Dan Blasingame  
Yes we did, some not so good, shooting a hole in my parents ceiling for one. Scared the begigers (polite word for FB) out of me. But a little patch and some paint and no one will ever know.

Charles Hargrove

I still tell people about that, particularly kids I talk to about gun safety. Also, about the hook in my eye and the nurse's look of revulsion when we walked into the hospital!! Good times!

Bill Weitkemper

I've known Charlie for over 40 years. Whenever I went to see Charlie he always had time to listen. Thanks Charlie.

Jan Grossmann

Nice article, Charles Hargrove!

Chris Campbell

Great article, Charlie!

Dick Malon

And another nice one. But old Bill doesn't give Marilyn near enough credit for being the super wife, companion and all around care taker for old Charlie. They are both super people. I told Charlie more than once that he has more grit and determination to deal with stuff life can dump on you than any other 4 people I know combined.

(6/21/17)