

Wenatchee Valley Museum & Cultural Center's Post



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The 1952 polio epidemic was the worst outbreak of the virus in US history; nearly 60,000 children were infected with the virus; thousands were paralyzed, and more than 3,000 died. Hospitals set up special units with iron lung machines (like the one pictured from our collection) to keep polio victims alive. Patients typically spent one to two weeks in the device while they recovered. Physical therapy was another key to polio recovery. The virus weakens and paralyzes limbs, and without stimulation and exercise, the immobility can become permanent. At Wenatchee's Deaconess Hospital, Carmen Brosenbeck treated hundreds of patients, most of them children, as one of the only licensed physical therapist practicing in North Central Washington. Then in 1955, the US began widespread vaccinations and by 1979 the virus had been completely eliminated across the country. Unfortunately the virus was still a threat in other countries. However that changed in 1984 when Wenatchee native, Dr. Ed Cadman, then president of Rotary International, helped launch PolioPlus a global campaign to eradicate polio. The world has since seen a 99.9% reduction in polio cases. We are thankful for all our local medical professionals, past and present, who have and continue to fight infectious disease in our community and beyond. [#wenatcheemuseum](#) [#fromourcollection](#) [#TogetherWenatchee](#)

