

Pandemic Influenza Storybook

Hi! I'm John Seggerson and this is the story of my mother who is 92 years old now and she was two years old when the pandemic, influenza pandemic hit the Calumet area of northwestern Indiana in 1918 when my grandfather was a foreman in the steel mill there and the epidemic got so bad, and my grandparents were so concerned that my grandfather sent my grandmother, my mother who is only two years at the time and her little sister and sent them back to Oil City, Pennsylvania where they had come from because the flu had not yet hit there. And so they took the train back to Oil City, Pennsylvania but within a few weeks the epidemic hit Oil City and really hit it hard so badly that in the block that they were staying in that there my mother said there was a death in, in, in every, every house on the block had, had death in it. And so my grandmother decided to come back to the northwestern Indiana because it couldn't of been any worse there. And so they took the train back and did not alert my grandfather that they were coming back again. And when they got there and they got to the house and opened the door and my grandfather had gotten the flu and he was very, very ill couldn't even get out of bed, but he heard them open the door and come in and he yelled, "Don't let the children come in here!" Well my mother hadn't seen her father in a few weeks and she wanted to see him and she took off and ran right in and jumped up on top of the bed and started kissing him all over his face and my grandparents

were horrified and, and my grandfather insisted that they literally bathe my mother in Listerine, which they did. And, my, my mother never did get the flu or the symptoms of it and nor did my aunt or my grandmother for that matter. But my, my mother said that for many years thereafter she and her sister had to gargle with Listerine and they didn't, they didn't care for that too much. But that's, that's one of her stories of 1918 and she remembers some of that but the family talked about it so much that's how she remembered much of the story. The other related story was that shortly after my grandfather got better they decided to go see my mother's Uncle Harry who lived a few blocks away. And, at that time they had guards posted at every corner to try to restrict transfer, try to restrict travel so that in, in the transmission of the flu. And she said it was very bitterly cold there was snow on the ground and my grandfather put her and her little sister in a box with a rope on it and pulled them down the street like a sled. And she remembered when they got to the corner the guard standing at the corner it was so cold that he had built a fire in the middle of the street. But because of his work my grandfather had a pass and he was able to get them from one block to the next to see Uncle Harry and back again. So, that's that's the story of my 92 year old mother who's in a retirement home up in Lima, Ohio right now. Her name is Judy McLaughlin Seggerson. Thank you.