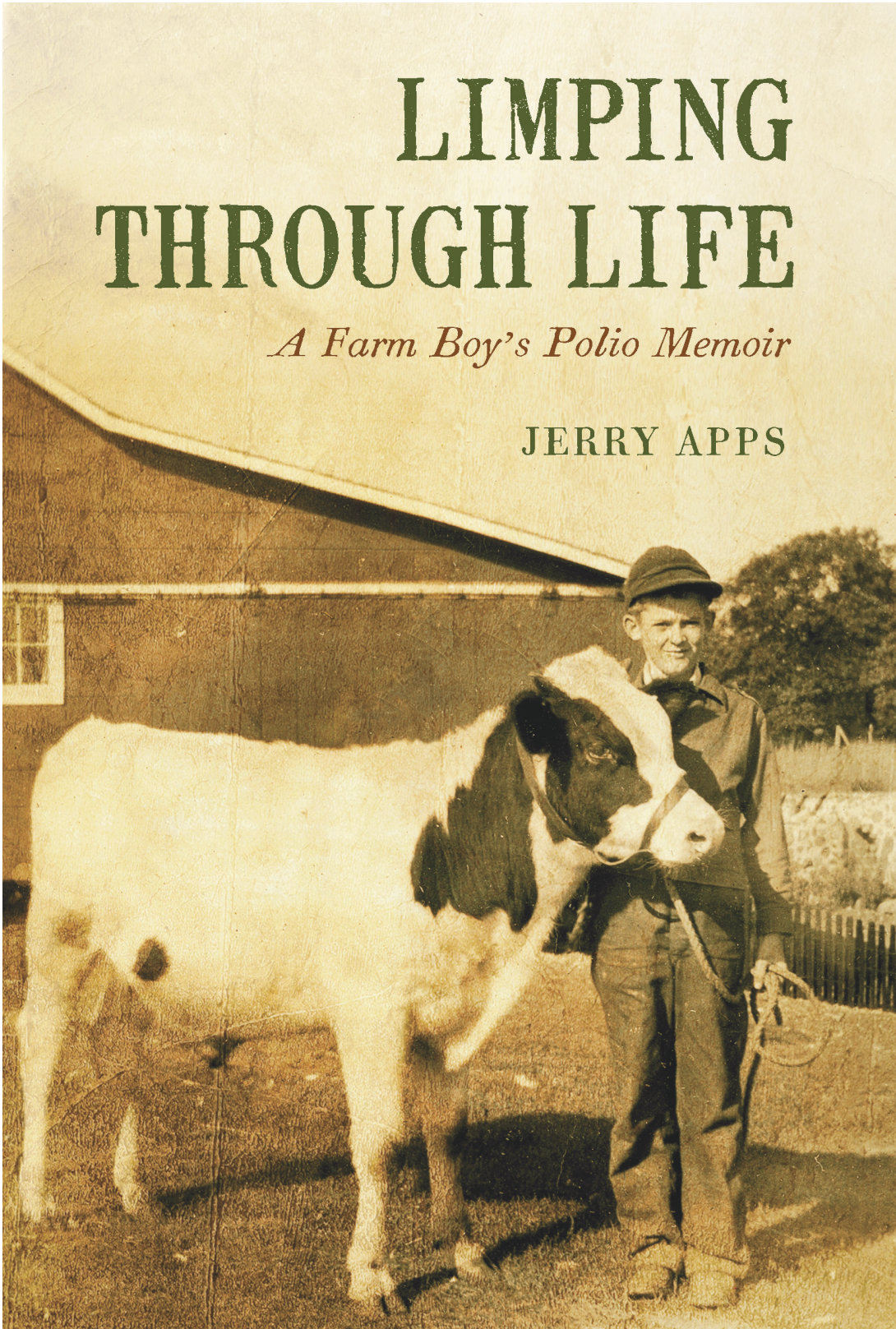


# LIMPING THROUGH LIFE

*A Farm Boy's Polio Memoir*

JERRY APPS



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



WISCONSIN  
HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY



# LIMPING THROUGH LIFE

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS\*



Today we have physical therapists to help people recover from illness or injury. What activities or work provided Jerry with “physical therapy” to strengthen his right leg?

Jerry couldn't play baseball or basketball in high school because of his “bum leg”, but found other interests. In what areas did he do well? What activities became lifelong skills?

“I told Ma about my worries. ‘Do the best you can,’ she said. ‘That’s all anyone can do.’ She didn’t say, ‘I know you’ll do fine.’ Neither did Pa.” (**page 56**) Consider Ma and Pa’s attitudes throughout the story. How did they react to Jerry’s illness? What strengths did each of them have?

In chapter 14, Jerry writes about a favorite high school teacher, Mr. Wright. How did this teacher impact Jerry’s high school experience? Did you have a teacher who was a positive influence on your years in school?

\*Prepared by DeForest Area Public Library



Would you consider Jerry's life successful in spite of his illness? Why?

Describe what you liked or disliked about Jerry's writing style.

Jerry returned to school and work on the farm about 3 months after his polio diagnosis. What everyday activities did he struggle with? How did he compensate?

Here's a sampling of Herman Apps' advice for Jerry:

**Page 129**

"Do the best you can with what you've got."

**Page 130**

"Good enough is never good enough."

**Page 84**

"Sometimes it's best to let the dust settle before saying or doing anything."

**Page 57**

"Don't want to put anybody out by having them wait for you."

**Page 133**

"Whatever you do, don't brag. Nobody likes a bragger. Let your actions speak for you."

How did Jerry's father's simple values shape his life?

Think about instances in the book where Jerry had interactions with other people or a group of people. How did they treat Jerry? Was anyone overly nice to him because of his disability? Did anyone make fun of him or did they treat him like an average guy?

Poliomyelitis is a viral disease that can affect the central nervous system and lead to partial or full paralysis and death. What did you know about polio before reading this book? Did you learn any facts you weren't aware of previously?

Did you know?

- Actor Donald Sutherland says he developed his love of reading while bedridden with polio.
- Michael Jackson's mother, Katherine got polio as a baby and still walks with a limp.
- Actor Alan Alda contracted polio in the 1940s when he was seven years old.
- Violinist Itzhak Perlman contracted polio at the age of four. He uses braces and crutches to walk.
- Film director Francis Ford Coppola was confined to his bed for more than a year with polio.

Do you personally know of anyone who had polio? How did that person cope with the illness?