

Doctor, Rotarian, Gives Medical 'Progress Report'



Dr. Thurman Shuller

Dr. Thurman Shuller, a long-time Rotarian, gave us a look at the medical profession from the early 1900s until today, on April 25.

In his program, Thurman pointed out that early-day physicians in this area could treat a disease, but could not cure it, because there were no medicines yet to cure diseases.

In an old medical book dated 1855, there was no mention of germs. Doctors did not sterilize their instruments because they did not know about germs. It was the early 1920s that pasteurization was first used and that water treatment began.

Thurman confided that he was born in 1914, and the rate of deaths in children was expected to be high. His mother had eight children and lost two. A neighbor had nine children and lost three. The doctor said he had whooping cough as an infant, and most children with whooping cough died if they were under one year old.

His mother had typhoid fever when he was a youngster. Doctors then knew how it spread, and gave a shot, but there was nothing to cure it, he recalled.

When his brother, Dr. E. H. Shuller, moved to McAlester in 1931, he treated diseases the first eight years and made patients "feel better," but could not cure them.

When Thurman graduated from medical school and served his internship in New Orleans, they had sulfanilamide. It was also available in World War II.

Doctors' offices were downtown in McAlester until the McAlester Clinic opened in 1936. The town at that time had St. Mary's Hospital and Albert Pike.

When Thurman came to McAlester, he had two seersucker suits, but they hung in his closet unworn. Doctors in those days did not wear ties or coats.

In 1948, doctors made a lot of house calls. Their charge was \$3. So the young Dr. Shuller carried dollar bills in his pocket, to make change.

Thurman was on the board of McAlester General Hospital when it was organized in 1950. At a board meeting that year they argued for an hour about raising the room rate at the hospital from \$4 to \$5 a day.

He remembered that he had one case at that time, that he could not diagnose. He said Dr. Stough told him it was Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever. Thurman was not familiar with it, and said it did not respond to any available antibiotic.

"Those who lived," who had the disease, lost the skin tissue over their joints. The family of the 9-year-old child "left her," for four months and Thurman continued to change her bandages every day.

Later, there was a pre-prescription drug on the market which would cure the disease, he recalled.

In 1941, his nephew died of acute rheumatic fever. But soon after he went into practice here, a 10-year-old girl with rheumatic fever was treated and recovered, because there was a cure then. She later married a doctor, Thurman recalled.

Soon a Typhoid Fever immunization was developed and it was given to children, later with a Diphtheria shot, and still later, with a Hepatitis immunization.

There were still few virus shots for children, and "Dr. Thurman" deliberately exposed his two youngest children to Chicken Pox, as an immunization method. He said they were pre-school age, and they would not miss two or three weeks of school if they got the diseases later.

This was the time before the polio immunization, and during that period, some 50 years ago, Thurman said he personally diagnosed 55 cases of polio.

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Members Hear Reports On Baseball And Track

Club members got a report on the McAlester High School track and baseball teams last week, from Coaches Kevin Harmon and Richard Carney.

The boys' Buffalo Track Team won at Regionals, last weekend. And the Baseball Team beat Tulsa Hale, 14-0.

McAlester's Baseball Buffaloes had two home runs in the same inning, and had nine players walked, Harmon said.

The team was going to Regional competition the past weekend, and has gone to state 13 times in a row.

The Girls' Track Team placed third at Regionals. The top three in each event will go to state at Tulsa.

Carney said that 50 students are our for track.

Coach Harmon came here in 1990 and Carney returned here in 1994.



"PARTNERS"—Dr. Thurman Shuller had praise for his wife, Joan, for her help during his years of medical practice.



McAlester Coaches Richard Carney, left, and Kevin Harmon
(Photo by George Lampton.)

Governor Tells Meeting Of Railway Plans

Gov. Brad Henry said at a joint civic club meeting here that the state "is working" on a plan for the state to buy a section of railroad line between McAlester and Shawnee.

Rotary joined Lions Club members and area lawyers for the Law Day luncheon May 1 at the Masonic Temple. Governor Henry said the 66 miles of railroad line could be used to help economic development in both cities. It belongs to the Union Pacific Railroad, which no longer uses it.

Henry is from Shawnee, and said he remembers coming to McAlester as a youngster, to eat Italian food.

The governor said Sen. Richard Lerblance is helping with the rail project, along with U.S. Sen. Tom Coburn and David Donoley of the A-OK Railroad, based at Wilburton.

Governor Henry also talked about education and the law profession.



HEALTH SCREENING

Sharon Dustin, a certified Health Services Coordinator told us April 18 about six health screenings being offered in McAlester. The screenings were to detect future possible health problems. All six cost \$179

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During that epidemic, Thurman said his wife, Joan called his office and said one of their children had a fever, and she was worried about the possibility of polio. Thurman was tied up with appointments, and said his "nervous system got the best of him," before he could get home to check on the child.

The Salk vaccine controlled the polio outbreaks.

The doctor said he never refused to treat a patient due to inability to pay.

Hospitals have made "tremendous progress" and he commended the local hospital for its progress.

After his retirement, people "come up and say, 'You took care of my children,'" and one woman gave him "a big bear hug, he said. But

Kiamichi Tech Students Honored

Samantha Warcup and Marla Riddle are the top students at the Kiamichi Technology Center for this semester. Both were introduced to club members by their instructor, John Johnston. Ms. Riddle served seven years in the military and is studying in the Network System. Ms. Warcup is in Drafting and Design.

Second Reading

Second reading was held last week for Evans McBride, executive vice-president at the First National Bank and Trust Co.



THE BLUES BROTHERS?

At least that is what they looked like when these Rotarians competed in the McAlester Chamber of Commerce membership drive. However, they did not perform at the meeting.

(Photo by George Lampton.)

it means they "appreciated it," he added.

Thurman said he "lived through the Depression and a war" and was "on call 24 hours a day," his first 20 years here. But he still considers that time as "the Golden Years for practicing medicine."

Today, when people apply for work, "the first thing they ask" is what the pay is and then how much time they will have off.

The doctor also said that insurance has become such a big matter, than they "must be paid before we get paid.

He closed with praise for his wife. She has been his partner and "enabler," he said.

When he proposed to her, he said he told her his patients would come first. "But she still said yes."

Thurman was club president in 1964-65.

Attendance, Visitors, and Handshakers

Last week there were 60 in attendance. John Johnston, Kiamichi Technology Center instructor, was here to introduce the top students from the Vo-Tech School. Jane Smith, daughter of John Tua, was his guest. Billy Holt, Athletic Director at the high school, was a guest of Lucy Smith. Katie Peters was a guest of Iva Due. Evans McBride was a guest of Roi Nelson. Pat Layden was one of the Blues Brothers.

On April 25, there were 50 in attendance. Joan Shuller was a guest of Thurman, who was our speaker. Chattie Hewitt was a guest of Thurman. Evans McBride was a guest of Bruce Hall. Matt Shumway was with Brent Yates. Lenard Rhone was a guest of Shayne Javersak.

On April 18, there were 51 present. Lavon Williams was a visiting Rotarian from Poteau. Evans McBride was a guest of Bruce Hall.

HANDSHAKERS-Shirley Fleming gave the dollar to Dick Dudley on April 25, and the women have been trying to get it back ever since. Brett Smith gave it to Doug Helt the week before and Tim Whipps gave it to Judge Bland, so he could investigate what the women are doing with all that money.