



7-15-1982

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Recommended Citation

Gravley, Ernestine (1982) "The Newman Dynasty," *Westview*: Vol. 1 : Iss. 4 , Article 5.
Available at: <https://dc.swosu.edu/westview/vol1/iss4/5>

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THE NEWMAN DYNASTY

— Ernestine Gravley

The Diamond Jubilee of Oklahoma has another meaning in Shattuck: 75 years of powerful Newman influence.

The recent passing of Dr. Haskell Newman marked an era of family strength and public service unparalleled in western Oklahoma history. The Newman Memorial Hospital and Medical Center, Shattuck's largest employer and single greatest claim to fame, is still and always the very heart of this town.

People within a 200-mile radius say the tradition will never die, particularly since a third generation Newman doctor opened his practice only months ago. Dr. Robert "Bob" Newman, son of Dr. Floyd Newman, took the family medical reins only a few weeks after his uncle, affectionately known as "Dr. Hack," died of cancer. Shattuck folk breathe easier knowing there is another Newman around.

Dr. Bob admits that the high expectations he will face are quite a challenge these days. It's a matter of what he calls "styles of doctoring" established by his forebears. Dr. Haskell Newman was the last survivor of three physician brothers whose famed father, Dr. Oscar C. Newman, founded the institution in 1907. To them all, personal attention to each patient was a must. Dr. Hack paid a daily visit to every patient in the 114-bed hospital even after he retired because of failing health.

"My father was second only to the Great Healer," Dr. Haskell told me several years ago. "Dad always told us boys that love and caring were as vital to healing as the scientific practice of medicine."

Like his Uncle Haskell, Dr. Bob is an outstanding urologist. "Actually, I'm the only urologist between Enid and Amarillo. Patients were lined up waiting for weeks before I opened for practice."

It is partly Shattuck's geographical location in the midst of Western Oklahoma a long distance from large cities or other major health-care facilities that made Newman Memorial an important regional hospital.

"Location was certainly not the only factor," Dr. Newman declares. He credits the concern of his father, uncles, and grandfather to attract only the best available physicians as the reason the hospital is a nationally known medical center.

Patients come to this "Little Mayo of the West" from Southwest Kansas, Southeast Colorado, Northeast New Mexico, Northwest Texas, and all parts of Oklahoma.

Don J. Conroy, the hospital administrator, told a reporter, "We are the regional medical center for Western Oklahoma. And the whole thing revolves around the Newmans."

What kind of giants are the Newmans? Why was Dr. O. C. Newman — patriarch, counselor, physician, husband and father — a giant among men?

Oscar Newman, an Ohio boy born in 1876, performed his first appendectomy on a chloroformed hound dog

while a pre-med student at the University of the South, Tennessee, in the majestic Cumberland Mountains.

How did an Ohio boy, a graduate from medical school in Tennessee become a confirmed Oklahoman? An uncle, Dr. A. M. Newman of Canadian, Texas, asked Oscar to "journey into our fresh new country this summer. Once here, I believe you will agree that the opportunities for a young doctor are endless in the wide open spaces of the West."

The uncle took Oscar to the village of Grand in Day County, Oklahoma. The entire population of the county was 350. This was a part of the Cheyenne-Arapaho lands arranged by treaty signed at Medicine Lodge, Kansas, on October 28, 1867. The Indian tribes accepted their lands in severalty in 1890. In 1893, the Cherokee outlet was thrown open for homesteading on 160-acre tracts. Each settler was required to "prove up" the land by establishing residence and cultivating the soil.

Young Newman was impressed to find people of varying backgrounds from all parts of the country living here together on an equal social status. There was no doctor in all of Day County, later to become a part of present-day Ellis County. In May, 1900 he settled in Grand where the prairie teemed with new life. The cottonwoods rustled gently in the wind as it whipped unabated across the plain. Here and there, young children gazed at strangers passing their dugouts and sod shanties. There was neither house nor fence between Grand and Gage, O.T.

Oscar "lived in embarrassment" at Mother Walck's Hotel because he had no money for room and board. A neighbor loaned the new doctor a sprightly bronc named Frog to ride the wide plains on house calls. He worked at many menial side jobs to keep body and soul together.

In 1901, a smallpox epidemic struck Eller Flat and Hackberry, west of the Antelope Hills, and swept the countryside. The county allowed Doctor a dollar for each vaccination and at the close of the epidemic he was paid \$250 in a lump sum. It was fortune! He paid his landlady \$152 and then rode old Frog to Higgins, Texas, to pay his patient drug bill of \$53.

There were no bridges for many miles around in the Territory and in East Texas. Doctor made his horseback calls over almost impassable roads and across flood-swollen streams. The treacherous South Canadian was a constant challenge with its raging high water, tricky quicksand bars, and breaks through the ice in winter. A man of less courage could not have braved the deprivation and suffering of a raw, new frontier, to become a legend.

Doctor had a six-by-twelve office at the end of a store building which doubled as sleeping quarters at night. One day, a hunter who had accidentally shot off the end of a finger found Doctor in his underdrawers mending his worn-out and only pair of trousers. At that time, several hundreds of dollars were owed to him by people who could never pay.

Dr. Newman met and married Miss Della Smith in the summer of 1902. They settled in a two-room cabin with a lean-to shed in Grand, Oklahoma, "the grandest place on earth," he often said.

After Doctor became a family man, he was often paid for professional services with slabs of salt pork, fresh garden produce in season, even a tender young cottontail for a platter of fried rabbit for Sunday dinner.

The first son, Roy Ellsworth Newman, was born September 18, 1903. The following year, the citizens of Day County raised money for their doctor to take post-graduate work at the University of Ohio. The family went along to get acquainted with his relatives in that state. During mid-term break, January 20, 1906, Floyd Smith Newman was born. That summer, the Newmans returned to their friends at Grand.

The settlement of Shattuck a few miles north was a thriving frontier town on the Santa Fe railway. Doctor dreamed of a hospital there and in 1908, he formed a partnership with Dr. George W. Wallace for what became the Northwest Sanitarium.

The third son, Meshech Haskell Newman, was born September 20, 1907, and that fall Oscar loaded all his professional worldly effects in the back of his buggy and moved his family to Shattuck. Shortly after, the South Canadian swelled in "the terrible flood of 1908" and washed away a chunk of old Grand. The town faded away.

O. C. Newman bought a family home in 1909, and there he lived for some fifty years — the remainder of his life.

The Northwest Sanitarium failed because people would go to the hospital only as a last resort. One went to the hospital only to die, they believed. The nearest hospital was now in Wichita, Kansas, and Doctor was the only surgeon over a very large area. He delivered babies and performed operations on kitchen tables. Many times the only fuel for heat was damp broomcorn seed, and the only water secured by melting snow in vessels on the wood stove. Surgical instruments were processed in a portable sterilizer set on the kitchen stove.

For surgery, a room in the patient's home was cleared of all furnishings, a folding operating table set up, the patient anesthetized, and the surgery proceeded under ordinary lights.

Often as not, people could not pay, but Doctor never refused a call, whatever the weather or distance, regardless of how much sleep he had lost or how he felt. During flu epidemics, whole families would be in bed and Doctor would double as errand boy. At one home, after ministering to their needs, Newman picked up milk buckets, went to the barn, and milked several cows by hand before going on to the next call. Far from an isolated incident, this type of service was a regular part of his life.

Babies seemed to choose the worst of all weather to be born. Once, when snowdrifts were deep and business at a standstill in Shattuck, Doctor was called to deliver a baby 25 miles southwest, over on Commission Creek.

"Get out the car, John," Doctor told his young driver. "Take a good strong snow shovel. We're on our way." Across fields and pastures they plowed their way, scooping snow at fence lines. Doctor had not been to bed for 36 hours, and each time they got stuck, John noticed it seemed to please him. Newman would slide down into the coyote fur coat he was wearing and sleep soundly until the young man dug out. When they started to move

again, Doctor would light up a cigar and stare moodily through the front of the tin lizzie.

Six hours later, the baby was delivered and Doctor charged no fee. "Those people are poor as church mice," he told John on the way back to Shattuck. Young John Barcafer would not permit Doctor to pay him for the trip, either. Newman had a way of bringing out the best in people by the inspiration of his own unselfish dedication.

On one occasion during the Northwest Sanitarium period, he headed for Canadian, Texas, after a heavy snowfall, taking Louise Cramer, superintendent of nurses and Opal Booth Karn, R.N. The road east of Higgins was drifted full and several times, the car had to be towed.

The three had a hot noon meal with Dr. Caldwell, then started operating. That afternoon, Dr. Newman performed a Caesarian section, a hemorrhoidectomy, and four tonsillectomies before hitting the drifts for home. Arriving in Shattuck about ten in the evening, he drove the nurses home and then made his hospital rounds before seeking his own bed.

In 1913, the Newmans scraped together money for two months training in newer surgical methods at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota. Each year from then until his death, O. C. spent several weeks at Mayo's — 32 times in all.

In the fall of 1916 when a small boy was hit in the head with a twelve-pound iron shot-put ball, Doctor performed a touch-and-go operation in the home, removing fragments of bone from the brain. The boy recovered completely, but Doctor swore to redouble his efforts to open a hospital in Shattuck.

The old hospital known a decade earlier as Northwest Sanitarium was reopened in 1920. Several of the former hospital staff joined Newman and stayed through the years at Newman Memorial Hospital and Clinic until their retirements. Patronage increased and in 1927, a 39-room fireproof building was erected without wards. "Even poor folks appreciate a private room," Doctor said. "Why should they feel any different from anyone else?"

Roy, Floyd, and Haskell were earnest in their goals to practice medicine. Not only did they become doctors and specialists in varying fields — they came home to join their father's staff where all stayed to practice their entire lives.

Roy earned his B.A. at the University of Oklahoma, attended medical school at Baylor University, and got his M.D. in 1932. Post-graduate work was done at Cook County Medical School in Chicago, at Washington University in St. Louis, and at Mayo's. His specialty was in Pediatrics. Dr. Roy served his internship at Missouri Methodist Hospital in St. Joseph.

Floyd's education and training were completed at University of Oklahoma, Westminster College for Men at Fulton, Missouri, Baylor at Dallas, and the University of Tennessee. He served his internship at Muhlenberg Hospital in Plainview, N.J., and took post-graduate work at Columbia University. His specialization was in eye, ear, nose, and throat.

Dr. Haskell went to Westminster College for Men,

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followed by pre-med at Baylor. He received his medical degree from the University of Tennessee in 1932. He took his wife and two sons to Florida where he served his internship in the Duvall County Hospital in Jacksonville. At the age of 33, "Dr. Hack" received his Fellowship in the American College of Surgeons. His specialty was in Urology and general surgery.

While the sons prepared themselves in medicine, the father, O. C. Newman, kept the hospital at Shattuck operating smoothly. From 1929 to 1935, the Great Depression Years, Western Oklahoma was in the Dust Bowl. Patients had little money and during this period, Newman charged off a quarter-million dollars of unpaid bills for the people of his area.

Always philosophical, Dr. O. C. frequently injected dry humor into relations with his patients. There was the time when a doctor from Perryton, Texas, sent a patient to him. The Shattuck physician found gallbladder disease with stones in both bladder and common duct. He recommended immediate surgery.

The patient's husband hesitated, shook his head slowly and said, "Well, Doc, I think we'll go to the Mayo Clinic for this operation."

What the man did not know was that Doctor had declined a recent offer to join Mayo's surgical staff. Doctor's expression did not change as he remarked, "Well, they're good, too."

By 1935, all the sons were back practicing medicine in the Shattuck Hospital and on January 12, 1937, the four Newman doctors became equal partners. Soon after, the Newman Clinic was added to the complex. More additions were completed in 1947 and in 1956. In 1949, the Newman Memorial Foundation was formed and the hospital given to the City of Shattuck. The following year, 30,000 patients registered at the clinic alone.

The hospital of Doctor O. C.'s dreams became a reality in his day.

He served many years on the State Board of Medical Examiners. He received a Fellowship in the American College of Surgeons. At the time he was inducted into the Oklahoma State Hall of Fame in 1943, a Tulsa reporter who described him as "an erect, sparkling, kindly eyed little man" also wrote:

"Dr. Newman, legend has it, is the nucleus of Shattuck, that small Western Oklahoma town from which he hails and which he has made famous. 'Doc came first,' grin his cronies. The hotels and business houses sprang up to take care of his patients and the town just grew."

A medical reporter wrote in the DAILY OKLAHOMAN about that time: "Of the three cities in Oklahoma accredited by the Joint Hospital Commission to perform open heart surgery, one is Shattuck, population 1,500. The other two, of course, are Oklahoma City and Tulsa. The small-town hospital is supremely equipped."

The institution has undergone numerous building programs and expansions through the years. The Newman Memorial Hospital and Medical Center of the 1980's stands as a humanitarian contribution to Western Oklahoma unequalled in the Cheyenne-Arapaho country so loved by the Newman family.

ILLUSTRATION BY LINDA FICKLING



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