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**THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF DR. RUSSELL R. RUDD
(1898-1998): FROM MEMOIRS WRITTEN IN 1989**

CHAPTER II

When I was young, I was a boy scout under the leadership of Lewis Weeks. One day he said to me, "Russell, you are the only boy scout in my troop who is not a church member. I wish you would consider becoming affiliated with some church." That made a good impression on me so I brought it up at the dinner table that night. My mother was a strong believer in the "hard-shell" Baptist religion in the McConnell, Tennessee vicinity near Sandy Branch. She wasn't too pleased when I expressed my desire to become a member of the Missionary Baptist Church as there were some conflicting doctrines between the "hard-shelled" Baptists and the Missionary Baptists.

When I explained the situation to my father, he immediately contacted the minister of the Missionary Baptist Church, and I was baptized the following Sunday. Not just to be like the other boy scouts, but my whole life was turned around because of the good influence of my scout master. I was ordained a deacon shortly after becoming a member of the church. I was in my early twenties at the time.

Times were hard in those days. The Great Depression was gripping the whole nation. My father was a struggling physician himself, but he had sacrificed and managed to put me through medical school. My allowance was only fifteen dollars a week and that had to cover all my expenses. I did my own laundry and ate five-cent hamburgers, cheese and crackers or a bowl of soup. Sometimes I would splurge a little and buy myself a five-cent bottle of Coca Cola.

My mother realized how hard it was for my father to get up fifteen dollars a week and for that reason only, she was against my going to

medical school. But father told me to go ahead. He would manage
some way.

My father asked me one day which I had rather be when I grew up, a
farmer or a doctor. My reply was, "Well, I don't want to be a farmer
because I tried to plow a few days ago while I was visiting my friend Paul
Turbeville, and I couldn't hold the plow in the ground. It went in all
directions so I don't think farming is for me. If I had to make a choice, I
think I would choose the medical profession, but I've got plenty of time,
for after all, you are working and mother is a dressmaker. You both keep
food on the table, so why should I concern myself with such trivial matters
right now?"

Father's answer was "Son, as long as your mother and I live, we will
help you, but there will come a time when we won't be around, and that's
the reason we want you to go to school, get a good education, and learn
how to take care of yourself."

Mother died in 1938 and father died in 1946. I have been on my
own ever since, and my father's words have stayed with me throughout my
life. My father was a good influence on me, and whatever success I have
achieved I owe to my parents for instilling in me the desire to learn and to
make something worthwhile out of my life.

When I boarded the train for Cincinnati, Lee Roberts, fire chief for
the Fulton Fire Department, was on the same train. He and his wife were
attending a convention at Louisville. I had been working with the Fulton
Fire Department prior to entering medical school. When the train stopped
in Louisville, I had to stay overnight before going on to my destination in
Cincinnati. Mr. Roberts went with me to the fire station and asked them if
they would let me sleep in the fire station that night. He explained to them

that I had worked for him as a fireman and was on my way to enter medical school. He knew I couldn't afford a hotel room.

They let me stay there that night. They gave me a cot near the hole in the floor where a pipe ran down to the first floor and told me in case of a fire call, I was to grab that pipe and slide down fast. Luckily, there was no fire call that night. They served me a nice breakfast, and I boarded the next train.

When I arrived at the medical college in Cincinnati, my first assignment was to go to the basement, get a dead body, and carry it from the basement to the sixth floor. Another freshman was sent with me. There was this long pole with a hook on one end to retrieve the bodies with. I took hold of the pole and secured a female corpse, but because it had a gangrene leg, the other pre-med student told me to leave that one and select another. We then pulled a black male corpse out onto the floor, washed him off with a hose, then crammed him into a wicker basket and carried him up six flights of steep steps to the anatomy study room.

We were given a jar of Vaseline and some bandages. We had to rub Vaseline all over the dead body and then wrap the bandages around it to soften the skin. We were told not to dissect anything without knowing exactly what we were cutting.

Our anatomy teacher was a stern, tough, "no-nonsense" teacher named Nunnemaker. Before becoming a doctor, we had to pass Dr. Nunnemaker's inspection and that in itself was a big order.

I slept with my book. I would study until I fell asleep. I would take a short nap, then start studying again. I studied so hard and for such long hours at a time that the leaves came loose in my book and I would have to bind it with adhesive tape.

Our instructor in the dissecting room informed us one day that we would have to dissect all the tissue from the cadavers he had assigned us before we could go home for the Christmas holidays. I told my roommate I was going to take a man's head home with me and study it at home. I wrapped some brown paper around it and stuck it under my arm and started home with it. He wrapped the arm in brown paper, but just as we were about to leave, a gust of wind blew through the open window, blowing the papers off the body parts we had planned to take home with us.

The landlady came up to our room at about that time. The dead man's head was looking at her through the open door, and his arm was stretched out toward her. She screamed and ran back down six flights of steps!

One day in class, I was called on to describe the "lymphatic system of the body" in the presence of Dr. Nunnemaker. I had to stand by his chair and talk for forty-five minutes. Dr. Nunnemaker was in charge of anatomy. The other students had warned me about how hard it was to pass in his class. He taught from *Gray's Anatomy*, and we had to pass Nunnemaker before we could get our diplomas.

We had a nice bunch of boys in our class and they were all pulling for me when I got up to speak. My knees were shaking so bad I could hardly stand on my feet, but I sort of balanced myself against his chair and proceeded with my speech. When the class was over, we all went downstairs to the locker room. One of the boys said to me, "You did real well, Russell. You knocked old Nunnemaker cold with your speech." We looked around and there stood Dr. Nunnemaker. He had followed us and had heard every word. He just smiled and walked out of the room.

Our professor also taught anatomy at embalming school. Now, he wouldn't speak to any of us as individuals. If we spoke to him by name, he

"I never did see that ball!" to which I replied, "That's because it was a smoke ball."

The night before final exams, I went upstairs to my room to study over some of the questions. We were given 200 questions to study with only two days to learn them. I studied these questions feverishly until about 2 a.m., when I fell asleep. When I woke up, it was about 7 a.m. and I heard people walking around downstairs. I got up and hurried down to join them. One of the doctors asked me if I was going to take the final exam. I replied, "Yes, sir." Next, he told me to write "Number 16" on all my papers instead of my name. When I finished the exam, I was so nervous, I thought surely I had failed to answer all 200 questions correctly. We had to wait a whole month to find out if we had passed our final exams or not. To my surprise, I passed my State Board exam along with the other successful students in my class.

When I graduated from Union University in 1925, no one came to my graduation. When I graduated from medical school in Cincinnati, Ohio, in 1928, again no one came to my graduation. I brought my diplomas home, had them framed, and hung them on the wall in my office where they are still hanging today. I practiced in Kentucky for one year; next I obtained my medical license to practice in Tennessee. I also obtained my narcotics license and all other professional licenses essential in 1928.

I was gone from home studying for eight years, eleven months out of twelve for three years. Professor Cheek never thought I could pass my high school requirements. But after my man-to-man talk with Major Irwin, I was able to graduate from Columbia Military Academy in 1921; Union University in 1925; Cincinnati Medical College in 1928; pass my Kentucky State Medical Board exams in 1928; receive my narcotics license

Police cars were parked all around the house, and before I knew what they were doing, one policeman approached me with a gun in his hand and asked me what I was doing. I said, "I'm trying to deliver a baby." He then escorted the two women out of the room and left me alone with the patient. I had to give her the anesthesia with one hand and deliver the baby with my other hand. I believe, except for the three of us, that policeman cleared everyone else out of that place.

I cleaned the baby up and did everything else except cook breakfast, which I couldn't do there. There wasn't any food in the house after the woman and her newborn were moved to a rundown shack in the slums. I reported the case when I returned to the school and provisions were sent to help the new mother and her child.

Dr. Welker's wife invited me to their house for dinner the next day and from then on, when I was sent out to deliver a baby, she accompanied me. She would take me in her car. I would deliver the baby, but she did all the paperwork.

In our senior year at medical school it was customary for the juniors to give us a party. The first thing we did was have a baseball game with the juniors playing against the seniors. I was the catcher. We were one run ahead. The pitcher gave me the ball and told me to go through the motion as if I had caught it. He would then throw the ball back to me in the same manner. We let the umpire in on our little secret and told him if he would let us get away with it, we would get him a pass to the party. He agreed.

The pitcher took his place at the mound, and the batter took his position. I got down behind the batter. The pitcher pretended to throw the ball to me. I pretended to throw the ball back to him. The umpire yelled, "Three strikes and you're out!" The batter looked at me and complained,

"I never did see that ball!" to which I replied, "That's because it was a smoke ball."

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the same year, pass my Tennessee Medical Board exams in 1929 and receive my license to practice in that state the same year.

After graduating from medical school, I returned to Fulton and began practicing medicine in the same office with my father. Father built the first hospital in Fulton, Kentucky. It was a three-story building. We lived on the first floor and kept patients on the second and third floors. [See pp. 69, 74, Vol. XXX, *Journal*, JPHS for photos of 222 Commercial Avenue.] I was born in that house ninety years ago, and I am still living in the same house. The top floor of the house was destroyed by fire in 1913. Father then turned it into an apartment house.

Not long after I began to practice medicine in Fulton-South Fulton, George Allen called me to treat his bird dog. I informed him that I was not a veterinarian, but he insisted, saying because the vet was out of town, he feared for the dog's life unless something was done for him really soon. When I arrived at the Alley house, I found out that a neighbor had thrown some biscuits over the fence to the dog with strychnine sprinkled on them. I then drove to the vet's office, where the doctor's wife gave me a hypodermic syringe and needle with some liquid sleeping medicine that her husband used for treating poisoned dogs. I had never given a dog a shot so I just sort of guessed at where to stick the needle. Luckily, I hit the right spot. The dog stopped having convulsions almost immediately. I laid him over by the heater, where he went to sleep. The dog recovered. A few days later, George and his dog came by my house to give me some birds. George said, "My dog wanted to give you these birds for saving his life."

From Hickman, Kentucky, Dr. Curlin and a Dr. Neil came to Fulton to build a hospital shortly after my graduation from medical school. We also had three other hospitals here at that time: Fulton Hospital, Haws Hospital, and Jones Hospital.

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From Hickman, Kentucky, Dr. Curlin and a Dr. Neil came to Fulton to build a hospital shortly after my graduation from medical school. We also had three other hospitals here at that time: Fulton Hospital, Haws Hospital, and Jones Hospital.

I was asked to assist in all the hospitals. I gave anesthesia and assisted in obstetrics. Dr. Walters assisted in surgery at Jones Hospital. He was known as "the fast surgeon" because he could complete any operation in thirty minutes or even less time.

One day after surgery some twenty years later, I asked Dr. Walters if he could treat my virus infection that I developed while serving overseas in World War II. He replied, "No one can cure the kind of virus you have. It will outlive you. You will just have to learn to live with it." It comes on suddenly with cold chills and high fever. It attacks without warning two or three times a year. The only treatment that will stop the chills and fever and arrest the virus infection is a tetracycline injection.

When I have an attack, I take these injections, go to bed with a heating pad and sweat the chills and fever off, and by the next day, I feel fine. I get up and go on about my business for several months. Sometimes I will go for a whole year before having another attack.

Speaking of Dr. Walters as "the fast surgeon" is putting it mildly. One day while assisting him, I was watching the patient go from one stage of anesthesia to another, and when I thought she was ready for surgery to begin, I told Dr. Walters he could start surgery now. He looked at me and replied, "The surgery is already over. Mrs. Fairra Jones and I have finished, and we are ready to go home."

Fairra Jones was Dr. Alonzo Jones's wife. She was also a registered nurse and worked alongside her husband and assisted other doctors in whatever capacity she was needed.

Dr. Ward Bushart called me one day to the Fulton Hospital to help him. He had five women all in labor at the same time and needed me. I rushed to the hospital and took over one of the patients. Dr. Ward took one, Dr. Glenn took one, and Dr. R.L. (their father) took the other two.

With the assistance of Jeri Braswell, R.N. (and Mrs. Kirby, R.N.), we delivered all five babies in a matter of hours. I told the nurse to be sure to leave each baby in the room with its mother. I had seen too many cases of babies being mixed up.

A week or two later, I had five teenage girls who were all in labor at the same time. Not one of them was married, four little white girls and one little black girl. I hoped I could get the same doctors Dr. Ward Bushart got to help him, but I couldn't find any of them.

Mrs. Braswell, in charge of the Fulton Hospital at that time, was looking down the stairs as I came walking up the stairs with these five behind me, ready for delivery.

"Mrs. Braswell, I have girls in labor."

"Doctor, can you deliver five girls at the same time?"

"I don't know," I had to admit.

She put the girls to bed and asked Mrs. Kirby and me to get dressed to go to the delivery room. Mrs. Kirby and I had delivered many babies as a team because we worked well together.

Mrs. Braswell rolled one girl in and Mrs. Kirby and I delivered the baby. "Mrs. Kirby," I said, "that's one down and four to go."

About then Mrs. Braswell rolled in the next girl, and we delivered her baby. "That's two down and only three to go," I said.

A few minutes later Mrs. Braswell rolled the third girl in, and Mrs. Kirby and I delivered a third baby: "Only two to go," I counted.

Mrs. Braswell rolled in the fourth girl, and we delivered her. Finally Mrs. Braswell rolled in the last girl, whose baby Mrs. Kirby and I delivered.

All the white girls would give their babies up for adoption. I asked the little black girl what she planned to do with her baby. She said she was going to take it home with her "and play with it."

But most babies in those days were delivered at home. I delivered many babies around Dukedom, Tennessee. Dukedom was nine miles from Fulton, and for the most part, it was "a nine-mile mud hole" for there were no graveled or paved roads in those days.

I owned a six-cylinder Chevrolet with a rumble seat. I would stop at the edge of town and put on my chains before attempting to drive through those nine miles of muddy road on a rainy day. One day my chains came off, and I was stranded about halfway between Fulton and Dukedom. A man came by driving a log wagon with a team of mules. He pulled me out of the deep mud hole and asked me where I was going. I told him I was trying to go to Dukedom to deliver a baby. He said, "What kind of time are you making in your car?" I told him about five miles an hour and asked him what kind of time was he making in his log wagon. He replied, "About five miles an hour." He then asked me if I was going to deliver a Kentucky baby or a Tennessee baby. I said, "A Tennessee baby--Why?" He then asked me how much I got paid for delivering a Tennessee baby. I told him I got paid eight dollars.

He said, "How much do you get paid for delivering a Kentucky baby?" I told him twelve dollars. He asked why Kentucky babies pay more than Tennessee babies, and I said, "I really don't know, unless Kentucky babies are higher-priced than Tennessee babies." Tennessee welfare paid us only eight dollars, and even then we had to outrun the doctor to the house in order to deliver a baby. Kentucky welfare paid four dollars more for the same kind of home delivery. Doctors today at hospitals get a thousand dollars and won't even shake hands with the ladies who are having

babies for eight dollars. [In the early 1970s Dr. Rudd told Walter Haden he and his father were often paid for their services in barter: "We worked for peanuts, chickens or at best a pork shoulder where there was no welfare payment available."]

Another time I was called to Dukedom to see a patient. The caller didn't tell me it was a labor case. I stopped by the fire station and asked a young man if he would go with me. He said, "Sure, I'll be glad to go with you. I don't have anything better to do." A big fat boy in his early teens, he answered to the nickname "Fats."

When we arrived in Dukedom and I found out it was a labor case, I told Fats to stay in the kitchen and keep the coffee hot for we might be here all night. Because Fats didn't know how to fire the cookstove correctly, he caught the house on fire. He stuck his head in at the door where I was and yelled, "The house is on fire!"

People began gathering to help put out the fire. One was drawing water from a well and filling a barrel; the others were dipping buckets into the barrel and passing them to the people who threw water on the house until the fire was extinguished.

In the meantime, my patient was in the last stages of labor. She had a very hard labor. We were there all night. When it was all over, Fats said, "Dr. Rudd, please don't ever ask me to go with you again."

During the Depression years, many people were unable to pay rent for houses to live in. Some were allowed to live in the stables at the fairgrounds. I would go to the stables and deliver babies. I remember one of my professors in medical school telling me, "Russell, you can't do two things at the same time." But one day, while I was at the fairgrounds delivering a baby, the World Series ballgames were going on and were being broadcast over the radio. I ran my Model T Ford into a stall, turned

my radio on, walked into the stable and delivered a baby. That made two things I was doing at the same time. I had outsmarted my professor, I chuckled to myself.

I delivered nine babies for the same family over the years they lived in a stable at the fairgrounds. They used the manger for a baby bed, and the walls were covered with cardboard, so Jesus wasn't the only baby laid in a manger.

Not one mother or child became infected with any kind of infection caused by neglect or lack of proper equipment. No doctor was ever sued for malpractice because the doctors back then were more conscientious than some are today. Many modern-day physicians see "\$" instead of human beings, and patients in hospitals today are recognized by their numbers instead of their names.

I was called to the Fulton Hospital one day to administer anesthesia to a patient who was having surgery. I walked upstairs and asked Dr. Ward Bushart where the patient was. He said, "In there" and pointed to a certain room. I said, "But doctor, there's no one in there, but a little baby and he replied, "That's the patient." It was a one-week-old baby. I had never put a baby to sleep before, and I don't mind telling you, I dreaded that job. I said a little prayer and performed my duty. Dr. Ward performed the surgery and everything was okay, and then I whispered, "Thank you, Lord."

I also assisted Dr. M.W. Haws at Haws Hospital. We would go together oftentimes to make housecalls. We had a call to come to Obion River Bottom (better know as The Goose Pond) to deliver a baby. This particular area was also known as Black Wood Swamp. By the time we arrived, it was already getting dark. It was on a cold winter night, and we soon realized we were stuck there for the entire night for this was going to

be a long, slow, hard labor case. It was beginning to rain; then the rain turned into sleet and snow, and the temperature dropped 'way below zero.

Dr. Haws and I would take turns resting. He told me to go into the next room and go to bed first. I usually carried a flashlight with me, but that night I had forgotten and left it at home. When I had my flashlight with me, I would examine the bed for bugs before lying down on it, but that night I didn't and in just a few minutes, bedbugs were attacking me from every direction. I leaped out of bed and told Dr. Haws about the bed-bug situation. That was one night neither one of us got any sleep.

When I got home the next day, I was afraid to go to bed for fear I had brought some bedbugs home with me so I slept in the bathtub and wondered if those things might crawl out of the tub and work their way to our beds. I took a hot soapy bath and burned my clothes before I entered the rest of the house.

One day while I was at Jones Hospital, Dr. Jones remarked to me, "You know, I have been working with Dr. Jean Poe for several years now, and I have never heard him speak an unkind word about anyone." I jokingly told Dr. Poe what Dr. Jones said about him and asked him why he never talked about people. His reply was, "Well, for one thing, this town is too small. Bad news travels faster than good news. Most people in a small town are usually related to each other in one way or another, and if you talk about one, they will tell the other one."

My father was the only other person I ever knew who never talked about people in a derogatory manner. It seemed he could always think of something nice to say about everyone. One day I asked my father what he thought about the Devil. "Is he a good man?" I asked rather flippantly, testing father. Father gave me a hard look and said, "The Devil is a hard worker. Gossip is Satan's tool of destruction. The Bible teaches us to

bridle our tongue. We can't tame it, but we can bridle it if we really want to."

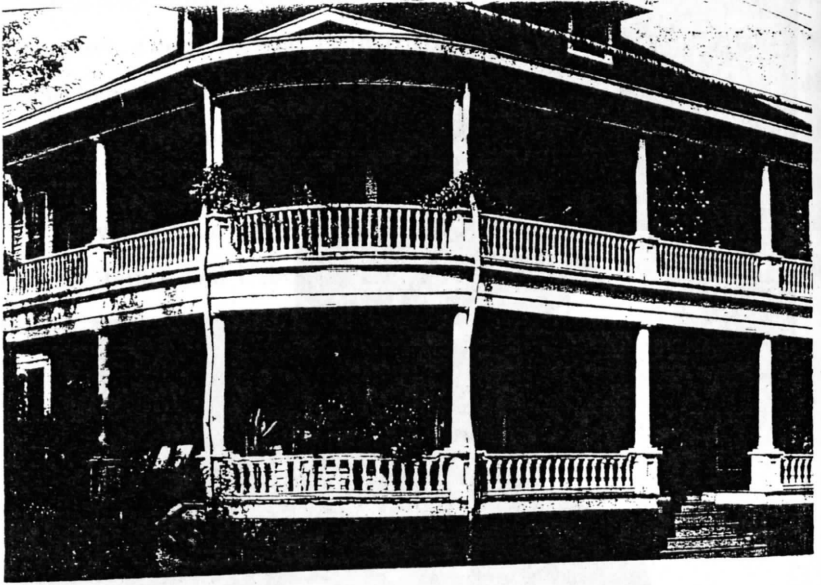
I married Frances Rice from Hickman, Kentucky, in 1929. We have one daughter, Carolyn, who is married to Leon Mann. We have two grandchildren: Randall Russell Mann, who is married to Karen Tokatch. They live in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Our granddaughter, Connie Frances is married to Brian Ray. They reside in Franklin, Tennessee.

I delivered over 1,000 babies, one set of triplets, and several sets of twins. My father and I, between us, brought over 2,000 babies into the world.





Dr. Russell Rudd as medical officer with the United States Army during World War II.



Dr. Rudd's home and office building, almost a century after its construction in 1904, at 222 Commercial Avenue, Fulton, Kentucky

NOTE: Dr. Rudd's daughter, Carolyn Rudd Mann of South Fulton, was given this picture by Benjamin Carr's granddaughter, of Memphis, Tennessee. She states that the house was built in 1905, when her father was 5 years old, and that the third story burned shortly after it was built. The house was also flooded the year after it was built, and was restored on a new brick foundation approximately 4 feet higher.