

Reflections of my Dad, The Country Doctor
and a Little History of Medicine in Arkansas

by Dr. Harold L. Boyer

(Speech transcribed from video at Retired Physicians Symposium)

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Well, first and foremost I would like to express my appreciation for all of you who have made the effort to be out here this morning. I have met a few of you over the years. A few have lived in Las Vegas. I'm sorry I have not been able to talk to all of you. But when Dr. Mashburn and I get started talking about images (?) in the Civil War, we take up a lot of time-sharing. I'll visit with you later.

You may know that we have had one doctor in Las Vegas, David Walker, the son of Judge Walker. There is another physician there who was the son of the man who ran the old hotel in Fayetteville. His first name was Tom. I can't remember his last name (From audience - Brunfield) Yes, Tom Brunfield. And then we have there a Dr. Hardy from Clarksville in Johnson County and he was president of our Part time Medical Society and president of our LV Out-of-State Medical Association. I spoke last night at (?) and named another one of a group of people who have been very prominent in Nevada. One is our present Governor Dr. Kenny Winn who was from southwest Arkansas. He tells me that when he was a youngster he worked in a hay field with his father and got one dollar day and one bale of hay and his father got two dollars a day and three bales of hay. One of the most prominent mayors we have had in Las Vegas is Oran (?) Rex, who was born in Mansfield, Arkansas. One of our recent presidents of the University of Nevada, the Running Rebels, is also from Arkansas, Dr. Mackey.(?) I just wanted you to know that Arkansans have participated a great extent in building up Las Vegas and Nevada and I could go on and name a few more.

Dr Hall has assigned a subject to me and I see it is the recollections of the doctor, my Dad and the evolution of certified physicians (?) and a brief history, and that is exactly what it is going to be.

My father born in Bethlehem in Johnson Co. His mother died when he was 8 years old of TB. She asked that he become a Physician and for that reason, he did. He was a member of a family of about 7. Went to Medical School at University of Arkansas from 1907 to 1911. Med schools in the United States were not rated as today. There were 3 med schools in Little Rock and the University was the one that remained. He was in med school at just beginning of a State Board examination for licensure. So he took one of first state boards. Others [practicing medicine] were still country physicians with maybe 2 years of med training, a few falsified physician that may have obtained licenses for widow of deceased doctors. But they were all country physicians.

One day on the sleeping porch, my father asked me, "What do you want to be when you grow up?. I want to be a doctor. Why do you want to be a doctor?"

Well doctors don't ever die.

What do you mean doctors don't ever die

Well they should be able to heal themselves

I don't know anyone like that. How about Dr. Fawcett. (sp)

Well he committed suicide. He jumped in a well and drowned. That doesn't count

Hartford, is a town of 600 people Believe it or not , there were two other doctors there

In 1929 the depression was really hitting Arkansas and so we moved to Oklahoma, the southeast part , a place called Fort Towson, an old pioneer fort town, and 2 days after we got there the depression hit Oklahoma. We lived there until 1946 and he decided to come back to Arkansas and he bought this practice here in Lincoln from Dr. Berganstal. A previously owned home built by another pioneer physician Dr. Sabiola Lacey Bean. whose family came to this part of the country about 1834. A very prominent family. I was telling Dr. Hall that out of all I could read Dr. Bean was an outstanding man a graduate of Washington University in St. Louis and actually did an internship shortly after the turn of the century which was extremely unusual . Most doctors would get out of medical school and begin practicing.

So he came to Lincoln in 1946. The first time I came to Lincoln was about 3 months after he was here and I have spent many a night in this little clinic and his office. Over the years from 1946 to today is 48 years, I have come to know Lincoln and become reacquainted with Arkansas that I knew as a boy in Johnson county. It has been one of the most pleasant experiences of my life- to have an attachment to Arkansas and Lincoln and now to the medical profession here in Arkansas.

My father died in 1976, By the way Dr. Hall was his first physician. Dr Hall came to Fayetteville from St. Louis University. He saw Dr. Hall's partner, Dr. Higginbotham, also He died in 1976 and at that time he had been out of practice for about 7 or 8 years.

In the paragraphs that follow, Dr Boyer changes the focus of his speech. He talks about the establishment of the museum and does not mention his father, Dr. Herbert Boyer—though the museum was established in his honor..

The clinic was still intact. Then my step-mother who had been his nurse and assistant died. When she died they willed the hospital to me and to my brother, Bill Boyer and to my step-mother's grandson who lived Houston Texas. I had in mind the possibility of converting this is to something like a museum. I asked them, and at that time they were not, so I bought them out and started from there. I had a conversation with Mr. (?) Parker who was the mayor of Lincoln at that time and also with Mr. Alvis Spears who was a realtor and a insurance man and with Mr. Lloyd Swope at the bank of Lincoln who in turn referred me to Mr. Cyrus Sullivan an architect at the University of Arkansas who had a special interest in restoration, and later on to Dr. Marty Hoffman who was in the Dept. of History and archeology at the University . So I talked to all these people and then it was decided we would have meeting in the basement of the at the First Methodist Church and we met with Mr. Bob Beason(?) who praised the method of the Shiloh Museum who had a n area of expert in (?) and that was where the idea was born, about 5 years ago—no, about 8 years ago. And so we had a Board o f Directors organized with the help of the leading citizens in Lincoln. We had an attorney, a banker, Frank Sharp of

the Ozark Mountain Smoke house who I knew real well. His father knew my father. A real stellar group of people worked on this Board of Directors.

And it came on from there. What you see there now is the result of 1000s of hours of work by over a hundred people who contributed money, time and expertise and interest and we were able to obtain publicity and so that's how it all came about. And as I have mentioned before, I intent to dedicate this Arkansas Country Doctor Museum to the rural physicians and country physicians of Arkansas and the people they served. and that's the purpose of the museum. It has not been a static museum. It has been on the move with education programs. Dr. Hall came aboard and he has been a leader in the education program and supporting history of the museum. More recently/ we have obtained tax exemption status and had the assistance of an attorney in doing all this.

There is another museum in Bailey, North Carolina founded by a lady named Vera (?) Thomas and her friend who was also an internist. They each had some medical material and they didn't know what to do with it. So they hit on the idea of establishing a museum and searched the county around them and found two old doctors with possibilities (?) and they brought them to Bailey and put them together and that started their museum. She is a personal friend of mine. She helped me a great deal. We have her bylaws. She made the dedicatory speech—she and her husband- 3 years ago And it has been a lot of help

So it was all headed by bringing the physicians into the framework and organization of the museum. It is from Dr. Hall that we have obtained most of this help and Dr. Hall was present at the first meeting. At one time we had contact with the president of the Arkansas State Medical Association and I wanted to get him here but he was out of town on business. So he is not here with us. We have a lot of support from the physicians I conclude the part of what I have to tell you and I hope you will in some way continue to support the museum and hope to extent this support throughout the state and have it be truly a museum of Arkansas County Doctors for the state