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A Century of Caring: ACH Celebrates 100 Years of Service

Excerpts from *Ashland Community Hospital - A Century of Caring*
by Kay Atwood
Independent Printing Company, Ashland, Oregon

Ashland's hospital, a modern, well-staffed and welcoming place, is rooted in 100 years of history. Created and sustained by residents, physicians and city officials, the hospital is an integral part of a community that has always valued quality of life.

Ashland Community Hospital has been both privately and publicly owned, has had five separate locations and five different names. At various times the hospital has faced fire, obsolescence, and insolvency. In each instance committed and forward-looking citizens rallied to preserve the institution.

Ashland's first resident physician settled here in August, 1856 when David Sisson purchased the Ashland Boarding House and built a small, wood-frame hospital nearby. Treating local residents and travelers, Dr. Sisson's primitive hospital was often occupied by destitute people who had nowhere else to go.

When Ashland's first physician became its first murder victim in 1858, David Sisson's hospital was closed and dismantled. Ashland remained without a physician until the early 1870s when Dr. J.H. Chitwood and Dr. H.T. Inlow moved to town. Dr. John Parsons, who settled in Ashland in 1880, practiced medicine locally for over forty years.

By 1900, Ashland's population had increased to 2,634 residents. As Ashland grew, so did the need for a medical facility. In 1903, Dr. Joseph Herndon, a graduate of Willamette University, opened a sanitarium near the present site of the Elizabethan Theater. In March 1907, Dr. Francis G. Swedenburg moved to Ashland and joined Dr. Herndon in practice at the sanitarium. Dr. Swedenburg soon emerged as a significant figure in Ashland's medical community. Almost immediately he sought a location for "a local hospital."

Southern Oregon Hospital was located in the former Fordyce Roper residence on Main Street and saw steady use by both local residents and tourists. After slightly over a year in operation, disaster struck on March 11, 1909 when the roof burst into flames. After the fire, the hospital moved to a temporary location at 586 East Main Street and a decision was made to build a new structure rather than repair the damaged one.

Granite City Hospital, located on the Boulevard near the intersection of Palm Street, opened its doors on April 30, 1910. Ashland's population had reached more than 5,000 and the new hospital saw frequent use but struggled financially.

In 1921, Jesse Winburn, who had acquired a fortune developing subway advertising in New York, retired to Ashland. He formed a friendship with Dr. Swedenburg and decided to purchase Granite City Hospital. He remodeled the facility and gave it to the city. After several years of struggling with the hospital's financial hardships and trying



Southern Oregon Hospital, Main Street, 1908

to find responsible lessees, the city decided to formalize its ownership of the institution, putting an amendment to the city charter on the ballot in November 1930 that would allow the city to own and maintain a city hospital. The issue passed with a resounding 936 votes in favor of city ownership and 152 votes against. Throughout the 1930s and 40s the hospital remained open but a long list of lessees found business difficult at the continually financially strapped institution.

Ashland's doctors returned home following military service in World War II and during the decade 1950-1960 a number of new physicians opened practices in town. By the summer of 1959, the city council decided that Ashland needed a new hospital. Studies by architects and engineers indicated that remodeling the existing structure would be as costly as construction of a new facility. After passing a bond issue and examining 22 sites, a location at Maple and Chestnut Streets was selected. The parcel of land, approximately eight acres, was purchased for \$34,500. Groundbreaking was held on October 3, 1960, and on November 4, 1961, the new hospital was dedicated. From the mid to late 60s, the facility was enlarged, including the addition of a new 30-bed wing. In 1973 plans to expand space for outpatient services were announced.

In April 1977, the Ashland City Council approved formation of the Ashland Community Hospital Foundation. The Foundation's first Board of Directors made the decision to incorporate as

a private, independent foundation, which would provide greater latitude in pursuing donations to the Hospital. In May 1977, the Foundation was formed as a 501(c) (3) non-profit corporation. In 1989, under the guidance of Board President Jean Bernard, the Foundation established its own endowment fund, which now has a corpus of more than \$1.3 million. Today, the Foundation has assets of more than \$6.8 million.

The Hospital continued to grow, expanding its facility and services to meet the increasing needs of the community. At the June 18, 1996 meeting of the Ashland city council, the city and hospital board representatives signed a definitive agreement and lease agreement turning the hospital's facilities and operations over to Ashland Community Healthcare Services. The action meant that the hospital would no longer be a city department, but a not-for-profit corporation.

In recent years, the Hospital added a new medical/surgical wing and partnered with Siskiyou Imaging in a new MRI facility, provided respite and hospice services and opened an outpatient physical therapy center and a wound center. The Hospital purchased a new multi-slice CT scanner and, in 2006, opened a state-of-the-art Diagnostic and Surgery Center providing expanded and enhanced services for outpatients.

In recent months the Hospital affiliated with Planetree, a network of progressive healthcare facilities committed to the creation of patient-centered healthcare environments that support and nurture healing.

In 2007, our community hospital commemorates its 100th anniversary—a century of caring—with a yearlong celebration. Highlights will include oral histories preserved on video, a photographic exhibit, a t-shirt design contest, an entry in the Fourth of July parade, a community reunion event, and placement of a time capsule.

Mark Your Calendars!

Save the Date!
ACH Hospice

3rd Annual Butterfly Tea
Sunday, May 20, 2007 1:00 p.m.
Ashland Springs Hotel

Join the celebration!

The mission of Ashland Community Hospital Foundation is to support Ashland Community Hospital and the healthcare needs of the general community by soliciting, holding and granting funds.

If you do not wish to receive future issues of the ACH Foundation newsletter, please call 541-201-4014.

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Dick and Jean Bernard Earn Distinguished Service Award



Photo by: Orville Hector

Dick and Jean Bernard were honored with the Ashland Community Hospital Foundation's 2006 Distinguished Service Award at the Foundation's annual Gala. The award reflects service to the Foundation and to Ashland Community Hospital marked by length, intensity and significant accomplishment.

Dick and Jean spent most of their lives in the Chicago area and all four of their children—Dave, Vicki, Becki and Cindy—were born there. The family

moved to Ashland in 1979, bringing with them the small business they had started, which developed the Drill Doctor for the home improvement market. Says Dick, "Dave and his new bride, Marge, Jean and I were getting restless living in the Chicago area and thought why not move to a better place while we could. Darex looked like it would be successful so now would be the time. We decided on the Pacific Northwest because we are not sunbelt people but we wanted

a little milder weather than you get in Chicago. We started researching the area and Dave found and fell in love with Ashland. What's not to like? Beautiful setting, a small college, good schools, skiing, good restaurants, lots of culture and very cosmopolitan for a small town. We couldn't be happier with our decision. We've never looked back."

Darex Corporation eventually split to create ProTool, but in recent years, the two companies merged once again. Most Ashland residents know that the winter skating rink in Lithia Park was the gift of the Darex Corporation.

The Bernards have been married for a remarkable 54 years. They met in college when Jean was in nurses' training and Dick was studying engineering. After working as a nurse for a period of time, Jean retired to raise her family. When they moved to Ashland, she joined the family business, handling financial operations for six years. Dick retired from the business about five years ago, but still goes to the office every day and says he "definitely keeps a hand in."

The Bernards strongly believe in giving back and have a long history of community service, both in the Chicago area and here in Ashland. Jean has been active in the local chapters

of Soroptimist International and PEO, a women's service organization with a primary focus on providing educational opportunities for women. She's also been a member of the Tudor Guild Board, including serving as the Guild's President.

Dick has served on the Board of the YMCA and the SOU Foundation. He was a member and President of the Board of the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, as well as President of the Festival's Endowment Fund. Dick remains very active in Rotary and has served as chairman of the Ashland Rotary Foundation, which oversees Rotary scholarships.

The Bernard Family are generous and long-time supporters of Ashland Community Hospital. Jean served on the ACH Foundation Board from 1983 to 1989, also serving as Board President. She was instrumental in hiring the Foundation's first paid director and established the Foundation's endowment, which now has a corpus of more than \$500,000. Dick has been active on the Foundation Board for more than 10 years and served as President from 2001 to 2003. He continues to serve on the Foundation's Finance and Real Estate Committees. Keeping the family tradition alive, son Dave is the current President of the Hospital's Board of Directors. Dave's wife Marge, a nurse, works in the ER.

Both Dick and Jean are very enthusiastic about Ashland Community Hospital. Says Jean, "I've had surgeries and a number of treatments there and have always been very, very happy with the care I received. I love supporting the Hospital. It's a passion for me."

Dick adds, "With all the specialty care available in our valley, I think it's wonderful to have a hospital right here in our community where excellent care is available. You know, sometimes you just get sick, and you can always count on ACH to provide great care and treatment in a thoroughly modern and welcoming facility."

The Bernards expressed great surprise at learning they had been awarded the 2006 Distinguished Service Award. "I was quite shocked," says Jean. "It seems there are so many others who are more deserving."

"We're so honored," Dick adds. "Given those who have gone before us, we know we're in really impressive company."

Dick and Jean boast nine grandchildren and three great-grandchildren. They divide their time between their home in Ashland and a house on the Oregon coast. They also spend one month a year vacationing on Maui. Both enjoy reading, but it is their community service work that continues to fill most of their days.

Yes! I'll support the Foundation's Continuing Commitment to Meet Growing Needs in Healthcare

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