Chapter XVIII

Memories

The Creighton School of Medicine is now 100 years old. The history of these years has been detailed in the first section of this book, and for the most part, it involves serious business such as buildings, curriculum, tuition, administrative changes, entrance requirements, and so forth. All of these things are important parts of the history of a medical school, and must be told.

But there is so much more. At the heart of any medical school, giving it its character, its spirit, its very essence, are the people who walk its halls as students, the people who impart medical knowledge as teachers, the people in need of help as patients. And where there are people, there are stories, some funny, some sad, some ironic. Those who have been associated with the School of Medicine will remember such stories and the persons who helped shape their lives and experiences at the School.

Many of these memories and stories are transitory. Unless captured for posterity, they will die. None of these anecdotes are significant in the broad sense, and few will mean much to anyone not associated with the School of Medicine or Creighton in some way. Yet they also represent a history, a more personal, selective history, of the School of Medicine.

This segment of the book will relate, in anecdotal fashion, such stories and memories. A few will trigger emotional responses, as long forgotten events are evoked. They are repeated as faithfully as possible to the manner in which they were related, with some editing for clarity (and, in a few instances, for propriety). Veracity is assumed on the part of the story tellers, with some allowances made for the passage of time.

Thanks, Creighton

Willis Leo “Mike” Herbert (M.D. 1929): “The years have passed. I am approaching my 88th birthday. In the beginning not knowing I was a depressive (many a low period I had) and with limited financial backing and average intelligence, I was fortunate to be accepted by Creighton University Medical School. I survived and received my M.D. degree in 1929, I believe, because of the Creighton Spirit, which is humane. So, I’m taking this opportunity to give my thanks to Creighton University Medical School . . . .

My closing wish: ‘God bless Creighton University Medical School and preserve its spirit, which was ‘Encourage and Inspire!’” (Letter dated June 18, 1990)

James F. Kennedy (M.D. 1935): “Now it is 1990 and fifty-five years have passed by . . . . Almost monthly the name of a classmate will appear in the obituary column of the Journal of the American Medical Association. No wonder, for even those of us who graduated at twenty-two years of age are now approaching eighty. But regardless of our ultimate fate I will always cherish Creighton Medical School, its devoted faculty, and the opportunity it gave me to enter the fascinating field of medicine.” (Letter dated September 29, 1990)

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Joseph E. Sobota (M.D. 1939): "Now that we are in the autumn years of our lives, we reflect upon the many Jesuit teachings: honesty, moral ethics, sincerity of purpose, charity and respect for the needy. I am certain that their teachings had a positive effect on our lives. I feel privileged and proud to have had the opportunity to attend Creighton University." (Letter dated January 9, 1990)

Arthur Gore (M.D. 1940): "I am very proud to be a Creighton medical graduate. We Creighton doctors are becoming more well-known all over the world." (Letter dated June 4, 1990)

John William Vincent (M.D. 1944): "Creighton University and my peers stimulated me to exploit my potential capabilities, which stimulus was transmitted to my children." (Graduate Questionnaire, 1990)

Larry E. Williams (M.D. 1952): "I have fond memories of all of my classmates. It is difficult to believe those four years in medical school went by so fast. It is good to remember the many professors who worked as hard as we did to get us educated and graduated... The most wonderful thing about medical school was all of the wonderful people one met and shared one's life with." (Graduate Questionnaire, 1990)

James John Shea (M.D. 1957): "I am very grateful for the education in both morals and medicine given by Creighton and hope to make a significant bequest for the medical school." (Graduate Questionnaire, 1990)

F. Daniel Foley (M.D. 1959): "I pray before every procedure I do now, although they're all minor and diagnostic, and am never disappointed. Creighton taught me the prayer part." (Graduate Questionnaire, 1990)

Peter DeMarco (M.D. 1962): "It was only when I interned at Los Angeles Country in Torrance, California, that I realized how good the education at Creighton had been, so I say thanks very much to Creighton." (Graduate Questionnaire, 1990)

Robert William Kenton (M.D. 1974): "I look back on my Creighton experience as altogether pleasant. As a native Californian, I held, for the four years at Creighton and a short time thereafter, a tremendous grudge against the U.C. system, that they did not accept me to a U.C. medical school. When I returned to California for my internship and residency, I real-
ized that my Creighton training made me at least as prepared as the U.C. graduates, and better than many! Being at Creighton also forced me to get out of my California 'shell' and see another part of the country, and meet and become friends with guys from virtually every other state in the Union." (Graduate Questionnaire, 1990)

Stephen Alan Straubing (M.D. 1976): "I am very appreciative of the great teaching I got from so many people at Creighton University. I often compare my education with what I see students at the University of Cincinnati receiving. Although U.C. is a fine medical school, I still see my medical school years as being far superior." (Graduate Questionnaire, 1990)

Changing Times

- The following recollections were compiled by Sister M. Edw arda Fitzpatrick, O.S.F., for the 1933 Golden Jubilee celebration of Sister Cosma at St. Joseph’s Hospital. Sister Edwarda came to the hospital in 1891 and in 1901 was one of the first thirteen graduates of its original School of Nursing. She served as superintendent of the School of Nursing from 1901-1903 and as a registered nurse, pharmacist and medical records librarian for over forty years. Her recollections are among the earliest personal accounts of St. Joseph Hospital.

"I arrived at the old St. Joseph Hospital the night of October 5, 1891. Sister Agnes accompanied me from Columbus, it was all so strange to me. Next day I was assigned to the Drug Room with Sister Cosma. It was a small room near the entrance. There was no sink or running water. It had a short counter and two scales, old fashioned.

There was only one telephone in the hospital and that was on the wall in the Drug Room. All calls coming to or from the hospital were put through by Sister Cosma. This phone was an ancient type, you took the receiver from the hook and turned the crank until the operator asked ‘Number please?’ Then we would continue to turn the crank until we got our party.

It was my duty to clean the operating room and put away the wash or laundry. There were no towels marked for the operating room. The towels that were sent to the operating room from the laundry were all the old torn towels they could not use in any other part of the hospital. There was no sterilizer of any kind. Water was heated on the kitchen stove, and cold water used from the tap.

We made absorbent gauze from unbleached cheesecloth by washing it a few times and drying it out on the grass. Then it was cut up in lengths from two to five yards, and we medicated it by soaking it in a solution of Bichloride 1-1000 or carbolic acid 2%. Then we put it in glass jars.

Instruments were washed in laundry soap and water and put in cases. The amputation sets were leather boxes lined with purple velvet. Needles were strung through..."
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Sutures were prepared from the cat-gut by rolling it on something stiff after soaking it for days in chromic acid or alcohol. Black sutures were made from linen sewing thread or horse hair with little or no preparation.

The operating room was small, no larger than 15 by 20 feet. It had one door and one window, painted a sort of blue-gray. It was lighted only by a gas flame. The operating table was made of wood with drawers beneath where instruments were also kept loose.

One operation I remember and heard the doctors talk of in later years was to be the first aseptic operation. One day two doctors came in the Drug Room. I being a young postulant, always had to leave the room when a doctor came in and not return until they left.

When I returned Sisters Cosma and Henerica looked so serious and excited and were saying, 'My - are they losing their minds? What a funny idea! Who ever heard the like,' etc., etc. They talked on and on until finally one said, 'Well, if they want it, we will have to do it.'

They turned to me and said I should soak two dozen towels in a solution of Bichloride 1-1000 and hang them up to dry. I did so, hanging them all over the benches and any place that would hold one. When they were dry, I folded and stacked them but did not know why.

The following day they amputated a leg, and did not remove the dressing for a week or so. When they took off the dressing it was healed. I remember the excitement; the doctors stood around and told every doctor that came in the result. They [the other doctors] said, 'My, what FOOLS you are, don’t you know it will break out in some other part of the body?' Finally they took off the dressings and probed the healed space and it was infected. All were satisfied when they had laudable pus.

There was little absorbent cotton and even cotton batting for splints. They used oakum, a wood fibre, for splints and packing. It was used one time after another with no way of cleaning it. Sawdust was also used in fracture boxes.

Linens from the used-up sisters' head dresses was cut into squares and used for eye cases.

Leeches were kept in the drug room. A blood-letting apparatus was used often, a small square with cutting knives on one side and operated by a spring. This was only washed and dried after using to keep it from rusting.

Laundry was done by steam boiler but mostly by hand and hung out of doors. St. Joseph had a mangle, one with a long, large wooden roller. Into this the sisters packed the linen, sheets, pillow cases and towels, one over the other, then set it to rolling under pressure. It did good work unless a wrinkle got started, then the whole thing was wrinkled."

"...and Surgery by Gaslight," A Century of Service: Creighton Memorial St. Joseph Hospital, 1870-1970 (Brochure courtesy Creighton University Archives.)

Dr. John Prentiss Lord, Dean of the School briefly at the turn of the century, shared this story and its moral with students in The John A. Creighton Medical School Senior Annual of 1904:

"One day, during the first years of my practice in an Illinois small town, as I was sitting on the porch of the elevator discussing the prospects of Jas. G. Blaine (on whom I subsequently lost my first vote for
President), I was accosted by a lanky, bewhiskered, long-haired Norwegian with exophthalmic eyes. He was astride an ordinary farm horse, with a grain sack partially filled with hay to ameliorate that fence board effect. I was ready to acknowledge that I was “Doctor Lert.” He said, “I vant eyo geo bi Peter Halle, see he girl. I tank he gette on he lung Ai vant eyo goo purty shoot. Ai tank he go die.”

Peter Hall was a prominent farmer and an influential member of the Norwegian settlement. This was my coveted opportunity to obtain their favor. I found a big, overgrown Scandahovian damsel, sprawled and kicking across a bed, her ample breasts bare, her legs likewise; several young fellows were doing their best to control her. The household and the neighbors were in a panic of excitement, expecting her to die from her unusual suffering. Order and confidence were soon restored. An examination revealed no pulmonary or other disease. It was nothing but hysteria. This I explained as well as I could, but it could not be comprehended by these people.

One night at a later date, it suited her convenience for a little scare. I was called about two o’clock in the morning, with a most urgent request to get there immediately. The roads were of the kind furnished by the fertile prairies of Illinois in the month of March, when a man on a load of hay is in some danger of being submerged. Six miles in a half hour rendered my sorrel mare a veritable cloud of steam. The chill of the night during my prolonged visit foundered the mare. After a week’s service and the girl uncured, I was replaced by a famous quack from a neighboring city who visited her daily at $25.00 per visit. After being smelled and tasted, my medicine was thrown out the window, with the positive statement that in three hours longer she would have been dead or a subject for the insane asylum. My bill of $28.00 for services rendered the niece of Peter Halle was repudiated by Peter and ignored by the girl. The quack’s bill had been previously guaranteed by the aforesaid Peter and nearly $200.00 was paid.

Thereafter I never drove the tail off my horse, and I do not recall in my experience any one having died because I did not get to them fifteen minutes earlier. It would be a rare patient who would willingly pay for a ruined horse. Due promptness in responding to calls is proper, but undue haste seldom necessary.

Doctors with more regard for dollars than professional standing will choose the methods of this unprofessional, and while the quack may make his “scoops,” to use the reporter’s expression, he is short-lived in a community. The honest, pains-taking, careful and reliable physician can live in a community as long as he cares to, has the almost universal respect and confidence of the community, and his financial reward will be ample, in the end usually exceeding that of the unprofessional and dishonest.” (John Prentiss Lord, M.D., “Early Experiences,” The John A. Creighton Medical College Senior Annual, 1904, p. 22.)

Dr. Edmond Walsh (M.D. 1930) tells a story related to him by a friend, Dr. Warren Thompson (M.D. 1909). Dr. Thompson was called upon to do a consultation in a small town in South Dakota around the year 1919. All he knew before leaving for South Dakota was that the patient was having bad headaches. He took with him
his microscope, a couple of spinal needles, a little novocaine, some slides and some stain for his microscope. He did a puncture on the patient (on the dining room table), collected some fluid, stained it on the microscope and it clearly demonstrated menin-
gococcus—the diagnosis was evident! The attending was so im-
pressed that he called his physician friends from many of the small surrounding towns, who came to meet Dr. Thompson. Many of them had never seen a microscope. (Audio-
tape Interview)

"Everything old is new again," the line of a once-popular song, seems to fit the spirit of the following, noted under "Medical School Happenings," in a February 1921 Creighton Chronicle: "The first incident of the revival of the ancient Blue Laws in the school was noticed in the recent announcement that smoking is forbidden around the building. Apparently no effort is to be made to enforce the other provisions of these laws and prohibit Sunday work on our studies." ("University Notes," The Creighton Chronicle February 1921, p. 247.)

Advertisement appearing in a 1921 Omaha Bee, quoted in The Creighton Chronicle: "FOR RENT: Two connecting, well-furnished bedrooms, steam heated; suitable for two gentlemen or four medical students. Call Ty. 17764." ("University Notes," The Creighton Chronicle February 1921, p. 247.)
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Dr. Clarence S. Moran (M.D. 1928) tells of "Miss Don's Boarding House" for Creighton students at 2710 California, run by Miss Donohue. She was a retired cosmetic saleswoman, a small but robust woman who devoted herself entirely to cooking. Twenty-five or twenty-six boys stayed there at a time, many of them medical students. Eight worked in the kitchen. (Dr. Moran worked in the kitchen for two years.)

Dr. John Gatewood (M.D. 1933) recalled that, coming from a rural background, he had raised a litter of pigs that won championships at the Burt County, Cuming County and Nebraska State Fairs. During his freshman year, an auctioneer stopped in to tell him that one of his pigs had sold for $850. While thrilled with the windfall, he recalls being embarrassed. "I didn't want to be talking about pigs there in the city." (Audiotape Interview, September 12, 1989)

Dr. Werner Jensen (M.D. 1932) recalled playing basketball for Creighton as a freshman and sophomore in medical school, which is not allowed today. "I was about 6'6 1/2", one of the tallest basketball players in the country at that time... Today I would be short." (Audiotape Interview, January 18, 1990)

Dr. Arnold Lempka (M.D. 1941) remembers Dr. Jensen and his basketball-playing days. He says that Dr. Jensen "was about 6'5", the tallest person in the world!" (Audiotape Interview, December 4, 1989)

Dr. Arnold Lempka also remembers enrolling for his premedical studies at Creighton in June 1934, weeks after school was recessed for the summer. He walked through a deserted Administration Building and could find no one from whom to even ask directions. Finally he came upon a man in overalls out back, mowing the lawn with an old rotary push lawn mower.
The man directed Lempka to wait in the President's office. A few minutes later, the same man welcomed Lempka to Creighton University—he was the President. (Audiotape Interview, December 4, 1989)

Dr. John Patrick McDermott (M.D. 1935) shares memories of his class: “Only a few were married; one young lady in class; very few had cars; can remember hocking my watch several times for a few dollars; A.M. meal [cost] 10 cents; lunch [cost] 25 cents; P.M. meal [cost] 35 cents; sent laundry home.” (Graduate Questionnaire, 1990)

— Dr. Joseph E. Sobota (M.D. 1939) started his medical education in 1934, but due to the fact that the Depression was raging, stayed out of school for one year from 1935-36 to earn money. He returned that fall, graduating in 1939. He recalls vividly the economics of the time, saying that when people asked him, “Don’t you worry about money?” he replied, “No, I don’t have any.”

He recalled that as an intern at St. Joseph Hospital from 1939 to 1940, those serving in this capacity had their own dining room. There they were given a special, fancier noon meal on Sundays, then the evening meal was kept simple, often sausages and a bottle of Falstaff beer. Dr. Sobota said that some “who had the shorts” would take their beer bottles across the street to redeem them for two cents per bottle, so as to be able to buy car checks (tokens) to get where they needed to go.

He also recalls the interns’ pay as being $25.00 per month. The intern got to keep $20.00, and $5.00 was kept by the hospital. This was saved for the intern for the purchase of a suit of clothing upon completion of the internship, so that in his new, higher status in the world, the Doctor would have at least one good outfit.

Dr. Sobota also recalled that the Sister who ran the gift shop at St. Joseph’s “out of a basement closet” often gave students and interns candy bars on credit. (Telephone Interview, June 5, 1990)

— Dr. James E. Cashman (M.D. 1938) remembers seeing a fellow student, Joseph Sobota (M.D. 1939), sleeping in the Phi Chi dormitory with a true beardskin long overcoat for cover (especially during the winter) and catching a ride from the Phi Chi house to the Medical School with Frank Columbo (M.D. 1938) in his Packard automobile. “What a ride.” (Graduate Questionnaire, 1990)

— Dr. James F. Kennedy (M.D. 1935) also recalled the rigors of the Depression: “The Depression had not hit our part of the country in all its fury but the impact came home to me in October 1931 when our bank in Alliance closed its doors. I had planned to buy a suit and overcoat in Omaha that fall but put it off, the weather was so warm. As things turned out, the purchase of the suit and overcoat was permanently cancelled. From then on the gloom of the Depression was our constant companion.

Getting enough to eat often posed a problem although prices were low. Henshaw’s Cafeteria offered ‘all you can eat’ for 29 cents. A small cafeteria in the basement of the school was run by a husband and wife team, a most compassionate
pair who made the noon hour a highlight of the day. Bridge games were popular during the lunch hour, and almost everyone smoked cigarettes. 'More Doctors Smoke Camels Than Any Other Cigarette' was the message in magazines, which was written under a full-page picture of a group of doctors, sitting in a staff room, each with a cigarette in his hand.

Regarding methods of surviving physically, there were many varieties, largely dependent on resources from home. One very fortunate group of students lived at the Knights of Columbus Club where they had private rooms, a fine dining room and access to swimming and a gymnasium.

On the other end of the scale were those who had to hold some type of outside job to make ends meet. Some had lowly jobs as bus boys in cafeterias, dishwashers, night clerks in hotels, switchboard operators, or chauffeurs. My best break came from a couple named Dolen who lived in the Benson area. Roy Dolen was a conductor on the railroad and away from home much of the time. His wife, home alone during his absences, was constantly afraid of burglars, so they offered a room and Sunday meals to a student. This was a godsend to me for it provided physical comfort in a good Catholic household. I lived with the Dolens for two years, commuting by street car.

To receive two meals a day, I also had a job washing dishes in a tavern on Harney street; this was a joint run by two ex-cops whose clientele was made up mostly of Omaha's 'finest' plus many Damon Runyon types. It was possible to get a shot or shots of booze at the bar though this was still Prohibition time. My hours were from 5:00 to closing, usually around 9:30, week days only. For this I was permitted to take my noon meal there and get my evening meal, cooked to my taste, after closing. A wonderful little man was the cook. He took a special interest in my welfare and prepared many a steak for me.

During my senior year, 1934, the Depression was at its worst and money from home scarce. Through Con Heafey, the mortician, I was able to get directed to a wholesale casket company just off Turner Boulevard on Harney Street. They were looking for a student to live there and take telephone messages during the night. They offered a nice apartment with amenities. I was able to recruit another student to share this windfall, and he, Bill Dwyer, was desperately short of cash too.

My big break came later that fall when I was appointed one of the Junior Interns at the Douglas County Hospital. This provided board, room, and laundry - real luxuries. Six of us from the class held these positions. The lucky ones were J.K. Burns from Spokane, Bill Duggan from San Francisco, John Grayson from Philadelphia, Arnold Peter from Omaha, Rex Finegan from Hyannis, Nebraska, and me from Alliance, Nebraska. J.K. Burns had a Chevrolet coupe with a rumble seat, and that provided our transportation between the school and the hospital.

Our duties at the hospital were doing histories and physicals on the new admissions. My assignment was in the psychiatric department, quite an experience, for it was the dumping ground of the county and city. Alcoholics, drug addicts, senile dementias, schizophrenics, manic-depressives, and some who could not be
classified wound up there. One of the prized returns was the privilege of doing spinal taps on each admission. ‘I cringe now to recall the size of the needles used.’

(Letter dated September 29, 1990)

- Yoshihiko Fred Fujikawa (M.D. 1934) recalls: “The class of 1934 went to medical school during the depths of the Great Depression. I remember when the banks all closed down and students were waving their allowance checks from home, asking for loans. All the boys carried sacks of Bull Durham tobacco to offer fellow students when they asked for a cigarette, keeping the packs well hidden.” (Graduate Questionnaire, 1990)

- Dr. Werner Jensen (M.D. 1932) recalled that during his premedical days, he had a job after school at the Brendon Jensen Paper Company. At 25 cents per hour, he made a higher wage than the average laborer. Because he had such a good job, he almost didn’t go on to medical school! (Audiotape Interview, January 18, 1990)

- Dr. Elinor Marsh (M.D. 1942) recalls how medical students were affected by the Depression and World War II: “All those in school with me had to watch finances carefully. We could all tell of financial hardships our families went through to keep us in school—losing houses, businesses and going into debt.

Many of the students were older, having worked for several years to earn money for school. Tuition was $300 a year. My father’s salary at that time was $3,000 a year. Salaries had not been raised from a 10 per cent cut in 1934. There were lab expenses, microscopes and books. Much juggling and borrowing went on for the required book checks.

However, there were many happy times. We liked school, our classmates and most of our professors. We went to football games and basketball games, to the Mary Ann, Nalibows and Dundee Dell, where we drank beer for 10 cents because Cokes were 15 cents, and we could dance all evening. There were many dances, shows were 40 cents, hamburgers a nickel. We even splurged after exams and went to a special restaurant for lunch. Three times a year for eating out was something. We were not the kind to study every minute and week-ends were fun.

Ours was the last class to have summer vacations until after the War. From then on classes continued year round. Most graduates during those years went to service immediately after internships, some doing residences years later. It is still painful to think of those who died after years of sacrifices to finish Medical School.” (Letter dated January 15, 1990)
Dr. Werner Jensen (M.D. 1932) recalls that one of the side jobs of Dr. Earl A. Connolly (M.D. 1918), Professor of Surgery, was that of a company physician for Cudahy Packing Company. When Dr. Connolly was out of town, Dr. Jensen would fill in. He recalled that there was a metal rail on the ceiling on which meat was hung. When employees looked up, some got rust in their eyes from the metal railing, which had rusted with age. "We'd put drops of atropine, an anesthetic, into the eye. This would dilate the pupil and they wouldn't have any feeling. And then we'd take a scalpel and scrape the rust out, make a little deep ulcer, an opening in the eye. This would fortunately I never went too deep. I was always scared some jelly would come out." (Audiotape Interview, January 18, 1990)

Henry T. Allingham (M.D. 1912).

Dr. Jensen also retold a story, told him by Dr. Henry T. Allingham (M.D. 1912). Dr. Allingham was the physician for the Fraternal Order of Eagles, for which he received $2.00 per year from each member. In return, he was to provide care when needed. One night about 2:00 A.M. a patient called, complaining of a sore back and wanting Dr. Allingham to make a house call. When asked how long his back had been bothering him, he replied, "About four months." Dr. Allingham prescribed aspirin and heat and advised the man to come to the office the next morning. The man became irate and insisted, "But I'm an Eagle!" Dr. Allingham said, "I don't give a hoot if you're a catfish, I'm not coming out!" (Audiotape Interview, January 18, 1990)

Dr. Jensen himself served as a police surgeon in the 1930's. On one occasion, he was called to 6th & Pierce Streets in the middle of the night. A man had already been examined and pronounced dead by another physician (A Creighton physician, by the way). Dr. Jensen pulled back the blanket which had been placed over the "corpse" and found the man was alive, reeking of alcohol. He was taken to the station and booked for being drunk. Dr. Jensen noted that as a possessor of a police badge, he could go to shows at the Paramount Theatre for free, while it cost his wife thirty cents. (Audiotape Interview, January 18, 1990)

Home Call or Outcall was once a routine part of the clinical experience for all medical students. Some of these home calls included the delivery of a baby. Dr. Clarence Moran (M.D. 1928) remembers
well the home deliveries during OB outcall. During the summer while most students went home, the Clinic and Outcall still operated, and this was a chance for underclassmen who stayed in town to get their OB experience. Dr. Moran remembers two underclassmen, John Trautman and Thomas McCurdy (both M.D. 1929) asking him to accompany them on their first home delivery, since he had had some OB experience.

When the call came, they piled into Johnny Trautman's Ford Roadster, which had only one full seat, plus a rumble seat. The underclassmen were keyed up since this was to be their first delivery, but everything went smoothly. On the way back, they were "feeling pretty proud of themselves" and comparing notes.

It seemed Johnny Trautman, as a Protestant engaged to a Catholic, was taking instructions in Catholicism at the time, and with the zealousness of a convert, had taken the opportunity to baptize the newborn baby. When he turned to his partner, McCurdy, and said, "You know, I baptized the baby," McCurdy said, "Why, so did I!"

Dr. Moran noted, "That wasn't part of the Obstetrical procedure." He also seemed to remember that the family of the baby was probably Jewish. (Audiotape Interview, September 12, 1989)

Dr. John Gatewood (M.D. 1933) recalls one of the house calls he made as a student. He and another student, not really knowing what to do, and not able to reach their advisor, literally "picked the woman up, put her in the car, and carried her in to St. Joe's." Now, of course, a single call to 911 would be made instead. (Audiotape Interview, January 11, 1990)

Sebastian "Subby" Pirrucello, in charge of the Pharmacy within the old Medical School beginning in 1945, recalled preparing little black bags full of emergency pharmaceuticals for medical students to take out on home calls. He remembers "Cactus Jack" McDermott (Arnold J. McDermott, M.D. 1929) as being in charge of home visits and reading the riot act to students on their home call rotation. (Audiotape Interview, January 11, 1990)
Dean Richard O’Brien (M.D. 1960) also vividly recalls home call, still a senior requirement during his time at the School, where students paired off to share responsibility in going to sick people’s homes. He recalls “awe-inspiring experiences,” such as seeing a child with diphtheria in East Omaha (one of only two cases of diphtheria he has ever seen) on a “cold, cold January night,” with the only light in the house coming from a gasoline lamp. He remembers East Omaha itself at the time, with many tar-paper shacks (“like a hillside barrio in Latin America, but not on a hill”). He remembers treating lots of earaches, lots of kids with otitis. He also recalls parents who had no money for the antibiotics necessary to treat their children. (Common, inexpensive antibiotics of today were very expensive then). So he purchased them himself. Druggists gave large discounts to him and other medical students in the same position. Home call turned out, in most instances, to be night call, since most found a way to get to the Clinic during the day. Dr. O’Brien feels that students learned a lot from their experiences, not only about medicine but also about society and poverty. (Audiotape Interview, December 27, 1990)

Dr. Alfred C. Andersen (M.D. 1941) recalls pursuing his M.D. degree in stages. He taught part time because of his background in Biochemistry, Physiology and Pharmacology while pursuing his medical degree the other half of the time. He did this between 1934 and 1941. Some of his students were also medical classmates, Dr. Fred Marsh (M.D. 1941) and James VaVerka (M.D. 1942) also obtained their M.D. degrees in this manner. (Audiotape Interview, September 28, 1989)

Years later, Dr. Edward Grinnell (M.D. 1962) also taught some medical students at the same time he himself pursued the M.D. He called it walking a tight rope and likened this position to a warrant officer in the Navy – “you’re neither one or the other”. (Audiotape Interview, January 30, 1990)

Dr. Alfred C. Andersen also recalled that Dr. Wilhelmj always liked to live out in the country. When he first came to Omaha, he lived “clear out on 72nd Street, in the boon docks in those days.” When it began to be a little more traveled, he moved “way out” to about 92nd and Shirley. “I remember it was still pretty much country in 1952 around 90th & Center. I saw foxes running around out there.” Dr. Andersen recalled that during one of the blizzards Nebraska is known for, Dr. Wilhelmj was marooned out in the country for about three days. (Audiotape Interview, September 28, 1989)

Dr. Regis E. Weland (M.D. 1940) remembers, “Four of us owned an old Ford while at Creighton. Anytime something on it wore out, we’d just go to the junkyard for the part. Jim McGuire (M.D. 1940), a classmate, would drive the car down the middle of the street. His reason – because no one else was using it.” (Graduate Questionnaire, 1990)

Dr. Herman S. Judd (M.D. 1941) shares some memories (all pleasant, he notes):

Regis E. Weland (M.D. 1940).
Living and studying in the old Loyal Hotel on 16th Street (16 of us, two men to a room at $16.00 per man per month); Wearing galoshes and ear muffs when it was 20 below zero; Eating spaghetti at the Italian Gardens on 6th and Pierce for 75 cents, when we could afford it; Cadaver dissection and Dr. Pohlmian saying ‘in general terms.’ My physician dad visiting school one day and Dr. Adolph Sachs posing the diagnostic question of what this patient might be suffering from after his recitation of symptoms. None of us knew but my dad stuck his hand up and I almost died. ‘Don’t louse it up, Dad,’ I whispered, but Adolph Sachs, a tremendous teacher of internal medicine, called on Dad who said, ‘Hansen’s Disease.’ Adolph hollered, ‘You’re right, Dr. Judd Senior, have you seen some cases of it?’ And Dad said, ‘Never saw one in my life.’ That summer he [my Dad] took me on a two-month tour of the Deep South where I worked two weeks in the U.S. Public Health Lab in Columbia, South Carolina, on malaria and later saw pellagra, beri beri and, of course, leprosy at Carville, Louisiana. Being a member of the Grave Digging Group that picked up cadavers from the U. of Nebraska school tanks for the incoming freshman class. Then going to King Fong’s for lunch on Creighton, and we smelled so bad the Chinaman could hardly serve us.” (Graduate Questionnaire, 1990)

Dr. Arthur Core (M.D. 1940) also shares some fond memories: “It’s hard to leave out the beginning of medical school, even if it means nothing to somebody else. Anyway, I had a ’31 Ford Coupe with a rumble seat that could go 50 m.p.h. full throttle down hill. Not much room for baggage, but really we didn’t have much. There was a criminologist who specialized in hair, no less, who also was accepted in medical school at Creighton. He was 5’2” with his shoes on, and I picked him up at his house in Pasadena. His mother, I remember so well, cried and cried at their parting, and she handed me a rather large special package that was to take care of our stomach needs until we arrived in Omaha. Believe me, when Acquarelli [Mario John Acquarelli, M.D. 1940] opened the package for a snack, the garlic jumped out right into my eyes. He was used to it, but needless to say, it wasn’t my favorite. I think
the odor remained in the car until I traded it in the next year (even with the windows open).

That was a long trip to Omaha, but we finally made it. I remember so well, fifty-four years ago almost to the day, when we got our first look at the Med School, down at 14th & Davenport. Skid Row it was—and old and dirty looking!

So we were wandering around when Leo Heywood (everybody at Creighton Med knows Dr. Heywood) invited us over to the Phi Rho house to look around. Somebody else from the Beta house invited us there, and finally after a few days, Acquarelli took his salami to the Beta House and I went with Leo to the Phi Rho House.

Believe me, it was a great help to belong to a fraternity. Even before school started the upper classmen delighted in telling us freshmen just how tough it really was—and they were right! (Letter dated June 4, 1990)

Arnold Lempka remembers teachers at the medical school being actively involved in the recruitment of new medical students. Having gone home to South Dakota for the summer after his freshman year in medical school, to a job in his brother-in-law’s pharmacy, Dr. Lempka recognized one of his professors as he entered the pharmacy that summer. It was Dr. James VaVerka, (M.D. 1942), who at that time was teaching Chemistry to freshmen medical students. He had driven to South Dakota to see a family whose son was a prospective medical student. He had braved temperatures of over 100 degrees for a whole day’s drive in a car with, of course, no air conditioning, to talk to one prospect.

Dr. Lempka says that Dr. VaVerka’s “tongue was hanging out, [he was] red as a beet, and I fixed him one of the biggest, thickest chocolate malts.” Before Dr. VaVerka died a few years ago, Dr. Lempka visited him in a nursing home. The one thing which Dr. VaVerka most vividly recalled was that chocolate malt Dr. Lempka had made for him all those many summers before, and how wonderful it had tasted after the extreme South Dakota heat. (Interview, December 4, 1989.)

Dr. Lempka received sage advice from Dr. E. E. Curtis (M.D. 1911), a physician and family friend from his home town. He spoke to Dr. Lempka about his ambitions to become a doctor:

“See that lady who just left? She’s going to have a baby. She didn’t pay me for the last one. Do you think I’m going to deliver this one? Of course, that’s my job. Whatever you do, don’t go into medicine for the money. Only about half of my patients ever pay their bills.”

Dr. Lempka notes that of course, with insurance, HMO’s and governmental assistance, all of that has changed. But it is still a lesson that has stuck with him through the years. (Audiotape Interview, December 4, 1989)
In speaking of remuneration, Dr. Lempka recalls, "When I started, barter was not that unusual. They'd bring in a hen or some eggs or whatever." (Interview, December 4, 1989)

Times were a little rougher, too, sometimes, according to Dr. Lempka. He described the Chez Paree' section of Carter Lake, Iowa, near East Omaha. In the gambling establishments certain people were displeased not to have a cut of the action. The people who were active in such establishments in Las Vegas and Kansas City came here and tried to shut these independents down. Once they took a couple of men out in a field and summarily shot them.

The police in Omaha had a hard time getting any evidence against anyone, locals or the big boys. One of Dr. Lempka's patients, a woman named Helen, ran one of these establishments, keeping all bets and records in her head. She kept no written records of any kind.

"He was called upon many times to administer aid when violence erupted in this section of town. One night he was called to treat a gunshot wound for Big Bill, "a mean fella who weighed about 275 pounds." Dr. Lempka said that, yes, he could come. His housecalls were $3.00, $5.00 at night.

When he got to Carter Lake, Bill was on a stretcher with four policemen surrounding him, two at his head, two at his feet. Dr. Lempka was told they had already found one gun and taken it away from Bill. As Dr. Lempka was preparing to examine the patient, he was told that everyone knew Bill always carried a second gun, hidden, and that he should attempt to find it as he examined Bill. (Interview)

Dr. Anthony L. Rifici (M.D. 1943) has some vivid recollections of his school days at Creighton: "Attended school in an old school near the railroad tracks and across from a park filled with railroad tramps and derelicts. Room and board was $25 per month. Only 44 students graduated—we started with 64. . . . The odor from the Stockyards was very prominent in Omaha. There were good restaurants in the Stockyards, where you could get a good-sized steak for a dollar to $1.25.

Not far from the Medical School, close to the park we had to cross was a tremendous large Red Light District, off bounds to medical students.

Our opening greeting was from the prefect [Regent] of the Medical School, a Jesuit priest, who said 'the door swings both ways. The man sitting next to you may not be here next year.'

Creighton's basketball team was big-time, coached by Mr. Hickey, who played in Madison Square Garden each year. The players were amazed at the number of people attending games. Their hometowns were very small, and they had never seen that many people at one time. The football team was good, and played in the Missouri Valley Conference.

We had a very extensive course in prescription writing. Many of the graduates left for rural areas and practiced general medicine. Specialization was not the great thing at the time.
Aksarben was THE social place for the ‘high to do.’

The attitude of the professors was very strict, and they would not mind seeing you flunk out. The liberal attitude of today did not exist. It was tough to graduate, and we were told at graduation as we were handed our diplomas that we were not better doctors today than yesterday.” (Graduate Questionnaire, 1990)

Dr. William Reals (M.D. 1945) recalls that his class “was just decimated.” They lost a great number of people, either kicked out due to failing grades or who voluntarily withdrew. And since it was war time, “the next step was the Draft Board.”

“We had one man, his name was Joy. Jimmy Joy, who was dissecting near me. One day, he took his scalpel, threw it in a piece of muscle, and said, ‘That’s it - I’ve had it.’ He walked out of the door and quit. The next time I saw him, he was walking down 16th Street. He said, ‘I’ve enlisted in the Army. I’m going to be a pilot, I’m going to be in this war.’ He made the raid on Ploesti, was shot down, and killed.”

Dr. Reals also remembers having several Orientals in his class who went home to California by train for Christmas break. They were beaten in the mistaken belief that they were Japanese. They each returned after the holidays with a huge sign: “I am a Chinese American citizen.” (Audiotape Interview, March 29, 1990)

Dr. James F. Kennedy (M.D. 1935) recalled the dislocations caused by World War II: “During our senior year we had presentations from recruiting officers of the Army and Navy Reserve Departments. If one could pass a physical he could receive a reserve commission in these branches of the service. Since many of us were so unsure of the future, and may have to earn a living as a medical officer in the Civilian Conservation Corps, we took the offer of the reserve commission. Little did we realize then the implications of this decision, for it resulted in many of us being called up for duty in the Year of Emergency which preceded our entry into World War II. Since most of us by 1940-41 had been in practice several years, it was a major dislocation to give it up and enter the service for what we thought was to be a one-year period. Unfortunately for most of us, it stretched into almost five years. One of our classmates, Andy Panatierre, was killed at Guadalcanal as he served with the U.S. Marines.” (Letter dated September 29, 1990)

Dr. Werner Jensen (M.D. 1932) recalled that after World War II, residencies were rather difficult to get. Many people completed their Boards, but few got residencies. “I always said that with your Board Certificate and twenty-five cents, you could get a cup of coffee most anywhere.” (Audiotape Interview, January 18, 1990)

Brother Frank Jelinek, Creighton Superintendent of Buildings and Grounds, recalls that years ago the Creighton football stadium occupied much of what has become Criss III, as well as parking for the medical buildings. He noted that many circuses and Fourth of July celebrations were held there. (Audiotape Interview, December 11, 1989)
Memories

“Subby” Pirrucello, in charge of the Pharmacy at the old School, recalls pharmaceutical companies giving vast amounts of drug samples to the Pharmacy, to be used for indigent patients. This often included large amounts of baby formula, baby food and vitamins. Sometimes married medical students with families found their way to “Subby” when budgets were stretched, to ask for some infant samples. (Audiotape Interview, January 11, 1990)

Dr. John Mitchell, former Pediatric chairman, recalled helping to clean out the Pharmacy of the old school when the move was made, and coming across some very old prescription drugs, some with ten to twelve ingredients. One was called “Wagner’s Lung Shrinker,” and contained, in addition to many other things, digitalis and morphine. (Audiotape Interview, February 22, 1990)

Dr. Mitchell feels that the overall quality of all Omaha physicians has improved. Standards of practice are much higher today. He believes that when he first came to Omaha in 1954, he could have named twenty to twenty-five persons he considered bad doctors. Now he feels there are no bad doctors here. Some are better than others, but they are all competent.

For example, Dr. Mitchell recalls one Omaha physician, not a Creighton graduate, who was eventually kicked off every hospital staff in the city, including the old Doctors Hospital, the most liberal at the time. He was barred from there for throwing a placenta at a nurse. He was barred from another hospital for an incident with a resident. He was late for a delivery, so the resident delivered the baby. When the doctor arrived, he tried to grab the baby, and a tug of war ensued. The baby ended up in a bucket. While the baby was not injured, this illustrates the old maxim, “The Doctor is King in his own Kingdom,” carried to the extreme! (Interview)

Dr. Richard P. Groschupf (M.D. 1953), who was married as a medical student in 1951, asks, “How about the $20.00 per month apartment rentals for married students in South Omaha?” (Graduate Questionnaire, 1990)

Dr. James F. Gerrits, (M.D. 1955) recalls student life in the 1950’s: “Med School was down by the freight yards in those days. . . . We were poor like all med students. Lived in the South Omaha public housing, three-bedroom apartment for $15 per month. Four kids in four years. Came to Detroit, Michigan, to intern, too broke to leave so settled in little town nearby, and still here.

In those days lived for a time up around 32nd & California. Used to eat at the Grass Shack, full meal—soup, salad and through to dessert even, for thirty-five to forty-five cents!! Went to Trocadera Night Club, over behind the old gym. Great vaudeville!” (Graduate Questionnaire, 1990)
Chapter XVIII

Dr. Peter DeMarco (M.D. 1962) relates: “My years at Creighton Medical School were from 1958-62 and like so many students, were filled with wonderful memories and experiences.

At noon, the students would either eat downstairs in a small cafeteria or walk up to downtown for lunch. The cheapest place was the Chrysler Cafe. Up from it, there was the Virginia restaurant. You could eat for less than $1.00. Roland Steele and I would walk a bit further up to the Garden Cafeteria on Harney Street since we thought it was a little cleaner and could get a big tray of food for just a little over $1.00, if you had dessert. Getting away at noon that first year kept a lot of us sane, since there was pressure on everyone, particularly in the anatomy class.”

(Drug, undated)

Dean Richard L. O’Brien (M.D. 1960) recalls that during his time in medical school at Creighton, there were four students (himself, John O’Brien, Bill Pettinger and Charlie Reilly) who decided they wanted to pursue a career in academic medicine. They were allowed to use their entire senior year as a research elective.

Dr. O’Brien also remembers N.I.H. post-sophomore research fellowships, no longer offered, by which the student took a year off between his second and third years of medical school to conduct research. It was possible to earn a Master’s Degree in this fashion (which Dr. O’Brien did). (Audiotape Interview, December 27, 1990)

Dr. John R. McDonough (M.D. 1954) also recalled the post-sophomore research fellowships, in which he participated under the guidance of Dr. Charles Wilhelmj: “There are many memories from medical school days. Probably my most enduring is the time spent with a truly gifted teacher, Dr. Charles Wilhelmj. Though Dr. Wilhelmj is now long deceased, at the time of my medical school sojourn, he was professor of physiology and chairman of the department.

I became fascinated with the process by which medical knowledge is produced. Dr. Wilhelmj had an active research program at the time and I was fortunate to be selected to spend a year with him between sophomore and junior medical school years, to participate in this program. It was a truly wonderful, and for me, formative year. Research methodology unfolded for me and became remarkably clear. The year spent with Dr. Wilhelmj was involved with cardiovascular physiology and was most important in helping me formulate future directions in training, research, and practice for myself.

Upon returning to Creighton in 1968 for a 25th year reunion, it was grand to see the new buildings, programs, and wonderful expansion at Creighton. My thoughts, however, went back to the days of physiology research when we used a smoked paper roll on a rotating drum together with a mechanical stylus to record..."
pressures changes in the circulation, or changes of tension and length in a muscle strip. Though by today's standards these older methods are obsolete; they did provide important tools, for the time, to learn by and we did learn well. As I stood at the site of my old medical school, since torn down and replaced by a ramp leading up to a freeway, with not even a shard of the old facility remaining, a feeling of sadness came over me, remembering the former times, places, activities, and great teachers that made up the Creighton of my day.” (Letter dated June 5, 1990)

School Days, School Days

- Anxiety over tests during the freshman year is nothing new, as attested to by this anecdote reported in the February 1921 Creighton Chronicle: "Tubby Kestel [John L. Kestel, M.D. 1924] of the Freshman Class has always been just an ordinary good sort of a Christian with no particular leaning to devotion and piety, nor yet with any marked inclination to things of a religious nature—in about the same class in these matters as the great body of his fellow students. Now after four weeks constant application to his books in preparation for the exams, getting sleep, and a few hours sleep likewise, Tubby turns into bed the night before the Anatomy final for a little rest. Sometime in the night his roommate, Steve Rohwer [Roland Theodore Rohwer M.D. 1924], was disturbed by a light in the room and awoke to find his bunkie fully dressed and about to leave. Sensing that it wasn't time to get up, Steve glanced at his watch to notice that it was but 2:30 A.M. He called to Tubby to ask what was going on and where he was going. The answer came back from the corridor, 'I am going over to church to go to Mass.'" (“University Notes,” The Creighton Chronicle February 1921, p. 249)

Likewise, students' high jinks are nothing new to the halls of the medical school. A Creighton Chronicle of April 20, 1921, notes the following activities of the junior class: "We all have read about the tortures of the Roman persecutions, the inhuman cruelty of the buccaneer with his plank, the alleged horrors of the Inquisitions, and the other vicious schemes of torments in history, but the Junior class can make them all seem like mere slumber parties. They can beat the world at this game. They induce some unsuspecting freshman to sit himself in what appears to be just a harmless, undersized barber's chair up in the Physiological Lab, and then steal away his senses by revolving the apparatus. After the poor dupe has lost consciousness, he is tossed out into the air and lights square on his head on the hardwood floor. When he comes to again, he is told that his vestibular nerve is okeh [sic] and he is allowed to go on with his course with what undamaged brains he has left while they ghoulishly search the corridors and halls for fresh victims. And it is
said that civilization is advancing!” ("University Notes," The Creighton Chronicle April 20, 1921, p. 375.)

As if it wasn’t confusing enough being a freshman in the medical school, The Creighton Chronicle of February 1921 relates the following lab story: “In the procedure of one of the experiments in the Physiological Chemistry Laboratory Manual appears this sentence: ‘Let stand for twenty-four hours stirring constantly.’ A direction like this could only occur in a freshman textbook since that class alone seems to have nothing much to do throughout the year other than learn the matter on 1,396 pages of Anatomy, 785 pages of Histology, 546 of — but why go on? What is a little thing like stirring a beaker: all of solution of betamethylbetaethylalphaaminoisopropioniclucine for amere twenty-four hours?” ("University Notes," The Creighton Chronicle February 1921, p. 246)

Freshmen continued to be singled out for less than flattering copy, in this March 20, 1921, Creighton Chronicles note: “There is an old campus tradition that you can always tell a freshman — but you can’t tell him much. Dr. Schulte, however, seems to have been unaware of this custom, or decided to break all precedents and totally disregard it, for he certainly told them much — yes, indeed, a whole lot. And he told them indirectly, and directly, singularly and collectively. In fact he held sort of a reception in his private office and invited many of the boys down. It was all because the class was preparing to slip into a ten-ayays’ slump to sort of re-organize their forces and somewhat recuperate from the ordeal of the semester exams. Needless to say, the incipient slide came to an abrupt stop with one of those ‘dull sickening thuds’ we have all heard about. There was no doubt left in the freshman mind that the eliminator hasn’t been mislaid, and that unless they get a thick colloidal covering of scholarship, they are very liable to dialyze out and find themselves with a lot of time to devote to higher culture and other leisurely pursuits.” ("University Notes," The Creighton Chronicle March 20, 1921, pp. 312-13)

The Creighton Chronicle also poked fun at some upperclassmen, as evidenced by this October 1921 note: “An incident showing remarkable keenness of perception and a depth of insight into physiological and sartorial matters recently came up in Sophomore Pathology. Geo. Lynch (M.D. 1924) was examining under his microscope a slide made from the lung of a dog. After careful study of the specimen under both low and high power George decided that the dog was troubled during life with a shortness of breath, as he could see the seat of his pants. Will we have to ‘schematize’ this for you?” ("University Notes," The Creighton Chronicle October 1921.)

Dr. Novella A. Schafer (M.D. 1957) recalls stories her father Leander Herman Schafer (M.D. 1923, told her. “Dad always said ‘The Girls’ solicited them when he was in school. The Med School was in the red light district. He said you should see all the diseases these girls had. None of his class wanted any part of them.” (Letter, undated)

Dr. Clarence S. Moran (M.D. 1928), too, remembers "the houses" surrounding the School on 14th & Davenport. "When I came to school, it was in the red light district... All these girls who worked in these places used to come over to the GYN Clinic... When I was a Sophomore, the Pathology Lab was on the second floor on
the North side and the American Legion had a conven-
tion here. The President, Coolidge, was here . . . These
places near the Medical School were pretty busy then,
even during the daytime . . . During the convention, it was
like a company of soldiers outside, lined up four abreast,
each one waiting his turn to go in. And we used to sit in
the windows (of the Pathology Lab) and bet ten cents on
the time. Whoever was closest to the time got the ten
cents . . . It was in the spring, it was warm out . . . you got
kind of fed up with school work.’’ (Audiotape Interview,
September 12, 1989)

Dr. Moran remembered many incidents of his
school days. He recalled Dr. Victor Levine’s Chemistry Lab. Dr. Levine’s Assistant,
John Little, “liked his liquor pretty well. These were Prohibition Days. I don’t know
where he got his liquor, but some days he’d be pretty happy.’’

Part of the Assistant’s job was to read to the students the pages of the book
which Dr. Levine was in the process of writing. The students would circle Little, and
when he started reading, would begin to slowly close in on him, pushing and
nudging, making the circle smaller and smaller until the Assistant would stop and
say, “Get back! Get back!” They did this several times during the reading session,
especially on Little’s happier days.

As a sophomore, Dr. Moran remembered several German doctors, recruited
and brought to Creighton by Dr. Maurice Howard, who had been studying in
Vienna. The senior man recruited was a Dr. Rickensteiner, who was in charge of the
Pathology Labs and did autopsy pathology reports. Since the faculty couldn’t speak
German and these German doctors couldn’t speak English, much communication,
including the autopsy reports, was conducted in Latin.

Dr. B. Carl Russum (M.D. 1916), Professor of Pathology, required his students
to outline their entire Pathology textbook, section by section, and turn in the outlines
periodically on 3x5 cards. According to Dr. Moran, the students had a difficult time
with this, it was terribly time-consuming, and they really dreaded it. They did it
dutifully the first time, but reasoned that since Dr. Russum’s schedule was so packed
and since the lab instructors could read no English, it was unlikely the cards were
ever really checked.

So they devised a plan: They arranged all of their own cards in a certain order
and the collective stacks of cards in a certain order on the table in the small office.
Then they kept watch. Day after day went by without the cards being moved, and
one day they were returned to the students. No more outlining was done by any of
the students for the remainder of that course.

For Anatomy Lab, Dr. Moran remembered bodies in a big pile in the middle
of the floor. The students would pick a body, carry it back to their dissecting table,
then rub it down with a sort of vaseline from a huge jar. After doing this, no amount
of washing would take the smell off their hands. They became quite used to it, so
they didn’t even notice it after awhile.

“But when working in the Anatomy Lab, you really stunk – everything
smelled.” The boys would sometimes break for lunch and walk up to 16th Street.
When they walked into a restaurant, heads would turn at the smell. “People would
turn and stare in unison, especially as we raised food to our mouths.”
Other times, people going to the restaurant would take orders and bring food back to the students still working in the Anatomy Lab. The students became so nonchalant about the whole thing that they would be eating with one hand and dissecting with the other.

Despite strict prohibitions against it, much student gambling took place in the Student Recreation room at the old Medical School, and on Saturday mornings, even in the Clinic Rooms, according to Dr. Moran. For the most part, the stakes were low, about a dime, but sometimes they went much higher. Dr. Moran had his own scheme: lunch was twenty-five cents, so he brought fifty cents with him and gambled as long as he could on the fifty cents until he was left with lunch money only.

One student was an orphan whose grandmother sent him $80.00 every month to live on. One Saturday, this man had just received his four twenty-dollar bills, and wanted to play dice. He threw down $20.00 to bet, upon which each of the four students present (including Dr. Moran) threw down a five-dollar bill to cover his bet. The $20 better threw the dice—two aces, snake-eyes. He threw down another twenty dollar bill, then another, and another. In four rolls of the dice, he had lost his whole $80.00. Dr. Moran and his three colleagues were each $20.00 richer. How that student survived that month was a mystery to Dr. Moran.

In the waiting room of the school, "there was a big table in there [that] made a nice crap shoot." This was right across the hall from the office of the Regent, who could look out of his curtained window directly into the open waiting room. As a result of these observations, No Gambling notices were prominently posted—to no avail.

Dr. Moran vividly recalled one especially raucous crap game, with students cheering and shouting, and a classmate, Cirino Finocchiaro (M.D. 1928) loudly complaining that no one was covering his dime side bet. Just after Dr. Moran lost the dice, an abrupt hush fell over the gamblers. There was Father Whelan, the Regent, "a great big fella, he was at least six foot and he must have weighed 250, he had been a ball player, I think." He was leaning over the crowd, watching. "That dispersed the crowd pretty rapidly." Three students were suspended for two weeks each. Two of them lived with relatives, and to avoid having to admit their fall from grace, got up, dressed and pretended to go to school as usual. (Audiotape Interview, September 12, 1989)

Dr. D.E. Raca (M.D. 1939) also has a "gambling story" from his student days: "It was against the rules to gamble at pitch during the noon lunch hour in the dining area of the old school building, located at 14th & Davenport. Fathers Francis and George Degelman would sometimes wander in dur-

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ing the lunch hour. This particular noon I had a nickel and with that I got into the
pitch game to see if I could win the pot and then proceed to eat lunch with the
winnings.

Seven students in the game would allow one to 'shoot the moon' if one got the
ace and bid first. This time I had the ace and shot the moon. All the cards fell to the
ace and there I was, drooling for lunch. But no nickels were falling into the pot. I
came angry and cried out, 'Hey, you S.O.B.'s, put in the money!'

No one spoke. Someone motioned with his eyes that there was someone
behind me. I turned, and it was Father George Degelman. I knew him well, and he
in turn knew that I was broke. So I calmly said to him, 'Father, don't you think that
these S.O.B.'s should pay me their nickels?' He said, 'Come on, you S.O.B.'s, pay him
his nickel!' With that they all laughed and threw in their nickels. I thanked Father
and went to get my lunch. That is some remembrance of what a Real Jebbie, as we
called them, was!' (Graduate Questionnaire, 1990)

Dr. James F. Kennedy (M.D. 1935) recalled his impressions of his freshman
year at the School of Medicine: "September 1931 was hot in Omaha, the hills around
the Creighton campus were steep for pedestrians accustomed to the flatlands of
Western Nebraska where the nights were cool and the humidity low. Beginning the
freshman year in medical school was an adventure into the unknown. I felt like a
stranger in a strange land, having just turned nineteen, and being now in the midst
of classmates older and more sophisticated.

I seem to recall ... a contingent of repeats from the year before us. Whatever
the reason was for their repeating the freshman year I never did learn. It must have
been a 'group sin,' they were definitely not dummies. I believe there were eleven of
them, most of the group went on to illustrious careers in medicine. The students
from California were a new breed to me, most of them quite handsome and suave.
With their light-colored clothing and suave ways they were easily identified. In the
California group was an ex-sailor named O'Sullivan. He had tattoos on his forearms
and a lock of blond hair which hung down his forehead. He didn't last long. I often
wondered if he had applied for medical school on a bet and did not find the academic
environment to his liking. There was another ethnic group, the Italian students from
the East coast, at first I thought they were all Jewish. A cluster of them lived in an
apartment where I lived. In my own naive upbringing, I had never encountered
Italians and was unprepared for their effusive style. At meal time especially there
were loud bursts of animated conversation mixed with songs and arguments. Other
ethnic components of the class were six of Jewish background from East and West
coast, two Japanese, and the miscellaneous remainder of Irish, German, and Polish
or Central European stock, plus the Anglo-Saxons. Probably ten or twelve were
native Nebraskans, mostly from Omaha. Most of the Nebraskans had come via
Creighton Prep.

Only a few students had cars in the early 30's, one had to either walk, take a taxi,
or use the street cars. Many of us lived in the Hilltop area and walked down to 14th
and Davenport early in the morning. The route led through one of the red light
districts and it was not unusual to hear tapping on windows as one passed by certain
dwellings. If one glanced up he would receive hand signals to come on in.
Fortunately there was neither the time nor the money to accept these invitations.
The Anatomy Department was our special den of terror. To have Dr. Fred
Schwertley stalking the tables and peering over one's shoulders was particularly

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unnerving. His presence rendered even the most poised student a stammering zombie. One incident of those memorable days in the dissecting room is still vividly recalled. It concerned the areolar area of the nipple on the cadaver. This was to be left as a landmark no matter what. At one table someone had inadvertently detached it and had pinned it back on, hoping no one, especially Dr. Schwertley, would notice it. When Dr. Schwertley did approach the table and asked Rudy Ferlic to describe the anatomy of the female breast, Rudy stammered, ‘Well, sir, well, sir, it’s a complicated mass.’ And Rudy was one of the top students in anatomy.

What a mixed bag we were – ages of members of the class ran from late teens to fifty-plus. We had dentists, pharmacists, teachers, holders of masters’ degrees in various fields, former lab technicians, and teenagers such as I, with only two years of pre-med. Roll call was routine, we heard it so many times that I have it permanently imprinted in my memory and can still, after fifty-five years, recite the roll call if asked. Sort of a subliminal type of learning.” (Letter dated September 29, 1990)

– Dr. Silvio Joseph Giovale (M.D. 1936) reminisces: [I have] “fond memories of ‘fishing’ for our cadavers out of the tank; of Dr. Schwertley’s sessions in the Star Chamber; of the cafeteria line downstairs in the basement of the Medical School, and being served many times by Wally Graham [M.D. 1936], who later became President Truman’s personal physician; of my first pledge party at the Phi Rho’s, and that was the beginning of my smoking (all of the free cigarettes handed to us); of Dr. Phil Cogley [M.D. 1921], his private chauffeur, and the fresh flower in his buttonhole; of the dermatologists, Borghoff and Kort – I remember one of the first statements Kort made – that our lifestyle will reflect our earnings – the more you make the more you will spend. Not a truer statement was ever made. I felt that Creighton Medical School classes were really the melting pot of would-be physicians – so many from California, and from New York State, and from so many ethnic groups.” (Graduate Questionnaire, 1990)
Dr. Yoshishiko Fred Fujikawa (M.D. 1934): "I learned my anatomy through fear from Dr. Fred Schwertley, and my knees shook when he approached the table for fear that I wouldn't know the answer to whatever he might ask. I also remember when our Dean, Dr. Hermann von Schulte, reprimanded the Bacteriology class for shining the mirrors of our microscopes into certain rooms of an old apartment building on 15th Street, reminding us that we were to be gentlemen at all times." (Graduate Questionnaire, 1990)

Dr. J. Whitney Kelley (M.D. 1934), a classmate of Dr. Fujikawa, remembers the same dressing down by Dr. von Schulte. He recalled the students flashing the mirrors from their microscopes into the houses of "these chippies." The chippies told Dr. von Schulte, who then confronted the students, "I never saw such a mad German in my life. He said, 'Gentlemen, have you no dignity whatsoever? It is beneath the dignity of any medical person or person who aspires to become a doctor to engage in the kind of behavior you have, in disturbing the women in these apartments behind us.' And you better believe we stopped it." (Audiotape Interview, November 18, 1990)

Sebastian "Subby" Pirrucello, who many will remember from the Pharmacy, recalled that the cafeteria in the old school had been the cadaver room, prior to conversion to food service. The tank where cadavers were kept after this conversion was directly under the Pharmacy and adjacent to the Pharmacy stockroom. Trucks would back into the alleyway with a load of cadavers, covered only by canvas. Hooks would be used to place the nude bodies on a sort of operating table and into an elevator. From the elevator, they would then be dumped into the tank of preservative liquid. Pirrucello recalled the odor level in the Pharmacy at these times as being very bad. (Audiotape Interview, January 11, 1990)

Dr. Werner Jensen (M.D. 1932) remembered Dr. Schwertley in Anatomy choosing the four largest members of the class to go to the alleyway to help bring cadavers into the Lab. At 6'6'1/2", of course, he was one of those chosen every time. "I learned then that the foot end of the cadaver was lighter than the other end." (Audiotape Interview, January 18, 1990)

Dr. Ethel M. Waters (M.D. 1940) remembers Anatomy. "Dr. Schwertley told me to 'get your German thumb in there' in dissecting a cadaver. After a few weeks we were able to eat candy (someone kept a clean hand for this purpose)." (Graduate Questionnaire, 1990)

Brother Frank Jelinek, Superintendent of Buildings and Grounds, says that most people in his Department didn't want anything to do with the transport of cadavers, so many times he himself drove the truck bringing the bodies back to Creighton.
However, he does remember some rather mischievous maintenance workers who played pranks on each other. One janitor at the old school used to start his work around midnight and work through the night to get the school cleaned by morning. Some of his co-workers put a couple of stiffs from the Anatomy Lab in a sitting position to greet this man when he got to the Lab. “We never saw him since.”

(Audiotape Interview, December 11, 1989)

Dr. Werner Jensen (M.D. 1932) remembers his very first faculty dinner, held at the Omaha Athletic Club. Dr. Claude Uren, chairman of ENT, was the Master of Ceremonies and told the following story: A woman came to him for an examination, her chief complaint being that she couldn’t hear herself—(pass gas). He examined her thoroughly, and could find nothing wrong with her ears. He referred her to Dr. Adolph Sachs, chairman of Medicine (a rather stern fellow). Dr. Sachs saw the woman, and sometime later, Dr. Uren asked Dr. Sachs if he had been able to help her. In this story, Dr. Sachs replied, “I couldn’t really find anything wrong with her, so I gave her something to make her—louder!”

Dr. Uren told this story at the faculty dinner, at which Dr. Sachs was in attendance. Dr. Sachs was not too amused— he had never really seen the patient.

(Audiotape Interview, January 18, 1990)

A May 3, 1939, Creightonian article focused on “Mabel, the Medic’s Mighty Mouser,” a cat who had taken up residence at the medical school some six years before. According to the article, this cat was a “career woman,” trained to recapture white mice who were being used in research and who had dared escape. Not only that, her training included not breaking their necks, but simply returning them to their cages. Every once in a while, Mabel got to make a gourmet meal of one as a reward. (“Medic’s Mighty Mouser, Mabel, Brings ‘Em Back Alive, Au Jus,” The Creightonian May 3, 1939, p. 1.)

Dr. Sam D. Hoeper, Sr. (M.D. 1943) tells of an incident which must have been most gratifying to a budding young surgeon. When he was a junior in medical school, he got a job examining new employees (beginning at 5:00 A.M.) for Swift & Company. It seems the father of his fiancé’s friend was a Swift salesman, and arranged for young Hoeper to obtain the position. Back at Creighton, a Professor of Hoeper’s, Dr. Andersen, indicated to him that he had applied for that job, but was not hired. Dr. Hoeper finishes his story, “I did not explain to Dr. Andersen.” (Letter dated June 13, 1990)
**Memories**

The freshman Medical class in 1943 had a fun idea, according to a *Creightonian* article: "Freshmen in the School of Medicine decided to come to class dressed like the 'Gay Nineties' or 'the good old school days.' The fellows wore little black bow ties, parted their hair at various angles and smoked big black cigars. The three freshmen girls wore gay bows in their hair and brought shiny red apples.

As Dr. William A. Stoepler, instructor in Micro-anatomy, walked in the classroom, Kathleen Shanahan [Turgeon] [M.D. 1945], Louise Camel [Farragel] [M.D. 1946], and Angela Adams [M.D. 1945] marched up to the front and gave him apples. The fellows weren't so gift minded and coughed, fumed, smoked and practically choked to death on the cigars.

It was a day the frosh and the professor will never forget. Freshmen always were full of ideas." ("Medical Freshmen Dress in Costumes of 'Gay Nineties'," *The Creightonian* March 12, 1943, p. 3)

A *Creighton Alumnews* story of June 1944 points up the fact that medical students at the time were members of the military as well: it was the finish of still another trimester under the accelerated wartime medical program. "The candidates for Bachelor of Science in Medicine were allowed three hours free in order to attend the Commencement ceremonies and receive their 'half-way' degrees. Therein lies a story.

Twenty-four B.S. in Medicine candidates marched in the academic procession, moved into the gym and heard President Bowdern's remarks. In an impromptu introduction to his formal President's Report for 1944, Father Bowdern congratulated the new graduates and laughingly told them to go out and relax a bit before tackling the cruel, cold where-we-work. Twenty-four new Bachelors of Science in Medicine did just that for the rest of the day, in spite of a full afternoon's class schedule.

Then came the cruel, cold catch.

All twenty-four men were members of either the Army or Navy Medical Training Units. The Army said 'A.W.O.L.,' - the Navy said 'Mutiny,' and the absentees got six hours of drill and fatigue duty. Servicemen in ETO and South Pacific, please note: Crime never pays!" ("Medc Grads go A.W.O.L.," *The Creighton Alumnews* June 1944, p. 9)

Dr. Elinor Marsh (M.D. 1942) vividly recalls many events in her medical school experience: "There are many incidents I remember, some childish, some tragic and some humorous. The students pulled the usual tricks, paper stuffed in eyepieces of microscopes, quarter moons and stars on the incubator room and many unprintable ones.

Our freshman year, the Embryology professor was informed too early that his contract would not be renewed. In retaliation, he gave either a failing grade or a conditional grade to nearly every member of the class. Those of us with a 'condition' just took another test in the fall. Many of those with failing grades had averages brought down so low that they were through with medical school.

One day in Laboratory Diagnosis in our sophomore year, some of our group of eight took a break just after we had taken blood smears from our partners. Meantime, Dr. Tom McCurdy, our professor, passed out slides of Sickle Cell Anemia. I quickly put the slide under the microscope, then showed my partner, Roy Mattari, when he returned. His look of consternation should not have been funny, but it was.