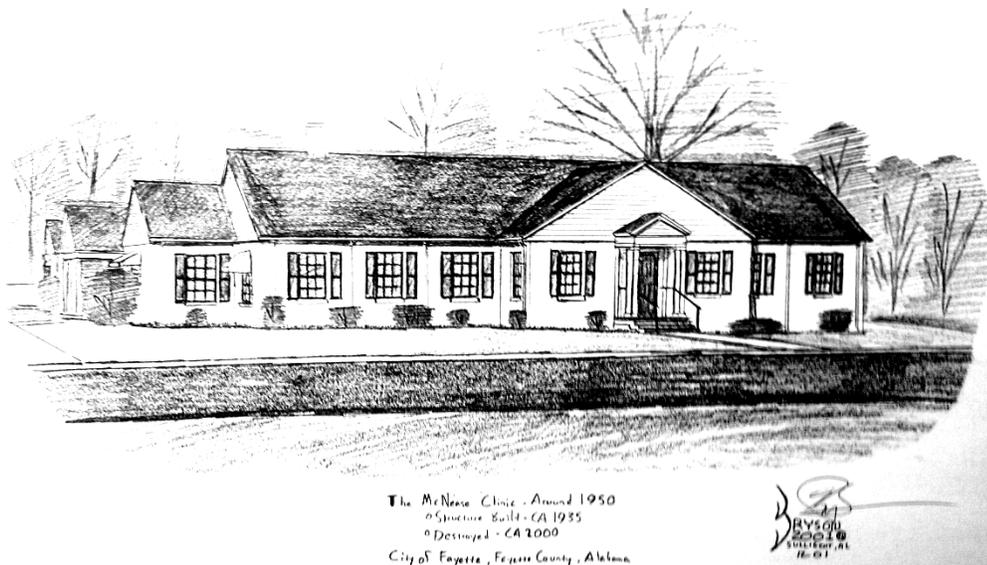


# Fayette County Medicine: A History of Quality Healthcare In Rural Alabama

*The Physicians,  
The McNease-Robertson-Hodo Clinic/Hospital,  
and their Legacy*

**By Harold Reed**



## **Contents of Part 4**

Administrators.....	
Employees of Fayette County Hospital and Medical Center.....	
Significant Happenings.....	
Epilogue by William A. Curry, MD.....	
Acknowledgements.....	

## **Administrators**

Administrators have played an increasingly important role in Fayette's evolving health care system. Dating modern medicine in Fayette to Dr. McNease's arrival in 1926, the medical facilities remained under physician administration through the close attentions of Dr. McNease, Dr. Robertson, and Dr. Hodo. Dr. Robertson joined Dr. McNease in 1937, the same year that the McNease-Robertson Clinic-Hospital was built, and worked to gain this small hospital accreditation by the American College of Surgeons. He also became chairman of the Alabama Hospital Association in 1941-42. When Dr. Hodo opened surgical practice in Fayette in 1946, he took the role of administrator of the McNease-Robertson Hospital and held that position until the new hospital was built in 1958. With the new Fayette County Hospital/Fayette Medical Center and complications from regulations, technology, and payment systems, the medical community turned to professional, full-time administrators. These were Robert Boone, 1958-1980; Frank Wilbanks, 1980-1985; John Graves, 1985-1987; John Lucas, 1987-1990; Harold Reed, 1990-2008, and Barry Cochran, 2008- present.

### **Robert H. “Bob” Boone**

The new Fayette County Hospital opened in September 24, 1958. Robert H. “Bob” Boone was hired as the first Hospital Administrator. He started early enough to monitor the hospital's construction. He was in this position for 20 years from 1958 until 1980. Bob and his wife, Trudy, were very happy living in Fayette. Trudy worked for a short while as the hospital infection control nurse.



Robert H. "Bob" Boone

Bob was very personable and a sportsman. He frequently took a break or had lunch with the employees. He loved Brunswick stew. He liked playing golf, and he and Dr. McNease often attended Ole Miss football games. He and some of the guys enjoyed shooting doves during season. He was sometimes made fun of because he was a terrible shot.

Bob was active in the Alabama Hospital Association, serving as its Chairman 1968-69. He

As is sometimes required was also chairman of the West Alabama Hospital Association. Bob was also was involved in the American Hospital Association and often attended its meetings. He was a long time board member of Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Alabama.

Bob was involved in the local community. He was a member of the Exchange Club and Chamber of Commerce, which were the most active civic organizations at that time.

of administrators, Bob could be the "bad guy" in order to get the job done. At such times the employees felt intimidated, but he strived for what he thought was best for Fayette County Hospital and served the facility well. He guided the hospital and nursing home through several expansions and improvements from February 20, 1958 until July 23, 1980. Late in his career, Mr. Boone employed his first assistant administrator, Noel Hart, who worked five years in that capacity before taking the job of Administrator in a Mississippi hospital. A few months later, Frank Wilbanks

came on board as Assistant Administrator, and followed Bob as Administrator when Bob retired shortly thereafter.

## **A. Frank Wilbanks**

Frank was Administrator for 5 years from 1980 until 1985. These were very difficult times for Fayette County Hospital and Nursing Home. Medicare was established in 1965 and hospitals were paid on a “retrospective cost-based reimbursement” system. Under this system of payment from 1967 until 1983 Medicare cost went up from \$3 billion to \$37 billion annually. In 1982, Congress mandated the creation of the prospective payment system (PPS) to help control costs. This system is a per-case reimbursement mechanism under which inpatient admissions cases are divided into relatively homogeneous categories called diagnosis-related groups (DRGs).

(<http://oig.hhs.gov/oei/reports/oei-09-00-00200.pdf>) In effect, any patient admitted for a diagnosis, such as heart attack, provided the same reimbursement to the hospital as any other heart attack. One highly complicated heart attack admission might consume the resources of ten uncomplicated heart attacks. Whereas hospitals serving large populations would have enough uncomplicated admissions to make up for the complicated ones, small hospitals were highly stressed by this system. At the same time, there was a downturn in the national economy affecting rural areas disproportionately with decreases in private insurance coverage. Alabama led the nation in rural hospital closures during the decade of the 1980s.

The financial condition of the Fayette County Hospital and Nursing Home was highly stressed. Frank, in an attempt to help (with board approval), announced that all hourly employees would only work 72 hours per pay period and salaried employees would continue to work their 80 hours per pay period, but would only receive 72 hours pay. Frank was fair with his decision. The pay reduction applied to everyone, including himself. Most of the employees were upset but were supportive. This pay reduction continued for a few months but no one resigned.

Due to these changes in Medicare, it became very difficult for small hospitals in Alabama to survive without an affiliation with a tertiary referral hospital. The hospital board decided that working with a large hospital should be considered.

Proposals were sought from all interested parties and proposals were received from Druid City Hospital, Baptist Health System Birmingham, Caraway Methodist Hospital, and East Alabama Medical Center. A group of local citizens were appointed by the Probate Judge and County Commission to evaluate the proposals.

Before the committee could evaluate the offers of agreement, the Probate and County Commission entered a lease agreement with Baptist Health System, whose representatives came to the hospital and took over operations. However, hospital board chairman T. C. Smith and board secretary William Thigpen sought the help of Attorney Harwood Bernard to file a restraining order in District Court. Attorney Bernard of the firm Rosen Harwood was very skilled-- he was later appointed to the Alabama Supreme Court. The case was heard by the District Court to determine who had authority to enter a lease agreement on behalf of the hospital. Judge Cladus Junkin gave his ruling and stated:

*By necessity, this Order has vested ownership of the Hospital in the Hospital Board, but that ownership is for control purposes alone and is in trust for the citizens of this county. The citizens of Fayette County are the true owners of the hospital regardless of who has control and that should not be forgotten by those in control.*

To stabilize the financial position of Fayette County Hospital and Nursing Home, on August 16, 1984, the board signed a management agreement with Druid City Hospital, but retained ownership of the facility.

Another management problem Frank faced was the attempt of local United Auto Workers (UAW) Union, which was in the Arvin automotive plant, to also organize the hospital's Nursing Home and service employees. This created another few months of extreme stress. However, in the end and with the help of DCH and good legal counsel, the efforts of the UAW were unsuccessful.

When Frank was assistant administrator, in addition to his administrative duties, he was the purchasing agent. When he became administrator, he hired Frank Damico to replace him as purchasing agent, but he never filled the Assistant Administrator position. Frank Damico had a long experience in hospital supply sales and was excellent in his job.

Frank enjoyed living in Fayette. He had a swimming pool installed behind his house and enjoyed it very much. However, while mowing his lawn, he backed his lawn mower into his new pool. Frank Damico, who was an expert scuba diver, came to the rescue and helped Frank retrieve his lawn mower.

Fayette County Hospital and Nursing Home employees supported Frank as administrator during these difficult times. They understood the difficulties the facility was facing and wanted to do all they could do to help. Frank also maintained a good relationship the Chairman of the Board, Mr. T. C. Smith, and the entire hospital board. He had a good relationship with the medical staff, but they were not always in full agreement as to what action should be taken.

When the lease agreement was entered into with DCH, John Graves was employed as administrator of the hospital and Frank was moved to be the position of administrator of the nursing home. A few months later, Frank resigned to start a business of his own in Fayette-- Spring Fresh Cleaners. The business was an immediate success. When he resigned, Barbara Malcolm was named administrator of the nursing home.

## **John Graves**

John Graves was Administrator of Fayette County Hospital from 1985 to 1987. The first item of business for John was to change the image of the facility and develop a list of action items. He quickly gained the support of the department heads who helped create the action list. Among the items on the list were recruit doctors, especially a surgeon; adjust staffing to appropriate levels; and begin improvements of the facility.

John was not the most personable of administrators, but he got the job done. With recruitment he brought in Gordon King, MD, a general surgeon who only stayed about one year. He also recruited Rusty Bates, MD, an internist who remained almost 4 years. With the use of a consultant, John reduced staffing by about 18 full time equivalent employees.

John immediately began making improvements in how the facility looked. The first recommendation from architects was to install a large triangular, uninstructed canopy for the front entrance. Some people loved the canopy and some people hated it, but they all talked about it. It made a statement that Fayette County Hospital was different. In addition to the canopy a "V" shaped sign was built on the front lawn in front of the canopy with the DCH logo. Just behind the sign was a simple, but most

important symbol, the United States flag on a 30' flag pole. With this change in image, there were also improvements made inside the hospital. One controversial item was carpet in all corridors and patient rooms. Nursing personal could not be convinced that the carpet could be kept clean and especially not sanitary. The first large construction project after the lease with DCH was in the north patient wing of the hospital. The project demolished the interior space and constructed a 5-bed ICU and administrative suite.

One near disaster occurred when John employed as business manager Don Woodard with whom he had previously worked. Don was very good in the business office, but when there was company party for the employees Don dressed as woman and play the part of "LaTonya." On this particular day everyone was in the cafeteria, and LaTonya tried just a little too hard to dance with Dr. Hodo. The next day, Don was back at his work in the business office, but LaTonya apparently left town and never returned.

John Graves and the medical staff could almost never agree. One reason for this was that when John first started to work as Administrator, some of the doctors were delinquent with their medical records. John did not try to work with the doctors, but notified them that they were off staff until their records were up to date. This action was not well received, and one of the doctors never returned to the hospital.

When the lease with DCH was entered into, Fayette County hospital made a loan of several thousand dollars from DCH to fund the cost of structural changes to the facility. The operation of the hospital soon improved and the loan was repaid. However, during the time John was there it was felt that he was a little too quick to make purchases. It was believed that some of John's superiors At DCH had the same thoughts. John was Administrator for less than two years, then he became manager of the local Golden Eagle manufacturing plant. John Graves was followed by John Lucas.

## **John Lucas**

John Lucas was Administrator of Fayette County Hospital for 3 years, from 1987 until he retired in 1990. He had been the City manager of Demopolis, Alabama, which was Dr. Harold Breitling's home town. While in Demopolis, John had been a

partner in and administrator of a nursing home. When John was in his early 50's, he and his wife Faye moved to Tuscaloosa so John could continue his education. After receiving the Bachelor of Science Degree from the University of Alabama, he went to the University of Alabama at Birmingham and arranged to do a residency in Health Administration with Jim Ford, Chief Executive officer of Druid City Hospital. John said that after his residency Jim Ford asked him to stay on and become the night administrator. John asked Jim Ford "What authority will I have?" and Jim Ford responded, "You are working in my place and you have the same authority as me." John was obviously a highly respected and competent Administrator.

John left the position of Assistant Administrator of the Cancer Treatment Center in Tuscaloosa to take the administrator position at Fayette County Hospital. John's greatest accomplishment while at Fayette was his first administrative decision-- the recruitment of the professional couple, John Morrison MD, general surgeon and Janice Hudson MD, family physician. They practiced in the Fayette community for 20 years and made a tremendous contribution to the community and Fayette Medical Center. They continue to have been missed greatly.

John Lucas was highly respected and honored by all employees. One of the reasons the employees were so fond of John is that all of the years that John was administrator he gave every employee a 6% pay adjustment at the end of each physical year. This amounted to an additional 2 weeks' pay received each November.

John was very knowledgeable of the healthcare industry. He had a calm reassuring demeanor, but he was not to be underestimated. He was well able to take a firm stand when needed. John was often referred to as a statesman.

John was active outside the community. He was chairman of the West Alabama Hospital Council, Board member of the Alabama Hospital Association, served as a member and President of the Alabama Association of Healthcare Executives, was a member of the American College of Healthcare professionals, and often attended the American Hospital Association meetings.

John and his wife, Faye were very special people to Fayette. They were active in the First United Methodist Church of Fayette. They were both loved by all the employees and the community.

John was an excellent mentor to Harold Reed and prepared him well to be the next administrator, which he was.

## **Harold Reed**

Harold Reed was born in Winfield, Alabama, about 18 miles north of Fayette and lived in the nearby area until moving to Fayette at the age of five. He went to Fayette County High School, graduating in 1967. He then attended Shelton Technical College in Tuscaloosa for two years and received an Associate Degree in Industrial Electricity. He began working at Fayette County Hospital and Nursing Home on April 3, 1970, as a maintenance engineer, which included the preventive maintenance, upkeep and repairs of all equipment, building and grounds. Through the course of 20 years, his career progressed steadily as shown below:

- Maintenance Engineer (1970)
- Chief Engineer/Safety Officer
- Director of Plant Operations, including departments of Engineering, Housekeeping and Laundry.
- Director of Facility Operations, adding to those departments above Dietary and Materials Management (1981)
- Assistant Administrator Fayette County Hospital and Nursing Home
- Administrator of Perry County Hospital and Nursing Home to reopen the closed hospital and assume operation of the nursing home (1989)
- Administrator Fayette Medical Center (1990-2008)

During this advancement, he continued to attend school part-time. At Brewer State Community College he earned the Associate in Arts degree; at the University of Alabama New College, the Bachelor's of Science in Administrative Sciences; and at UAB, a certificate in Health Services Administrative Development.

Harold Reed worked with each of the professional administrators that served Fayette County Hospital and Nursing Home before him--Bob Boone, Frank Wilbanks, John Graves, and John Lucas. Under Mr. Boone, he was elevated to head of the Maintenance Department and assisted with day-to-day operations of the hospital, served as Safety Officer, and managed logistical operations of the ambulance service. Already he was becoming involved in administration.

In 1981, Frank Wilbank's recognized Harold's continuing development and elevated him to Director of Facility Operations. He served in this role over the next several years under Mr. Wilbanks and Mr. Graves. John Lucas made him Assistant Administrator, and Harold found Mr. Lucas to be an excellent mentor. Next, Harold was promoted within the Druid City Hospital management system to Administrator and transferred to Perry County Hospital and Nursing Home. His work in Perry County was valued highly. Subsequently, on January 1, 1990, he was transferred

back to Fayette Medical Center to replace Mr. Lucas as Administrator, a position he held for 18 years.

*During his administration*, Harold led a \$10 million renovation program for the hospital. This included a new Dietary Department; a 21 bed expansion to the nursing home; a 3 room expansion to surgery including central sterilization and supply; replacement of 45 patient rooms; a new 8 bed Intensive Care Unit; a remodeled hospital entrance and foyer with Health Information Department, conference rooms and gift shop; and a new administrative suite and various small projects. Fayette County Hospital and Nursing Home gained national recognition for patient satisfaction under Harold' watch. Press Ganey, a nationally recognized leader in patient satisfaction surveys, found Fayette County Hospital to receive high survey scores and listed Fayette County Hospital among the top 10 of Press Ganey facilities nationally based on its inpatient ratings.

Harold's professional activity expanded beyond hospital and county boundaries. He was a charter member of the E911 Board to facilitate the communication of emergency telephone calls in Fayette. He served as Adjunct Faculty of the University of Alabama College of Community Health Sciences from 1996 until 2008, assisting to teach medical students and residents aspects of health care administration. As a charter member of the Rural Alabama Health Alliance (RAHA), he facilitated the inclusion of rural community voice in discussions of medical education and outreach. He was a member of the Alabama Rural Health Association and served as its president in 2006. He was a Fellow in the College of Health Care Executives, a board member of the Alabama Hospital Association from 1996 until 2004, and member of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Hospital Advisory Board for two terms, serving as chairman during the last term.

He has been active in community affairs being a member of the Fayette Area Chamber of Commerce, including President in 1995; member of the President's Advisory Board of Beville State Community College; board member of United Way of West Alabama; and member of Fayette Medical Center Foundation Board, Fayette Kiwanis Club, and Fayette County Extension Advisory Council. He is a member and has served as Deacon of Unity Baptist Church. He remains a devoted husband and father.

Harold maintains a strong personal appreciation for the high quality care provided by the doctors and staff at Fayette Medical Center. In his words,

*I am sure I would not still be alive if not for [Fayette physicians'] astute clinical acumen, up-to-date expertise, and connectedness to some of the world's most advanced medical experts. On the evening of March 22, 1995, when I was in a meeting with a few of doctors, I collapsed with a*

*cerebral aneurism that was located in a very critical part of the brain. This would have resulted in my immediate death had it not been for our modern CT scanner, the well trained radiologist, and the expertise of our medical staff, who knew the care that was needed to prevent my brain from swelling and who engaged immediate emergency medical transportation. All of these factors contributed to my survival to reach Dr. Evan Zeiger, a world renowned neurosurgeon, who without doubt performed life-saving surgery for me. This proves the benefit of high quality medical care in rural areas, including such advances as CT, MRI, and ultrasound as a standard of care that should be readily available.*

Late in Mr. Reed's tenure as Administrator, Tom Hood was employed as Assistant Administrator. However, Tom had accepted a position as Administrator of a hospital in Mississippi shortly before Harold's announced retirement, so Barry Cochran came to work as the Administrator in 2007.

## **Barry S. Cochran**

Barry Cochran came to work at Fayette Medical Center as Administrator in June of 2007. He came with broad knowledge and experience in health care. He started his career as Director of Pharmacy at Baptist Cherokee Hospital in Centre, Alabama. Within a few years he was promoted to Administrator, and after only a few more years he became the concurrent President of Baptist Cherokee in Centre and Baptist DeKalb Hospital in Fort Payne, Alabama. He later served as CEO in various small and large hospitals.

Mr. Cochran's administration began in parallel with a national depression that has had significant affects on rural economies, including health care. Jeff Huff, who came on board as Chief Financial Officer just prior to Mr. Cochran's arrival, has worked with Barry to address issues affecting the financial viability of the hospital. Perhaps foremost among these issues was the departure of Surgeon John Morrison and Family Physician Janice Hudson a few months after Barry started to work. They had finally given in to recruitment efforts from their alma matre, Louisiana State

University, to get Dr. Morrison back home as a medical teacher and administrator. Their departure exacerbated greatly the hospital's financial stress. However, Mr. Cochran soon recruited Dr. Jonathan Smith, General Surgeon, and Dr. Robert Bolling, Plastic Surgeon, to practice at Fayette Medical Center.

Other stressors included the retirement of Dr. Rutland from part time practice in the nursing home. He was replaced through a contract company that provided Dr. Owens to be the on-site physician. Also, Barry promoted Michelle Robertson, RN to be the Nursing Home Administrator.

As did those before him, Barry maintains many professional and community affiliations and has been recognized for his professional service. For example, he is a fellow in the American College of Healthcare Executives and is Past President of the Alabama Hospital Association. He received the Gold Metal of Excellence, which is the highest award given by the Alabama Hospital Association.

During Barry's short tenure at FMC he has proven himself as an excellent Administrator and has gained the respect of the employees. Even as many small rural hospitals are facing uncertain futures, given the financial distress that appears to be compounded by evolving federal health policies, Fayette continues to expect state-of-the-art medical care under the guidance of Mr. Cochran and at the hands of its beloved physicians.

### **Employees of Fayette County Hospital and Medical Center**

Many dedicated and loyal employees have worked or continue to work at Fayette Medical Center. Some of these began their careers in the old clinic-hospital downtown or in the Fayette County Hospital and Nursing Home. Here I have just to name a few I could remember..

Blanche Whitley, as Director of Nurses, is one of the first to come to mind as a loyal and dedicated employee. Flossie Kizzire worked alongside Blanche at the old hospital down town and also at the new Fayette County Hospital. Flossie was assistant Director of Nurses for a time. When Blanche retired, she was followed as Director of Nurses by Dot Bobo. The next Director was Mae Davis, then Pam Farris,

and finally Kathy Griffith who continues to hold the position today. Kathy Griffith is a self professed workaholic with 27 years of service. She started her career as an obstetrics nurse and through extreme dedication and commitment grew in her position to become Assistant Administrator and Chief Nursing Officer. She demonstrates exceptional leadership skills and superior ability to interpret and apply accreditation standards. She is an exceptional person and also serves as Associate Pastor for the First United Methodist Church of Fayette.

Wanda Moore has 37 years of service, starting as a ward clerk and progressing to her present station as Administrative Secretary for Kathy Griffith..

Cynthia Melton came to work without any prior experience in healthcare and for 15 years has held the demanding position of Administrative Secretary/Medical Staff Coordinator.

Annie Shackelford was the first African American registered nurse to be at Fayette County Hospital and was a long-time ICU nurse.

Phoebe Kizzire had the reputation as the best surgical aid that ever worked at Fayette Medical Center.

Earnie Bonner was a good nurse for 22years. She started as an LPN in the Nursing Home then transferred to the hospital and worked in all areas nursing. Went back to school and worked her last 11 years as an RN.

Betty Whitley retired with 33 years of service. During these years she progressed to be an RN. During her career, she developed the Infection Control Department and built the Quality Assurance Program through all its phases.

Sarah Price also returned to school and became an RN. During her 26years of service she developed hospital programs in Discharge Planning, a Swing Bed Program, implemented an organ recovery policy and started a Social Services department.

Jettie Wilson, an LPN with 33 years of service, worked in all areas of nursing.

A few other nurses that come to mind. Lattice Williamson and Dorothy Prater as aids; Sarah Price, Maxine Trull, Mary Bowen, Iola Herron, Hazel Clearman and Sarah Owens as LPN. Most of these nurses had a long history at the hospital and almost all at one time or the other worked part time on the ambulance. Afterwards a few went on to work in doctor offices.

Barry Eads, an employee of 36 years, came to work as an LPN and soon afterwards became an EMT Paramedic. His name became synonymous with the ambulance service. After receiving his Bachelor in Science in Nursing he was promoted to the Director of Inpatient Care and Emergency Department. After

additional studies, he obtained his Masters in Health Administration. He became an assistant Administrator before his retirement. Barry went on to hold positions of Director of Emergency Department and Director of Nursing at two other facilities.

Kim Jordan, Director of Respiratory Care, built an outstanding Respiratory Care Department over a long successful career.

Jackie Waldon started in physician recruitment and built the Communications and Marketing Department. She is known for excellence in writing and advertising.

Barbra Malcomb, with 25 years of service, began work as an LPN and proved to be an outstanding emergency room nurse. She continued her career by becoming an RN. She worked in Case Management until she was promoted to Director of Nursing in the Nursing Home. From there she was soon promoted to Administrator of the Nursing Home. Other administrators who followed her as nursing home administrator were Harold Reed, Joann Nichols and Michelle Robertson.

Deloris Thompson was the first registered nurse to work in the Nursing Home and was a long term employee there.

Linda Mitchell worked for a total of 38 years as an LPN in faithful care of nursing home residents.

Linda Powell, with 42 years of service, started as a ward clerk and progressed to administrative secretary working with Noel Hart and then to working for the nursing home administrator.

Most recently the Long Term Care staff has done an excellent job in complying with the licensure and certification standards by having numerous deficiency free surveys by the Department of Public Health. This has been under the leadership and direction of Michelle Robertson as Administrator with a total of 21 years of service, Andrea Johnson as Director of Nursing with 21 years of service and Mary Ham 28 years service, Nan Glassglow 25 years service, Wanda Brown 14 years service, Susan `Taylor 22 years service as supervisors.

Gertrude Stanford, the first food service manager, was an excellent manager and known for her big heart. She was followed by Nancy Maddox who did an outstanding job for twenty years before moving to the Department of Public Health. Odessa Walker, long-time dietary employee and excellent cook, served also as food service manager.

Lynwood Christian and Doug Berry worked in both the lab and x-ray departments, covering untold nights of call and providing excellent quality x-ray and lab results until 1975, when Gaillard Stoker came to work as the first officially

trained radiology technician. Susanne McGraw worked in the laboratory and x-ray and helped Gaillard take radiology call.

Dee Barger, member of the American Society of Clinical Pathologists, was a long time faithful employee in the lab.

Bill Durr followed Gaillard as Director of the Radiology Department . He was followed by Sandy Hester, then June Keith, Jeff Madison, Bill Fikes and John Files, who works in the position today. John has built an excellent department, both in quality and efficiency. He has arranged for all technicians to be cross trained in multiple disciplines.

Cheryl Farris has worked in the Radiology Department for 21 years in Ultrasound. Described by Radiologist as being excellent in her work.

Lynnwood Christian, who enjoyed being a prankster himself, had to stay on his guard. One instance occurred when administrator Bob Boone was away from the facility, but was expected to return later in the day. At lunch time Lynnwood came through the cafeteria in his usual jovial mood on his way to the serving line. As he passed by the window, he noticed with alarm that his red pickup truck had been pushed over into Bob Boone's private parking place! Everyone had a good laugh as a confused, angry, and a little bit anxious Lynnwood scurried to move his truck before Bob, who could be the bad guy, returned. Another episode of good humor occurred one day when several of the guys who regularly hunted with Bob were sitting with him in the cafeteria. Bob loved to dove hunt and considered himself as good shot. However, he often shot at birds that were too far away, but everyone was afraid to tell him. This day Bob looked out the window and said "Gaillard, when you have a shot at a dove about where the corner of the building is, how much you lead them?" Without thinking, Gaillard replied, "At that distance I wouldn't take a shot; it's too far away!" Everyone had a big laugh, though Bob never understood why, and Gaillard was relieved when moment passed.

Lynnwood was not just a prankster, but was an excellent employee. The facility often had an employee of the month and quarter, but only once did it name an employee of the year. Lynnwood was elected to this well deserved position by all the employees.

Lawson White, the first maintenance engineer, was extremely dedicated and committed to the facility.

James Burkhalter, another maintenance engineer with 40 years of service, also had extreme dedication. He came to work anytime he was called, if on call or not. He had the reputation that he could fix anything.

Della Mitchum, the first Director of Housekeeping, did an excellent job. Frances Driver was an exceptional Environmental Services worker, also. Ronnie Wilson worked in Environmental Services and was one of the best, if not the best, floor finisher ever to work at Fayette Medical Center.

Lillian Watkins, the first Director of Laundry, was a diligent worker. She was followed in this position by her daughter Eulene Barnett who was also a very dedicated worker. Eulene's daughter, Sally Ham, worked in the Physical Therapy Department as a secretary.

Larry Watkins started to work as a clerk in General Storage and after going to school to become a Registered Nurse. He transferred to surgery and soon became the Director of Surgery. He later returned to general storage as the Director of Material Management.

Katie Black was the first Director of Medical Records. Pam Stocks followed Katie with 35 years of service Medical Records and is now Director of Health Information Management. Cindy Renfroe has been a coworker of Pams for 35 years and is an excellent coder and transcriptionist.

Diane White began directly out of high school and through 42 years of service has successfully worked in every position in the Business Office. Other Business Office employees with a long outstanding record were Mary Smith, the first business office manager; Terrell Jones, first Director or controller; Tommie Shelton, payroll; Shelia Swendial, billing; Susan Hones, Long Term Care billing; Mary Smith and Florence Farris, receptionist.

Tina Gilliam, Patient Admission Coordinator, has worked untiringly for 35 years and has worked whenever needed to get this important job done.

With each passing generation the faithful employees of the Fayette health care facilities have been constant in helping provide the people of Fayette County and the surrounding area with exceptional care. I am sure I have failed to mention many other dedicated and loyal employees, all of whom should be recognized for their service to the community.

## **Significant happenings in the history of Fayette County Medicine:**

- December 14, 1819- Alabama became a state.
- June, 1842- Fayette became a county.
- 1800-1859- Pioneer doctor, irregular doctors, and doctors without formal training were prevalent in the practice of medicine.
- June 24, 1926- Dr. B. W. McNease came to Fayette.
- 1926- Fayette County had its first paved road.
- 1929- Flu epidemic came into Fayette.
- 1929-30 Great Depression started.
- April 1, 1936- Dr. McNease paid \$500 for land to build clinic.
- 1937- Clinic construction complete at a cost of \$11,000.
- 1937- Dr. John Banks Robertson, Sr., a surgeon, came to Fayette.
- 1938- McNease-Robertson Hospital was built.
- 1939 to 1945- World War II in process.
- 1941 to 1942- Dr. Robertson was president of the Alabama Hospital Association.
- 1941 to 1945- Inez Fowler, after completing studies, started working at Fayette as lab tech.
- 1947- Dr. Robertson retired due to stress of work causing health concerns.
- 1947- Dr. Henry Gunter Hodo, Jr., a surgeon, came to Fayette.
- 1950 to 1953- Korean War.
- 1952- Dr. Inez Fowler, after medical school internship and time with Red Cross, began medical practice in Fayette.
- 1954- 4 mill tax for new Fayette County Hospital approved by county vote.
- February 20, 1958- Robert Boone became Administrator.
- September 21, 1958- Grand Opening of Fayette County Hospital.
- September 24, 1958- McNease-Hodo Hospital closed.
- September 24, 1958- Fayette County Hospital officially opened as a 35-bed hospital with four patients; semi-private rooms were \$10/day, private rooms \$17/day.
- December 15, 1958- W. D. Anderson, radiologist and friend of Dr. McNease, began visiting the hospital each Thursday and reading x-rays.
- 1959- Dr. Harold E. Breitling began his practice in Fayette.

- Early years of FCH- Lab employees did X-rays as well as performing lab procedures.
- 1962- Addition of a 38-bed nursing home.
- April 27, 1964- Tuscaloosa Pathology started a referral and consulting lab.
- November 23, 1965- Nursing home expansion of 22 beds, bringing total beds to 50.
- 1966- Unit secretaries added to assist nursing service, but only on 1st and 2nd shifts.
- July 1, 1966- Hospital approved to participate in Medicare program.
- March 27, 1967- Addition of 26 beds, second Nursing Station, and OB patient wing open to the public, increasing hospital capacity to total of 61beds.
- October 16, 1968- Administrator salary increased to \$17,440 per year.
- 1968- Administrator Robert Boone was chairman of the Alabama Hospital Association.
- May 24, 1971- Board requested a traffic light at entrance to hospital and entrance was changed to Side Street.
- September 27, 1971- The hospital average daily census was 48.4 with 61 total beds.
- March 6, 1972- Mrs. Blanche Whitley, Director of Nursing was awarded “Woman of the Year by Exchange Club.
- 1972- Dr. Jon Sanford moved his practice from Gordo to Fayette.
- May 26, 1973- The hospital assumed operation of the ambulance service that was previously run by Howell Funeral home.
- 1973- Dr. Inez Fowler, after further training, started Psychiatry practice in Fayette.
- July 22, 1974- Two x-ray technicians became available on a full time basis.
- February 24, 1975- Fayette's first registered Pharmacist, Pat McCrackin, was employed three days per week, moving to full time in May.
- April 24, 1977- The Exchange Club credited Dr. B. W. McNease for implementing“modern” medicine in Fayette County.
- April 24, 1977- Nursing home was renovated and 51-bed wing was added bringing total to 101 beds.
- June 26, 1977- Hospital began offering respiratory therapy service via contract with by Larry Andrews, LLC.

- July 5, 1978- Nurse Midwife Lovie Oswalt delivered her last baby.
- 1979- McNease-Hodo Clinic downtown was closed.
- 1979- New McNease-Hodo Clinic was opened, and Dr. Hodo honored for his great contributions to medicine in Fayette.
- 1979- Frank Wilbanks became Administrator.
- 1983- Dr. Magouirk started practice in Berry.
- August 16, 1984- DCH Health Care Authority leased Fayette County Hospital and Nursing Home for 20 years, until August 11, 2016.
- 1984- Allen Blackwell, VP of DCH, was named interim Administrator at FCH.
- 1984- There were 230 employees and 28 total medical staff members, including part time subspecialist from Tuscaloosa. Active staff were Dr. Richard Rutland, Dr. Phil Smith, Dr. Harold Breitling, Dr. Henry Hodo, Dr. Peter Peacock, Dr. Jon Sanford, Dr. Roger Moss, Dr. Garry Magouirk, and Dr. Chandrin.
- 1984- John Graves became administrator of hospital.
- 1984- Frank Wilbanks was transferred to Administrator of nursing home.
- 1985- Hospital gained a new diagnostic nuclear medicine department, mammographic machine, and x-ray machine.
- 1986- Dr. Magouirk moved practice to Fayette.
- 1986- Barbara Malcomb was named Administrator of nursing home.
- 1986- Lynwood Christian was named Employee of the Year.
- 1986- Renovation of north wing of hospital with a 5-bed ICU and administrative suite and renovation of front lobby.
- 1986- Combined nurses station I and II to be central nurses station.
- 1986- Laundry closed and service contracted to DCH, medical records moved from trailer into laundry space, administrator moved from trailer to new administrative suite in hospital.
- 1986- Fayette County Hospital Foundation chartered.
- 1986- Pam Farris RN, CCRN named Director of Nursing.
- 1987- John Lucas became Administrator.
- 1987- Millport Clinic open with a physician.
- June 1987- Dr. John E. Morrison and Dr. Janice L. Hudson started practice in Fayette.

- 1988- CT suite constructed, making Fayette one of the state's first rural hospitals to install a CT scanner.
- 1990- Harold Reed became Administrator.
- 1990- Kathy Griffith became Director of Nursing, Assistant Administrator of Nursing, and Chief Nursing officer.
- 1991- Laparoscopic surgery was begun by Dr. Morrison.
- 1992- Dr. Fred Yerby started practice in Fayette.
- 1992- Home Health Agency was established.
- 1992 to 2000- C. Neil Moss, MD became full-time Radiologist.
- 1993- Rezwan Islam, MD established practice at Millport Clinic.
- 1993- Mobile MRI service was started.
- 1993- Physical therapy expanded into the old ambulance house.
- 1994- Heliport and new parking lot were constructed.
- 1994- DCH opened dialysis clinic in Fayette.
- 1994- Construction of 21-bed nursing home wing and new kitchen funded by FCH Board.
- 1999- Expansion in preparation for new nursing wing.
- 1994- Dr. Van Johnson began cataract surgery.
- 1994- Meditech computer linkage installed.
- 1994- Dr. Grubbs left after four years as full-time ER physician. Hospital went to contracted Emergency Department service.
- 1995- Hospice and durable medical equipment service were started; Dr. Volker Jacobs, German physician, began working with Dr. Morrison doing research; Dr. Luis Pernia began performing endoscopic carpal tunnel procedures; and a new larger surgical suite was built.
- August 8, 1996- The DCH lease was extended for 20 years, until August 31, 2016.
- 1996- Outpatient Clinic constructed from the old kitchen.
- 1996- Hospice and **DME?** were expanded and relocated to Fayette Square Shopping Center.
- 1996- Radiology began doing angiography procedures.
- 1996- Fayette County Hospital and Nursing Home were renamed Fayette Medical Center.
- 1997- Teleradiology equipment was installed to DCH.

- 1997- New central sterile Supply Department was built adjoining surgery and a new surgical wing was named after Dr. Henry G. Hodo, Jr.
- 1998- Fayette Medical Center celebrated its 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.
- 1999- A new mechanical building was constructed; expansion prepared for a new nursing wing; a wing of new patient rooms was opened; cardia rehab was initiated; and Dr. Martha Jo Christian started practice in Fayette.
- 2000- Dr. Lisolette Métier, a German gynecological surgeon, traveled from Germany to Fayette Medical Center for gall bladder and hernia repair done laparoscopically by Dr. Morrison.
- 2000- Telesurgery equipment was used to broadcast surgery procedure by Dr.Morrison to fourteen physicians in Miami, FL.
- 2000- A new MRI (fixed base) was installed at FMC to replace the old mobile MRI.
- 2000- Balanced Budget Act began with large Medicare cuts for hospital.
- 2001- Construction completed on new hospital front entrance, business office, medical records, gift shop, and lobby, chapel- and conference rooms.
- 2001- TNKase, new clot dissolving drug, became available at FMC.
- 2002- FCH Board renovated Long Term Care Station 2 with new call system and corridors.
- 2003- Long Term Care “step-it-up” program was begun in August; Employer of Choice Award was given to FMC in November.
- 2004- FMC was given the “Above and Beyond” award for its support of the Alabama National Guard and Reserve.
- 2005- New hospital administrative suite area was constructed just off front lobby; FMC purchased a 16-slice GE Pro Light-Speed CT Scanner.
- 2006- FMC received employee satisfaction award from Sperduto & Associates for “Commitment and Excellence in Employee Satisfaction Measurement.”
- 2007- FMC awarded by Sperduto & Associates for “Greatest Increase in Employee Satisfaction;” the Pharmacy was renovated sand relocated to surgery hall; JoAnn Nichols, RN became Administrator of LTC; Barry Cochran became Administrator; and on October 1, 2007, the DCH lease was extended until September 30, 2016.
- October 31, 2008- Fayette County Home Care was transferred to LHC Group.

- September 2008- Ambulance service was transferred to North Star Ambulance Service.
- January 1, 2012- Hospice of FMC joined with Hospice of West Alabama.
- November 2007- Dr. John E. Morrison and Dr. Janice Hudson moved back to Louisiana to teach at LSU, their alma matre.
- 2008- Richard Rutland, MD retired after fifty four years of service to FMC; the Emergency Department was renovated.
- July 25, 2013- Michelle Robertson, RN became administrator of Long Term Care.

### **Epilogue by William A. Curry, MD**

Being a physician can be a lonely business. Even though practicing medicine requires establishing relationships with patients and families, taking histories, making physical examinations, and recommending plans of investigation and treatment, the responsibilities and the complexities of decision-making can leave the physician longing for help. Often that can come only from a colleague who has been there too – someone who not only can understand the personal and social stresses of medical practice, but who also can contribute to the problem- solving that is the mark of good diagnosis and treatment. Much of our best work is done in collaboration.

When Dr. Benjamin Wilberne McNease arrived in Fayette in 1926, he was only a generation removed from a time when most physicians in the rural South practiced medicine part time, combining it with farming, teaching, ministry, or other work. The change involved much more than hours on the job, however. The early 1900s marked a shift from medical practice based on observation, experience, and apprenticeship to a standard of scientific evidence and an academic model of rigorous education and training like that Dr. McNease pursued.

So it was not surprising that Dr. McNease, with his academic preparation as a student and as a professor, would establish not only a clinic but a hospital, a place where physicians could work in collaboration. Besides serving the medical needs of the people of Fayette County and the surrounding region, it became a focal point for a medical group that supported and complemented each other. Over the years, the Fayette medical community has earned the respect of Alabama physicians for

clinical excellence, professionalism, and civic responsibility. The concept of community medicine embodied in the work of Drs. William Willard and David Mathews was well established in Fayette fifty years before it gain academic structure through the University of Alabama College of Community Health Sciences.

My own exposure to the work and role models of Fayette medicine started early. The first I.V. line I ever saw was attached to my grandfather while he was an overnight patient in the McNease – Robertson Hospital. I remember Dr. McNease as a powerful and imposing figure. Later, when my grandfather needed a home visit, it was their dashing young colleague, Dr. Dick Rutland, who came to nearby Kennedy – giving me the memorable experience of his inspiring and comforting presence that is described earlier in this book. I wanted to be like him.

When the time for my application to medical school approached, I spent time with Dr. Jon Sanford, then practicing in Gordo, to make rounds at the North Pickens County Hospital. My own family physician and role model, Dr. William Hill, wanted me to get to know this young, dynamic doctor. From their perspective on medicine and community, I felt well oriented and recommended to the profession I hoped to enter. When my other beloved grandfather fell seriously ill, it was Dr. Sanford who made a home visit in Carrollton while covering in Dr. Hill's absence. Once again I could see the comfort and peace that a family can receive from a competent and caring physician. Jon soon after that moved to Fayette, and our friendship continues to this day.

All this would be more than enough gifts to me from the physicians and health care community of Fayette, and their contributions to patients and community would be noteworthy and deserving of the commemoration of this and other records. However, the relationship of Fayette physicians – particularly Dr. Rutland – with the University of Alabama College of Community Health Sciences adds another layer of historic accomplishment. By the 1970s it was unusual for academic medical programs to bring practicing rural physicians onto their faculty – especially in leadership positions. But that was exactly what Bill Willard, David Mathews, and John Burnum did in tapping Dick Rutland to lead the new Family Medicine residency in Tuscaloosa. Not only did Dr. Rutland help establish what has become one of the nation's most successful family practice programs, he created a lifeline for future physicians to the Fayette medical community. As a site for medical student and resident teaching, Fayette has been a natural attraction for the young physicians who have chosen it as their own practice home.

The story of this book comes full circle now, with Dr. McNease's great vision being fulfilled through the successor to the medical school where he taught in Tuscaloosa, bringing physicians in training to learn and be enriched by the legacy of the McNease – Hodo Clinic, the hospital, and medical staffs yet to be formed. My own story also comes full circle. Dr. Rutland's ground-breaking work in Tuscaloosa made it easier for another rural physician to find work there – for me it was first as chair of the internal medicine department and later as dean of CCHS. My debt to Dr. Rutland, Dr. Sanford, Dr. McNease, Dr. Hodo and to our younger colleagues including Garry Magouirk can be repaid only by passing on to others what was so freely given to me. It can be a lonely business, but the practice of medicine also can be a place of the richest and most rewarding professional relationships. We all can be grateful that medicine has been graced by visionary and committed leaders who answer a call to more than routine work, who insist on solutions to the problems their patients face – whether they are scientific or social, administrative or personal. The fruits of their labors are better ways of practicing medicine and of being physicians – practices well-served and lives well-lived. It is an honor to be their colleague.

## **Acknowledgements**

If you find a turtle sitting on a fence post you know he had a lot of help in getting there, which leads me to say that I am extremely grateful to everyone (listed below are those I remembered) who contributed in so many ways to this project and especially for the contributions of my good friends Richard O. Rutland Jr., MD, John R. Wheat, MD and Mr. Delbert Reed. I am also grateful for Kathy, my wife's, patience during the process of writing this book.

Mr. Joe McCrakin

Mr. Reedus Wheat

Mr. John Banks Robertson Jr.

Mr. Gaillard Stoker

The Historical Society

Dr. Garry Magouirk

Mr. Bill Robertson

Dr. John Morrison

Mr. Tommy Norwood

Dr. Janice Hudson

Mr. Richard Nelson

Dr. Charles Nolen

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Dr. Martha Jo Christian

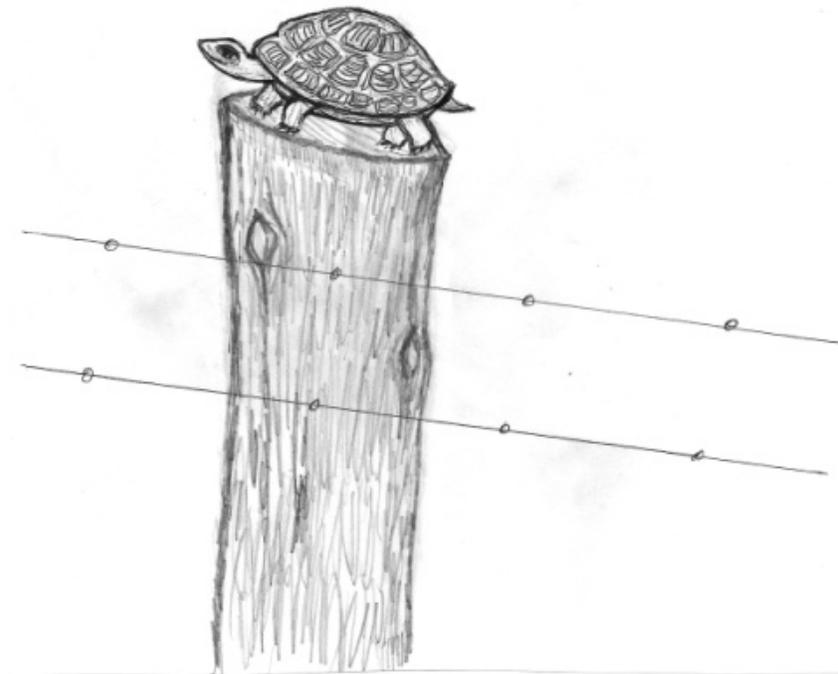
Dr. Gregory Stidhem

Dr. Jonathan Smith

Mr. Barry Eads

Mr. Barry Cochran

Mrs. Melissa McFall Rutland



Mr. Phill Clark

Fayette County Library



**Fayette Medical Center**

## Back Cover

When B. W. McNease arrived in Fayette on June 24, 1926, he was soon called the Fayette's father of modern medicine. As he began his private practice, he made significant improvements in the quality of healthcare available at that time. Later the addition of the McNease- Robertson-Hodo clinic-hospital expanded and improved greatly healthcare services in Fayette County. Fayette has always had exceptional, very passionate healthcare professionals who were dedicated to their professions and, due to their commitment, Fayette has had constant growth in facilities and improvement of healthcare services.

Harold Reed worked at Fayette County Hospital and Nursing Home for 20 years and received routine promotions during this entire time. He also improved his education and received a BS degree from the University of Alabama and did additional studies at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. As Administrator he had a successful career for 18 additional years.

His 38 years at Fayette County Hospital and Nursing Home, later becoming Fayette Medical Center, gave him good exposure to healthcare. His passion and interest in the subject helped this book become a reality. This book is a proud work and without Harold's determination the history in this book may have been lost forever. It was a long difficult process but it was a labor of love.