

## OSCAR CLARENCE NEWMAN, M. D.

By O. H. Richards

Oscar Clarence Newman, nationally known physician and surgeon and founder of the Shattuck Memorial Hospital, was born December 29, 1876, near Peebles, Ohio, the son of Mesheck Herdman Newman and Sarah Johnson Newman.

After finishing grade school, Oscar C. Newman entered the Adams County Teachers Normal. The winter after he received his teacher's certificate, he taught his home district school. In 1894, he enrolled in the National Normal University at Lebanon, Ohio. At the end of the semester, he returned to Adams County and taught a winter term of school at Mineral Springs. In 1896, he entered Fayette College, Fulton County, Ohio remaining until September 1897, at which time he entered the Medical Department of the National University, Lebanon, Ohio, taking the first step in gratifying a boyhood-ambition to become a country doctor. In 1898, he entered the Medical Department of the University of the South at Sewanee, Tennessee, graduating in 1900.<sup>1</sup>

Dr. A. M. Newman, an uncle, located at Canadian, Texas, informed him of the opportunities for a young doctor at Grand, Day County, Oklahoma.<sup>2</sup> Grand was without a doctor, the nearest one located at Higgins, Texas; and the next, at Canadian, Texas from which point Dr. A. M. Newman was often called.

When the young doctor landed in Grand, in old Day County, people gave him a hearty welcome. Impressed by their friendliness and hospitality he decided to locate. With only \$2.50, he gambled on the future. He was given board and room by two kindly old people, Mr. and Ms. Adam Walck who ran the local hotel and were willing to wait until he was able to pay. A friend loaned him an untamed cow pony and a saddle to make his professional calls. The doctor had many painful experiences before he qualified as a "bronc-buster." His medical practice increased. His calls extended from the state line on the west to the Washita on the south and to Turkey Creek on the East.

While his practice increased, his collections were at a standstill. His patients were poor and unable to pay. He became discouraged and at times he felt like quitting the whole thing. An old doctor in a little town in Arkansas was retiring and offered the young doctor his practice on a partnership basis. He was about to accept but the

<sup>1</sup>O. C. Newman, M.D., "Reminiscences of a Country Doctor," *The Chronicles of Oklahoma*, Vol. XXVII, No. 4 (Winter, 1949-50), pp. 312-419.

<sup>2</sup>O. H. Richards, "Early Days in Day County," *The Chronicles of Oklahoma*, Vol. XXIV, No. 3 (Autumn, 1948), pp. 313-24.

people of Grand would not let him, saying, "You are needed here. Times will get better." Soon afterward, he was appointed deputy County Treasurer. During the winter of 1901 and 1902, there was an epidemic of smallpox in different parts of the county, and the County commissioners gave him the contract of attending all cases and vaccinating all persons who were willing, at \$1.00 each. During the day, he would ride horseback and attend patients and at night, he would post the County Treasurer's books. On March 1902, the County commissioners paid him \$555.00 for services rendered. His first obligation was the payment of his board bill of \$152.00, and a month in advance. "No incident in my life gave me greater satisfaction than paying this obligation," the Doctor often recalled. By this time the country was becoming more prosperous and more people paid their bills. The doctor discarded his saddle horse and purchased a span of driving horses and buggy as a means of transportation.

On September 18, 1902, he was united in marriage to Miss Della Smith, which was the most important social event that ever occurred in Grand. It was given under the auspices of the Woodmen of the World at their lodge hall. People from all over the country attended. To this union, were born three sons: Roy E. born September 18, 1903; Floyd S. born Jan. 20, 1906; and M. Haskell born September 20, 1907. One of the most remarkable things in the life of Dr. Newman is that his three sons adopted the medical profession. Each one is a specialist in some line of the profession. However, the Doctor always gave credit to Mrs. Newman as the power behind the throne in supervising their sons' education.

On October 30, 1907, he moved to Shattuck and with other Shattuck businessmen established the Northwestern Sanitorium which closed in one year, as a failure. He resumed his private practice but each year he managed to take post-graduate work from four to six weeks in some of the leading medical and surgical colleges of the country. He attended the Mayo Clinic thirty-two times from ten days to two weeks, since 1913. During World War I, he was inducted in the military service and served one year and was discharged with the rank of Captain.

In 1920 he established the Shattuck Hospital to which was added thirty-nine modern fireproof rooms in 1927, and twenty-four more rooms were added in 1929. In 1937, a twenty-room, fully equipped modern clinic was built adjoining the hospital. In 1947, another story was added to the Newman Clinic and Hospital, and the capacity in rooms and equipment doubled. This was the third time the Shattuck Hospital had been enlarged since 1927.

When each addition to the hospital was completed it was dedicated with impressive ceremonies, the most memorable when the first clinic was dedicated in 1937. There was an estimated crowd of 2,000 people present at the High School auditorium where the program was held. The high-light of the occasion was the presentation of the

life-sized portrait of Dr. Newman, painted by Dord Fitz, a rising young artist and made possible through contributions of over 3,000 babies at whose birth Dr. Newman attended. These babies, some of them now fathers and mothers, paid tribute in an engrossed memorial, to their friend and physician with this portrait. Few physicians have had more high honors conferred on them than Dr. Newman.

On January, 1939, he was selected by Governor Leon C. Phillips as a member of the State Board of Medical Examiners, much to the Doctor's surprise, as he had not asked for the appointment. On October 16, 1939, he was inducted as a Fellow of the American College of Surgeons at Philadelphia, the highest honor that can be conferred on any physician. He was honored by Governor Robert S. Kerr as a member on the State Board of Medical Examiners, April 7, 1943, for a period of four years.

On November 16, 1943 he was honored by the Oklahoma Memorial Association, inducted into its "Hall of Fame," at the annual Statehood Day banquet. At the December, 1947, meeting of the State Medical Council held in Oklahoma City he was voted the most outstanding country doctor in the state. In connection with these honors he was director of Oklahoma Medical Research and Oklahoma State Medical Insurance.

Dr. Newman was a great humanitarian as well as a physician. The rich, the poor, the halt and lame and blind received the same consideration at the Newman Hospital, a practice he began back in Grand, Oklahoma. He was absolutely fearless with a nerve of steel. It took nerve to conquer a bucking bronco, his first means of transportation. It took nerve to cross the swollen Canadian to visit a sick patient when he almost drowned because his horse stumbled.

Another occasion he showed his fearlessness that few people know about: He was called to attend a ranchman's sick wife. While there he encountered two outlaw brothers of the sick lady who were hiding out. After breakfast the next morning the Doctor stepped out for a smoke. On returning to the sick room, he found there the lady's outlaw brothers and husband. The lady was crying and the brothers were cursing the husband claiming he had been abusing their sister and one said "I am a notion to shoot him," dropping his hand to his gun. The doctor grabbed the outlaw's hand and said, "Get out of here! I know your sister has a kind and loving husband. you fellows are causing these tears and if you know what is good for you, you had better hit the grit." They got!

In 1902, he was made a Mason at Texmo Lodge, No. 56, Texmo, Oklahoma Territory, riding horseback thirty miles to receive the degrees. On March 26, 1952, the Masonic Grand Lodge presented him a fifty year Masonic pin. He was a 32nd Scottish Rite Mason

of Guthrie and India Shrine Temple at Oklahoma City. He was also a member of the Odd Fellows Lodge. He was a member of the First Baptist Church of Shattuck, and a Life Member of the Oklahoma Historical Society.

Oscar Clarence Newman passed away at the family home, March 14, 1953, aged seventy-six years after an illness of almost three years. Funeral services were held at the First Baptist Church March 16, 1953. His body lay in state between the hours of 1:00 and 3:00 p.m. in the Church Sanctuary. Old and young alike passed by the bier to pay tribute to a beloved man. Services were under the direction of the Reverends Lewis M. Hancock, Wilmer E. Grindstaff and Leon Smith, the latter Christian minister of Dalhart, Texas, and nephew of Mrs. Newman. Burial was made in the Shattuck Cemetery with grave-side services by the Masonic Lodge.

If any physician ever lived up to his Hippocratic oath it was Dr. Newman. To aid the sick and ailing was his first consideration with no thought of financial consideration. Paraphrasing, one can truly state when Dr. Newman's final summons came the Great Physician said, "Well done thou good and faithful servant, enter in my name."