

## VAN DUZEN BRIDGE NAME IN HONOR OF HAROLD COMFORT, M.D.

Harold W. Comfort, M.D. spent his life as a country doctor, serving the Fortuna and Scotia communities for many years, and going "above and beyond the call of duty."

Dr. Comfort came to the Fortuna area in the late 1920's, and he practiced there for almost three decades: from 1926 until his untimely passing in 1954. He was a graduate of the University of California Medical School, and first opened practice in Rio Dell. However, within a couple of months he relocated to Fortuna, in a Medical Office over the Bryan Building. He stayed in this office until he built a large 2 story home on 7th and Main Street. The "office" was located in the front section of his home: with a reception room, 3 exam rooms and a small lab; the back part of the home was his living quarters. Before the Redwood Memorial Hospital was built, his practice served all Southern Humboldt.

He was married to Dorothy Travis Comfort and had three children. He was a Veteran of World War I, and served with the Army in France. Dr. Comfort was very active in the community, and was a member of the Fortuna Rotary Club, the Methodist Church, and served several terms as a Trustee on the Fortuna High School Board of Education.. His community involvement led him to sponsor Dr. Garvin Goble as a medical student. He was a very dedicated, wonderful, caring, kind, warm hearted, and understanding person who was loved by all who knew him.

Dr. Fred Olson comments: "I was associated with Dr. Harold Comfort of Fortuna for over 20 years. He was unique in the way he ran his office and his life. It was a privilege to be his friend. He was the most caring doctor to so many people as well as to my own family."

Dr. Comfort was a typical small town doctor, spending long days, and often long nights, caring for his patients. He often worked an 18 - 20 hour day, usually 6, and sometimes 7, days a week. There were many nights when he was up all night and got no sleep at all. If a patient could not come to him, he went to them. He often made house calls-- sometimes many miles away and late at night, to the smaller communities of the Southern Humboldt County area: such as Ferndale, Petrolia, Loleta, Bridgeville, Ruth, Garberville, Alderpoint, Zenia, etc.

He performed the majority of his surgeries and delivered most of the more than 5,000 babies (reportedly) at the Scotia hospital, where most of his other hospital patients went. Making thousands of trips from Fortuna to Scotia on Highway 101 over the Van Duzen river bridge, Dr. Comfort crossed the old bridge that was built in 1924. The narrow structure was a beauty when viewed from a distance. However, the old bridge design caused visibility problems to drivers crossing it .The 1992 earthquakes that ravaged the Eel River Valley severely damaged the bridge, forcing its ultimate closure.

The new Harold W. Comfort, M.D. Memorial Bridge, a concrete arch 810 feet in length and 39-feet wide, replacing the old structure, was formally dedicated on May 31, 1996. We at the Humboldt-Del Norte Medical Society feel that this honor to the man who made such an indelible impact on the citizens of Humboldt County is fitting, and we can think of no finer memorial