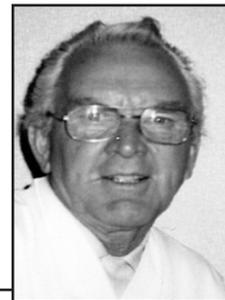




IN MEMORIUM JACK W. WALSH, M.D. 1917 - 2016 *by Jack Irvine, M.D.*



Jack Walsh died on October 22, 2016, just entering his 100th year, after a short illness. Jack was born, raised, and spent the majority of his life in Eureka. He went to Humboldt State College and graduated from the University of California, Berkeley. He received his medical degree from the University of Louisville. After medical school he enlisted in the Army and was stationed in Alaska where he assisted in managing hospitals in Fairbanks and Anchorage. While there he built his own sealskin kayak and had a dog team with which he hunted and fished.

After military service he returned to Eureka in 1946 and assumed the medical practice of his uncle, Dr. Joe Walsh, who had practiced in Eureka from 1914 and who is said to have delivered the first baby at St. Joseph's Hospital on F St. Mary, his wife, was his first office nurse. Jack came home daily for lunch, then took a 20-30 minute nap in his favorite chair with the newspaper spread over his face. How remarkably different the practice of medicine was then: there were approximately 26 physicians in Eureka with specialists only in ENT, obstetrics, and radiology. General and family practice physicians supplied the majority of the medical care and were expected to handle emergencies, as well as care for broken bones, perform most surgeries, provide anesthesia for operations, deliver babies, and make routine and daily house calls. Jack estimated that he delivered over 5000 babies during his long medical career. He personally knew most of his patients before they were his patients, knew about their families, their personal lives and challenges in a way that we hardly can recognize today. Technology-driven office and hospital medicine was in the not too distant future. Somehow Jack learned to adapt to these remarkable changes during his 58 years in practice. He retired in 2003 with back problems, a decision that he later regretted having made!

While medicine was his vocation, his avocations were many: he loved the outdoors and hunted and fished from the time he was a child. He loved to sail on the bay in his homemade sailboat, he surfed, flew gliders, developed Trinity Village with two others, managed timberlands, and ran tractors creating roads and culverts. And then there was skiing! He first skied as a teenager with skis that he crafted himself. He skied Squaw Valley the first day it opened in 1949 and skied every year until 2014. He bought his last pair of skis in 2009 at age 94.

And did I mention that he and his wife raised 11 children?

The Walsh family had a cabin in Squaw Valley which could accommodate Jack and Mary, all their children, the children's friends, and often anyone else who happened to drop in and needed a place to stay. He also invented and patented one of the first snow mobiles. Jack and Mary took over the Humboldt Ski Club operation at the top of Horse Mountain in 1962 and with their children continued to operate it until the early 1980s. At age 75 he was still climbing trees to hang pulleys for the rope tows.

Jack was devoted to his wife, Mary, to whom he was married for 63 years, to his children, their spouses, and their children and grandchildren, to his Humboldt community which he thought was the only place anyone could want to live and be raised, to his patients, and to his staff that supported his medical practice. His passing brings to a close an era in medicine that was more personal, certainly more slowly paced, less technological, less economically concerned, and hardly recognizable to us practicing today. While acknowledging the tremendous, life-saving and -prolonging advances that have occurred in medicine, some may look back on his era with a marked sense of nostalgia and a feeling that something important that has been lost. §