

RICHARD RICKLEFS, M.D.

OUTSTANDING RURAL PHYSICIAN RECEIVES AWARD

Richard Ricklefs, M.D., of Hoopa, was awarded the 1998 Frederick K.M. Plessner Memorial Award. The Plessner award honors the California physician who best exemplifies the practice and ethics of a rural practitioner. Dr. Ricklefs settled in Hoopa in 1952, after receiving his medical degree from Hahnemann Medical College and Hospital in 1951. He served the local Native people of the Hoopa Valley and rendered distinguished service for over 30 years to this rural area in northern California. He was quite instrumental in building of the Klamath-Trinity Hospital which opened in 1959. His life and service are so interesting that he was featured on Ralph Edwards' This Is Your Life program in the 1960's. As a result of that program, people were asked to send a \$1 contribution to "hospital, Hoopa California". In the subsequent months more than \$98,000 was raised to complete the hospital. Doctor Ricklefs started a form of a rural HMO where people paid \$25 per year for complete services including medications. However, he provided care even if the patients could not pay. He also performed home deliveries for many years. As a non-Indian physician, he helped to bridge the gap between modern medicine and Indian culture. He was known to utilize both Native American healing practices and traditional Western Medicine, often times on the same patient. Dr. Ricklefs retired from active practice of medicine in 1994. Besides working in Hoopa he spent parts of the last 20 years working in Fairbanks, AK, central valley of California, and even Kenya. He was profiled in the North Coast Journal in April 1996, in an article titled Medicine Man. Dr. Ricklefs met and married Elsie Mae Gardner, one of few surviving full-blooded Hoopa Indians, in 1942 and they remain happily married. The Humboldt-Del Norte County Medical Society being extremely proud to acknowledge Dr. Ricklefs' contribution to health care in North Western California, nominated him for this award. We are thrilled that Dr. Ricklefs was chosen by a state-wide panel who considered nominations from all over California. (Dr. Ricklefs is the third Humboldt County recipient to receive the Frederick K.M. Plessner Memorial Award: Samuel P. Burre, M.D. (1989); Theodore W. Loring, M.D. (1988) being the other two)