

Kansas Public Health Association, Inc.

SALUTES

Hester G. McCurley, R.N.

and

Harry Wettig



Samuel J. Crumbine Banquet

May 19, 1971

Ramada Inn — Topeka

SAMUEL J. CRUMBINE BANQUET

SERVICE RECOGNITION AWARD

To give recognition to members who have given long and faithful service in the field of public health, the Kansas Public Health Association has established a Service Recognition Award. This Award is presented to those who are selected by a committee composed of the President of the Association and the Chairman of each Section. The Award, in the form of a Certificate, was presented for the first time in 1956.

Past Recipients

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| 1956—Miss Cassandra Ritter
Mary C. Bure, R.N. | 1965—Virginia Pence
Lockhart, M.P.H.
Waldo W. Wilmore,
M.A. |
| 1957—Alice M. Finley, R.N.
Ivan F. Shull, M.P.H. | 1966—Leona M. Boyd
Paul E. Luckan |
| 1958—Sarah Zeller, R.N.
James T. Newton | 1967—Evelyn I. Ford
Guy G. Salts |
| 1959—Bertha H. Campbell
Melvin O. Johnson, B.S. | 1968—Loretta B. Wilson, R.N.
Willard R. Bellinger,
D.D.S., M.P.H. |
| 1960—C. Herbert Munger,
M.D.
Jesse M. Reddy | 1969—Opal Becker
Alberta Mahaney, R.N. |
| 1961—Flora Acton McKinley
Evan E. Wright | 1970—Blaine Logan
Glendening, Ph.D.
John Zook |
| 1962—Bernard J. Langdon
Margaret P. Shadoan,
R.N. | |
| 1963—Robertta E. Foote, R.N.
James M. Mott, M.D. | |
| 1964—Hannah E. Lindberg,
R.N. | |

ask Dr. Russell J. Stanbridge some special pointers on how to take care of emergencies.



HESTER G. McCURLEY

"Today, when one often hears 'Who cares?' it is gratifying to find a nurse like Mrs. McCurley who does care." Thus reads **The Kansas Nurse** tribute to Hester G. McCurley, chosen for a Special Service Recognition Award by the Kansas Public Health Association.

Hester Garner McCurley was born in Parsons, Kansas to Fesker Guin Garner and his wife, Sarah Ann Ransom. Her parents were living with her maternal grandmother, Hettie Shaw Ransom, while their home was being built two houses away. This house is still the family home where all Hester's brothers and a sister were born.

Hester attended Parsons public schools through one year of junior college. During her junior and senior year in high school, she was employed at the Bowser Memorial Hospital as a "helper." She worked wherever she was needed, from the kitchen to the operating room and wards, even in the yard.

Her interest in medicine goes back farther than that, however. When Hester was still a little girl in elementary school, she was applying bandages to a cut finger, stumped toe, or injury from a wild baseball. (There was no such person as a school nurse in those days.) It seemed that the teachers disliked the sight of blood and called on the gym instructor. He, in turn, soon learned that Hester could clean and dress the wounds. Besides, all the children wanted her to help. The gym teacher encouraged Hester to ask Dr. E. E. Bowser for some special pointers on how to take care of emergencies.

"This was one of the high points in my life, because Dr. Bowser was so interested," Mrs. McCurley explains: "He told me all about how one had to study and work to become a doctor, and that if I wanted to, I could be a doctor. This was really a revelation to me because I had never seen a lady doctor. Needless to say, Dr. Bowser became my idol. When I look back and think of the many families he recommended me to babysit for, and what they paid for all the work I did I find it really laughable. Nowadays most teenagers get more allowance per day than I was paid for a week.

"We were taught in our home that everybody had chores to do, for our own individual benefit as well as for the family. To work was good and honorable and character-building. To like your work was even better; hence, whatever your chore was, learn to like it and it would no longer be a task. This has stayed with me, and I have tried to pass it on to all the children I have had the opportunity to help guide—Sunday school classes, YWCA groups, Brownies, Cub Scouts, and various students."

Her Education

While she was still in high school, Hester collected so many bulletins from various colleges that her friends teased her. They asked "What are you trying to do? Start a library?" Even so, they never discouraged her and all of them helped.

Her parents studied the college bulletins, too. They explained to their children why they could not afford to send them to college. However, if any of them really wanted to go and could get in, their parents promised to help in every way they could.

Hester's idol, Dr. Bowser, spent many hours talking with her. She also had the opportunity to observe student nurses learning at his hospital. The supervisor of nurses told Hester that if she still wanted to be a doctor after completing her nurses training, she could still work and go to college and medical school. She gave Hester the names of several hospitals where a Negro girl could be trained. So once again Hester began writing for catalogs and brochures.

Dr. Bowser encouraged her to accept the course offered at Mercy Hospital and Training School for Nurses in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, where she would be near Temple University and the University of Pennsylvania. The decision was made and off she went to Philadelphia. Her entrance fee was paid with the help of her parents, Dr. E. E. Bowser and his brother, N. W. Bowser, a mortician. She graduated from Mercy Hospital with top honors and awards in her class.

After six months as operating room supervisor in the hospital, Hester's doctor advised her, due to illness, to give up the confinement and find easier work. Thus her experience in private duty nursing began.

During this period Hester began to realize that nursing in the hospital, occasional homes and hotels was not what people needed most. Everybody needed to be taught something about health care. Her affiliation with the Pennsylvania Tuberculosis Association and VNA become more to her than the required two months that the nurses were shifted off on them.

Hester moved to Detroit, Michigan, where she secured employment with the clinical department in City Hospital. Her desire to become a physician was gradually fading. She had become friends with several female physicians, both black and white, and they were not very encouraging. Besides, she just was not earning enough money to help her parents and save to go on to college. Furthermore she was doing something she liked and felt that she was needed. The depression period was on. During this time she became fully convinced that public health nursing was her goal.

When her mother became ill, Hester returned to Parsons. Immediately she was hired as a caseworker by the Labette County Commissioners and worked there for two years. Then she accepted a position as nurse-teacher-director in the nursery school department at Douglas School under NRA, WPA, and the Kansas State Department of Education. While there she met Miss Fredricka Beals, R.N., State Board of Health, and Miss Esther Twente, Kansas University.

Her training included courses in nursery school procedure at Kansas State University, Manhattan, and the University of Kansas at Lawrence; at St. Phillips School of Public Health Nursing, in Richmond, Virginia; and public health training at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, including rural and urban field experience. It was the last course given at the University of Michigan that rated a nurse a "certificate" in Public Health Nursing. The full-degree program was being emphasized for all future nursing students.

Career in Public Health

Hester McCurley began working at the Kansas City-Wyandotte County Health Department on May 1, 1940. Her service there has frequently gone beyond the call of duty.

Dr. Nellie G. Walker, director of the department, tells about her association with the dedicated public health nurse.

"I have known Mrs. McCurley for 16 years and have enjoyed the association. Very shortly after I came to the Health Department, I began my acquaintance with the community and its many problems through the employees on the staff. It was my pleasure to hop into a car with Mrs. McCurley, one morning early, and start out with her on her rounds. We visited with a number of families throughout the area and wound up for lunch at St. John's School. Wherever we had been that morning, I was impressed with the warmth and genuine concern which Mrs. McCurley displayed for her people regardless of their race or situation or their problem. And as we had lunch at St. John's, the genuine feeling of love which the children showed her has remained in my memory all these years.

"Of all the nurses on the staff, I particularly chose Hester McCurley to head up the Migrant Project to serve our migrants coming into Wyandotte County. This was not done because she had a knowledge of Spanish or Spanish-speaking people or that I had ever seen her work with this type of individual, but it was done because I knew that whatever job she took on she would find a way to accomplish the goal set for her. She has proven this a thousand-fold over during the six years of this project."

Her Organizations

The Kansas State Nurses' Association of Directors submitted the name of Hester G. McCurley to the American Nurses' Association for the 1970 Mary Mahoney Award. Hester has been a KSNA member for almost 30 years. Presently she is 2nd Vice-president and Public Health Section Chairman, at the state level, and has been Secretary-Treasurer of District II. She has served on many committees and has been especially active in recruitment of members.

Other memberships include KPHA; Langston Chapter No. 39, Order of Eastern Star; True Kinsman Court, No. 19; Heroines of Jericho; Past Most Ancient Matron; Past Imperial Commandress Koran Court No. 37; Daughters of Isis; Past Imperial Director of First Aid and Health. She is a trustee of Trinity AME in Kansas City, Kansas. With her special religious educational training, she has worked in all branches of the African Methodist Church throughout the United States.

Her Family Life

Wade McCurley, now retired from the American Bakeries Company, is Hester's husband. He probably deserves an award too, for the many lonely sandwiches he has eaten while she took care of emergencies or attended nurses' meetings.

The McCurleys have no children of their own. They have served as foster parents for the Probate Court in helping to rear three teenage girls through high school. All three girls are married and have families now. One finished nurses' training and is working in a Minnesota hospital.

When Hester's sister became seriously ill, the McCurleys took her five children into their home. They grew up there and became members of medical or religious professions.

In addition, Mrs. McCurley gave financial assistance to some young people to enable them to enter nurses training. They have now graduated, some with degrees, and are practicing in states from New York to California.

Obviously helping other people has been a lifelong characteristic of Hester McCurley. She puts it this way. "I like working with all people and feel that the time taken to help them is time well spent. I like to sleep when I go to bed, and feel that when I have done the best I can for my fellow man I have served my God that day."

With that philosophy, Hester McCurley must sleep very well. KPHA is proud to bestow this award on her.



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HARRY WETTIG

A Tar Heel born,
A Tar Heel Bred—
But a Jayhawk through & through!

That is the second Special Service Recognition awardee, Harry Wettig. He was born in Wilmington, North Carolina, then a small town at the mouth of the Cape Fear River on the Atlantic coast.

Harry was reared in an extremely closeknit family of five sisters and one brother. All were married before Harry and their children call him "Uncle Brother."

Harry became 18 during the World War II era. He volunteered for U.S. Army Engineers as photographer. Somewhere along the way he wound up in Michigan State University and became a pilot in the U. S. Army Air Corps. It was late enough in the Japanese-German conflict to remain in stateside service.

He returned home after the war to operate a private airfield, and graduate from the University of North Carolina. Then he entered public health for a one-year demonstration to earn money for medical school expense. Due to a set of lucky circumstances, he is still in public health.

His Career

When Harry entered the Public Health Service, he said he would work "anywhere within sight of the ocean." That was in 1949. After eight months in North Carolina, and then assignments in St. Louis County, St. Louis, Puerto Rico, Detroit, Pittsburg, and Cincinnati, Harry came to Kansas. Within two months he was certain he had found a home.

One reason was the kids. Harry was impressed by the "built-in responsibility" of Kansas teenagers compared to those of the east and west coasts. During four years of Kansas assignments, Harry spent a great deal of time with young people—both on and off the job.

All his assignments in Kansas, as in other states, were in the USPHS Venereal Disease Control Program. Harry also served as instructor for nurses' classes at the University of Kansas Medical Center, with Virginia Pence Lockhart, and continued to operate the statewide VD Control program. In Kansas, he was director of VD Control, under Dr. James M. Mott, director of the Division of Disease Prevention and Control, and Dr. Thomas R. Hood, then State Health Officer.

Reluctantly he transferred from Kansas to his home state of North Carolina in 1957 and on to Ohio in 1958. Determined to get back to Kansas, he transferred to a position as Regional Representative for Health Mobilization in the Kansas City Regional Office. He wrote a new job for broad based training support that was highly acceptable and became the Regional Training Consultant for the Kansas City Regional Office. That is his home office now where he carries the title of Director, Office of Special Staff Services, Health Services and Mental Health Administration; Department of Health Education and Welfare.

His Hobbies

Now considered one of the mod dressers and the only male with a hair stylist in his office, Harry never wore a pair of uncreased pants until he came to Kansas. Then things changed. Jeans and similar clothes are favorite attire now.

Harry's car trunk was filled with tennis racquets and golf clubs when he arrived in this state, according to a friend, Guy Salts. Within a year they were replaced by fishing tackle and shotguns.

Guy, a 1967 awardee and now retired, and Gene Lockhart, Chief of the VD Control Section, are favorite companions on fishing and hunting trips. Many are the tales they can tell of shared experiences.

A new member of the clan was always initiated, sometimes not too kindly. On Harry's first few hunting trips out, the other men fired so fast that he didn't have a chance. Harry caught on, however. He fired straight up into the air and yelled, "I got all four of them!" He was referring, of course, to the four quail that the other fellows had already shot down.

A more recent hobby of Harry's is painting. He gave Erin a set of oil paints. She went to an art class and now she says she'd enjoy painting if Harry would let her use the paints.

Harry loves a good party. He has several birthday parties a year because he was born on January 1, and there's no one in the office to help him celebrate that day! The secretaries in the office see that he has at least 3 other birthdays a year. And at a recent cocktail party, a star was suddenly born. Harry was sit-

ting in the middle of the floor reciting poetry and a friend heard him. She asked Harry to narrate a children's film, and the report is that he will be recording soon.

His Family

At the same time Harry came to Kansas, so did Erin Downs. She became Director of Nursing in the Kansas City-Wyandotte County Health Department, and Harry's wife. They were married in 1963. Harry became an "instant father" of two daughters, Michael Remy and Carmen Walsh and grandfather of John Remy. The family now includes two more grandsons, Stephen Remy and Richard (Ricky) Walsh; three granddaughters, Erin Lynn, Elizabeth and Evelyn Walsh. Shortly after their marriage, Harry and Erin were "adopted" by their foster son, Jay A. Mathews, now a junior at Emporia State Teachers College.

His Awards

Due to all his work on the Missouri and Kansas Public Health Associations' combined meeting (Mo-Kan) in 1969, Harry received a special award. It was the MoKanPha I Award by HOMAKCA. Translated, it means Missouri-Kansas Public Health Associations Award by the Health Officers Metropolitan Association of the Kansas City Area. HOMAKCA is an Association of all Health Officers of the Greater Kansas City Area which Harry organized in his spare time.

Harry's involvement in KPHA came about because of his duties in training. He recognized the Association as a powerful force for improved health services

in the state. He has served the KPHA Board as consultant to program committees and as chairman of other committees and Task Forces.

Each committee assignment is a challenge and he cheerfully works long hours to accomplish the set goals. This attitude expresses his philosophy that the Federal level worker must become actively involved in the solution of problems at the state level, not just a sideline observer and consultant.

Because of his many dedicated hours of service to KPHA and public health in general, the association presents the well-deserved Special Service Recognition Award to Harry Wettig.