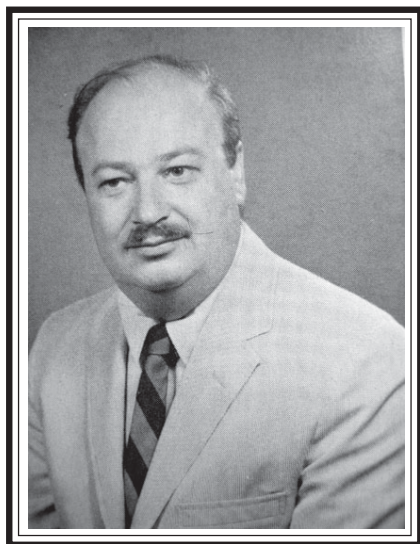


Important News

The Nevada History of Medicine Program and Greasewood Press have created a website at <http://NevadaMedicineHistory.com> in order to showcase our books and archived issues of *Greasewood Tablettes*. Please visit this site and give feedback to Anton Sohn at antonps@gbis.com or Lynda McLellan at lmclellan@medicine.nevada.edu.



*George Smith, M.D. (October 19, 1931
- March 20, 2010)*

Memorial To Dr. George Smith, Founding Dean of UNSOM

By Bob Daugherty, Dean Emeritus

Editor's Note: Dr. Joan Brookhyser (class of 1975) is spearheading a drive to establish a Student Scholarship in memory of Dr. George Smith. Contributions can be made by contacting her (208 Villa Borghese St., Las Vegas, NV 89138 or ljbrookslv@yahoo.com) or Stefanie Scoppottone in the Dean's office (1664 N. Virginia Street, Reno, NV 89557 or scops@unr.edu).

George Smith M.D.
Born: October 19, 1931
Died: March 20, 2010
M.D.: University of Maryland
Pathology Residency: Harvard
Founding Dean: University of Nevada
School of Medicine

With the death of Dr. George Smith, we are reminded of the history of the beginning of our school of medicine. George had been a successful cardio-vascular pathology research faculty member at Harvard before he arrived in Reno to begin research at the Desert Research Institute. He

came to establish Nevada residency in order to finalize his divorce. Little did he realize he would leave Reno ten years later having provided the leadership to create Nevada's School of Medicine.

The historical accounts of the activities from the 1965 feasibility study by George to the bill signing creating the School by Governor Paul Laxalt in 1969 are well documented. However, the stories surrounding George Smith's personal and professional life during that time are less well documented and border on becoming folklore.

Rather than recount history or folklore; we thought it more fitting to remember George as the individual who worked with many to create the School. Thus, we will share with you the personal recollections of this man by those with whom he worked.

Tom Hall, Pathologist

I had the good fortune to be associated with George Smith in the very early days before the Medical School came into being. Although it is rightly said that Doctor Fred Anderson is the Father of the Medical School, it was through the efforts of George Smith that the concept was realized.

It is hard for most of us to understand how much work George had to do, largely on his own, to first build acceptance and then support for the School. There were countless meetings with physicians, legislators, and community leaders.

I remember him coming to our pathology group to ask for our financial aid in setting up a chair of pathology. Initially we had certain skepticism. Ultimately we were quite willing to comply, in large part because of the respect and affection we had for George. When it became evident that, despite many obstacles, the School would indeed be set up, he approached again to ask that we free up one of our members for three years to set up and head the pathology Department.

I was pleased to be named to this post and to know George as an administrator and dean. His style came as no surprise. He would choose staff that he trusted and then allow them to do their job with no unnecessary interference.

When I reflect on the qualities that made George so successful in this remarkable undertaking, I realize it was not primarily his intelligence and ability to work very, very, hard. Rather it was his unquenchable optimism and personal warmth. It was a pleasure to teach with George and to have him as a friend.

Miles Standish, Physiologist and Administrator

I was one of the new faculty recruited to the School of Medical Sciences in the early 70s. We were mostly young, without much experience, and too few for the job at hand. I taught physiology but mainly worked with Dean Smith to develop programs and funding for the new school, and later convert it to a four-year medical school. George was certainly one of a kind; he was the perfect dean for difficult, exciting, and usually fun times. I still don't know what it was about George that made him what he was: the perfect person to start a medical school in Nevada. For our small faculty, one of the things that made George unique was his ability to make his goals our goals, and we gladly worked long days, often nights, and sometimes 7-day weeks to get the job done.

After George left for Alabama, I realized that in all the years I worked with him he never once thanked me for anything I did. If he had I would have felt insulted: after all, I didn't work FOR him, I worked WITH him. We were a team that worked as hard as we could to accomplish the same thing. All of us who were there while George was dean will tell you that the story of those years would make a good movie. But Hollywood would never have cast George as the star. He wouldn't be at all right for the part. Maybe Harrison Ford, but never George Smith. Without that one very special man, though, I don't think there would be a Nevada School of Medicine.

George Furman, First Chair of Obstetrics and Gynecology

George Smith was engaged in practicable cardiovascular research, including work on an implantable cardiac pacemaker, after arriving in Reno. His paper entitled "Slot Machine Stasis" called attention to pulmonary emboli as the result of prolonged lack of leg movement while gaming. With only a tiny budget for the new two year medical school, he managed to recruit an outstanding full time faculty and a volunteer clinical faculty. George was a good friend, and I couldn't say no to him—even when he asked me to teach anatomy to undergraduates.

Tom Kozel, Microbiologist

George was a master at representing the medical school to various stake holders. Whenever he met with legislators, foundation representatives, or donors, he always brought along a student and a junior faculty. These students and faculty were the face of the future of the medical school. It was a very effective and very attractive presentation. Regardless of the audience or the topic, George would say "I have three things to say about this." It was always three; never one; never four. George would go on at length about the first point. He might touch on the second point. He never got to the third point.

Bud Baldwin, Administrator

George was an amazing and somewhat unlikely paradox; on one hand a brilliant and talented leader with great instincts and inclusive ideas, yet he often affected an air of vulnerability and even helplessness that made some people underestimate him and want to help and protect



Advisory Board

him. I can't tell you how many times I would drop in on Friday evening to say good night, looking forward to a restful weekend, and he would say "Bud, I wonder if you could help me with this problem." I was stuck working for the weekend. You simply couldn't refuse him—a quality, I believe, that was essential and worked wonders in the early days of the school.

He had great ideas of his own, yet felt free to entertain those of others and then gave them the space to develop their ideas without needing to claim credit. He was a generous, fun-loving man and a good "hands-off" leader who was able to inspire great loyalty.

Malcolm Edmiston, First Chair of Surgery

George did an incredible job. I think part of his success was due to the fact that he involved community doctors in the school. He got community doctors like Jerry Dales, Frank Roberts, Bob Myles, Bill Tappan, and Tom Scully involved. He only had eleven full-time faculty and had to create a curriculum based on the systems and not departments. I was really impressed

how he and Phil Gillette were able to manipulate finances. They had little money, but they moved it around to keep the school going. They were magicians in finances. George was involved in every aspect of the school and was an effective leader.

Joan Brookhyser, Member of the 1975 Class

I have some very clear memories of Dr. George Smith—particularly from early August of 1973, the beginning of my first year of medical school. The new class was all gathered together in the biggest meeting room we had at the time—in fact, in the only building we had—overlooking a pasture with cows. We were in an orientation session in which several members of the faculty came to welcome my class of forty-five men and five women. We were eagerly getting to know each other, "scoping out the situation" and listening very carefully to what was being told to us by Dr. Scully, Dr. Kozel, Dr. Smith, and others. I remember Dr. Smith saying two

things in particular to us. **FIRST**, He spoke for a few minutes about the struggle and history of the creation of the medical school.

SECOND, he spoke about the practice of medicine in general and **CONCLUDED BY SAYING**, "Medicine is a very demanding mistress." I was a bit taken aback at the construct, but after thirty years of training, professional opportunities, and "teaching moments," I understand. Medicine is the most demanding, the most rewarding, the most exhilarating, the most heart-breaking, and the most thrilling thing I have encountered in my life.

Without George Smith and his commitment to opening the University of Nevada School of Medicine, our lives would be different, and Nevada would be much the poorer. As a result of his efforts, I and countless others like me, would walk through its door and impact thousands of lives.

You were right about Medicine, George, and we thank you from the bottoms of our hearts.

Jim Moren, Member of the Charter Class

As a teacher, George was not a great lecturer—dry without much intonation. Obviously smart and well-educated, he was always there supporting the faculty and students while working hard behind the scenes to garner support from the Legislature and the medical community. The faculty was excited and usually about two days ahead of the students. Similar to ducks treading water—smooth on the surface and

paddling furiously underwater—they led us through minefields of material, experience, and clinical exposure. George was the ringleader of this medical menagerie. A smoker despite the known health risk, he had a gravelly quiet voice and firmly talked us through two years of medicine. He prepared us well before we transferred for the last two years at an M.D. granting medical school. Like the common man, he was able to share a beer or two with students, and then meet with heads of state, cajoling and finessing them with his vision of a top community medical school, which our School has become. George kept our letters of our third and fourth year medical school experiences and returned them to us in 2009 at the School's anniversary. So, for thirty-six years, George kept these reports

of how we were doing, with particular attention to how we compared with our peers at established medical schools. The fact that George kept these papers indicates his interest in our class and his long-term commitment to the students and their successes. The first class was special in so many ways, and we were treated with respect, and dare I say, loved by George and the faculty.

The image on a banner to characterize George would be him in a black suit, white shirt, thin tie, cigarette in hand, and a look mixed with pride and curiosity beneath a balding head. George, the faculty, and the medical community groomed us for success, and the success of the University of Nevada School of Medicine is a tribute to George and the standard he set.

Editors Note:

Our featured story in the last edition of *Greasewood Tablettes - Volume XXI Number 1 Spring 2010* "Stinkheads and Stinky Tails: The History of Botulism among Native Alaskans" will be continued in the next edition.

In Memoriam

Lynn B. Gerow, Jr., MD

Dr. Lynn Gerow died at home on May 20, 2010. Lynn was a third generation Nevada medical doctor and was preceded in practice by his grandfather, Dr. James W., and father, Dr. Lynn, Sr. Dr. Gerow practiced general and child psychiatry in Reno for twenty-four years before retiring in 1999. He served in the US Army and was discharged as a Lt. Colonel. After returning to Reno, he was elected to the Board of Trustees of Washoe Medical Center (Renown Medical Center). Donations can be made to Saint Mary's Hospice.