

The Story of Far View

When our home on Market Street became small for a family of six, my father, who was a busy doctor, had little time to ride around looking for a suitable site. One afternoon while make a house call on South Park Street, just beyond the city limits of Brenham, he admired the looks of a field of corn on a hill overlooking the town of Brenham. He became charged up and persuaded the farmer to sell him the 1 ³/₄ acre farm. He wanted his home to be a fine one, so he hired Mr. Alfred C. Finn of Houston to draw up a set of plans that would be fitting for such a nice home site.

Mr. Finn had been hired as an architect for the beautiful clubhouse of the Brenham Country Club on Highway 290, and he was also responsible for the stylish Simon Theater in Brenham. In Houston, he was known to have been the architect for many fine buildings and homes. Two notable ones were the Esperson Building and later the San Jacinto Monument.

For a contractor my dad's patient and friend, Mr. J. R. Nix, was chosen. I believe, when Mr. Nix thought one 2x6 piece of wood was necessary, my dad would say, "Use two. I want the house to be sturdy." The day they found solid rock in the right place was a time for celebration, for the foundation of the proposed home was secured. Several oak trees were planted on the west side of the lot before the house was started. I remember the heavy boards surrounding these trees to help keep the workmen from destroying them.

When it came time for a name for the new home, two names were popular. One was "Fairview" and the other "Farview." The name "Farview" was my mother's choice. Besides a good view of Brenham to the north, there was even a better view of the three to four hills in the area of Highway 290 east and on the last hill, the Brenham Country Club Mansion could easily be seen. Also, there was a great view of the old Giddings Stone Mansion to the south. Ruth Robertson remembers watching people arriving for a party at the Stone Mansion and admiring the feathers on the ladies' hats that were worn at that time. On a Sunday my grandfather, Rev. C. P. Hasskard, dedicated the house. The Brenham Banner Press gave it a very nice write-up calling "Farview" a showplace. My sister, Esther, took exception to this, because she felt that it was a home for living and not a showplace. Live in it we did! My three sisters each had their own sets of friends and it seems that a "slumber party" was almost a constant happening. My dad and mother entertained very seldom, but the rest of us did.

The wonderfully large yard in the front of the house was my private football field, and every weekend one or two games would be played. Years later my dad had several small metal rods with triangular flags made so we could hit chip shots to sharpen up our golf game.

The tennis court was great with good backstops and a warmup board. Later lights were added for night play. The surface was clay, and even though we had trouble with nut grass, we had a good smooth surface. The only other

tennis court in town was a private one so the country and the district high school tennis tournaments were held on our court. My sister, Esther, and I relied on hitting the tennis ball as hard as we could, and we both were very good players; however, my older sister, Ruth, simply would return every ball, and she alone went to state finals in Austin.

Among the many parties my mother organized, there was one that I remember best, and it was a Japanese party. This took place in our back yard, and colorful Japanese lanterns were hung from the clothes line my mother used for hanging out clothes. I remember also the small Japanese umbrellas made out of bamboo that were delightful to play with.

The driveway to our home was beautifully lined with large pine trees, and this driveway was a favorite place for my dad to get his exercise. Every evening those of us who were at home would walk up and down that driveway with him and we would talk about everything. On several occasions, I thought we had walked long enough, but nobody interrupted my dad.

When the word got out that the Hasskarls' had a refrigerator that made ice cubes, we had many curious friends drop by for quite some time until the curiosity wore off.

In 1936, the centennial year for Texas brought Gov. James V. Allred, and his friend, Gov. Phil LaFolite, of Wisconsin to Brenham mainly to visit Washington on the Brazos. When they ended their tour of Washington County, they came to our home to have dinner and spend the

night. I was duly impressed with the honor guard of our National Guard guardsmen all carrying either rifles or flags lined along our driveway. All these guardsmen were businessmen that we knew well. The dinner party was elegant, with our best china and silver being used. Gov. Alfred remarked after dinner that Texas was always known for their beautiful women, but that my older sisters, Ruth and Esther, were the prettiest that he had seen. This was spoken as a politician, at least that's what I told my beaming sisters.

The large front porch was a good place to sit and look over the surrounding hills. We had several pieces of large wicker furniture there and a steady breeze from the south was present late afternoons.

I might add here that the small landing leading onto the front porch was used on several occasions as a stage for the Brenham Fireman Mayfest serenade, and the audience of spectators would gather out in the front of the house. The president of the Mayfest Association would announce who was selected queen. Then the newly named queen would then announce her king. They both would make a short speech. Two of my three sisters were chosen, and many years later my oldest daughter, Joan, was chosen as a junior queen, and again the serenade took place at "Farview". I might add that this Mayfest tradition has been going on for over 100 years.

The living room was a meeting place, especially when visitors were present. I remember our living room had a large rug with fringe on each end. It seemed that my mother could always find a little special brush and had the

children straighten out the fringe on each end of that rug. There were times when there were ten to twenty people all in that room, and it didn't seem all that crowded.

Christmas was a big event and at this time sheets were placed over the columns to keep everyone out of the room while Santa Claus was taking care of the tree and other Christmas doings. I am sure my dad was behind that curtain and directed my mother as to what to hang and where to hang it. On Christmas Eve the sheets were removed, and my mother and the rest of us sat on the stairs facing the living room. My dad played "Silent Night, Holy Night," on the phonograph, sung in German, and after the Christmas story was read, we all wished each other Merry Christmas. There were a few kisses, and then it was time to open the presents.

The library or den was a small, more intimate room. One wall contained many books, and there were some pretty stained-glass doors covering this wall. There were also comfortable chairs here, a cozy fireplace and when a member of the family needed a bit of dressing down, it was done in this room. I seemed to have spent more time here than my sisters.

The sunroom on the southwest corner of the house was a colorful room. The wicker furniture there was comfortable. My mother did her sewing there and also kept some pots of flowers. My stepmother, Katherine, used this room for bookkeeping. The breakfast room and kitchen were not very big, but busy. Just behind my dad's chair there was a telephone outlet, because his patients knew

they could always catch him at mealtime. Everyone ate at the table and many weighty problems were discussed.

The upstairs was made up of five bedrooms opening into a central hall. The four main bedrooms all had one opening to the south side to insure a good breeze before the days of air conditioning. My room was the largest with a door to the second story porch. I, being the boy, of course, should have the nicest room. The view from this porch upstairs was very good. There were some outdoor chairs, and some iron rings were placed in the walls in cement for a hammock, which I used a good deal during some of those summer months. The fifth bedroom belonged to the cook and maid. Also opening into this room was a huge cedar closet. Besides winter clothes, much hunting wearing apparel was kept there also.

When arthritis became so sever for both my father and mother, a small elevator was added inside the closet just off the entry hall. This really made life more bearable for them, and of course, the grandchildren loved this machine.

When I was off at college and medical school, my father converted my bedroom into a trophy room. For many years, he continued to add stuff deer heads and also some trophy fish. One fish was a 6' tarpon that he landed in Port Isabel on one of our fishing trips. There were two sets of longhorns I remember, which measured well over 8' from tip to tip. My father would love to sit in his large rocking chair covered with buffalo hide and tell where each deer was bagged and who pulled the trigger. My wife and I, after we moved back

to Brenham, would go by to visit my dad and mother for a nightcap (drink), so naturally we would relive a few of our favorite hunts and fishing trips in that room.

Along with the many stuffed animals and fish a Canadian goose mounted with its wings stretched out was connected to the ceiling of the game room. I had shot the goose when I was 12 years old, so my dad had to have it mounted. The goose caused a bit of excitement when my sisters took over my bedroom during their slumber parties, and during the night the goose would change directions with only the slightest bit of breeze.

The basement was large and even though it contained a large furnace and hot water heater there still was room for a workbench with some machinery. My dad seldom used this workbench, because he did not turn down too many house calls or emergencies that came up during the evening or at night.

In the northwest corner of the yard my dad planted several trees, a few oaks and several fast-growing trees. My father had a dream that someday he would build a log cabin there. He went so far as to have a set of plans made. He claimed this log cabin would be, "where he could spit on the floor and rough it a bit, away from the big house." It was never built.

The garage had to be enlarged because of all the hunting equipment that my dad kept storing, including tents, cots, mattresses, lanterns, so a 2-story structure was added to the north side of the garage, and he could go check equipment and get ready for his next hunt.

I have to add to this story the fact that whenever all the members of our family got together, particularly for Christmas, my dad would have the local photographer come out from Brenham and do a group picture on the south side of the house. This was an annual event and he wanted it done right.

Having "Farview" as a home was an important part of my life and for others who lived there. It was a place of much happiness and some sorrow. I was usually impressed with the parties I have mentioned and, of course, this includes the Maifest serenades, the many birthday parties, and lavish wedding receptions for all three of my sisters.

A sorrowful era occurred when my mother, "Dora," died only two years after the house was finished. Her death, which was sudden, devastated us all. My father became a mother as well as a father and helped us through some empty moments. My oldest sisters, Ruth and Esther, helped in many ways, because I was ten years old, and my younger sister, Dorothea, was only six at the time.

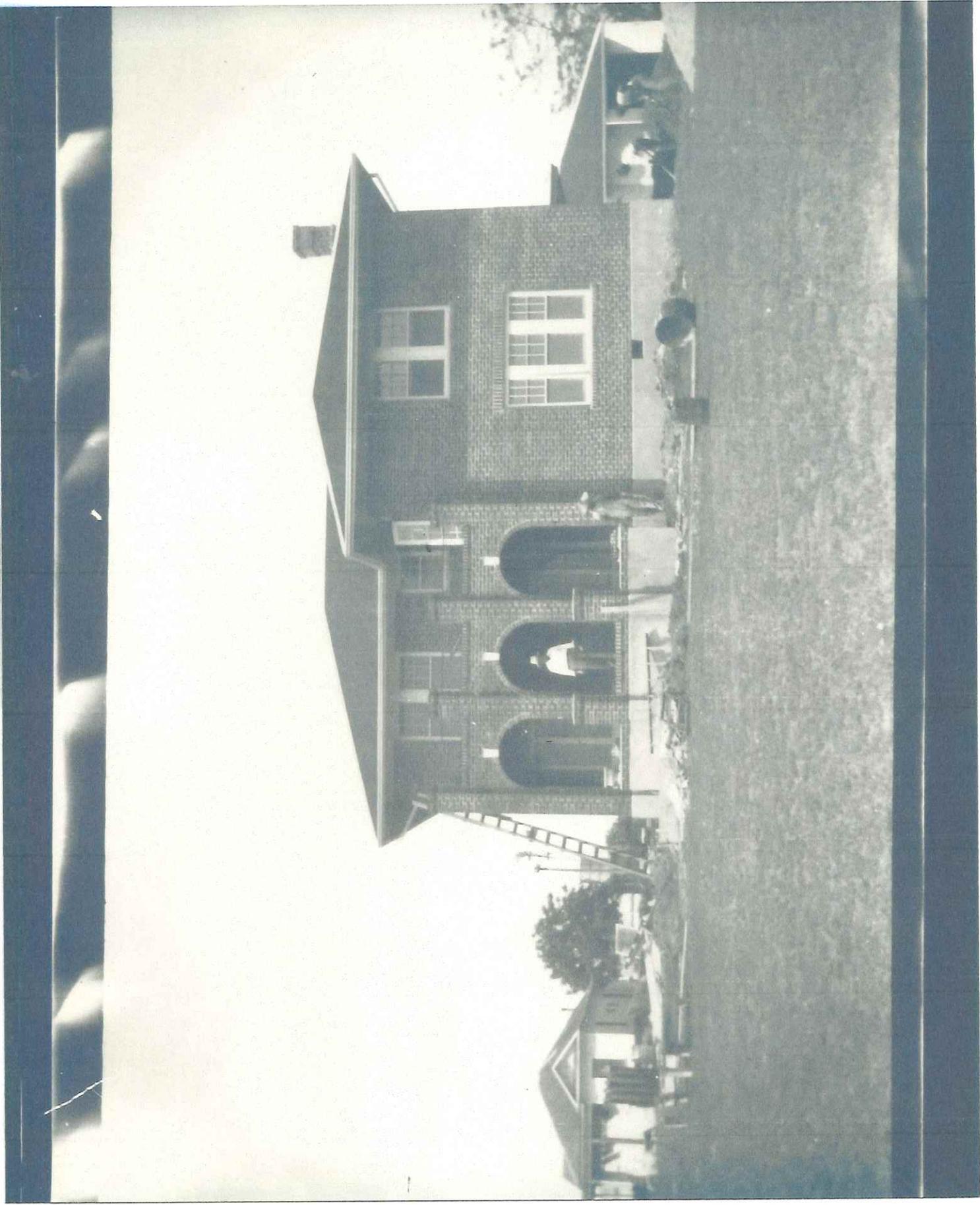
My father later married a nurse named Katherine Mgebross, and she did the best she could to care for us as a mother. She was a good companion for my father and cared for him lovingly in his final illness, and as he wished he died at home.

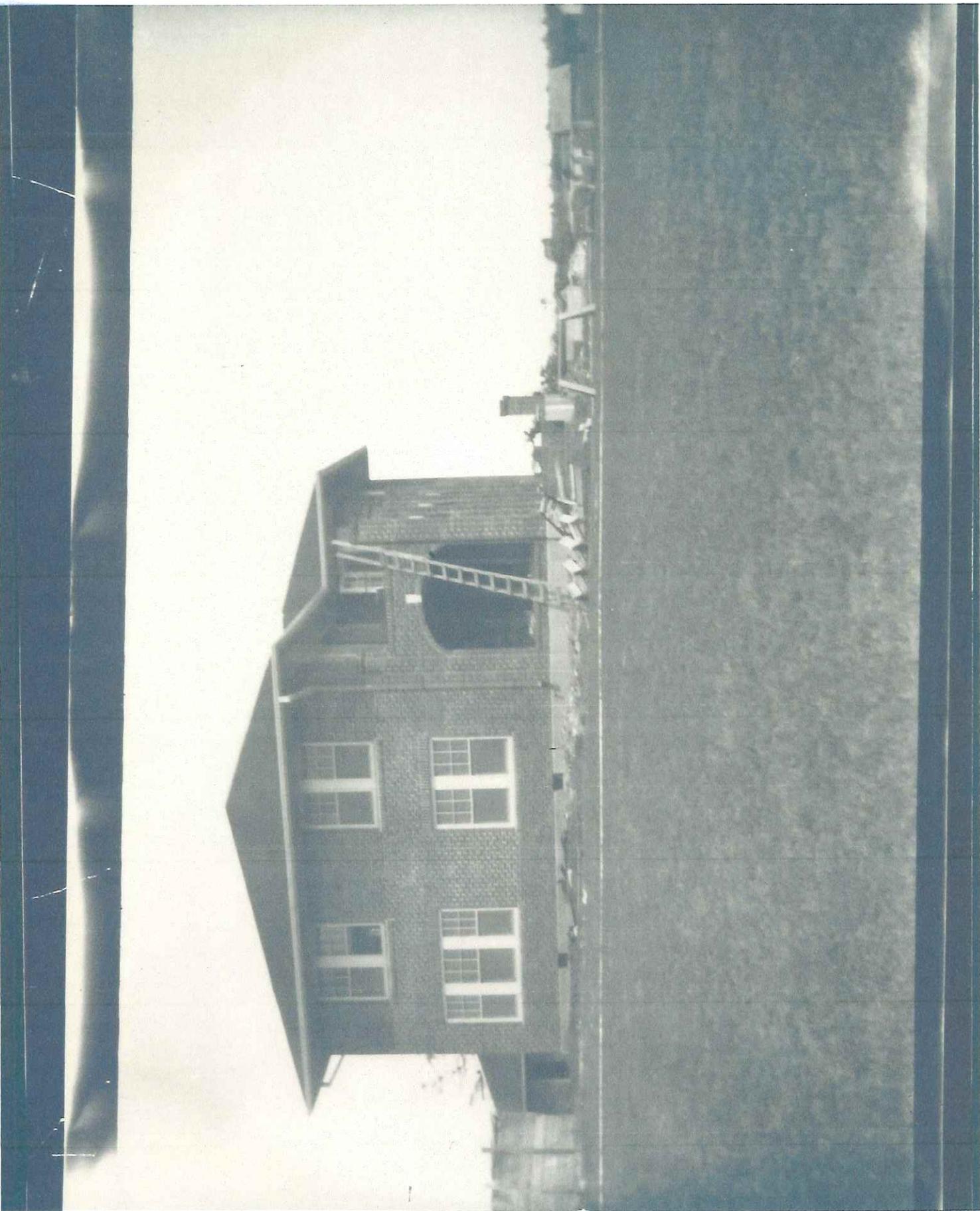
So finally, after we had all moved out of the house and our father died, our strong attachment to the house died with him. "Farview" served our family

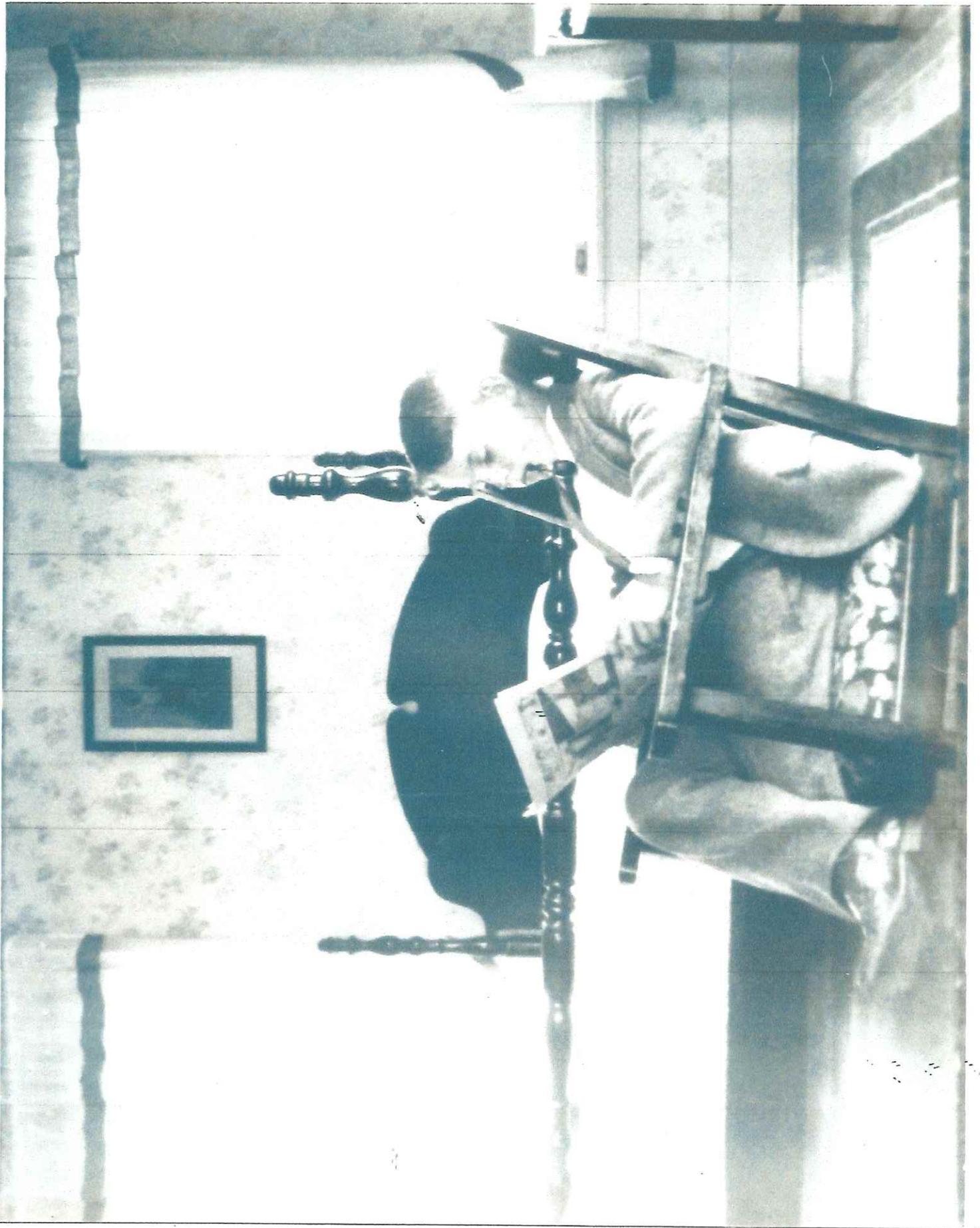
well and now it is time for another family to enjoy this livable homestead as we did. '

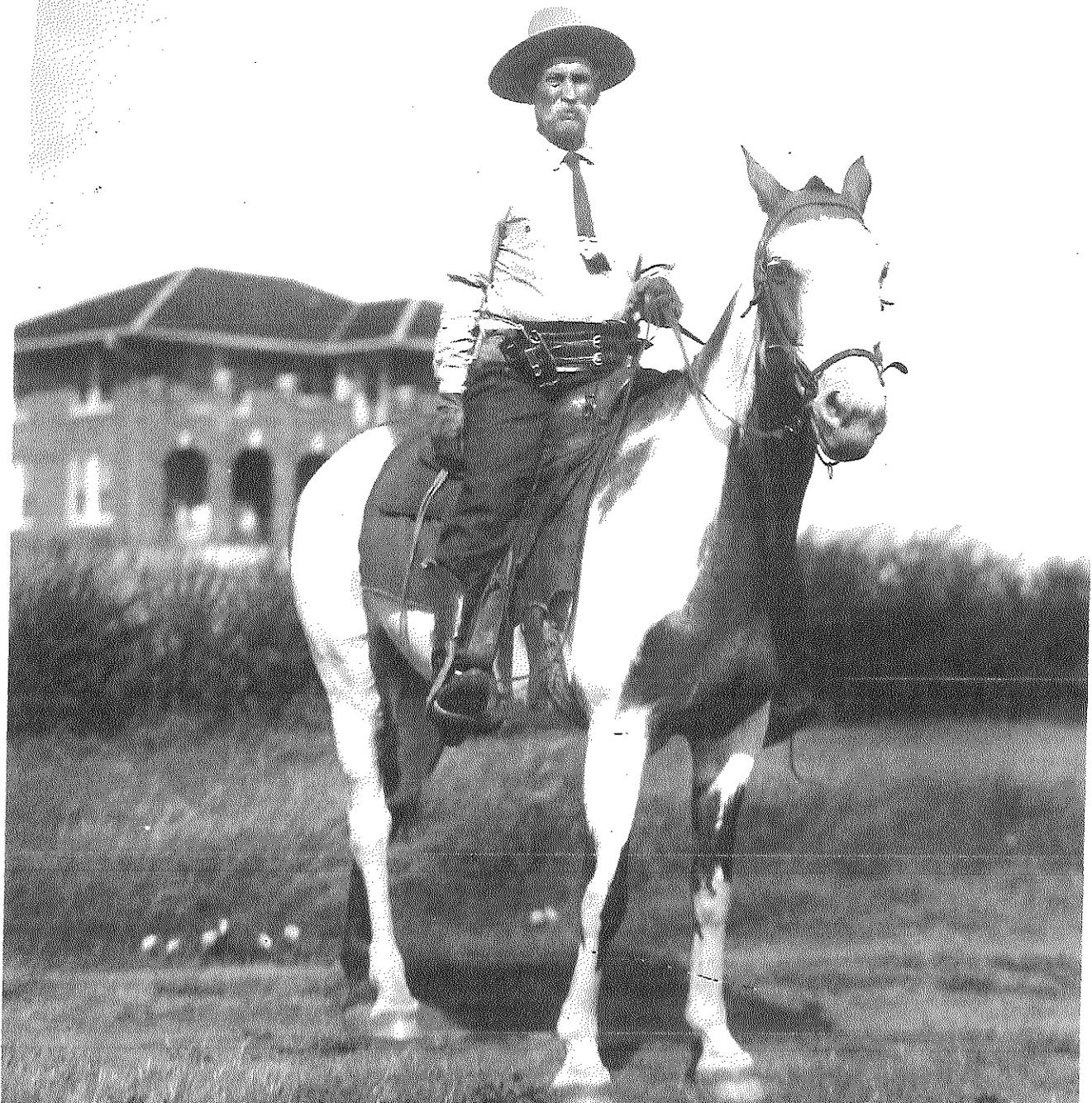
W.F. Hasskard, Jr., M.D.





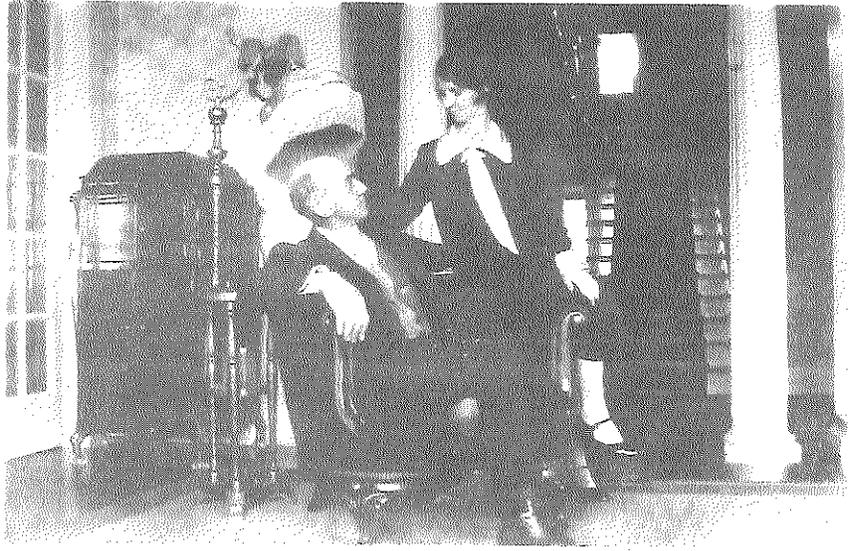






HIRAM CRAIG & TEDDY
PONEY EXPRESS GALVESTON TO SAN ANTONIO
FIVE DAY RIDE 312 MILES
OCTOBER 1925





They don't make them like they used to . . . the country doctor

Brenham surgeon W.F. Hasskari, Jr, MD, observes, "Because many of our state's small hospitals are forced to close their doors, fewer doctors trained for family practice will think it wise, or lucrative, to establish their practices in a rural area."

"(The demise of the country doctor) is disappointing," Dr Hasskari says, "not only to patients in rural areas who are accustomed to individual attention, but also to those practitioners who will miss the rewarding experience of taking care of sick individuals in a small town."

However, Dr Hasskari was fortunate to have shared his father's life as a country doctor. W.F. Hasskari, Sr, MD, served as Washington County Health Officer for "as long as I can remember," Dr Hasskari, Jr, recalls. "He is one of the few doctors who spent a year as president of the Washington County Chamber of Commerce. He also was the last doctor to pronounce death after a criminal was hanged in Brenham."

In this article, Dr Hasskari, Jr, recalls his father's contribution to life as a country doctor.

There is a saying, "They don't make them like they used to." I believe that is true in describing the country doctor. The general practitioners who ventured into the small communities in our state in the late 1800s and early 1900s were courageous men. They thought a 24-hour work day was normal. They certainly did not anticipate a specified "day off," and few, if any, could be assured a retirement plan.

Most of these physicians not only were active in civic activities, but also helped promote the building of the soon-to-be-extinct community hospital. After these hospitals were a reality, no one told the physicians how many days they could keep their patients there.

These practitioners worked hard. They knew their patients by name and loved them, and in return patients remained loyal. My dad was one of these hardy men. He lived a full life and did a service to mankind that few get the opportunity to perform.

My family came to Texas when my grandfather, a Lutheran minister from Iowa, received a call from a congregation

in Galveston. My father, being the oldest son, was sent to a Lutheran seminary. After only a short time he came home claiming he was caught smoking. I don't think it was meant for him to become a preacher.

However, he did become interested in medicine, and he worked unloading boats at the wharves in Galveston to earn money to pay for his education at The University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston, and after graduation, he had the good fortune to win an internship at St Mary's Hospital in Galveston. Learning medicine must have been a labor of love for my dad. He took care of the wounds of several patients with leprosy while in medical school. He even persuaded them to contact other patients with leprosy to come in for care, which was difficult because they avoided the public in general. Before my father graduated, he had approximately 52 patients from Galveston coming to the outpatient clinic.

Before he came to Washington County to practice, he married my mother, Dora Roberts, who was a school teacher and a member of my grandfather's church. Dad bought a horse and buggy and settled in a small German community called Prairie Hill, which is north of Brenham.

House calls

Dad made his first house calls on a horse with a saddle and saddle bags bought especially for that purpose.

House calls in those days were a slow but important part of being a doctor. Many visits meant staying to eat a meal, and a maternity case sometimes meant spending the night. After my father examined a patient, he would come home, prepare a prescription for the patient, leave it in the back window of his small office, and go to bed. The patient or a family member, usually a farmer, would have to catch his horse or mule; ride to my dad's office; pick up the drug; leave money, potatoes, chickens or whatever; and return home.

My father found that he needed more than one horse because the mud in the creek bottoms would pull the hair off the horses' legs, and they became too sore to be ridden. He ended up with four horses at one time. It was not unusual for Dad to catch a nap while riding home from a house call, and most of his horses could

find their way home. One dark, rainy night my dad's horse refused to take another step. When he climbed down from the saddle, Dad found that a bridge had been washed away, and the horse he had come to rely on may have saved his life.

One Sunday my father left the house around 1 pm and arrived home at 3 am Monday. During that time he had made three house calls and had ridden some 52 miles on the same horse.

I have always been fascinated by the surgery he performed, such as appendectomies, in a patient's home. He usually chose a southeast corner room because it offered good light. Doing surgery at night was much more difficult, and he burned his forehead many times while someone held a kerosene lantern close to the wound that he was working in.

During the flu epidemic of 1918, my dad had so many house calls, he hired two men to chauffeur him from house to house so he could take a nap between visits. He told me later how tender his ears became when using a stethoscope to listen to everyone's chest. He also told me how despondent he became when patients died and how hopeless he felt treating patients with only aspirin and quinine.

W.F. Hasskari, Sr, MD, with the saddle and saddle bags he used while making house calls on horseback.



When he was able to buy a model T Ford, Dad made house calls in much less time, and he did like to drive fast. Every country road and mud hole was a challenge to him. Many times a farmer would have to get his mule, horse, or tractor to pull him out. Finally, he had a car made with a model T body, model A engine, a truck rear end and rear fenders that were bent skyward. He called this his "mud dauber." He spent a lot of time on the road around the county. People always were "flagging him down," and he kept a .38 caliber Peacemaker Colt under the car seat. When they stopped him and saw the six shooter, they offered no problem, and some of them forgot why they had stopped him.

When I arrived in Brenham in 1949, my father bought me a four-wheel drive jeep station wagon. Just after a good rain he took me and my wife Johnnie, who was approximately five months pregnant, on a test ride. True to his adventurous driving habits, he not only drove in and out of the ditches, he also left the road and drove the jeep across someone's empty cotton field. My wife did not go into labor, but I thought she would—it took me a while to get her back in the jeep after that incident.

His driving was not Dad's only distinctive habit. I remember when he had spent a lot of time with a young patient dying of poliomyelitis. My father knew the disease was contagious, but did not know how it was transmitted from one person to another. So, as he had done after returning from many other house calls, he stood in the back yard and called to my mother to throw down his night clothes, and as a safety measure, he changed before he came into the house.

Surgery in the country

Early in his practice, Dad and my mother and two older sisters moved to Brenham. He took time from his busy practice to go to Chicago and work under such surgeons as Dr John Benjamin Murphy of Murphy's button fame. He bought his own surgical instruments, and he was proud of them. There was not much talking, and no joking, in the operating room. He worked fast because he wanted the anesthesia time to be as short as possible, and he kept his incisions small. Throughout surgery he was alert to the patient's

respiration and plane of anesthesia. Most often the referring doctor gave open drop ether and my dad had to tell him when to let up and when to pour it on. We would all smell of ether for several hours thereafter.

I was convinced that my father did good surgery and used good surgical judgment. My opinion was based on comparisons with the work of surgeons I had scrubbed with at Philadelphia General and the Mayo Clinic. When I returned from my fellowship at the Mayo Clinic, my father turned every surgical case over to me, and in spite of my having spent four years in Rochester, Minn., I learned a lot about surgery from him. He taught me a lot of surgical judgment. The only real quarrel we had concerning surgery was on postoperative ambulation. He couldn't believe that the postoperative patient should be out of bed in less than four to five days after surgery. After seeing that some of my patients did well, he came around and thought it was one of his best ideas.

My father could not stand disobedience, and he had little time for nonsense while he was working. Once a drunk was brought into the emergency room with a deep laceration of his leg. The man wanted to sit up and watch my dad work on his leg, "because it is my leg." My dad sternly told him to lie down. The second time the man raised up, my father quickly backhanded him in the face. The man stayed still after that. I am sure today my dad would be sued for taking that authoritative action.

My father worked hard and was pleased when he reported enough surgical cases to become a Fellow of the American College of Surgeons. At one time he was asked to send his old saddle and saddle bags to Chicago to be on display at the American College of Surgeons building in Chicago. He did send it there, but when they asked him to come up there for a picture to be taken with the exhibit, he didn't care to go. Publicity was not his thing. In 1947 the International College of Surgeons became the organization to join, and my dad and mother traveled to Mexico City, where he gave a paper on ovarian tumors to that prestigious organization.

When our clinic partner, Dr Thomas Giddings, returned from the Navy, and I

got home from the Air Force, our little office over Citizen's Drugstore became crowded. The idea of a clinic for a group practice was appealing to all three of us. My dad bought a few books and got in contact with many clinics around the nation and composed a document that we used in setting up the first group practice in this area. Even though changes have been made in the original framework, this document has stood up pretty well. Thirty years later we have 23 doctors in our organization.

Family life

The phone calls for the doctor were steady, and he spent very few evenings without at least one house call. He usually could tell, conversing over the phone, whether he was needed. Emergencies always interrupted birthday parties and Christmas activities. But, my father did enjoy being with his family, and whenever we took a trip, it was a big event. One weekend he rented a Lincoln touring car, and we drove to Corpus Christi, which was a real treat.

My dad let us know that he wanted us to attend and graduate from college. He also spent much money on our summer trips to various camps in the hill country. These turned out to be valuable experiences for all of us.

During the depression my dad stayed busy, even though no one had money to pay for his services. Since some of us were still in college, he must have spent little on himself and much on us. I became good at opening gates for my dad and was glad to go with him on many house calls. We visited in fine homes and in many poor homes and shacks. The walls of some of these were covered with cardboard and newspaper to keep out the cold. The smell of the woodburning stove was strong and our clothing kept that odor for some time. He kept a good supply of drug samples for all those who needed them.

While making a house call to a home on a hill overlooking Brenham, my dad noticed that the corn field across the street had a great view of the surrounding country. He found out who owned it and purchased that acre of land for his future home. Next he planted oak trees and hired an architect, Alfred Finn. Mr Finn already had designed the Esperson Build-

ing in Houston and the Simon Theatre in Brenham. My dad's long-time friend and patient, J.R. Nix, was the contractor, and a fine two-story home was completed. My father, mother, and sisters named it Farview. In 1936, during the Texas Centennial, Gov James V. Allred of Texas and visiting Governor La Follette of Wisconsin were our guests overnight.

My mother, who was a quiet, kind, and loving person, died when I was 10. I had two older sisters and one younger, so my dad became a father and a mother. My oldest sister Ruth was named "Mother Duck," but it was my dad who really made all the decisions. To complement the raising of two small children, my father later married Kathryn Mgebroff, an RN who worked at the old Brenham Hospital and was well liked by all.

Later years

After some of us were through college, my father began to do some deer hunting in the Fredericksburg area and also would go to Port Isabel for kingfish and tarpon fishing. Just like his surgical instruments, he bought the best guns and fishing gear that was available, and he also was a patron of Abercrombie and Fitch as far as clothing and equipment were concerned.

Sometime during his life he began wearing custom-made shirts, and not too long thereafter, he had me measured by Hamilton Brothers in Houston so that I likewise would be well dressed. When I was at The University of Texas, I was a little self conscious about wearing such a fine shirt to classes, yet I wasn't able to convince my dad that this was a little much. He also bought these fine shirts for his sons-in-law and even our clinic partner.

My parents' experience with dairy farming also demonstrated Dad's exacting standards. He bought a farm and many fine Jersey cows and bulls, some of which he purchased from Canada. He had the best barns built with the best lumber for his cows. He studied the blood lines for his cows and his herd produced milk with very high butterfat. He even designed an incubator, so that the delicate young Jersey calves could be kept off the ground in little wooden pens until they were strong enough to be out in the pasture. This farm was great recreation for

my dad, and everything was going great until the help at the farm developed a tendency to walk off on a weekend or two, and he and my stepmother had to milk some 70 cows.

My dad's legs were strong, and he loved to walk. Most every evening he would walk up and down his driveway. He enjoyed company, but keeping up with him could be a problem. He liked to play golf on Sunday afternoon, even though there were interruptions. He was well coordinated, and he like competition. At one time he wore the gold belt buckle that signified number one player at the Brenham Country Club. He played fast, and a bad shot would cause him to throw his club "at a gopher" he was known to say. He was a charter member of the first Brenham Country Club that was established in 1924 on Highway 290. In 1951 he was a charter member of the second Brenham Country Club that is still in existence, and he was a charter member of the Brenham Rotary Club.

Until he had a team of doctors working with him, he did not allow himself many personal indulgences, but in later years, when he knew he would not be called out, he liked to take a bath and have a nightcap before retiring. When he was young, he smoked Bull Durham and later switched to Chesterfields, of course with no filters. For some reason he never did develop emphysema. He did have hypertension and also one myocardial infarction that I found out about a year or two later.

Toward the last he had a stroke that caused weakness in his right arm. After recovering he would come to the office and visit some of his old patients. A year or so later he had a second stroke. While napping he became aroused and asked, "Who's smoking in here?" My wife Johnnie answered, "You know who—it's Johnnie." He seemed to be glad to have her near. He died an hour later. He was 80 years old.

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FOOTNOTES

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- 2 "They Don't Make Them Like They Used To...The Country Doctor. W. F. Hasskari, Jr.,
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- 3 W. F. Hasskari, Jr., M.D., Far View A Family Narrative, 1992.
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- 5 Brenham Banner Press, October 27, 1925.
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- 7 History of Washington County, Texas, Charles F. Schmidt, 1949.
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- 10 W. F. Hasskari, Jr., M.D., Far View A Family Narrative and The Blazing Story of
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- 12 Deed Records, Original set of property deeds from 1840-1992, T. Kasch.

FARVIEW

Brenham had its beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, being named after a hero of the Republic, Dr. Richard Fox Brenham, and becoming the county seat of Washington County in 1844. After its organization, Brenham became an active business center which had some of the most progressive and prosperous business in this section of the State. Brenham experienced a population growth from 900 people in 1860 to 5900 people in 1890.¹

Growth was at its peak during the 1880's when German immigrants were arriving by ship to Galveston and coming to Brenham by train or ox cart. It continued its expansion and growth until the turn of the century when a period of economic transition occurred to heavy mechanized industry such as machine shops, iron works, and oil mills. The pre-tax years from 1900-1910 were very prosperous for Brenham with several fortunes being made and putting the city on the map with such industries as the Wholesale Grocery Distribution business.

With the population at its highest level in decades, Washington County and Brenham were in need of medical practitioners to serve the growing population. These practitioners were brave men that entered Texas in the early 1900's because of the rigors of the job that demanded house calls on horseback and being available 24 hours a day.² Dr. Walter F. Hasskarl and his wife, Dorthea, established residence in Prairie Hill, north of Brenham, in 1910 where he began his medical career. He practiced there until 1913 when he moved to Brenham.

While making a house call on a home overlooking Brenham, Dr. Hasskarl noticed a cornfield that had a great view of the surrounding country. He purchased the acreage to be the home of his future residence, as his house on Market Street had grown too small for a family of six.³

Dr. Hasskarl hired Houston architect Alfred C. Finn to design a home befitting the property and his trust

National Guard Honor Team lined the driveway of Far View, announcing the arrival of these notable guests.²²

Far View has been in the Hasskari family from 1925 until 1992 when it was sold to David and Tonya (Kasch) Meyer.²² During the Hasskari ownership no structural changes or additions were made. The Meyer's are restoring it back to it's original elegance of hardwood floors, weighted windows, and period wall paper.

Far View, symbolic of Brenham's development in the early twentieth century, is a reminder of a prominent medical practioner, benefactor, and civic leader, and is an important residential landmark in the town.

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