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### News Clipping - 1948 - Cleveland County Early Days Column

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# In Cleveland County's Early Days

BY MAMIE JONES

## DOCTORS FIFTY YEARS AGO

Half a century ago, in 1898, the average life span was 32 years. Today it is 64 years. Just twice as long. Isn't it safe to assume that this increased life expectancy is due, in part, to the fact that we now have better trained doctors and better trained dentists?

Among the prominent local doctors 50 years ago was Dr. T. Evans McBrayer who was said to know more about internal medicine than any doctor in Piedmont North Carolina.

Pat McBrayer tells me that his father was the first doctor in Shelby to use a fever thermometer; and the first doctor between Charlotte and Asheville to use an automobile for making professional calls.

### A Hard Life

The life of a general practitioner 50 years ago was hard. For instance, Dr. McBrayer left home one Sunday to attend a labor case. He did not get back home until the following Wednesday. In the meantime he had delivered five babies at widely separated sections in the county.

In collaboration with the then youthful Dr. Everett B. Lattimore, Dr. McBrayer was the first doctor to use ice cream in the treatment of typhoid fever. About 1898 a patient, John Nix, lay apparently dying of fever. He told Dr. McBrayer that he would like some ice cream. At that time ice cream was certainly not used in

the treatment of fever. But Dr. McBrayer felt that the sick man could not possibly recover, so it would be just as well to humor him. Dr. McBrayer ordered a custard made of eggs, milk, etc., and frozen. This was fed to the sick man. But to their astonishment, in stead of dying, the sick man showed signs of improvement. He did not die. He got well and lived until a few years ago.

This was an innovation in the treatment of typhoid, and the results were so remarkable that it was reported to the State Medical Association. Prior to this time typhoid patients were given very little of anything to eat, and very little water to drink, and not any more bathing than was absolutely essential. It is likely that more people died of thirst and starvation than of the fever itself.

Dr. McBrayer was known as "Dr. Iv" to distinguish him from his double first cousin, "Dr. Vick" McBrayer, who died in September of 1897.

Many of the doctors of the earlier days had but limited training. A young man who aspired to be a physician would read medicine for a year or two under some local doctor, then take a two-year course — four months each year — at some medical college, get himself a diploma and a pill bag and provided he could pass the examination given by the State Board, practice medicine. But if he failed to pass the State Board then, (I am told)

he could ask his representative in the Legislature to get an Act passed permitting him to practice, despite his inability to pass the Board. This happened in Cleveland County less than 50 years ago.

**Other doctors in Shelby fifty years ago were: Dr. R. C. Ellis who was then county physician; Dr. O. P. Gardner, one of the foremost farmers of his day in this county; Dr. W. P. Andrews, Dr. John H. McBrayer, Dr. R. M. Penick, and Dr. R. H. Morrison, whose father founded Davidson College.**

In the county there were many capable practitioners, namely, Dr. G. M. Gold of Lawndale, who specialized in diseases of women and children; Dr. B. F. Falls of Cleveland Mills; Dr. George Oates of Grover; Dr. J. F. Beam of Waco; Dr. W. T. Grigg of Sharon; Dr. J. F. Osborne of near Lawndale; Drs. R. B. Hunter and J. L. McKay of Kings Mountain; Dr. S. S. Royster of Mooresboro; Dr. L. V. Lee of Lattimore; Dr. C. O. Champion of Mooresboro, and others, some of whom I have heretofore mentioned.

Up to 1887 the requirements for practicing dentistry in Cleveland County were very simple. Dr. T. O. Grigg tells me that in the early 1880's his father, Dr. (Continued on Page 7, Col. 4)