

Byron A. White (1893 - 1963)

By Elaine Rohse

Byron A. White practiced chiropractic medicine in McMinnville for forty-one years, winning considerable recognition as what was known as a "bloodless surgeon." It was a term that White disliked, preferring "orthopedic and corrective manipulation." Although chiropractic was first used primarily to treat hips and other joints, White advanced its use to soft tissue and the treatment of ulcers, diabetes, and gallbladders. White's patients came from around the world, the result of word-of-mouth advertising.

Born in 1893 in Oklahoma Territory, White was the son of John and Lily White. In 1898, the family traveled by covered wagon to Oregon and settled in Monmouth. Even as a child, White was interested in medicine, making rounds with a local doctor and helping roll bread pills, a placebo made from breadcrumbs. He graduated from Oregon Normal School in 1912, earning his way by working in a bakery, singing at funerals, and cleaning and pressing other students' clothes. After graduating, he taught for two years in the Independence area to save enough money for chiropractic school. In 1916, he married Marie Morlan; they would have three children.

After graduating from West State Chiropractic School in Portland in 1920, White opened an office in Yamhill. He moved to McMinnville two years later. Impoverished patients often paid him with apples or potatoes, and at one time he owned five cows that were the result of such compensation. During World War II, White opened a Portland office for patients who did not have the rationed gas to drive to McMinnville. His ten-bed facility, in a former residence, was closed after the war.

White operated a small hospital in McMinnville before establishing Happy Acres Clinic and Hospital on the site of his large colonial home, south of McMinnville. In its heyday, the licensed, twenty-two-bed facility had four full-time chiropractors, thirty-eight employees, an x-ray machine, a lab, a kitchen, a laundry, and surgical facilities.

Nearly every summer, White formally studied the latest chiropractic techniques. His most famous teacher was Adolf Lorenz, of Vienna, who is said to have started "bloodless surgery." Lorenz developed special glasses for patients to wear while undergoing surgery. Reportedly, patients wearing the glasses experienced no pain, thus eliminating the need for an administered anesthetic. The Whites spent considerable effort attempting to determine the composition of the glasses, but the formula died with Dr. Lorenz in 1946.

White was president of the Oregon State Chiropractic Association and the State Chiropractic Board of Examiners, and he served on the McMinnville City Council. The White family started the Bayou golf course, which is still in operation, although now under different ownership. Happy Acres Hospital closed after White died in 1963. He was eulogized by the McMinnville *News-Register* as having "an unexplainable gift in his hands granted to few men. . . . People came . . . because they had heard that Doc White might be able to help them. Few went away disappointed."

Sources

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Lorenz, Dr. Adolf. *My Life and Work, the Search for a Missing Glove*. London: Charles Scribner's Son, Ltd., 1936.

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