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**Lisbon Hospital goes through many changes in last 60 years**

By Janet Hansen

(Editor’s Note: This is the third in a series of articles on the history of Lisbon Area Health Services, originally known as Community Memorial Hospital. This article is being reprinted from one published in the March 4, 2002 issue of the Gazette. The original series of articles was published in honor of the facility’s 50th anniversary. The hospital is now celebrating its 60th anniversary.)

Following Hospital Superintendent Effie Larson’s departure, the Community Memorial Hospital continued under different administration. At one point in its early history, the facility suffered some embarrassment when its administrator, Jerry Nybeck, was sentenced for the murder of a local recluse whose personal check the administrator had allegedly altered.

In 1962 the hospital celebrated its tenth anniversary, under the administration of Robert G. Monson, who had taken over following the Nybeck scandal. Monson reported the total budget for 1961 at $119,085. Of that amount, $67,309 went for salaries. The hospital had a capacity of 20 beds and had eight bassinets in the nursery. The average patient load at that time was 11.8 and the average length of stay per patient was 5.4 days.

The medical staff in 1962 included: Dr. A.K. Lewis, Chief of Staff; Dr. Orin Delzer, D.D.S.; Dr. H.O. Bakke; Dr. A. Veitch and Dr. S.C. Bachellor from Enderlin. Dr. George H. Haynes was an honorary member of the staff.

During the first 10 years the hospital administered to 9,472 inpatients. Outpatients treated during this period numbered well over 5,000.

In 1967 a new 20-bed skilled care wing was added to the southeast of the original building. Bids were let on Aug. 4, 1966 and actual construction began a month later. The new wing provided 25 beds and increased up-to-date medical care. The 20-bed portion of the original hospital building was converted to nursing home, giving the Community Memorial Nursing Home a capacity of 45 beds. Oxygen was piped in and the emergency room was enlarged at a cost of approximately $435,000. Bids were let on Aug. 4, 1966. Construction began a month later. Contractors included: General - Meide and Son Inc., Wahpeton; Mechanical - Pfaff Sheet Metal, Enderlin; and Electrical - Wahpeton Electric, Wahpeton. Architects were Johnson and Lightowler, Fargo.

Dedication for the nursing home addition was held on Aug. 27, 1967, with O. Leonard Orvedal, President of the Governing Board of the Lutheran Hospitals and Homes Society, as keynote speaker. A special dedication silver tea was served by the Hospital Guild in the nursing home’s dining room and guild members gave guided tours of the facility.

Administrator James L. Giedd estimated the total cost of the addition at around $440,000. He stated that the nursing home would have a payroll of about $4,000 per month. A minimum of 15 new jobs would be created through the building of the new addition.
In an article in the Dec. 21, 1967 Gazette, it was reported that within four months of its opening the nursing home was one short of having a full quota of residents. Rates, at that time, were $340 a month for a semi-private room and $380 a month for a private room.

A hospital cafeteria menu from 1967 offered a full dinner for fifty cents and a light evening meal for thirty cents. A portion of meat, of any kind, was listed at twenty-five cents. A side of potatoes or bread and gravy could be purchased for a nickel. A casserole, stew, or supper entree cost a quarter. A piece of cake for dessert could be purchased for a nickel. If one wanted to splurge and order pie, it would cost them a dime.

In June of 1968, the appointment of Richard G. Herring as administrator of the Community Memorial Hospital and Nursing Home was announced. Originally from Turtle Lake, Herring had participated in the Lutheran Hospitals and Home Society administrator training program and had been in training at a hospital in North Platte, NE.

In 1969, a coronary care unit was added, with an EKG data phone system to Fargo. A patient education program was also begun.

In August of 1975 plans were begun for a new hospital and expanded nursing home next to the old building. A general fundraising campaign began under the leadership of Robert Hanson, co-owner of Hanson Motors, and Ernest Fadness, a local farmer. Dr. A.K. Lewis was named Honorary Campaign Chairman in honor of his 25 years of service to the community.

Around 250 people attended the fundraising kick-off dinner, sponsored by Lutheran Hospitals and Homes Society of America, Fargo. The dinner officially opened the fund drive. The Reverend Dr. Harry E. Olson, Jr. of Minneapolis was the keynote speaker. He assured campaign workers that they could attain their $500,000 goal. He concluded his talk with, “When you reach for the stars you will never come up with a handful of mud.”

Under the federal Hill-Burton Act the community could receive a grant for $800,000 and a guaranteed government subsidized loan of $1,100,000, if the community could come up with the sum of $500,000 in three years. The service area at that time included Lisbon, Enderlin, Gwinner, Fort Ransom, Englevale, Elliott, Milnor, Sheldon, Verona, Stirum, Anselm, McLeod, DeLamere, Kathryn, Nome, Lucca and Alice. Therefore a large area would be canvassed for donations.

The proposed project, estimated to cost $2.4 million, would include a more modern hospital to meet government regulations and, at the same time, the facility would be enlarged to meet growing needs. The hospital would be expanded from 25 to 35 beds. The nursing home would be enlarged from a 20-bed to a 45-bed facility.

Bids on the new hospital were opened on Oct. 29, 1975. The bids were awarded to: General Contractor - Wick Construction of Valley City; Mechanical - Twin City Construction Company, Fargo; Electrical - Modern Electric of F-M, Fargo.

A ground breaking ceremony was held on Nov. 20.

A dedication and open house for the new hospital and expanded nursing home took place on March 2, 1977. Dr. A.K. Lewis served as Master of Ceremonies. Dedication Speaker was Arnold Goplen who had served 18 years with the North Dakota State Department of Health. He had been present in Lisbon for the groundbreaking for the original hospital building.

The fund-raising goal was surpassed. In the Nov. 20, 1975 Gazette it was announced that a total of $704,674 had been pledged up to that date in the drive. By the date of the hospital’s dedication, 145 percent of the campaign goal had been reached.

Staff at the new hospital included: Drs. A.K. Lewis, Wesley Palmer, Paterno Marquez and Severino Rillo, along with consultants Allan Olson, Leslie Torgerson and Philip Wagner.
Administrator through the building process and transition to the new facility was Joan Bachman. Board members in 1977 included: Ralph Duncan, Chairman; Adolph Huether, Vice-Chairman; Gordon Weber, Secretary and Directors Robert Spolum, Ernest Fadness, Stan Melroe and Leo Reis.

Patients were transferred from the old hospital area to the new addition on March 15. John Maurer, Gwinner, a long-time volunteer at the hospital, was the first patient to be moved into the new addition.

Lutheran Hospital and Homes Society, a not-for-profit health care management corporation based in Fargo, became a subsidiary of Lutheran Health Systems in the fall of 1984. Home care became available through the Lisbon Hospital in 1983.

On Feb. 1, 1992, the Community Memorial Hospital celebrated its fortieth anniversary with an open house. Members of the active medical staff at that time included: Dr. Matthew Kidd, Dr. Robert Warwick, Dr. Guy D. Rosenthal and Dr. Francis Zeck. Those on courtesy staff included: Dr. Barbara Sheets-Olson, Dr. Duane Krivarchka and Dr. A.K. Lewis, as well as other consulting doctors from Fargo and Wahpeton, who came to the Lisbon facility on appointed days. The board, at that time, was made up of: Willard Lee, Chairman; Stan Melroe, Vice Chairman; Ken Stroh, Secretary; as well as Roger Hamre, Charles Anderson and Gordon Weber. Curt Eide was the administrator.

In 1992 the facility employed 157 full and part-time staff members.

An addition to the hospital was completed in 1996. A new resident room and office space for case management services were created for the nursing home. The resident room replaced a room lost due to the installation of a new elevator. The old elevator was removed, leaving the facility without an elevator for a few months early in 1996. During that time the staff had to come up with creative ways to perform tasks which had been dependent on the elevator, such as the delivery of meals and laundry. The new building project also included a new and expanded physical therapy department on the east side of the building. A “Caring for Tomorrow” fund drive, with a goal of $100,000 helped fund the project.

After many years of being known as the Community Memorial Hospital, the hospital’s name was officially changed to the Lisbon Medical Center. A new sign was unveiled during an open house to show off the newly remodeled facilities. The open house took place on Oct. 2, 1996.

With the name change came new facilities and services. The clinic, once located over a block away, was now under the same roof as the hospital and nursing home. It was relocated to the old lab and physical and occupational therapy area of the hospital. The main lobby entrance was made larger and the administrative offices moved to an area behind the front desk. A separate entrance was added for the new nurses’ station and the nursery and delivery sections were redone to add comfort and efficiency. A new recovery room was added next to the operating room. The entire cost of the remodeling and expansion project came to approximately $971,000. The funding came from a local fundraising campaign as well as a loan from Lutheran Health Services. The fundraising campaign was so successful that enough money was collected to also replace carpeting and refinish some walls in the nursing home.

On Sept. 1, 1999 Lutheran Health Systems of Fargo and the Phoenix-based Samaritan Health System officially joined forces to create Banner Health System, one of the largest not-for-profit, non-church-affiliated health systems in the US. The Lisbon facility became a part of the Banner Health System.

(Editor’s Note: Shortly before the article on the facility’s history ran in the March 4, 2002 paper, Banner Health Systems had pulled its corporate office out of the Fargo area
and made the decision to sell off its hospitals and homes in North and South Dakota. Next week’s conclusion to the hospital history will cover the last ten years of the facility’s history.)