



Speed Bump - Slow Down For Some Automotive Tales

A Monthly Column By Hal Tretbar

Cars, Tuberculosis and Medical Practice in Tucson

Please let me ramble on about cars, Tuberculosis, and medical practice. I will come back to auto makers and airplanes next month.

In the *Arizona Daily Star* from July 22, 2019, Johanna Eubank wrote an article about Tucson being a haven for ‘Lungers,’ those unfortunates with chronic pulmonary disease such as tuberculosis (TB). Eubank credits a source as “Tucson: A Place Making” Volume 58. Number 3, Autumn 2016 of the *Journal of the Southwest*.

I quote: “ In 1899 the first automobile arrives in Tucson, a Locomobile steamer imported by Dr. Hiram Fenner.... In 1905 he will receive the first driver’s license in Tucson...by 1914 or 1915 he became the first doctor to make his rounds in an automobile.”

The *Tucson Daily Citizen* of May 17, 1961 had a piece about Medicine in Early Arizona. “There were but three physicians driving automobiles in Tucson when Dr. Meade Clyne arrived in Tucson in January, 1910. They were Dr H.W. Fenner, Dr. A. W.Olcott and Dr. W.B. Purcell, who was killed that year when his car overturned near the San Xavier mines. All other doctors used horse and buggies.”

Eubank continued, “In 1900 Dr. Hiram Fenner designed the Round Building at St. Mary’s Hospital for TB patients. The two story building had private rooms with a balcony so the patients could benefit from Tucson’s clean, dry air.”

Dr. S. W. Watson came to Tucson in 1912 and established the first local clinical lab. He was known for his treatment of TB patients. Dr Clyne and Dr. Watson became partners in 1921 and from that association grew the Tucson Clinic.

I joined the multi-specialty Tucson Clinic in 1965. Since 1921 they were known for treating patients that had come to Tucson with their tuberculosis (TB), severe allergies and debilitating arthritis.

Harold Kosanke, MD was our specialist in TB. He consulted for and traveled to the County Health Departments in Southern Arizona. The Tucson Clinic had a contract from the Indian Health Service to staff the Oshrin Hospital for tuberculosis. It was located at 2100 E. Speedway just east of Campbell. It is now the site for a US Post Office. I remember having to go there in the middle of the night to treat a patient with a pulmonary hemorrhage.

The Clinic had a close working relationship with St. Mary’s Hospital. In 1921 our surgeon, Meade Clyne MD, was one of three physicians at St. Mary’s to be certified as a Fellow of the American College of Surgeons. He was still around in an Emeritus status when I arrived. He loved to tell stories about going out to the Silverbell Mine to remove bullets after a Saturday night shoot-out.

Cars were an important part of our medical care. We made hospital rounds each morning — usually to more than one. Then we drove to our private offices. We made house calls and I would meet a patient at an emergency room in the middle of the night if needed.



1900 photo of the new Round Building at St. Mary’s Hospital

I have driven Porsches since I was a Medical Officer in Germany in 1959. They were an everyday drive, not like today's over-expensive sports models. One of my first patients in 1965 was an older winter visitor with severe chickenpox. I drove him to St. Mary's Hospital in my '59 Porsche 356 A.

He was admitted to the (historic) two-story Round Building that had been built in 1900. It was designed so that each private room opened onto a shaded porch. When I took care of him I had to walk on the creaky wooden floors and open the sturdy wooden door with a ventilating transom above it. Unfortunately the winter visitor died from chickenpox pneumonia. The Round Building was torn down shortly after that episode.

A new Porsche 911 T appeared in my carport in 1970. That was my daily driver for the next 15 years. One day I

was parked in the Doctor's parking lot at TMC. I came out to find that a big Lincoln had jumped the curb and rammed its nose up my tailpipe — just another day the office.

I don't know who was the last doctor to drive to a hospital, make his daily rounds, and then drive to the office. I was driving an '86 Porsche 944 for hospital rounds when I retired in 1998.



My 911 T in 1973 with a pristine tail pipe

