

**15<sup>th</sup> Annual History of  
Medicine Dinner  
Featuring Historian  
Dr. John Marschall**



On November 24 the History of Medicine Program at the School of Medicine will hold its annual dinner and lecture at the Eldorado Hotel and Casino. Dr. John Marschall will talk about Jews in Nevada with emphasis on Jewish doctors and Dr. Henry Bergstein, one of the most important 19<sup>th</sup> century Nevada physicians. Dr. Marschall will also sign copies of his new book,

*Jews in Nevada*, which will be available for purchase at the dinner. Marschall is a well-known author and is professor emeritus in UNR's history department. Also available will be our most recent book, which is on Dr. George Kober, who practiced at Forts McDermitt and Bidwell before becoming

prominent as dean of Georgetown's School of Medicine in Washington, D.C. The 6:30 dinner and talk is open to the public. Tickets are \$35 and reservations can be made by calling the department of pathology at 784 4068.

**Drs. Ada & Gideon  
Weed:  
Early Reformers and Practitioners of  
Hydropathic Medicine in 1861  
Nevada**

By: Kristin Sohn Fermoile

Editors Note: I want to thank Guy Rocha for bringing Dr. Ada Weed to my attention. She may be the first woman doctor to practice in Nevada. Her husband's practice is expensively documented, but I could find any information on her in our archives. Since they went to the same medical school before they came to the state, one can assume they shared information on patients, and she may have had an active practice.

Doctors Gideon A. and Ada M. Weed brought eastern hydropathic medicine to the western frontier in 1858. The couple met while enrolled in Dr. Russell T. Trall's Hygeio-Therapeutic College in New York City. In 1857 they both received "irregular diplomas", as

the institution did not yet have a charter. Dr. Trall's college taught the principles of hydrotherapy, also known as the "water-cure", which was considered an alternative to allopathic medicine. Supporters believed that drug therapies were unnecessary and, in fact, detrimental to successful medical treatment. Instead, practitioners of hydrotherapy relied on principles of hygiene, diet, rest, and the therapeutic value of water.

Dr. Trall established hydrotherapy as a medical system in the United States during the 1840s. Admission requirements to his school included a "common school education and the possession of common sense." Most students were from the working class, and he advocated training women, despite the societal restrictions of the time. In fact, a third of Trall's graduates were female, during a time when it was extremely difficult for women to gain admission into traditional medical schools.

A few months after graduation, Ada (1837-1910) and Gideon (1833-1905) were married in the school's lecture hall. The couple quickly departed the east coast for the western frontier; they arrived in San Francisco in early 1858. Unlike many who migrated during this time, the Weeds did not plan to make a quick fortune and return east; they actually planned to settle in California and make a home there. They dreamed of opening their own Hygeio-Medical Institute. Unfortunately, unforeseen professional competition existed in San Francisco, and the Weeds decided to continue their migration into Oregon.

Oregon proved to be a state with abundant opportunities for the Weeds. The territory lacked hydropathic physicians, and, furthermore, there existed a great demand for their services. Readers had actually written to the editor of *The Water Cure Journal*, asking for both a hydropathic physician and a hydropathic institution in their area. The Weeds rented an office in Salem and advertised in the *Oregon Statesman*. They began plans for a water cure establishment, which would include bathing facilities, a gymnasium, and boarding rooms. Ida focused on the female populations, advertising a specialty in obstetrics and pediatrics.

Soon after their arrival, the Weeds began eliciting criticism and stirring controversy. Being "irregular practitioners", they were subjected to criticism by those who believed in traditional medicine. The women mistrusted Ida because she was the first female in Oregon with a medical degree. The couple was also suspect because they actively advertised. Lastly, the couple stirred controversy because they advocated social change. In addition to curing people of their ills, they desired to cure society of its problems.

Ida, in particular, strongly pushed for social reform. She gave a series of lectures to Oregonians, in which she espoused woman's rights and the need for improved conditions among frontier women. Although her efforts produced no significant changes or

advancements among women in Oregon, she did succeed in eliciting controversy and gaining opposition. Perhaps her strongest and most publicized opposition was from Asahel Bush, editor of the *Oregon Statesmen*. After hearing one of Ida's first lectures, he published several lengthy critiques in his newspaper. Ida issued rebuttals, but her reputation had been permanently damaged.

The Weeds continued their reform efforts despite this opposition. They traveled among various settlements in the Oregon region, and gave talks in churches and courtrooms. Some lectures were free and others required a fifty-cent admission fee. Most likely to avoid male criticism, such as that she had received from Bush, Ida often gave lectures to female-only crowds. In such lectures, her topics expanded to sex and birth control. Portions of the public soon began to view her as a woman's rights zealot.

Despite the negative publicity, the Weeds outwardly painted their crusade as successful. They believed they were making headway in converting the public towards hydrotherapy. In correspondence with Dr. Trall, they claimed that the people of Oregon were in a "transitional state" – they opposed traditional medicine and its drugs, but did not yet fully support hydrotherapy. Additionally, they believed that the traditional doctors in Oregon, who initially denounced hydrotherapy, were beginning to claim that they

had always used water therapy in their treatments.

After their second lecture tour, they wrote accounts of receptive audiences, many of whom were already practicing their principles. They described the success of their practice, and claimed they had as many patients as their house could hold. They failed, however, to divulge their financial hardships. As the economy in Oregon was depressed, many patients were unable to pay. The Weeds took on a partner to help finance the outfitting of their treatment house. Although their lectures were well attended, their profits did not cover their expenses.

Unable to get ahead in Oregon, the Weeds returned to California in the spring of 1860. A year later they opened a Hygeio-Medical Institute in Sacramento. Even though this was their unfulfilled dream while in Oregon, the Weeds were still unable to settle down and prosper. That fall they followed the silver rush to Washoe City, Nevada. A few years later, they returned again to California, settling in Vallejo. It seems that they remained restless.

(To Be Continued in the next issue)

### In Memoriam

Greasewood Tablettes was founded to preserve medical history.

Unfortunately, we do not have the means to keep abreast of the lives of all healthcare practitioners. If we inadvertently miss a particular obituary, we invite you to send us a copy of a newspaper obituary.



*Michael DeBakey, M.D., Wes Hall, Sr., M.D., and Bill O'Brien, M.D.  
1962 Reno Surgical Society & Nevada State Medical Association Meeting.*

Michael E. DeBakey, MD (Sept. 7, 1908 – July 11, 2008)

One cannot miss the headlines recounting DeBakey's death. For three days his death created headlines in the Houston paper. After all, he was, if not the greatest surgeon of the nineteenth century, at the least the best known. Interestingly, he has a small Nevada connection. He was the guest speaker of the Reno Surgical Society and Nevada State Medical Association in 1962. Years later Julie Swan, who was first female to train under DeBakey, was a vascular surgeon in Las Vegas for the School of Medicine.

His patients were Hollywood stars and world leaders. He was among the first to do carotid endarterectomies, heart transplants, coronary artery bypasses, and he list goes on. He was loved by his patients, and by all accounts was a caring doctor. There was another side. The following are Dean Bob Daugherty's comments:

"Dr. DeBakey was probably the greatest surgeon but he also became a Legend in his lifetime, because it is difficult to distinguish between greatness and legend. The year of 1960-61 that Sandra and I were interns at Baylor's teaching hospital, Jefferson Davis City County Hospital, we never saw Dr. DeBakey on the medicine wards, but we certainly heard stories about the legendary Dr. D.

"For example, he always made rounds every day, starting on the top floor and walking down to each floor. It is said, that one Christmas while making rounds (he made rounds every

single day) he asked the resident where was every one because there were few people around. The resident replied; 'Dr. DeBakey, they are celebrating the life of ANOTHER GREAT MAN.

"During surgery one day, a medical student nicked Dr. DeBakey with the towel clip (they were sharp). All were gowned and masked and Dr. DeBakey yelled, 'Who is that student?' The resident turned the student around and pushed him out the door while telling Dr. DeBakey his name was John Jones. At graduation, the students' classmates gave him a gold plated towel clip. Dr. DeBakey never knew who it was.

"In addition to firing residents regularly, he required all residents, when not in surgery, to wear a necktie. The medicine residents would often page Dr. DeBakey to make the surgery residents think he was in the hospital, so they ran to put on their ties.

"Surgery ran the emergency room at Jefferson Davis. The year we were there, Houston led the nation in homicides, and it seemed to us that they all ended up in our ER. Dr. DeBakey had a rule that no one was to die in the ER. If they were that bad off, they should be admitted. As a medicine intern, it was common for us to have a patient transferred by the surgery resident to medicine from the ER and when we encountered the patient, we would find him dead. Thus, he did not die in the ER but on the medicine service.

"Thus a great surgeon but maybe a greater legend. The saying was if you need a heart operation call Dr. DeBakey. If you needed your appendix out, do not call Dr. DeBakey."

### **Leibert Sandars, MD**

Dr. Sandars was born April 17, 1914, in Baltimore and died at the age of 94 in Reno July 26, 2008. He was the backbone of Washoe Medical Center's radiology department and a founder of Reno Radiological Associates. Dr. Sandars was an accomplished musician and artist.

### **Thomas McCleary, II, DO**

Dr. McCleary was born in Pennsylvania in 1915. He was stationed at Stead Air Force Base at the end of World War II and decided he wanted to live here. He practiced in Reno from 1946 until 1985 when he retired. He was active in the Nevada State Board of Osteopathic Medicine and had a love for golf and growing orchids.

### **Thomas J. Scully, MD**

(Nov. 14, 1932-Sept. 16, 2008)

It was with profound sadness when we received the news of Dr. Thomas Scully's death this past September. He

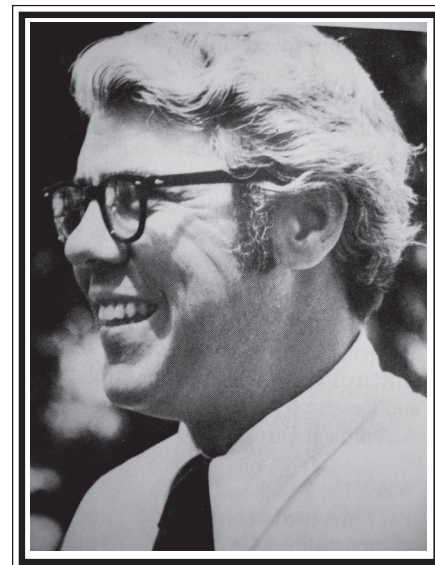
had been involved in the School of Medicine since its inception and was one of its most inspiring teachers.

A native New Yorker, Dr. Scully began his career in Nevada as a pediatrician in Las Vegas. After a two-year stint in a New Jersey heading a residency program, he returned to Nevada in 1969 to be a founding faculty in the new School of Medical Sciences. Appointed dean after Dr. George Smith resigned, Dr. Scully's career as dean was cut short by bad health.

Dr. Scully was involved in numerous facets of medical education and service to the profession, both on a local and statewide level, but he is best known as one of the School of Medicine's best teachers. He had a unique way of relating to students and teaching them how to be a caring physician.

A recognized expert on medical ethics, Dr. Scully and his wife, Celia, authored a book, *Playing God*. Dr. Scully's family and Dr. Robert Daugherty, former dean of the school

of Medicine have set up a scholarship fund for medical students at the University of Nevada School of Medicine, Pennington/332, Reno, Nevada 89557. [We ask that you support this effort and contribute to the scholarship fund.](#)



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