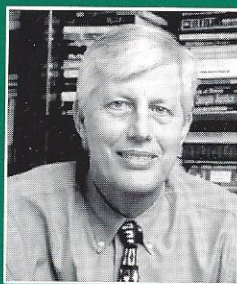


From the Editor



My dad died of melanoma cancer in 1970 after several years of treatment at M. D. Anderson Cancer Center. I was an undergraduate at Rice at the time, and I have vivid memories of long, sad walks from my dorm room to the hospital. My route took me over an intramural field, by the track stadium, and past the Tideland motel. Once I crossed Main Street and Fannin, I trudged over a large open space to a paved lot where cars circled in search of parking spaces. Inside the hospital, I covered my nose to block the clouds of cigarette smoke coming from the patients' rooms. I looked straight ahead to avoid seeing the suffering of those around me. Then I forced myself to look directly at my dad and hug him gingerly, trying to persuade both of us to believe—at least for a brief moment—that he was not wasting away and that a cure was possible.

Recently, I retraced those steps. My old dorm, Wiess College, has been demolished; the new Rice baseball field sits behind the old intramural field; the Tideland is long gone. A light rail track now splits Fannin. In the thirty-five years since my first visit to M. D. Anderson Hospital, just about everything except the parking situation has changed at the Texas Medical Center. The space between Main Street and M. D. Anderson has been filled with new buildings. The rooms are now smoke free. The doctors who seemed unwilling to talk frankly with a patient's family now seem almost eager to discuss the case. Above all, the survival rate for melanoma patients—as with most other categories of cancer patients—has

improved dramatically. There is a sense of hope more than of desperation.

As I write these memories, it surprises me to realize that I have been visiting the Medical Center for more than half of its history. How did a collection of institutions expand so quickly? The photographs in this issue provide snapshots over time of the growth of impressive new medical facilities. The profiles of doctors reveal their single-minded passion to push forward the research and treatment of serious diseases. The photos of chapels and green space remind us of the ongoing efforts to create spaces within the Medical Center for spiritual healing.

Healing of all kinds is the business of the Texas Medical Center. It has earned international renown for the quality of its doctors, its equipment, and its research. It has also become a major force in the Houston economy, contributing a healthy dose of diversity to a regional economy long dominated by the oil and natural gas industries. It is a second downtown, connected to the original by a modern light rail system. In little more than fifty years, people of vision, talent, and energy have turned approximately 750 acres of largely empty land into a Mecca for medical care.

This issue of *The Houston Review of History and Culture* focuses on its history. Guest editor William Kellar has assembled an engaging collection of articles, interviews, and profiles that conveys some of the sense of the dramatic expansion of the Medical Center. We thank all of the authors for their contributions, with special thanks to Dr. Mavis Kelsey, Dr. Denton Cooley, and Mary Schiflett for

their help on the issue. Thanks also to Beth White and Pam Cornell, who located photographs for us at the McGovern Historical Collections and Research Center in the HAM-TMC Library.

A 64-page magazine cannot, of course, present a comprehensive account of the history of a vast and expanding complex of institutions and people. We sought to include a variety of selections representative of the many different approaches to healing at the Texas Medical Center.

As we or our relatives and friends experience the ordeals presented by serious health problems, we gain greater appreciation for the contributions to our city made by the institutions at the Texas Medical Center. Even patients who died decades ago, such as my dad, still reach out to us through time in the work of researchers studying past treatments to find future cures. As a young man, I left my father's room at M. D. Anderson with a profound sadness. The sadness of personal loss remains a constant of any visit to the Texas Medical Center. But I also come away from each visit with a sense of awe for the miracle workers who perform their magic there, respect for those who came before them, and admiration for several generations of Houstonians who contributed to the building of this world-class medical complex.

Comments...Questions...Ideas...

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ON THE COVER

Aerial view of the Texas Medical Center campus in 2002, looking north with downtown Houston in the background. Photograph by Joe Vela, Shriners Hospitals for Children-Houston