

*This is a story of a lady, a wife and a mother with a need, driven by the death of a very young son; a vision and a dream she had for all children, and finally, the dream becoming a reality. This is also how **the Washington State Elks Association** became involved with Children's Orthopedic Hospital, Seattle.*

*By Robert W. Newberry – Lake City Lodge #1800
BIRTHDAY BUCKS Chairman*

References:

- a. "A Place for the Children" by Emilie B. Schwabacher*
- b. WSEA historical document printed for Ballard Lodge #827*
- c. WSEA Therapy Program Manual*

Mrs. Anna Clise, with her husband James and their daughter Ruth, came to Seattle from Denver, Colorado, in 1889. They had a son, Willis, who died of inflammatory rheumatism. After a visit to Philadelphia Children's Hospital to consult with her cousin, Dr. John Musser, who was the President of the American Medical Association and who established a hospital ward for crippled children; he told Anna "There's nothing so important to be done as service to children. Look about and see what is being done for them in your state. Find out what is not being done that is necessary and worthy, and do just that."

When Anna returned to Seattle she learned that there was no care available for crippled children. She then related her impressions and ideas to James and two of their close friends who soon shared her resolve.

For the next nine years, true to her Mennonite training, Anna researched the potential of a children's hospital. As a determined mother who had a child pass away for lack of available medical care, Anna decided to improve life for Seattle's sick and crippled children. Because of her emotional need Anna Clise was an extraordinary, talented and energetic young woman who had a vision of future needs. Thus, Children's Orthopedic Hospital was conceived in 1906.

On January 4, 1907, prompted by data Anna had gathered on a visit to New York Children's Hospital and reinforced in her convictions by Dr. Musser's admonitions, she called twenty-three friends together and suggested they go down in the City Streets where they would find the lame and hunchbacked children whose bodies were misshapen by disease. She knew that they would then realize how badly Seattle needed a children's hospital. She explained the limited alternatives for the poor and crippled children who when hospitalized were placed with adults and exposed to other contagious diseases. She told of her visits to children's hospitals in Philadelphia and Syracuse where she had seen how young patients were cared for, with the special tenderness that children needed and with the skills that would cure or alleviate their handicaps.

Anna suggested that an effort could begin in a modest undertaking with short term surgical cases with the hope that it would lead to a full-fledged orthopedic hospital.

After searching for a small ward within a well-established hospital, Seattle General was chosen with a seven-bed ward and the Children's Orthopedic Hospital Association Ward was opened. No official opening is recorded, but is believed to have been in February 1907. Thus, Seattle had the first orthopedic facility for children on the West Coast.

Little by little, word spread that children were being helped in the seven-bed ward and soon a waiting list necessitated additional beds. Responding to the need, James Clise said "It is time for the husbands to do their share." He and twenty others pledged \$1,000 each for a building to be designed for children with orthopedic disabilities.

Two trustees were entrusted the job of searching for a suitable site on top of Queen Anne Hill for a fresh air cottage. A vacant lot was found at Warren and Crockett streets. In 1909, Seattle was experiencing a very favorable economic condition. With the community-wide guild support system, a gift of two lots was realized. The two ladies, one of whom was a former student of architecture and the other with the knowledge of constructing a plaster model, presented their concept of the building to show the Trustees.

With careful planning, funding and building supplies, donations from local businesses and necessary labor for construction, the brown-shingled cottage was ready for its occupants on June 1, 1908. The cornerstone of the new building was dedicated on March 16, 1911.

It was 1911 when the question of “free care” surfaced. The Board decided it had a duty to serve the needy, sick children without cost and those who could pay should. They defined a policy accordingly. Outpatient services were begun then also.

Working with handicapped children as a fraternal activity began in 1915 when a small hospital with a capacity of twenty beds and consisting of two small cottages which had been converted to suit hospital needs was opened in Atlanta, Georgia, by the Scottish Rite Masons of that city. As a result of the work accomplished there, the Shriner’s in Portland, Oregon, undertook a similar program in 1920. Two years later, the ELKS Lodges in New Jersey initiated a program for handicapped kids and very quickly the ELKS Lodges in New York and Pennsylvania began similar programs.

In July of 1924, the Washington State ELKS Association initiated a similar program in supporting Children’s Orthopedic Hospital in Seattle. The *Birthday Utopian Crippled Kiddies Service* (BUCKS) was founded by the Washington State ELKS Association and incorporated in 1925. Funds raised through this program are donated to COH for the medical care and treatment of children. Today ELKS Lodges throughout their State Associations have similar programs. It is a nice feeling to know that in Washington, we’re one of the first.

In 1921, COH had grown to a four story building providing 128 beds and this had already proven to be inadequate. COH had grown to be an institution with national recognition. Negotiations with the ELKS for a convalescent home were consummated. Twenty-seven acres of land located at the northeast corner of Fort Lawton had been donated to COH by Mrs. Skinner. The facility was designed to provide fresh air and post-hospital convalescent care for the young patients. The ELKS donated \$40,000 for the building.

This building was a major project of the Washington State ELKS Association but because of its geographical location, its needs and problems were under constant supervision and was a special project of Ballard Lodge #827. Even after the building was completed and the little patients were in, members of the Lodge visited weekly. The children were supplied with toys, games and motion picture projector and films. The Ladies of ELKS also assisted in the effort with donations of stuffed toys and phonograph records. Christmas was a big day with a party. Santa had a present for each child too. On March 8, 1947, the Convalescent Hospital was renamed to COH Annex.

After World War II, COH found itself bursting at its seams. Space became scarce and the out-patient care was affected. At one point the Board room was divided into four offices and the Staff meetings were held in the play room. A building next door was converted into an annex for bed space.

Trustee Dorothy Bullitt suggested the COH hire a consultant for a long range plan. Dr. Herman Smith, an administrator from Chicago, was hired. He told the Board of Trustees that they were making a mistake by turning down private patients which was being done daily, and were denying the doctors who give such remarkable volunteer service the right to bring their own private patients to the hospital. He suggested that instead of being just a private charitable facility, COH should be a medical center for all children of the northwest and by all means affiliate with the University of Washington Medical School. This was done and began in 1947. He also recommended a new permanent building situated close to the Medical School. Studies were started in locating property for the proposed building with space for expansion, fund raising, and Dr. Smith worked with architects on the plans.

Months later the Trustees agreed to purchase the Laurelhurst site located on Sand Point Way. Funds were also raised by a successful fund raising campaign.

In May 1951, the Garden Committee ceremoniously broke ground for the new building. It symbolically marked the hospital's coming of age. Medically and institutionally Children's Orthopedic Hospital became a major community entity.

The new building was completed on April 11, 1953, and it was time to move. Shepard Ambulance and Farwest Taxi Company transported passengers while the Teamsters Union and truck owners worked together to move equipment. A continuous stream of cabs traveled the eight mile route displaying young arms and hands clutching multicolored balloons. Seattle had never seen such a parade and it had rarely witnessed such spontaneous community help.

On February 23, 1987, Children's Orthopedic Hospital's name was changed to Children's Hospital and Medical Center. On October 8, 1997, it was changed to Children's Hospital and Regional Medical Center.

The ELKS still play a vital part with the "BUCKS" program with different types of fund raising, drawings, dinners, collecting aluminum beverage cans, and selling them for BUCKS. We also participate in the Children's Network Telethon, selling pledge cards and assisting the Children's Hospital Foundation whenever we can.

ALL FUNDS RAISED IN THE "BUCKS" PROGRAM ARE DONATED TO THE CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL AND MEDICAL CENTER'S UNCOMPENSATED CARE PROGRAM. NO CHILD IS EVER TURNED AWAY FOR TREATMENT FOR THE LACK OF FUNDS.