

Town's Only Doctor Still Handles Practice Old Fashioned Way

by Michael Donahue

FRIENDSHIP, Tenn.— Dr. Lamar White's patients usually don't complain about his bedside manner. They know if they go to his home at night, he'll get out of bed to see them.

"My daughter brought me late one night," said Blanche King, 54. "He had his pajamas on. He took me into the kitchen and gave me the medicine. I had trouble with my ear."

White, 74, the only general practitioner in Friendship for the last 42 years, has even seen patients at his bedside. "I happened to be sick myself," he said. "I didn't get off the bed. I must have seen 30 or 35 people."

In an age of specialists, nuclear medicine and PruCare, White, who has pulmonary emphysema and often uses an oxygen tank to help him breathe, still makes house calls, keeps office hours four days a week and sometimes treats 20 patients a day.

His office/home is in a red brick house, where his wife, Polly, 68, is the receptionist and his daughter, Lamar Ann Hubbard, is the nurse and office manager. In addition to being the doctor, White has been mayor, medical examiner and chairman of the school board.

⑥ "He's just an old country doctor and I'm an old

country doctor's wife," said Mrs. White, who keeps track of patients by writing down their names when they enter the waiting room. White doesn't take appointments.

"We tried that when we first came here and it didn't work," Mrs. White said. "Too many patients. You didn't know how much time he was going to take with them."

With some exceptions, White didn't even send bills to his patients. "He said, 'They know they owe it, they'll eventually pay it,'" Mrs. White said. "But since his health has gotten so bad he said, 'I think we need to start mailing out some statements.'"

Patients aren't alone when they enter White's main examining room; hundreds of photos of other patients and children he's delivered cover the walls. White knows the names of just about everyone pictured in the snapshots, school photos, group pictures of high school sports teams and funeral notices.

"I used to know everybody," White said. "There used to be a house every 30 yards. Back then you'd have people help chop cotton, pick cotton. Now it's all mechanized."

Asked how many patients he's got, White said, "I don't have any earthly idea. I've got patients from Ripley, Humboldt. Did have one man came from Jackson. He got so old he was scared to come over in his truck."

Several of White's patients are approaching 100. "Oh, I've had one 103," White said. "Joe Smith's 95. Onie Shelby over here is 98."

A native of Dyersburg, White received his medical degree from the University of Louisville. His parents paid his tuition and he had a year's scholarship, but he also held four or five jobs, including making X-rays in the lab one night a week and working in an emergency room on weekends. Mrs. White cleaned stairs and scrubbed halls in the boarding house where they lived.

White and his family moved to Friendship in June 1954, after the doctor in nearby Tigrett had died. At the time, White was interning at Elizabeth Hospital in Covington, Ky.

White still recalls his first house call. He was at a welcoming party when he was summoned to the house of the town barber, now deceased. "Ellie B. Green with the kidney

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stone,” he said. “I gave him morphine intravenously and he got easy just like that. He thought the world had come to him.”

In the early days White’s fee was \$2 for an office call, \$1 extra for a shot. His fee for an office visit now varies, but it’s generally \$28 to \$35. His daughter handles the insurance for patients, but White, who also pays malpractice insurance, handles Medicare.

Eighteen years ago, White, who was having a problem breathing, visited a doctor in Jackson. The doctor said he couldn’t help him, but White could help himself. White, who smoked for 50 years, pulled his

pack of cigarettes from his pocket and threw it across the room. He hasn’t touched a cigarette since.

White began using oxygen several years ago. He’s slowed down, but he won’t stop seeing patients. “I guess I won’t stop till I fall over.”

He’s never had other doctors work with him in Friendship. “I never had anybody offer to help me. I’ve asked them to come over and let me take a little trip. I was joking. I’m sure maybe they would have if I completely insisted.”

Dr. Robert Mandle, who practices internal medicine at the Jackson Clinic, has known

White about 30 years. “He’s one of the last remnants of the ‘old family doc,’” Mandle said. What he can teach you is people. He’s a people person. He’s the patient’s friend. And he’s a good doctor.”

Although he’s enjoyed his life, White doesn’t encourage young people to become rural doctors. “Our grandson’s ambition was to be a country doctor and he talked him out of it,” Mrs. White said.

“It’s not like it used to be,” White said. “It’s entirely different. You’ve got to have a hospital close by to practice medicine. I’m lucky I had a close relationship with the Jackson Clinic.”

1. What is the author’s *main* purpose in writing this selection?
- A to warn against the dangers of smoking cigarettes
 - B to describe the life of a country doctor
 - C to compare the jobs of rural and city doctors
 - D to argue for the importance of a good bedside manner

2. What is the author’s tone in this selection?
- A admiration
 - B amazement
 - C confusion
 - D excitement

3. In paragraph 6, when Mrs. White says, “He’s just an old country doctor and I’m an old country doctor’s wife,” she reveals that she thinks of her role in life as what?
- A helper
 - B innovator
 - C leader
 - D observer
4. What incident is **most** ironic in this selection?
- A Dr. White lives in a small Tennessee town.
 - B Dr. White is the medical examiner in his county.
 - C Dr. White administered morphine to a patient.
 - D Dr. White saw patients while he was ill.
5. What is the overall effect of dialogue on this selection?
- A It clarifies the author’s argument about the need for more personal medical attention.
 - B It contributes to the mood of mourning for a lost historical practice.
 - C It allows readers to see a more personal aspect of Dr. White and his patients.
 - D It presents opposing points of view about the life of a country doctor.
6. What word would **best** describe Dr. Lamar White?
- A conscientious
 - B quick-witted
 - C reserved
 - D self-absorbed

7. Why did Dr. White have to visit a doctor?
- A He had a problem with patients paying.
 - B He needed to take a trip.
 - C He wanted a partner.
 - D He had a problem breathing.

End of Sample Items

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English 1

EOC English I Sample Items

Selection Title	Question Number	Correct Answer	Thinking Skill	Objective Number
Town's Only Doctor Still Handles Practice Old Fashioned Way	1	B	Applying	5.01
Town's Only Doctor Still Handles Practice Old Fashioned Way	2	A	Analyzing	5.01
Town's Only Doctor Still Handles Practice Old Fashioned Way	3	A	Analyzing	2.01
Town's Only Doctor Still Handles Practice Old Fashioned Way	4	D	Applying	5.01
Town's Only Doctor Still Handles Practice Old Fashioned Way	5	C	Analyzing	4.02
Town's Only Doctor Still Handles Practice Old Fashioned Way	6	A	Analyzing	5.01
Town's Only Doctor Still Handles Practice Old Fashioned Way	7	D	Applying	2.01