

IRA RICHARD WOODWARD, SR., M.D.  
PAYETTE, IDAHO

1. YOUTH:

I was born May 17, 1874 in West De Pere, Wisconsin; my parents were Jennie and Israel Woodward. We moved from West De Pere in 1879, coming west to Denver, Colorado in a covered wagon. We settled in the Black Hills near Denver, moving to Idaho Springs, Colorado in 1881. In 1891, we moved to Denver where I had one year in the Denver High School and one year at Denver University before I entered the University of Denver College of Medicine in 1894. While in medical school, I carried newspapers to finance my schooling. Also while in medical school, I contracted tuberculosis in the dissecting room. I was graduated from the College of Medicine in 1897 with an M.D. degree. At that time there were no internships available. During my medical school days, my income was \$30.00 per month.

After my graduation from medical school, I opened an office in Idaho Springs, Colorado, which had been my home town. This was a mistake since I was too young and there was no business for me. I then moved to Mercur, Utah, the last wide open mining town in the West. The population of Mercur, at that time, was 5,000 and the largest cyanide processing mill in the United States was located there. At the time of my move to Mercur, my bank-roll consisted of one thin dime. I secured a contract as Mine surgeon for the DeLaMar, Mercur, La Cigale, Ophir and other mines and mills, and for the first month or two helped my financial situation by dealing roulette at one or the many resorts there.

At that time there were no Unions. The management of the mines had to close the mines for two days at pay-roll time but made arrangements with the gambling houses to try and "clean" the workmen in those two days so that work could be resumed until the next pay day.

In 1899 it was found that the mines ran through ore body. The Mercur mine for which \$40,000,000 had been offered, and refused, was abandoned. Within a month. Mercur became a "ghost town". The 1950 census gave it a population 2! --the smallest city in the United States. My bank-roll was again shot to pieces!

2. MOVE TO IDAHO :

In December or 1899, I moved to Payette, Idaho. Dr. S. H. Pinkerton, Chief Surgeon, Union Pacific Railroad, furnished my transportation and the freight facilities and appointed me District Surgeon for the Union Pacific in Payette. I have held that position until the present time. When I arrived in Payette, I was possessed of the sum of \$2.00. During my early days in Idaho, I received a great

deal of help and much needed advice from Dr. J.A. Numbers, Wiser, Idaho and from Dr. L.P. McCalla, Boise, Idaho.

In 1904, after the death of my father in Denver, I was joined in Payette by my older brother Dr. Jesse Charles Woodward. Sr. In approximately 1907, I was appointed as a member of the State Board of Medical Examiners. At about this same time I also passed the State Board Pharmacy examination. In December, on the 4<sup>th</sup>, in 1907, I was married to Anna J. Hastings, R.N. a graduate of St. Mark's Hospital, Salt Lake City, Utah. I have one daughter, Jean Elizabeth, born December 19, 1910, who is now an attorney at law and research attorney for the Supreme Court of California. She is married to Justice Jesse W. Carter of the California Supreme Court. I have one son, Ira Richard. Jr. a graduate of Northwestern Medical School. He is married to the former Kathryn Whalen of Payette and has three sons, Michael, William and Thomas. I was joined, in the practice of medicine, in 1940 by my son, Dr. I. R. Woodward Jr.

### 3. ORGANIZATIONS, ETC.:

From 1909 until 1913. I was a member of the City Council of Payette. I served from 1917 until 1933, and again from 1935 until 1941 as Mayor of the City of Payette.

I served four terms as Master, Washoe Lodge No. 28, A.F. and A.M.

I am a member of Knights Templar, Shriners, American Medical Association, Idaho State Medical Association, and the Southwestern Idaho District Medical Society.

### 4. HOBBIES:

I have always been interested in mineralogy and at one time had quite an extensive collection of native rocks and minerals. Ever since my arrival in Payette I have taken yearly trips, by horse-back and with pack horses. into the primitive areas of Idaho. I like nothing better than to get way "back in" and of the beaten trail where the fishing and hunting are the best.

### 5. INTERESTING EXPERIENCES IN MERCUR, UTAH:

Mercur was' quite a place and there was no reason to complain or lack of patients. Large tanks of cyanide of potassium solution were used in leaching the ore. There were numerous almost instantaneous deaths from drinking from pails which were, or had been, used in the tanks. One outstanding case was that of the foreman's son who fell into, and was completely submerged in, a standardizing tank. He was pulled out and suffered no after effects! We managed to save some cases by the use of large quantities of hydrogen peroxide.

The caving system was used in the mines with the logical result of numerous fatal accidents.

At this time no masks, or other protection, were provided for the workman. The ore contained large quantities of arsenic which, when roasted, would re-

deposit in thick layers on the cold water pipes. Despite this, and the lack of protection, we had very few cases of arsenical poisoning.

During my time there we had eight cases of poisoning by arsenuretted hydrogen gas during one refining effort. There were two survivors. Dr. Noble Wiley Jones, then a recent medical school graduate who was later to become President of the Portland Clinic, Portland, Oregon, reported on these cases and received wide-spread attention in medical circles.

One case of an eruptive fever created a great deal of interest among local physicians. A shepherd volunteered the information that the disease was quite common in Idaho and that it usually occurred in June. He also said that it was caused by sheep droppings in springs and streams from which human beings drank. I know now that it was my first experience with Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever. After going to Payette, I went on a fishing trip with three friends and all of us contracted the disease. I was later to have the privilege, and very interesting experience, of accompanying Dr. Ricketts of Montana during his study of the then "strange" fever. We collected ticks from all sources. From this study came the knowledge that we all take for granted today.

At this time there was, of course, no such thing as Workmen's Compensation. In the event of an accidental death, someone, usually a gambler would pass a hat. This would usually net about \$1,500 for the family of the deceased.

I have often thought that the so-called "coffee hour" of today had its origin in Mercur with one small change. All professional and business men and mine officials would meet at a favorite bar to have one drink on the "even" hour after which they all went back to work until 8 or 9 p.m. when the serious drinking and gambling for the day began. I remember that there was at least one chronic alcoholic in town --a terrier dog, the town pet. His sad, or happy, state (as the case may be) was caused by the miners pouring the remains of their drinks in his water bowl.

As I have said, Mercur was a wide open town. One small cottage organ in the Episcopal Church there had on it a sign which informed the congregation to "Please do not shoot the organist --he is doing the best he can!"

I remember one terrifying experience I had in Mercur. We had there a very small, and primitive hospital, of which I was in charge. I was not usually all alone there, but on the night in question the entire town, including the hospital staff, had gone to a dance leaving me alone except for the body of a deceased miner. Sometime during the very late hours, I thought I had better take a look at the body. Much to my surprise, I not only could not push the door open into the room, but I hear some very loud, unmistakable snoring! Being very young in those days, I rushed out to procure reinforcements. Upon being so reinforced, we discovered that a very large dog had gained entrance through an open window and was peacefully sleeping, and snoring, right against the door!

Of great interest to me was Ajax, a settlement on the nearby prairie. Ajax consisted of a very large, and complete, department store with living quarters, stables, and salesrooms completely underground --a hold-over from Indian days.

Winter was a pretty rugged proposition in Mercur. The roads were very bad and house calls were quite an ordeal. I remember that the liverymen would sharpen inch long horse shoe caulks before allowing a team to start out on the icy roads.

## 6. INTERESTING EXPERIENCES IN IDAHO:

Shortly after my arrival in Payette, there was a smallpox epidemic in town. There were around 500 cases of the dread disease, some of which were very severe. To protect themselves, physicians wore long white gowns, hoods, masks and gloves. A special wagon was available for the stricken. This wagon had a mattress on its bed and entire families would be placed in it. The wagon would then be driven down Main Street on the way to the Pest House. Needless to say, when the wagon was seen approaching, Main Street would rapidly become deserted.

One case of Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever in its early stages was, upon consultation, diagnosed as smallpox. The patient was sent to the Pest House and later, upon being told of the mistaken diagnosis, considered it a good joke on the county authorities who had paid his expenses .

In those days there were no hospitals available. All babies were delivered at home for a flat fee of \$25.00. I remember one delivery which took place in an abandoned mine with the front partly boarded up. I had reached the mine through four feet of snow to find that it was an arm presentation. The husband of the patient assisted me and there were no complications. The fee remains to this day uncollected!

In obstetrical cases there was usually no pre-natal care since the physician was usually notified that his services would be needed during the last week of pregnancy. In many cases we were notified after labor had started. Our fees were not what could be called exorbitant --\$1.00 for an office call, \$2.00 and \$3.00 for residence calls, and as I have said, \$25.00 for any type of delivery.

Surgery in those days was also very apt to be accomplished with some little difficulty and under odd circumstances. I have done appendectomies on the kitchen table by candlelight; I did a tracheotomy on a kitchen table using hairpins as retractors. The old saying "necessity is the mother of invention" had strong application to doctors in the early days!

On July 16, 1903, I purchased the second car in Idaho and the first to be had in Payette County. It was a General and had a chain drive to the sprocket on the rear axle. This necessitated a continual "getting out and under" operation on my part. It had kerosene lamps and a hand operated drop bar in the rear to prevent the auto from running backward when going up any incline. Standard equipment for any length trip consisted of a spare axle, springs and a transmission chain. I remember one fine trip when I managed to drive ten miles - -but I returned under my own power. Automobiles were not regarded with enthusiasm by those not owning them. They were considered a great menace to the life and limb of teamsters who unsuccessfully tried to prevent anyone from driving one. All of the few automobile drivers in the early days were expected,

when meeting horse-drawn vehicles, to get the auto as far off the road as possible, stop the engine, and stand between the car and the team until the team could be brought under control. Any refusal to comply with this expected procedure would have had dire consequences --to the driver -- so we complied

Later years in Idaho brought, or course, many changes most of which were happy and progressive ones. The death of my mother on April 16, 1927 and of my brother, Dr. J.A. Woodward, Sr., were very sad experiences for me. One of the happy changes occurred when my son and I built the Woodward Clinic Building in Payette in July, 1952.

The End.

Dr. I.R. Woodward, Sr., died on May 28, 1954.