

DR. JACK LOVED DELIVERING BABIES

Posted Sunday, December 22, 2019

Jim Herrin | Herald-Citizen

"You delivered me."

It's a phrase Dr. Jack Johnson of Gainesboro, Jackson Co., TN has heard hundreds, if not thousands of times, over his 94-year lifetime.



Dr. Jack, as he is called, is the physician many people in Gainesboro and surrounding areas turned to when they needed medical care.

He is now a resident at Mabry Health and Rehabilitation Center, but encounters with former patients have continued.

"Yes, he delivered me," said his caretaker, Terrie Lloyd.

Dr. Jack was born in Jackson County in 1925, the oldest of three brothers. With the outbreak of World War II, he was one of millions to join the military.

"They were going to draft him, and he wanted to choose his own service, which was the Navy, so he enlisted," said his son, Don.

Don said a recruiter initially tried to tell Jack that the Navy's quota was "already full," so he would have to join the Army.

"Dad was pretty bold in those days and said 'I'm not going into the Army.' So the Navy guy stepped in and said 'I'll just put him on tomorrow's quota,'" Don said.

That boldness served Jack well during his wartime service in the Pacific as a signalman and a landing craft driver aboard the USS Starr, a ship that endured a kamikaze suicide attack by Japanese aircraft.

After the war, Jack returned home and started college, attending Tennessee Tech and Vanderbilt before heading to the University of Tennessee at Memphis Medical School.

Following a residency in Knoxville, he set up a practice back in Gainesboro.

"It was home," he said. "Plus, my wife wanted to be here."

Over the years, patients were not always able to pay cash for his services, but Dr. Jack didn't mind.

"I often traded for a shotgun or beef calves," he said. "Sometimes, it was eggs and maybe a few chickens."

While he was trained as a general practitioner, he found that many of his patients needed obstetric services. He estimates that he helped deliver more than 2,000 babies between 1955 and the mid-1980s when he retired from active practice.



"I loved delivering babies," he said. "Delivering healthy babies was the best part of the practice. Seeing the happy parents."

(Dr. Jack Johnson, left, and his son, Don).

Despite the natural complications that might come with all of those deliveries, he says he never lost a patient.

The worst part of the profession, he said, was having to treat terminal cancer patients.

"I couldn't help them," he said. "That was the worst part."

While he has to deal now with his own health setbacks, Dr. Jack continues to inspire those around him.

"He took care of me for all those years, and now I can help take care of him," Lloyd said. "It's a blessing."

*Read more about the people of Putnam Co., TN & surrounding areas at:
<http://www.ajlambert.com>