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Honoring the Past, Welcoming the Future - The Roots of St. Luke's South Shore, 1995

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Honoring the Past Welcoming the Future—

*The Roots of
St. Luke's South Shore*



It's a powerful combination . . .

*The spirit and essence of
Trinity, and the reputation
and resources of*

St. Luke's Medical Center.

*We are witnessing the creation
of an outstanding health care
resource for our community.*

The Spirit of Trinity . . .

How a Community's Dream Became a Reality

That "spirit" of Trinity Memorial Hospital . . . It's something everyone talks about, yet few can easily explain. Doctors, employees, patients, volunteers, visitors and members of the community are sometimes asked what it means. Those who have experienced the "spirit of Trinity" often turn to the beginning of the story . . .

Milwaukee Lion's Club to determine if there was a need for a hospital in the community. At the time, the nearest emergency facility for most area residents was at least 15 miles away.

A strong show of interest in building a community hospital led to the creation of a fund raising board of seven individuals appointed by Mayor Charles Plotz and the South Milwaukee Common Council in 1951. Since a hospital would be beneficial to the people in the surrounding areas as well, representatives from the Town of Oak Creek

and Cudahy also were invited to participate. Soon, there was a 21-member committee with seven individuals from each city. Ervin Baetke of Oak Creek was the first president; Floyd Fuller, vice president; Matthew Keese Jr., treasurer; and Evelyn Linde and Magdalene Bedusek, secretaries.

It is interesting to note that not one individual among the committee of 21 was experienced in building a hospital or in fund raising for such a major undertaking. Almost without exception, however, each person was

totally dedicated to the ultimate completion of the gigantic task. Because of the strong interest and enthusiasm of this nucleus, "the image of the hospital was no longer in the realm of fantasy," according to a history written by Evelyn Linde in 1967. "Though abstract in its conception," she wrote, "it



An early billboard promotes the need for a hospital in the south shore area.

Trinity Memorial Hospital began with dreams, determination, and an incredible grass roots effort that spread throughout the entire community.

The hospital's origin can be traced to a 1947 survey conducted by the South

grew into an overwhelming challenge which was both frightening in its scope, but wonderful, nevertheless.”

To identify the project, the committee agreed to formally name it “Trinity Memorial Hospital.” “Trinity” was symbolic of the three communities whose residents were dedicated to the project; and “Memorial” stood for the three wars in which men and women from the communities had fought.

St. Francis residents joined the original three areas in support of the hospital shortly after the name “Trinity” had become firmly established.

Once the planning committee was formed, efforts to build the hospital began in earnest with hundreds of letters mailed to senators, congressmen, hospital consultants and physicians. After failing to approve the first plan for a 50-bed hospital, the State of Wisconsin suggested a 75-bed institution to care for the population of 55,000 people in the area. The hospital planning committee was warned, however, that because of previous government commitments, “there was no possibility of getting federal aid” to help fund the project. The group was advised to employ professional fund raisers to help promote and publicize the campaign.

Acquiring land for the new hospital was the next major challenge for the committee. Members felt that the ideal location was a property owned by the Milwaukee County Park Commission on the east side of Lake Drive just north of College Avenue. Offers to

purchase the land from the County were rejected, however, and committee members continued what often seemed to be a futile search for other possible locations.

A major breakthrough came in 1953 when Victor Grant, a Cudahy resident, bought a five acre parcel on the west side of Lake Drive and donated it in memory of his parents as the site for the new hospital. The gift was



Members of Trinity's Auxiliary donned their work clothes to clean the hospital for its opening on May 1, 1958.

accepted with great joy and gratitude. The plan got another boost when the Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Conception from Little Falls, Minnesota, agreed to operate and administer the future hospital.

Backed by renewed hope and enthusiasm, a massive fund raising campaign was launched in early 1954, with Grant as the campaign chairman. Every angle and method was used to raise the awareness of the community and the \$1.3 million needed for construction. Invitations were sent to 500

“Toilet Bowl” Maggie



Magdalene Bedusek

When it came to building a hospital, no job was too big or too small for Magdalene Bedusek. “We did everything!” says Magdalene, one of the “original seven” on the mayor’s committee to plan and build a hospital in 1951. “And we had the time of our lives doing it, too!”

Her primary responsibility was to enlist the help of community organizations for fund raising and to build an “auxiliary” of volunteers for the new hospital. Magdalene recalls meeting with the committee at least three times a week in various locations, including an auto body shop. Offering free meeting space was one of many ways the community became involved in the project.

“Everyone pitched in,” she says. “When we cleared the land for the hospital, you wouldn’t believe the people there. Firemen, farmers, businessmen . . . Everyone helped.”

“Our efforts were a lot of work, but a lot of fun,” she continues. “Hundreds of women went door-to-door collecting money. We had cookie sales, dinner dances and card parties. We opened our homes to hold fund raising breakfasts and lunches for the public.

When the hospital was finally built and near ready to open, Magdalene and other Auxiliary volunteers were on hand to sterilize and clean 150 hospital beds. “We brought our pails and brushes and scrubbed and scrubbed,” she recalls. “Everyone was willing to do whatever it took to open the hospital . . .

“Except the bathrooms,” she laughs. “No one wanted to do the bathrooms! Finally, I said I’d do it.” Her friends teased her about it for months, and at the first Auxiliary Christmas party, they talked her into doing a dance number with a pail and mop. From that point on, the good natured Magdalene was often called “Toilet Bowl Maggie.”

By the time the hospital opened in 1958, Magdalene and her colleagues had gathered a group of nearly 500 auxiliary volunteers. She, herself, was the first president, and continued to be actively involved in the Auxiliary for 25 years. Today, at age 76, Magdalene looks back on the hospital building campaign and wonders just how they did it. “We never stopped,” she says. “We were always moving forward.

“It was a thrilling experience.”

presidents of clubs and organizations to attend an informational meeting. All doctors in the area were asked to support the plan. Business and industrial leaders as well as city employees were approached. Children held penny drives in the schools.

While many committees, boards and positions were established for the fund raising campaign, a particularly touching contribution was made by the women who appealed to the general public in all the communities. In South Milwaukee alone, 400-500 women were members of the "Women's Crusade." In



Third grade children of Marquette school of South Milwaukee presenting \$14.67 in pennies to Mrs. Evelyn Linde.

Cudahy, another large group known as the "Night Crusaders" went house-to-house, night after night, in the bitter cold, to collect contributions, pledges and to spread the word about the new hospital. Participants were women of all ages, from young mothers to grandmothers. Their goal was to make sure every household was contacted. Many of these women became members of the hospital's Ladies Auxiliary that was established in 1955, long before the hospital was a reality, with annual dues of \$1.

Magdalene Bedusek, one of the hospital campaign committee secretaries, was the first president of the Auxiliary.

The deadline for phase one of the fund raising campaign was set for February 8, 1955. In order to break ground, \$600,000 was needed. That goal fell short by just over \$100,000, but the hope remained that ground would be broken in June. The second phase of the campaign got underway on April 15, 1955, with a goal set for an additional \$350,000. Rev. William Farrell was named campaign chairman of this phase.

The campaign again fell short, and ground breaking ceremonies were postponed for the second time. On May 3, 1956, the momentum started picking up again with a donation of \$100,000 from the Bucyrus-Erie Company of South Milwaukee. Also that year, Victor Grant generously added six acres to his original gift for the building site.

May 24, 1956 will always be remembered as a glorious day for Trinity. That day, the federal government awarded \$500,000 to the project under

terms of the Hill-Burton Act. Three days later, on Trinity Sunday, May 27, 1956, ground was broken. Recognition of the event was recorded with these words: "Rarely has a project been tackled with such fervor by a community."

On October 10, 1956, Trinity received another \$85,000 from the federal government, and two local businesses, Ladish Company and the Cudahy Foundation, made contributions of \$25,000 each.

Heart to Heart



Rocco La Torraca, M.D.

The words, “cardiac care,” are almost synonymous with “St. Luke’s Medical Center.” Not many people realize, however, that there’s a “lot of heart” in Trinity Memorial Hospital’s history as well. Trinity, in fact, was one of the first hospitals in the Milwaukee area to have a Coronary Care Unit. Here’s how it all came about . . .

Rocco La Torraca, M.D., joined the medical staff of Trinity Memorial Hospital one year after it opened and stayed for 33 years. The pathologist held a special passion for cooperation between hospitals, believing that by working together rather than competing with one another, physicians could bring the best health care possible to the community.

In the early 1960s, Dr. La Torraca began organizing “Clinic Days” on Saturdays for all the doctors from four south side hospitals: St. Luke’s, St. Francis, West Allis Memorial and Trinity Memorial. On “Clinic Days,” physicians were brought in from medical centers around the country to share their expertise on various medical topics. “Although our budget was limited, we would try to get the best doctors possible,” says Dr. La Torraca.

For the first Clinic Day, he arranged for two speakers from Harvard Medical School: Dr. Dwight Harkin, a pioneer in cardiac surgery, and Dr. Bernard Lown. Dr. Lown had recently developed a promising treatment using electric shock waves to stop heart arrhythmias.

News of Dr. Lown’s work was not yet public. In fact, the doctors at “Clinic Day” were among the first to hear about it, and “it set us on our tails!” recalls Dr. La Torraca. “When we heard him speak, we realized there would be a change in the direction of cardiac care.” Two months later, Dr. Lown’s work was published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)*. It was a major turning point in cardiology.

Shortly after the lecture, Trinity purchased the new cardiac equipment developed by Dr. Lown with a \$5,000 donation from a local company. “It was a huge box and rather clumsy to move around,” says Dr. La Torraca, describing it as over six feet tall and three feet wide. It was received by other physicians with mixed feelings, and as a result, the responsibility for using the equipment initially fell on Dr. La Torraca.

“Whenever a Code Four was called, I would run in from the Lab, which was next to Emergency, and bring out the box,” he recalls. “One of the first times I used it, I started the heart of a patient who had cardiac arrest on the table. The man lived another year.”

Word soon spread around the medical community, and eventually, two other physicians from Trinity flew to Boston to spend a week with Dr. Lown. They returned full of enthusiasm, not only about the shock technique, but over a new trend to have specialized coronary care units separate from traditional intensive care units. In 1967, Trinity Memorial became one of the first hospitals in the Milwaukee area to have a dedicated CCU. In 1972, the Cardiac Cath Lab was added.

“It all started with Clinic Days,” says Dr. La Torraca. “When we worked together, great things were accomplished . . .”

In February of 1957, formation of the medical staff began with Jacob M. Fine, M.D., named the first chief of staff.



Trinity has had a tradition of nursing excellence that has continued through the years.

The cornerstone laying ceremony was held on June 16, 1957, and seven months later, "Operation Clean-Up!" began with the Ladies Auxiliary and local Girl Scout troops bringing buckets and rags to clean the construction dust out of the building and prepare for the hospital opening.

On May 1, 1958, Trinity Memorial Hospital admitted its first patient. Ironically, on July 31, a major train accident occurred in the Oak Creek area. The new community hospital was well-equipped to treat 26 people who were injured in the wreck.

In October of 1958, the hospital held capping ceremonies for its first group of nurse aides. One year later, the 1,000th baby was born in the obstetrics ward.

As a sign of stability and continuity, the Franciscan Sisters assumed ownership of the hospital and took over a 17-year, \$624,000 mortgage on October 27, 1959. Sister Mary Bernadette, OSF, continued as the hospital's first administrator, a role she began two years prior to the hospital's opening.

In November 1960, ground was broken on the hospital campus for a convent for the Sisters on staff. Fund raising for the residence and chapel had been initiated by the Ladies Auxiliary before the hospital opened its doors.

The "growth phase" of the hospital began in 1964 with a \$4 million expansion program that more than doubled the number of hospital beds. At the time of the expansion announcement, the hospital was recording a 99.4% occupancy rate with 106 beds. The expansion increased bed capacity to 210.

In 1966, the Sisters' home on the hospital grounds was relocated to make room for a new wing that again increased the number of beds to 266.

One of Milwaukee's first Coronary Care Units opened at Trinity in 1967.

From 1970 to 1971, a west wing was added for the laboratory, x-ray, outpatient and emergency departments.

Trinity's Cardiac Catheterization Lab opened in 1972.

From 1975-1977, a second floor was completed to house the library, classrooms, pharmacy, social services and public relations.

A Family Affair



Al Liegler (top left); his father David; his wife Bonnie and his mother Mary Ruth

Lieglers, Lieglers everywhere! You can't turn too many pages of Trinity's recent history without coming across a member of the Liegler family.

It all started with Mary Ruth Liegler, who began working at Trinity in 1968 as a licensed practical nurse. Now retired, she and her husband, David, are active hospital volunteers.

Their son, Al, joined the hospital staff in 1973 as a receiver in shipping/receiving. Twenty-two years later, Al is now a buyer in the Purchasing Department. His wife, Bonnie, was a respiratory therapy technician at Trinity from 1978-84.

Two of Al's brothers also put in time at Trinity. Seventeen years ago, Jim worked in the laundry before leaving to become a police officer. Jeff was a hospital housekeeper in the mid-1980s.

In addition to Mary Ruth, three other Lieglers worked in the nursing department: Cousin Gail Williams, Aunt Nancy Clasen and Aunt Joy Williams.

Finally, Chris Liegler, Al's sister-in-law, worked in the hospital's business office; and her sister, Rita Kloph, still works in Management Information Systems.

"People talk about the hospital having a 'family feeling,'" says Al. "For me, that means more than a spirit of friendship and camaraderie among employees. It really is my family!"

"I guess it says something about an organization," he continues. "From the time I was little, I have memories of my mom being so happy working here. I feel the same way. You don't have to have relatives here to pick up on that family feeling. At Trinity, there's a strong sense of family values. You know you can count on people."

"To me, the move with Aurora is like having an extended family. Trinity has grown up well through the years, and we're ready to move into the next generation. Aurora is our future."

In 1978, Trinity built an “open concept” Intensive Care Unit with all private rooms. It was the beginning of a design trend that continues today.

In 1991, the emergency department was updated with 12 patient rooms, central monitoring and a covered patient drop-off area. An expanded outpatient area for cardiac rehabilitation opened. The coffee and gift shops were expanded, and a glass entryway was added.

In 1993, with outpatient care needs increasing, a 6,000 square foot Ambulatory Care Center was added on the west end of the building to make surgery and other outpatient services more efficient, comfortable and convenient.

Despite efforts to add such competitive services, Trinity, along with other hospitals across the country, was experiencing financial losses. The need for

hospital beds was dropping because of shorter hospital stays and more medical care being handled on an outpatient basis. There also was a growing trend toward the formation of hospital networks to negotiate contracts with health maintenance organizations and large self-insured employers. As an independent hospital, Trinity was unable to compete for such deals.

In October 1993, the Franciscan Sisters sold the hospital to Catholic Health Corporation of Omaha, Nebraska. The direction of health care and hospitals continued to change, however, and by 1994, Trinity Memorial Hospital could no longer survive as a stand-alone in the Milwaukee market. On January 24, 1995, the hospital

board announced the signing of a letter of intent to transfer ownership to St. Luke’s Medical Center, which is part of Aurora Health Care, the region’s largest health care system.

Terry Wilson was named interim chief operating officer during the transition process. When the sale was complete, Mr. Wilson became executive director.

Under terms of the agreement, Trinity would no longer be a Catholic hospital, and its name would be changed. Community input was gathered, and the hospital became “St. Luke’s South Shore.”

Plans for the facility were for it to continue

operating a full-service emergency department, intensive care unit, outpatient department, and inpatient medical/surgical beds. To determine other types of services that would be provided in the future, hospital representatives

continued asking people within the communities about their needs and desires.

In a letter to the community in August 1995, Terry Wilson assured the people within the community that they would continue to be the hospital’s highest priority. “The community has been a part of Trinity’s honored past,” he wrote, “and will share in our most promising future.”

On October 1, 1995, Trinity Memorial Hospital became St. Luke’s South Shore, a part of the Aurora Health Care System. A rededication ceremony was held for all employees, doctors, volunteers and members of the community on November 5, 1995.

“The community has been a part of Trinity’s honored past and will share in our most promising future.”

—Terry Wilson, Executive Director

Welcome to St. Luke's South Shore . . . The Personalized Care Continues



The Lukie Family: Steve, Rhonda and Josh

Rhonda Lukie had just moved to Oak Creek from Columbus, Ohio, with her husband, Steve, and six-week-old baby, Josh. One day, between unpacking boxes and taking care of Josh, she began experiencing severe stomach pains. Knowing something was wrong, Rhonda drove herself and her baby to the closest hospital Emergency Department. It was Trinity Memorial Hospital, newly named "St. Luke's South Shore."

"Of course, the pains stopped as soon as I got there," says Rhonda with a wry smile. "The doctor told me to come back if the pain reoccurred. Unfortunately, I was back that night, and tests to determine if I

had gall stones were scheduled for first thing in the morning."

Since Rhonda's husband, Steve, was in the midst of a hectic new job trying to open a sporting goods store in New Berlin, Rhonda told him to go to work the next day and not worry about Josh. She would take him with her to the hospital. "I figured it was just a test," she says. "If surgery was required, I assumed it would be scheduled for another day." Rhonda packed Josh's bag with enough diapers and formula for the two hours she estimated her appointment would take.

She didn't count on having another painful attack right at the hospital. Doctors immediately scheduled emergency gall bladder surgery.

"I was frantic," she recalls. "What was I going to do with Josh? We just moved and didn't really know anybody here yet! I couldn't even reach my husband as they were just putting phone lines in the new store that day. I was in tears. Much more worried about my baby than myself . . .

"Then, this wonderful nurse came in and just took over," says Rhonda. It was Lauri Diske, R.N., from the Emergency Department. "She and other nurses held Josh and played with him," says Rhonda. "They fed him, they rocked him, they changed his diapers. While I was in surgery, someone went to the store and bought more diapers and formula. And when my husband came, they took care of Josh so that he could be with me.

"It was way above and beyond the call of duty. They made me feel so safe . . . I'll just never forget it."

St. Luke's South Shore



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