



Some of the young patients attend a puppet show.

At the Hattie B. Munroe Home ...

# 50 YEARS OF TENDER, LOVING CARE

By Harold Cowan

THE year was 1933 and it was no time for careless budgeting, particularly if you had a houseful of convalescing children.

Accordingly, in the report for February of that year, the supervisor of the Hattie B. Munroe Home for Convalescing Crippled Children set down expenses in meticulous detail, noting, among other items, that the month's grocery bill was \$161.71.

Divided by the number of meals served, this figured out to approximately four cents per meal.

"We have reason to believe all the children here are well fed," the report added. "All are given tender, loving care."

Friends aver that attention to detail and "tender, loving care" of its young patients have been hallmarks of this remarkable memorial home which this September observes its golden anniversary.

The home honors the memory of a woman who herself knew great physical suffering, according to Casper Y. Offutt, current president of the Hattie B. Munroe Foundation and since 1933 a member of the board of directors.

"SHE was an invalid for many years," he said. "Those who knew her remember her as a kind, warm hearted person. The Munroes lived at Thirty-ninth and Harney Streets. They had no children of their own. Mrs. Munroe's sister, Clara E. Elder, lived

with them. Miss Elder said that one thing next to her sister's heart was to have a home that would take care of crippled children."

John Munroe had retired as a Union Pacific Railroad vice president, traffic, when he and Miss Elder decided upon establishing the home as a memorial to his wife, who died in 1921.

A native of Bradford, Mass., Mr. Munroe was graduated from Munroe College in 1873 and came to the Union Pacific in 1882, retiring in 1920. On his death in October, 1944, he left much of his estate, valued at \$1,126,000, to Miss



John Munroe wanted a memorial to his wife.



Plaque at home honors memory of a kindly lady.

Elder. On her death a few weeks later, the bulk of her estate went to the home.

HISTORIANS trace the home's background to a meeting on September 16, 1919, of a group of Omaha doctors, who realized the great need for corrective orthopedics, and women who were interested in charitable work.

The group formed the Society for the Relief of the Disabled "to make it possible for all disabled and crippled

people in Omaha and vicinity to receive the benefit of orthopedic treatments."

The Visiting Nurse Association offered the use of its office to the society and offered to pay the salary of a nurse for a year. Arrangements were made to hold clinics weekly at two dispensaries and doctors offered their services.

Because of the shortage of nurses trained in orthopedics, the VNA sent Miss Greta Paulson to Boston for training. Funds were raised through membership fees to furnish the patients with braces and artificial limbs. A motor corps manned by volunteers was organized to transport patients to and from hospitals.

The question arose as to where to take the operative cases for convalescence. Because it could not raise sufficient funds for a home, the society opened a summer camp in 1922 where it kept 24 crippled children.

IT WAS at the close of the summer camp that John Munroe and Clara Elder made their gift, offering the house and grounds at 2824 North Sixty-sixth Avenue to be used as a convalescent home for children.

They purchased the 10-room dwelling and two acres at the site from private owners.

As the result of a publicity campaign, the home was quickly furnished, the cellar and coal bin filled with supplies and the home opened on September 1, 1922, for 12 children.

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In the 1920's, the home's children posed for a "family" picture.

## 50 YEARS

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Subsequently two wings were added.

The dispensary work was dropped and all of the society's energies were devoted to running and enlarging the home. Miss Paulson, assigned by the VNA, was the home's first director. At that time, home, school and therapy were all under one roof.

Normal capacity was 40 patients, with the cases mostly of rheumatic fever, post-polio myelitis, cerebral palsy, congenital heart disease, malnutrition, anemia, or osteomyelitis. In later years some children attended Benson West Grade School and Benson High School as they were able.

Among the doctors mentioned most frequently by friends of the home are the late Dr. Robert D. Schrock, a nationally-known Omaha orthopedic surgeon who greatly influenced the donors in establishing the home, and Dr. Michael Crofoot, former medical director of the home who has given more than 25 years of service to it. Dr. Schrock was one of the original incorporators.

Dr. Crofoot is now director of the pediatric outpatient clinic and professor of pediatrics at the University of Nebraska College of Medicine.

OF DR. CROFOOT, Frieda Dieterichs, director of the home from 1947 to 1961, said: "He gave countless hours of his precious time to the children. He responded to all calls, day or night, with deep concern and a deep desire to help."

The patient population reached a record high of 52 in August, 1952, Miss Dieterichs recalled, with the increase in polio.

"For many years, we spent nearly all our energies on the polio cases before the Salk vaccine came in," she said. "We did not have the acute cases, which were treated at the hospitals. Ours were in the convalescing stages requiring therapy.

"After the polio serum came in to

stop polio, we went into the care of rheumatic fever patients. And gradually we got into the rehabilitation care of cerebral palsy children."

In 1956, the home accepted a 99-year lease on property at 4420 Dewey Avenue on the University of Nebraska Medical Center campus. Four years later, the new home was opened at the site. A modern plant costing some \$675,000, its construction was financed with some \$200,000 from the Munroe estate, a federal grant, and by funds from the United Community Services, of which the corporation had long been a member.

In 1968, an operating contract was entered into between the home and the University of Nebraska Board of

Regents and the home was renamed the Hattie B. Munroe Pavilion. Dr. Robert Kugel, dean of the College of Medicine, is the home's medical director. The 24-member staff includes eight RN's.

PATIENTS from infancy through 21 years are accepted upon referral from family physicians or community agencies. Services range from post-acute convalescent care to long-term or extended care. Accommodations are available for children being evaluated or treated at the University Hospital or at the C. Louis Meyer Children's Rehabilitation Institute and for those attending adjacent J.P. Lord School. The school is

operated under the direction of the Omaha Board of Education.

Dr. Crofoot noted that in 1964 there was a "welcome change in the type of patient resident."

"Before that we had been caring for many permanently disabled children for whom there was little hope of improvement. During 1964, as a result of an arrangement with the Services for Crippled Children, we began to care for convalescent heart patients. So they do get better and their stay is not permanent."

Thousands of children have been served in the home's 50 years, including many from as far distant as Western Nebraska and Wyoming. There are accommodations for 43.

THE ANNUAL operating budget is about \$70,000. When possible, parents are expected to pay for all or part of the cost of keeping a child. Charges take into account the parents' ability to pay. Nebraska Services for Crippled Children, county welfare divisions, insurance and certain service clubs are other income sources. Part of the income also is received from the Munroe estate endowment fund.

Gifts to the memorial fund are set aside for the purchase of equipment for the children.

"Braces, orthopedic equipment, wheel chairs and even shoes are particularly costly for these children," Len Tondi, board president, said.

In 1967, when the home began to experience a lighter load than the average of 25 to 35 patients, the United Community Services cut its support of the home by half, then stopped its support. Today, the home no longer receives UCS funds.

Plans are for open house observance of the fiftieth anniversary of the home during September, Tondi said.

## AN ALUMNUS OF HATTIE B.

"ONE day I was walking and running and the next day I was flat on my back with lumbar and bulbar polio," said Arlan Greve. He was 11 years old, a terrible blow to an active West Point, Neb., farmboy. Greve, now 32, was stricken in 1952 during the epidemic that swept the

country. He was paralyzed from the waist down and couldn't continue at a public school.

He was sent to Hattie B. "I felt awful at first," he said, "but the home had such a full list of activities you didn't have time to feel sorry for yourself."

The home did wonders for Greve's outlook and, after completing eighth grade studies, he returned to West Point High and was graduated.

He went to trade school at Milford, worked at a Santa Fe, N.M., motel for nine months and attended the Institute of Medical Technology in Minneapolis, Minn.

He is now completing his seventh year in the Pathology Department at Nebraska Methodist Hospital. He works the 11 p.m.-7 a.m. shift and handles any emergency that arises.

He's well qualified. In 1967, he was credited with saving the life of Dean A. Zerbe, grandson of U. Alexis Johnson, then Ambassador to Japan.

Greve made his way on crutches to the neighbor's fence, flung himself over it and then did the impossible—reached up and lifted the unconscious, choking 3-year-old off a gym set.

His latest challenge? He chucked the pollution and noise of the city, bought a five-acre place near Yutan, 20 miles west of Omaha, added two horses and put in a mammoth garden overrun with tomatoes.

"We can handle it," said Greve, referring to his wife and three children, 6, 5 and 1.

