



2020-2023

**MEDICAL WALL
OF FAME**

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2020-2023

Medical Wall of Fame

5:00 pm

Reception

5:30 pm

Welcome

Antonio A. Gurule

San Luis Valley Health Clinic Administrator

Class of 2020-21

Esther Houser, RN

Judith Gritz, Presenter

Lois Booth, RN

Julie Geiser, Presenter

Jack Brown, DDS

Lindsey Paulson, Presenter

Ted Morrison, PAC

Jim Robbins, Presenter

Class of 2022-23

William Brinton, MD

Mike Firth, Presenter

Julie Geiser, RN

Lois Booth, Presenter

Jim Robbins, CRNA

Patricia A. Robbins, PhD, Presenter

Kristina Steinberg, MD

Robert Kelly, Presenter



Esther Houser, RN



It was cold and crisp on the early morning of Jan 19, 1929 as Esther Schurdel stepped out of the Pullman Coach of the D&RGW RR, having just arrived in Alamosa, Colorado. The sun was warm and made her feel warmer than the thermometer was reporting, a pleasant change from that time of year in Cleveland, Ohio where her parents, Pastor Theodor and Marie Schurdel, lived.

Esther had always been fascinated with the West and had read many books about cowboy adventures. It was the end of the Stock Show in Denver and people were taking the same train back to the Valley. When she got on the train it was packed with cowboys. She was so disappointed that not one was packing a six-gun.

Esther quickly walked from the depot to the Lutheran Hospital at 715 Main Street. Clara Dienst, a classmate from Fort Wayne, Indiana Lutheran Hospital School of Nursing, Class of 1923, greeted her warmly. Clara learned that Esther was in Denver, sent her a telegram asking her if she would help out with staffing because the State was requiring a certain number of RNs be employed by the hospital in order to be accredited.

Clara gave Esther a list of potential accommodations. Having looked at several different places that were unsuitable, she found a home at 910 Main which had a "Room For Rent" sign in the window.

Esther thought that was exactly what she was looking for and became a resident at the home of Thomas and Minnie Houser. About 1981 that home was moved to 735 First St.

Esther began working the next morning. Nurses then worked 12 hour shifts six days per week with half a day on Sunday.

In October 1932, Esther Schurdel married the young man living at the home where she was a boarder, Denver Houser, known better as "Bud" Houser. Esther continued working at the Lutheran Hospital until 1934 when her first child was born.



In 1951, when all four of her children were in school, she returned to nursing. By this time, the hospital had moved to its present location.

Now she did private duty nursing. These were RNs, hired by the family, who cared for just their loved one. When she was hired, she worked an 8 hour shift, 7-3, every day until the patient either died or was sent home. She would then wait to be called to care for another patient.

Dr. Elliot Stong had become acquainted with Esther, having worked with her caring for different patients in the hospital. At that time, Adams State College had a Health Office on the 2nd floor of Richardson Hall.

The clinic was staffed with an RN and a Doctor. Dr. Elliot Stong was the Doctor who came for 1 hour every morning. In 1952, the nurse at the Health Office was quitting. Dr. Stong asked Esther if she would consider being the College Nurse, a role she found very fulfilling for 18 years. The College eliminated health services in 1970.

Esther Houser was a Nurse Practitioner before there was such a designation. Under Dr. Stong's supervision, she diagnosed, prescribed, and ordered medications directly from the Pharmaceutical salesmen who came to the Health Office. Esther ordered x-rays when she felt it was warranted.

There was an x-ray machine in the room adjoining the Health Office waiting room. This meant sending a note to Dr. Tommy Thompson, the chemistry professor on the 1st floor. He would come up to the Health Office between classes, take the x-ray, develop it in the College dark room which was adjacent to the Chemistry Lab and have it ready for Dr. Stong to read when he came into the office. Esther wrapped ankles, put on splints and drew pre-marital blood for students. She was also 'on call' for Casa Bonita and Kit Carson Resident Halls if a student became ill during the night.

When the College eliminated the Health Office, Esther went to Piney Woods, Mississippi and started a Health Clinic at the high school boarding school where she worked for 3 years. She also traveled to Papua New Guinea 3 different times doing volunteer work. Esther helped give immunizations to children 5 and younger, helped in teaching young students basic medicine, and organized all the medical records at the hospital.

Esther Houser had a very fulfilling and satisfying medical career for which she thanked her Lord daily. She was an active member at Trinity Lutheran Church for 69 years.

Esther was born in 1900 and lived to 1998.



Lois Booth, RN



My classmate and I were on the road to our first job, sight unseen via a telephone interview, for an RN position in a little Lutheran hospital in the colorful mountains of Colorado. We had just graduated from Fairview Hospital of Nursing in Minneapolis. How exciting! Little did we know how challenging the journey was to be. On December 31, 1961, she hit an icy spot and rolled the car, and New Year's Eve was spent in the Ogalla hospital. I was now sporting a sling for a broken collarbone. No car! Belongings were put on a train that didn't arrive for two weeks, but we had an apartment and a short walk to work.

I made \$250.00 a month working 22 and a half days. Ann Edstrom patiently worked with "these newbies" and we soon found out all the equipment in a hospital was not always available here. I found that ER was my favorite work area, but I worked in all areas.

Now a new event, a blind date (was glad I wasn't blind!). A cowboy was introduced into my life in February and then a wedding in September 1962, along with learning all about ranching with my husband's family. In 1964, our son Jace made his appearance. My staff walked me off my shift at the hospital and to the OB ward! After a few days, I was back to work - mostly night shifts so we didn't have to have babysitters. In 1965 Evergreen Nursing Home needed a Director of Nursing so Lois Carroll, one of the owners, and I had our eyes opened as we took on a new experience.

It was hard to get help and there were many days working 16-hour shifts and spending the night starting again in the morning.



I worked there until Janell made her entrance into the world in 1968, then I went back to the hospital ER. I continued working and filling in when special duty nurses were needed such as vacation staffing at the Doctor's office, etc.

In 1979 we made a major move to Conejos County, deciding to venture out on our own in ranching so nursing went on the back burner for several years. I was introduced to helping my husband drive semi-trucks. I went from driving tandem with him, to "You can do it by yourself". I drove thousands of miles and CB buddies who were supportive and helpful if trouble happened on the road such as flat tires or plugged fuel filters. If there was something mechanical, a call to Ed and he was on his way to bring a fuel pump, etc. This was certainly an empowering experience. I always carried my BP cuff and stethoscope so that some teaching could be done for guys working at the ports. Many of the guys were overweight or had diabetes.

Long and hard hours hauling livestock, hay and grain through necessity to keep the expenses in check, especially when we were flooded out twice. When the Public Health administrative position was available in 1992, I applied. I was introduced to staff as a "damn good trucker" but THAT did not impress staff! However, I managed to secure a \$240,000 grant and a new Nursing Service building was constructed. With staff and services expanded, I had to close to 100 employees servicing many programs such as WIC, Home Health, and HCP. I was there until 1997.

In 1999, Hospice del Valle was looking at closing its doors, so Judy Lamb and I were invited to see if we could salvage it. She moved on in 2000 and I was given the administrative job. It was my passion and with lots of long hours and commitment, we purchased and remodeled a building on Main Street and we had our own facility. When I left in 2012 (at 72 years old) we had a thriving service that covered the valley. Offering not only hospice care, but also palliative care and grief counseling. There was no doubt it was my most passionate and rewarding nursing career.

My words of wisdom: Enjoy everyday and remember the "special moments". Our time on this earth is much too short.

My family has been wonderful, allowing me to spend a lot of time in my career.



Jack Brown, DDS



Dr. Jack Brown was born in 1924 in the small western Nebraska town of Stratton. His father L.B. worked as a physician and together with his wife Nina owned and operated the hospital in town. Young Dr. Brown learned the family business of frontier medicine—caring for the sick, helping bring new life, and providing comfort during the hard years of the Great Depression.

After returning from Pearl Harbor where he served in the Military Police during World War II, Dr. Brown enrolled in the University of Nebraska Dental School. He returned to Stratton on his summer vacations where he met a young nurse's aide living and working at the Stratton Hospital. Jack and Phyllis League were married on August 4, 1952 and became an inseparable pair, returning to Lincoln together where Jack completed Dental School and graduated in 1954.

Dr. and Mrs. Brown made a leap of faith and moved to Monte Vista, Colorado, opening the Dental Office at 136 Adams Street. Many will remember following the sign that read "Painless Dentist Upstairs" and climbing the stairs to the second-floor dental office where Dr. Brown practiced dentistry with Phyllis at his side for the next thirty years. Dr. Brown provided more than dental care for generations of Monte Vista residents—he was equal parts dentist, entertainer, friend and confidante.

He cared for his patients as if they were his family.



Dr. Brown loved the practice of dentistry and found great joy in caring for his patients and his community. Trick-or-Treaters could count on a toothbrush if they visited the Browns' house. As many who have provided health care in a frontier community can attest, practicing medicine or dentistry takes the cooperation of the entire family. It is impossible to remember Dr. Brown's dental practice without also remembering his wife Phyllis who served as his assistant, receptionist, bookkeeper and X-ray technician. They were active members of the Colorado Dental Association and enjoyed traveling to dental meetings, often on their BMW motorcycle. Together Jack and Phyllis raised four children: Sherry, Shirley, John and Kim.

After retiring from Dentistry in the mid-1980s, Dr. and Mrs. Brown pursued their many hobbies. An avid hunter, fisherman, and outdoorsman, Jack and his family enjoyed fishing and camping in the summers at Santa Maria reservoir. He passed his love of hunting to his children and grandchildren—freezing cold San Luis Valley mornings hunting ducks with Grandpa are treasured memories. Dr. and Mrs. Brown were also known for their beautiful garden which they tended together well into their 80s.

Dr. Brown passed away on November 2, 2022 at the age of 98, after calling the San Luis Valley home for nearly seventy years. He and Mrs. Brown have passed their love for caregiving to the next generations, their sons and daughters, grandsons and granddaughters learning the craft of caregiving through the stories that have become part of the fabric of the family.



Ted Morrison, PAC



Personal History

Ted was born in Leavenworth, KS in 1945. His father was a wounded WWII soldier recovering from battlefield wounds.

His family brought him and his sister to Alamosa as children where he graduated from Alamosa High School in 1964.

Ted married Janet Pemberton in 1967, a marriage which lasted 55 years.

Ted graduated from Adams State College in 1969 with BA degree in biology.

After graduation, he joined the US Air Force where he trained and served as a Physician's Assistant in Southeast Asia. He completed his training and service in Albuquerque, NM in 1973.

He returned to the San Luis Valley in 1976 where he currently lives. Ted retired from his PA practice in 2013, after 43 years of notable and honorable service to this community.

Awards and Accomplishments

While in the Air Force, Ted was awarded Airman of the Month in 1971, Airmen of the Year for Southeast Asia in 1972, and USAF Accommodation Medal.

Ted was awarded the Colorado Association of Physician Assistants (CAPA) Appreciation award in 1980, the Rotary's Paul Harris award in 1991, the Adams State Billy Adams award in 1999, and the CU Rural Preceptor award in 2000.



Professional Accomplishments

Ted was the first certified Physician's Assistant in Albuquerque from 1973 to 1976 and the first certified PA in the San Luis Valley from 1976-2013. He was one of the founding fathers of CAPA, which is a state chapter of physician assistants that started licensing PAs. (License No. 21).

Other accomplishments included: Working 20 years with Dr. Dale Thomas, delivering over 600 babies, assisting in 1500 surgeries, ER call, office practice, and house in Conejos County. Ted also worked four years with Dr. Vaughn Jackson, Brian Jackson, PAC and Dr. Celada.

Ted served 13 years as Assistant Medical Director for Valley Wide Health Services. He was also medical provider for all clinics, primarily Guadalupe Clinic in Antonito.

Ted was also instrumental in writing and the passing of the Colorado PA 400 Rule, allowing PAs to prescribe controlled substances with DEA numbers and did away with the 100% chart signing.

Community Service includes:

Rotarian 50 years - Lifetime Member
Elk's Club 58 years - Lifetime Member

Committee Member of the following:

Adams State Sport Hall of Fame
SLV Educators Hall of Fame
SLV Medical Wall of Fame

Hobbies include golf and horses

Family:

Wife: Janet (deceased)
Daughters: Kim Woodke, PAC and
Melissa Moeller, Guidance and Counselor Department at ASU
Grandchildren: Sydney, Jayda, Brayden, and Kamryn



William Brinton, MD



Bill Brinton Brinton grew up in Denver and attended the University of Colorado Medical School from 1975 to 1979. In the fall of 1976, he met his fellow medical student and future wife, Kris Steinberg.

Bill trained in internal medicine and infectious disease in Cleveland, Ohio from 1979-83. In the fall of 1981, he worked at a research hospital in Bangladesh that treated patients with cholera and other diarrheal diseases. He and Kris worked at various locum tenens jobs in 1983-4, and then Bill trained in epidemiology at the CDC from 1984-6.

Kris and Bill moved to Alamosa in 1986 because Valley Wide Health Services had openings for two physicians. Bill worked at the Valley Wide clinics in Alamosa and San Luis for the next seven years. He especially enjoyed practicing as the sole physician in Costilla County, working with San Luis Clinic staff Hope Velasquez, Rose Sanchez, Howard Cox, P.A. and Patty Berens, P.A. from 1986 to 1993. Around 1990, he helped relocate the Alamosa Family Medical Center to a new building on the hospital campus. During those years, primary care physicians also attended nursing home residents, admitted and attended hospital patients and took night call for the emergency room. That was a good job for a young person. He learned many valuable lessons at work and play during those years from Mike Firth, M.D. and Bob Linden, M.D., his partners in internal medicine at the Alamosa Family Medical Center. Bill continued to work part-time at various Valley Wide clinic locations from 1993 to 2003.



At Alamosa Community Hospital (later to become San Luis Valley Regional Medical Center-SLVRMC), Bill was a member of the medical staff from 1986 to 2021, and a member of the hospital operating board from 1995-7. From 1994-9, he was the first medical director of the hospital, and was mentored in health care management by SLVRMC administrator, Paul Herman. During that time, SLVRMC added a three-story hospital addition, and developed several new programs including the first hemodialysis center in the San Luis Valley (1998) and the Regional Occupational Medicine Program-ROMP (1999). Bill worked part-time at the ROMP clinic from 1999-2003. He chaired the hospital infection control committee for over 30 years, and credits the previous infection-preventionist, Jessica Garcia, R.N., with developing and maintaining an innovative and invaluable Infection Control and Prevention Program. From 2008 to 2021, he helped to develop, and later co-chaired, with Josh Koontz, clinical pharmacist, the hospital antimicrobial stewardship program

Public health programs expanded in the U.S. following the September 11, 2001 attacks and the anthrax attacks later that fall. From 2002 to 2011, Bill was the first epidemiologist for the six-counties of San Luis Valley. This job involved investigating and reporting communicable diseases, supporting local public health nurse agencies, and responding to disease outbreaks including the Alamosa salmonella outbreak in March-April, 2008, and the H1N1 influenza pandemic of 2009. For Bill, the best part of this public health job was being able to work with the dedicated county public health nurses including his best boss ever, Julie Geiser, RN, who directed Alamosa County Public Health for many years.

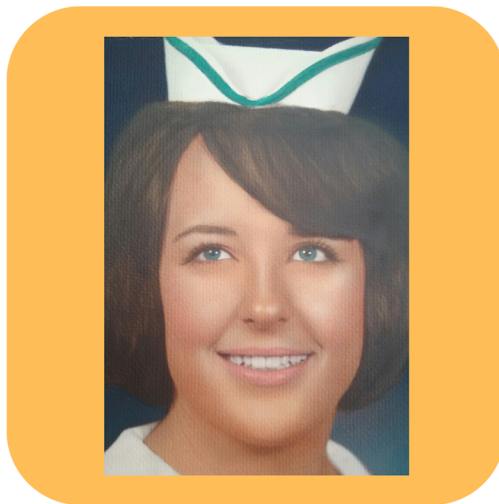
Bill returned to full-time geriatric care in 2011. During the next ten years, he attended residents, and was the medical director, at three nursing homes and two assisted living centers in Alamosa and Monte Vista. For Bill, the best parts of his work with seniors were learning their life histories, and interacting with the dedicated care staff.

Before widespread vaccination, COVID-19 was a major problem at nursing homes in 2020-1. Nationwide, more than 200,000 nursing home residents and staff members died of COVID-19. From December 2020 through April 2021, Bill volunteered at nearly fifty COVID-19 vaccination clinics sponsored by SLVRMC and Alamosa County Public Health, and he considers these vaccination clinics to be a highlight of his career in health care.

Bill retired from physician work at the end of April, 2021. He volunteers as a board member for the Alamosa County Ambulance District and the Mosca-Hooper Conservation District. His main jobs now are to be a good spouse and family member, and work to improve the small ranch that he and Kris have operated for twenty years. With any luck, they may get twenty more.



Julie Geiser, RN



Julie was raised in La Veta CO, just over the hill. In 1968 she became a registered nurse at the age of 19. She graduated from what is now Colorado State University in Pueblo CO.

After working in pediatrics at St. Mary Corwin hospital for a short time, she moved with her husband, Chub, to Alamosa. This resulted in 53 years of continuous employment in the San Luis Valley. She experienced many modalities of nursing including Peds., Med Surg., Cardiac, ER., OB.,

Office Nursing, and School Nursing {Head Start and Childfind Coordinator for the Board of Cooperative Services identifying children with special needs}. She ventured into Public Health for the final 18 years of her career as the Director of the Alamosa County Public Health Department.

She was responsible for traditional Public Health activities as well as Home Health, Options for Long Term Care, Home and Community Based Services, and specialty clinics for Children with Special Health Care Needs among others. Julie was the recipient of the Nightingale award for Nursing Excellence in the San Luis Valley, and the Lillian Wald award for outstanding nurse in Public Health for the state of CO. She was also the General Federation of Women's Club Woman of the Year.

One of the most rewarding positions was the opportunity through Head Start to travel to American Indian/Alaskan Native tribes across the nation. She was the only non-indigenous member of the team.

Some say that she was successful. She attributes this to the many incredible staff throughout her career who supported mutual goals.

She is very proud of her children. These include Tim and Yahaira Geiser, Scott and Amanda Geiser and grandchildren, Cameron, Abby, and Ashlyne Geiser.



Jim Robbins, CRNA



Jim was born May 7, 1943, in Sand Springs, OK. He grew up in rural Oklahoma attending a one-room schoolhouse and joined the US Army at age 16. Jim made the most of his new home in the Army where he graduated high school and started taking college courses on Army bases. After two enlistments, Jim attended the University of New Mexico where he earned a BSN, graduating with honors, and returned to the Army. During 20 years of active service, Jim served in Germany, Korea, Vietnam, five stateside bases and attended to the rank of Major.

In 1971, Jim graduated from the Army School of Anesthesiology. He also completed the Officer's Medical Advanced Course in 1976. Awards received include Meritorious Service Medal, Army Commendation, Vietnam Service Medal and the Vietnam Cross of Gallantry.

Jim retired from the US Army in 1981 and relocated to the San Luis Valley in 1983 and began working as an anesthesia provider at the Monte Vista Community Hospital. He soon was the only anesthesia provider for the Valley, working at Conejos County Hospital, Sisters of Saint Joseph Hospital in Del Norte, and San Luis Valley Regional Medical Center in Alamosa. Many times he worked more than 12 to 14 hours a day. Jim was instrumental in instituting new safety measures and up-to-date anesthesia equipment in all San Luis Valley hospitals, providing a national standard of care.

Jim met Patricia (Pat) Anderson at the Monte Vista Hospital, and they married in 1989, now married for 34 years. Jim considered Dr. Pat (PhD) a complement to his social and professional life. Jim practiced anesthesia in the San Luis Valley for 34 years and was Chief of Anesthesia for most of those years. Jim has been a member of the Medical Hall of Fame Committee since 2017. He now enjoys his well-earned retirement playing golf, and caring for his antique cars.

Jim's family includes daughters Cheryl Robbins-Serna and Janice Quintana; son Robert Robbins; stepsons Robert Ward and James Ward



Kristina Steinberg, MD



Dr. Kristina A Steinberg was born in New Jersey and shortly thereafter the family moved to Vail, Colorado where her father opened his own practice in family medicine. She attended elementary school there and in Minturn. She attended high school at a boarding school in Denver then went off to college in Middlebury, Vermont for her pre-med education. She graduated with honors from the University of Colorado School of Medicine. This was followed by a family practice residency at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio.

Kris met William Brinton in Medical School and they both did a residency at Case Western Reserve.

After practicing for two years at an HMO in Nashville, Tennessee, they both wanted to return to the west and chose to come to Alamosa, Colorado where they have been in practice since 1986 where she has been associated with Valley Wide Health Systems. Her interests include Obstetrics, Women's Health, and Pediatrics. In 2012-2015 she was named Alamosa's Favorite Female Doctor.

Outside of medicine, Kris and William have a small ranch which they have placed under a conservation easement as their legacy toward open spaces in the Valley. Kris also enjoys hiking, gardening, cross country skiing, and yoga. She also joins other cat enthusiasts in caring for feral colonies in the area.



**The Medical Wall of Fame
Commitee Thanks YOU for
Attending the
2020-2023
Medical Wall of Fame
Induction Ceremony**

