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New Parkway wing honors founding fathers

By Deangelo McDaniel
Staff Writer

If you remember Dr. W.P. Baugh, you likely have a story of kindness to tell.

The same could be said if you knew Drs. J.B. Wiley and J.T. Smith.

The three doctors, who gave more than medical treatment, are the reason Decatur has Parkway Medical Center.

On Tuesday, the hospital recognized their contributions by dedicating the Baugh Wiley Smith wing at the facility.

"It's such an honor to recognize these great men because they are the founding physicians of our hospital," said Parkway Chief Executive Officer Tim McGill.

Members of the Baugh, Wiley and Smith families were among the more than 100 people to attend the hourlong ceremony.

Robert Baugh said it was a struggle for his grandfather to be the kind of doctor he wanted to be.

"Sometimes granddad was paid with turnip greens or with a chicken," Robert Baugh said.

Smith's daughter, Deedi Parker, was one of five siblings to become registered nurses.

She was one of the first volunteers at the Community Free Clinic, located in the old Baugh Wiley Smith Hospital in downtown Decatur.

She said standing in the hallway of the clinic brought back memories of the times she waited for her father to finish seeing patients.

Parkway's humble beginnings started in downtown Decatur on Grant Street when Baugh opened the Baugh Clinic in the 1920s.

Following significant growth, the clinic moved to its second location on Gordon Drive in the 1930s. Wiley joined the medical staff in 1947 and the facility became known as the Baugh Wiley Hospital.

Smith joined the medical staff in 1956 and the name was changed to the Baugh Wiley Smith hospital.

In 1974, the hospital moved to the Beltline and opened as Parkway Medical Center.

One of Baugh's enduring legacies is the money he spent sending underprivileged kids to medical school.

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Daily photo by John Godbey

Parkway Medical Center CEO Tim McGill at Tuesday's dedication ceremony.

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Retired cardiac surgeon Dr. Shannon Turney was one of those students.

"He gave me the opportunity," he said.

Turney said he and Clayton Smith went to Ardmore at the request of Baugh to recruit Smith.

Dr. Lionel Naylor came to Decatur on the day Baugh died. He worked with Drs. Wiley and Smith and heard many stories about Dr. Baugh.

"He (Dr. Baugh) was the driving force," Naylor said. "He was the most colorful of the group."

One of the stories Naylor told about Baugh involved a friendly gambling debt.

The doctor apparently lost \$5,000 in a poker game with one of his friends.

That friend got ill and was brought to the emergency room.

"He yelled for Dr. Baugh," Naylor said.

The patient pleaded with Baugh to save him.

The doctor looked at his friend and told him it would cost \$5,000, the story goes.

Naylor said Wiley was always the same steady personality.

"He was a straight shooter," he said. "I have nothing but fond memories of him."

Naylor said Smith was viewed as controversial in the medical community because he had the biggest practice and did not socialize with other physicians.

"I got to know him intimately because I operated on him several times," he said.

Naylor said Smith was shy, not arrogant as some colleagues thought.

"The people he related to were people who couldn't pay bills, didn't smell good and people other doctors didn't want in their offices," Naylor said.

Drs. Robert Allen and Rodney Harney told stories they had heard about Parkway's founding fathers.

"I never knew them personally, but I have grown to respect their legacy," Harney said. "They all made great sacrifices to live their dreams."

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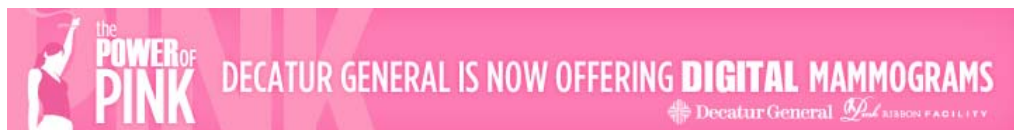
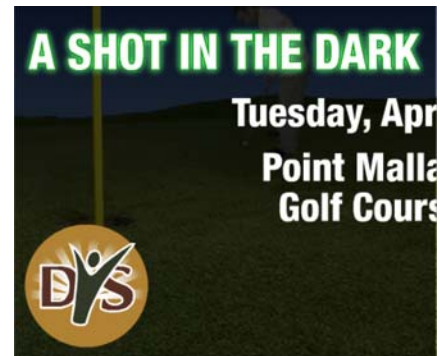
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