

# The History of St. Helena Hospital

## Chapter XII

### Making Way for New Services

Following the opening of the new Health Center wing of the St. Helena Hospital in May of 1968, a number of changes took place around the facility. The first order of business was to make room for more parking. The original Sanitarium building, which had served the community since its inception in 1878, was demolished in the summer of 1968. The newly-cleared area served as additional parking until the Professional Building was constructed to provide more physician office space.

In February 1969 a new maternity wing was opened on the fifth floor of the Hospital. The *St. Helena Star* reported that, "When you step in, you find it hard to believe that it is a hospital, for it looks more like the model home you dream about." The unit was carpeted in deep red with olive green bedspreads—all contributing to the Mediterranean motif. "Individual Sterivision television units" were connected to the nurse call system, permitting the patient to see the nurse on the TV screen as they talked. Other features included private phones equipped with a "dial-9" feature for making local calls and a new nursery with a large window fronting on the hall. The *Star* noted that, "Here children will be able to come see their brand new baby brother or sister."

A doctor's lounge was also included in the new maternity unit and was equipped with a shower and lockers. Two labor rooms were located across the hall from the two delivery rooms, with a scrub-up room between them for greater speed and efficiency between deliveries. Prior to opening the new unit, the public was invited in for tours during visiting hours.

Administrator Clarence Miller's operating report for the year 1971 indicates that the facility had been undergoing tough financial times. He reported that, "1970 was the year in which we suffered the most from the economic decline, and as a result a great deal of study has been given and plans implemented which have borne fruitage, so that our financial picture at the end of 1971 showed a marked improvement over the previous year." He reported a net loss for the year of just \$24,000 and thanked employees for being willing to forego any salary adjustments since April of 1970.

The board and administration began to look for ways to meet the needs of the community and help increase the hospital's bottom line. A special group was commissioned to research the development of a mental health facility. As a result of this study, a new program was developed which would provide an acute short-term psychiatric unit, a comprehensive outpatient mental health program, and a discreet unit for the detoxification and rehabilitation of alcoholic patients. These services are still in place today at St. Helena Hospital. Mental Health services were expanded with the addition of child and adolescent inpatient psychiatric programs when California Specialty Hospital was acquired in November of 1997.

Another major project, which began in 1971, was the development of cardiopulmonary diagnostic facilities. A group of physicians contributed to the purchasing of pulmonary function laboratory and radiographic angiographic equipment at a cost of \$150,000. In March, 1997, the first cardiac catheterization was successfully performed. Thus, with this modest beginning, St. Helena Hospital was the first hospital in the North Bay to begin providing cardiac services—first to perform coronary angiograms, first to perform coronary angioplasties, first to perform coronary bypass surgery and the first in the nation to purchase the Octopus device for minimally invasive bypass surgeries.

Today the hospital boasts a state-of-the-art digital bi-plane cardiovascular lab, the only one in our five-county region and the first of its kind in the U.S. for adult use. It is one of the West Coast show sites for Toshiba Medical. More than 2,000 procedures are performed in the lab each year, including 500 interventional procedures. The award-winning cardiac program at St. Helena Hospital continues to be an asset to the facility.

During the early '70s additional programs were added in the Health Center, including a weight loss program, a five-day plan to stop smoking and an executive health program. These additions, along with the cardiac program, began to show profitable results as the years progressed, and in March of 1975 the treasurer reported a net gain for the first two months of the year of \$36,272 as compared to a net loss of \$64,171 for the same two months in 1974. Thus, the hospital, by looking ahead and adding much-needed services and state-of-the-art equipment, averted a potential financial disaster.

In February 1973, the governing structure began to change from a self-governed organization to that of a member hospital of a newly formed corporation, which would govern all Seventh-day Adventist hospitals on the west coast. The main purpose for this new plan was to provide centralized services for the Adventist hospitals and to encourage educational and training programs. This was the beginning of the corporate world known today as Adventist Health. Adventist Health today oversees 20 Adventist hospitals from California to Washington and Hawaii.

To make room for the new Ancillary wing, the old Oakhurst Building was demolished in 1978; the Ancillary wing opened in 1980. This new addition provided a new location for the clinical lab, rehab services, ICU, surgery and medical imaging. Outpatient Surgery was later moved to the Ancillary wing when the new Emergency Room construction began in 1997.

The physical plant of St. Helena Hospital has undergone many changes over the past 125 years. As we grow into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, more physical changes will be in store in order to meet program growth and seismic requirements. But the quality of care will always remain the same, thanks to the dedicated employees who make up the heart of St. Helena Hospital.

Sources: *St. Helena Star*, Feb. 27, 1969; St. Helena Hospital Minutes of the Governing Board, 1970-1975; [www.sthelenahospital.org](http://www.sthelenahospital.org).