



No portion of this article may be reproduced without
express written permission of Style Publishing Group, LLC.

©2007 • All rights reserved.



Style Publishing Group

P.O. Box 1676

Frisco, Texas 75034

Phone: 972.335.1181

Toll Free: 877.781.7067

Fax: 214.722.2313

E-mail: info@friscostyle.com

Web: www.friscostyle.com

Ad Sales: (972) 335-1306



12505

Centennial
Medical Center

tener
1400

FRISCO



Dr. Erwin Pink, One of Frisco's First Physicians

By Beth Robinson and Missy Crump

THE PERVASIVE MYTH OF FRISCO AS A ONE "DOC" TOWN conjures up the image of a kind, grandfatherly man making house calls. And while house calls were common for many physicians until the 1960s, Dr. Erwin Pink enjoyed the most modern, state-of-the-art facilities available during his tenure in Collin County. When Dr. Pink came to Frisco in 1954 the City/County Hospital in McKinney was the closest medical facility. Doctors encouraged city officials to purchase the hospital from the county and in 1957 a \$750,000 bond issue was passed to create Collin Memorial Hospital, also located in McKinney. Over time, the city decided to get out of the business of running a hospital and the facility changed hands from American Medical International to Hospital Corporation of America, each time enjoying enlargements and upgrades in technology, staff and space. Today, North Central Medical Center in McKinney is still owned by Hospital Corporation of America and boasts 250 beds.

Frisco has grown over the years as well, and now has the population to support two hospitals, the physician-driven joint venture with Baylor Health Care System, Frisco Medical Center at Warren Parkway and Legacy Drive and Tenet's Centennial Medical Center at Coit Road and State Highway 121. Frisco residents no longer need to leave the city limits for first class medical facilities, but Collin County has always been known to provide first class amenities to its residents.

To share some history on the medical developments of Frisco over the years, we chose to revisit the story we first published in the spring of 2002 about Dr. Erwin Pink, one of Frisco's first doctors. Missy Crump talked with Dr. Pink and his wife, Elisabeth, and wrote "*From Country Doctor to Community Hospital.*"

CITY OF
FRISCO



*Dr. & Mrs. Pink in their home.
photo by Chris Johnson*

“We practiced medicine in that building for the first few years and determined that it was too small,” Pink recalls. “We enlarged it twice. Later on, when we overgrew it again, we built the Crestview Professional Center on Main Street together with Dr. Gerald Smith (a dentist), and Terry Bacchus, the pharmacist.” The Pinks donated the old clinic building to the Frisco Presbyterian Church, which sold it to the city of Frisco to pay off the church mortgage. The building then served as Frisco’s City Hall, and later as the Police Station. It’s still standing today, but vacant.

As the only medical doctor on this side of the county, Pink was very busy. He worked full-time office hours six days a week and worked half-days on Sundays. In the evening he made house calls, which kept him up much of the night.

“Back in those days there were a lot of older people (who could not get to the doctor’s office), so you just went to their house to see them,” Pink says. “If other patients got sick during the night they would call my house and I would either meet them at the office or go out to their house. Our trade territory was widespread,” he adds. “Good old Benton Bailey, the funeral director at the time, would get up at night and make all of these house calls with me because I didn’t know where a lot of the people lived.”

While medical care had progressed beyond the “horse and buggy” stage by the 1950s, some maladies were treated much differently than they are today. At the time, it was standard not to treat heart attacks in the hospital. Pink explains, “If a person had a heart attack they were treated wherever the heart attack happened. Back in those days, it was determined by the American Heart Association that the best chance for survival was not to move the heart attack victim, but to treat them at the home. A lot of times if there was a really serious case I just stayed at the person’s house. It was nothing to be tied up at someone’s house maybe a day and a half.”

When Elisabeth Pink wasn’t tracking down her husband or working as a schoolteacher, she was busy helping at the clinic.

“As the *only* medical doctor on this side of the *county*, Pink was *very busy*.”

Medical care in Frisco hasn’t always been as diverse and accessible as it is becoming today. Local medical practices, services and facilities are emerging in Frisco along with new rooftops, a direct response to the needs of the growing population.

Frisco’s medical services have evolved from a single “country doctor” – or at times, no doctor at all – to today’s bustling health-care landscape, which has attracted multiple specialties, medical offices and even the development of a hospital complex. Time and technology march on.

THE EARLY YEARS – GETTING ESTABLISHED

In the early 1950s, Frisco was without a doctor after the death of Dr. W.L. Saye, one of Frisco’s pioneer doctors. In order to attract a new doctor, the community sold stock, formed a corporation and built a small medical clinic. The clinic was offered rent-free for one year to a physician who would come to Frisco to practice medicine. Dr. Billy Parnell accepted the offer and began practicing in Frisco in 1952.

In 1954 Parnell developed health problems, forcing him to put his medical practice up for sale. Dr. Erwin Pink who was at the time doing postgraduate work at Dallas Veteran’s Hospital, got word of the opportunity and bought Parnell’s practice.

In July 1954 Pink and his wife, Elisabeth, moved to Frisco with their two young children. Because there was no available rental housing in Frisco at the time, the family spent the first year living in a house that had once served as the city’s telephone office, back when residents communicated via the crank-operator system.

Over the next few years, the Pinks established themselves in Frisco. It wasn’t long before they worked with the clinic’s board of directors to purchase the clinic building and pay off stockholders in order to become an independent medical practice.

Elisabeth says. "I would help after hours or when the other nurses were sick. I was also the payroll and the tax clerk at the clinic for the last five or six years of my husband's career."

Pink spent the majority of his first decade as a physician in family practice and obstetrics, although he handled almost any medical need that arose. "At the time we handled almost anything that came up because the day of specialization had not yet happened." Pink notes. "However, home (baby) deliveries were over by the time I started practicing medicine - thank goodness!"

Although Pink did not perform home deliveries, he recalls delivering many babies in his office during the cotton harvest season. "Back in those days, farmers didn't have mechanized cotton pickers so they hired trained cotton pickers to come in during the cotton harvest," Pink remembers. "We were a town of about 850 people, but it was nothing for 2,000 farm workers and their families to come pick cotton for four to eight weeks each year. A lot of the women would come here pregnant, so my nurse and I would stay at the office at night to deliver babies. We charged a flat rate of \$35 cash- I would get \$20 and my nurse would get \$15. A lot of times my wife would come down to the office to help us. The fun part was that my nurse and I used to name all the babies."

FROM CORN TO CASH

Payment for medical care has changed dramatically since Pink's early days in practice. Medical insurance didn't exist then, and most doctors accepted payment whenever the patient was able to pay. "Most farmers would pay once a year when their crop came in," Pink says. "And if someone couldn't pay their bill, they didn't pay – and so what? While some years were financially better than others, my family never missed a meal."

Pink remembers the time he was first introduced to industrial medicine and third-party medical billing. Texas Power & Light had just started billing the Collin Power Station, which attracted a multitude of ironworkers. "When someone would get hurt on the job, they would come see me at the office," Pink says. "Rather than pay me I would send the bill to some insurance company. A few days later I would get a check. That was something. I had never heard of that before."

Over the years, Pink took an interest in general surgery. He spent the remaining 30 years of his career practicing a combination of family practice and general surgery.

UP TO DATE TECHNOLOGY

No matter what medical concentration he worked in, Pink said he took pride in operating a modern medical facility. "From the very first day, I decided that we would always have a state-of-the-art office," he says. "We had state-of-the-art X-ray capabilities along with electrocardiogram and metabolism capabilities. We put in the first cardiac stress test equipment that came into a doctor's

office in Collin County, and we were always tied in with major laboratories. There was never a time that I didn't have the equipment capabilities that I needed."

In addition to having a modern office, Pink made sure that he always had a good staff, including a registered nurse and an X-ray technologist. He also stayed highly involved in the medical profession, serving as chief of staff at Collin Memorial Hospital in McKinney, chair of its credentials committee and a member of most other hospital committees. He was also the health officer for the City of Frisco for most of his career, helping to launch the paramedic system and the city's safety standards program for food handlers.

A COMMUNITY VOLUNTEER

Pink also found time for non-medical community service. He served on the school board for approximately 18 years, and was a health adviser to the school district as well as the athletic team physician for more than 40 years. The Pinks had a dominant role in establishing the Frisco Youth Center, which gives young people the opportunity to swim, play sports and hold meetings and social events. Today they are still actively involved in the community, especially with the Heritage Association of Frisco. Pink has been president of the association, while Elisabeth spends countless hours working to ensure that Frisco's history is preserved. Elisabeth is also one of the founders of the Collin County Central Museum in McKinney.

ENJOYING RETIREMENT

In 1985 Pink expanded his practice to include Dr. Vicki Blackmon-Davis. "The first time I saw Vicki Davis was as a patient when she was only 7 months old," Pink says. "When she was a teenager, she and I cut a deal that when she got through her medical education she could come practice with me. And she did. She is absolutely one of the finest people you'll ever meet in your life," he adds. "She has a phenomenal practice."

Davis, a board-certified internist, practices full-time in Frisco. "Working with Dr. Pink was wonderful," she says. "He taught me things I didn't learn in medical school. Most importantly, he taught me to talk to my patients and learn about them."

Dr. Pink retired from practicing medicine in 1997 and fully enjoys retirement by regularly playing golf. He continues his civic community work as president of the Heritage Association, developing the Heritage Village and the Heritage Museum and has served on the Bond Committee for the city.

"Most farmers would pay once a year when their crop came in."