

Harry Clark Teaches Us the Most Important Thanksgiving Message



“You don’t have to be perfect to have a good life!” That’s what former SHC patient Harry Clark told the Board of Governors on a visit here recently (see photo, left). “Because of the Shriners hospitals, I have had the best life possible. If I didn’t believe that, I’d be sitting in a wheelchair today!” Harry, who was born on March 25, 1919, has just patented his seventh invention, recently celebrated his 65th wedding anniversary, and drives himself wherever he wants to go. A resident of Belvidere, IL, he entered SHC – Twin Cities in the spring of 1923—there was no Chicago hospital then—as an infantile paralysis

patient (see photo, right). He was there a month. He came to SHC – Chicago in 1929 for a series of operations. “We drove here in a ’29 Dodge,” he recalls, “and I celebrated my 10th birthday here,” he says with a smile. He was in a wheelchair for a while and then in braces.



“Even with my condition, I married the most beautiful girl I ever saw—Betty (see photo left)—and we’re still married after 65 years. And we have three beautiful children who love us dearly and we love them!” he says, smiling. Harry has been a creative, enterprising entrepreneur. He was an auto parts dealer, he ran a taxi business, he operated a glass shop, and he owned a back-hoe business. When he needed a special bucket for this business, he invented it and took out his first patent. His latest patent is for a balancing device, which he created and

patented for the wheeled walker he now uses since breaking his hip a few years ago. Not having been back to SHC – Chicago in many years, Harry Clark returned on Board day to meet staff, tour our marvelous hospital, and attend the Board meeting. “I want you folks to know that, because of you, I have had a great life! I thank you! Keep up your important work on behalf of kids!” The Board gave Harry a standing ovation and long applause. It was a touching moment in the life of one of our first patients. I thought of the closing line of Ralph Ellison’s novel, *Invisible Man*, for, like the Invisible Man, Harry Clark might say for all our patients, “Who knows but that, on the lower frequencies, I speak for you?”



Harry (l) in 1952

Peoria Native, Long-Time Pioneering Physician for SHC – Boston, Dies

John F. Burke was born in Peoria, IL, grew up in Chicago, and was educated at University of Illinois. After service in the military during World War II, he became one of the nation’s most important pioneering physicians in the treatment of burn patients. As the chief of staff at SHC – Boston, and working with Ioannis V. Yannas, a professor of fibers and polymers at MIT, he created the first artificial skin for the care of burn victims. The project, the *NYT* reported, “required the command of two different spheres of knowledge: the biology of the skin, and the engineering of polymers.” The fusion of biology and engineering resulted in the creation of what is now known as “Integra,” artificial skin used in the treatment of severe burns, skin wounds common with people suffering from diabetes, and for use in various types of plastic surgery. Dr. Burke summarized this advance in medicine in this profound manner: “An important biological fact is that every part of us talks to every other part—all our self interacts with all other parts.” The artificial skin was so designed that it interacts with the being of those upon whom it is placed. Dr. Burke represents one of many true medical pioneers who have made SHC so important in the lives of children and so significant in American medical practice.