

Central Point Physician Reviews Work of Hamadan Hospital

Features

Sports

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Iran is a nation in the Middle East about a quarter of the size of United States. It is a nation whose background goes back to the first written history.

But it has been in relatively recent times that change has started to come to Iran, and other Middle Eastern countries. The change has been slow; it has met opposition.

Some of the change taking place in Iran has been observed during the past few months by the Dr. Alvin Roberts family of Central Point. He and his family have actually contributed to this change, and have indicated that more dramatic changes may be forthcoming.

Look Forward To Advance

Dr. Roberts recently wrote:

"We are looking forward to a great advance in this land under the program that the Shah has been initiating this winter. It has been very interesting to be in a land which is in such a state of expectancy and hope.

"The land reform — making it possible for the first time in centuries for the man who tills the land to buy it and own it — has been a great encouragement to the people. The promise of educational opportunities for both boys and girls is met with enthusiasm by the young. The new freedom for women will ultimately set right some of the social evils which have been a weight about the neck of the Middle East."

The Dr. Roberts family is in Hamadan, Iran, where he is serving on the staff of an American Mission hospital. The family tentatively plans to leave Hamadan early in June after spending almost a year there.

Mission There 100 Years

The American Mission has been in Iran for about 100 years, first with schools and churches amid considerable unorganized resistance and persecution, Dr. Roberts wrote. As acceptance came, hospitals were

opened, of which there were eventually six. Four of them remain today.

Hamadan hospital has a long and honorable history of both service and leadership in the medical service of the area. It has pioneered new developments in medicine in the Hamadan area. "Even yet," Dr. Roberts wrote, "we are the only ones competent to use blood transfusions. This is certainly not true in Tehran; but it has been very slow for advances to move outside the capital."

Dr. Roberts continued: "There has been and is continuing contact with those who practice in the town, and we feel that this is one of the great opportunities to point the way in methods and ethics which will in the future give the people of Hamadan and western Iran a permanent and ever-improving medical service."

Religious Work Reviewed

The work of the hospital is in two parts.

The religious work is carried on by members of the Evangelical Church of Hamadan with cooperation of the American Missionaries. There are five formal meetings each week, and an evangelist works full-time in the wards and waiting rooms of the clinics. Many of the patients, Dr. Roberts said, are interested and request literature and more information.

The second part of the work is the medical program, which includes well-attended general clinics from which the in-patients are sifted.

Few of the 56 beds in the hospital are occupied by "medical problems." Most of them are surgical patients; medical patients usually insist on being treated at home or on an ambulatory basis.

Chronic Bone Diseases Seen

"Chronic bone diseases seem to be epidemic out here," Dr. Roberts said. "It is a rare clinic day that we



Dr. Roberts with an Islam Priest in a great sheepskin coat.



Lawrence Roberts in front of the mobile clinic.

do not see one to five previously undiagnosed cases of tuberculosis. Intestinal parasites are near universal, and their complications frequent.

"Some things are conspicuous by their absence. Coronary heart disease is very rarely seen here and because of the generally shorter life-span, cancer is much less often encountered, although it is not rare. Since we are 'the end of the line' for many seeking help, we see a wide range of 'once-in-a-lifetime' rarities, in both anomalies and diseases," he wrote.

The obstetrical service is an odd one since most babies are born at home with the help of a mid-wife. An occasional normal delivery of some important person or foreigner is left to the hospital.

See Complicated Ones

"Mostly we see the ones that are complicated. About half of them are cesarean section which often must be undertaken in the most unfavorable circumstances and without some of the things we had come to consider necessities," he said.

The hospital also provides a mobile clinic which ministers to the needs of villagers in the remote areas. This is carried out by Dr. Homer Rice and Lawrence Roberts, Dr. Roberts' son, who drives and aids with dispensing medicines.

"This," Dr. Roberts noted, "has been the means of saving lives this winter, especially benefitting the small children, who, so often, are neglected until it is too late."

The Hamadan hospital was built in 1952, replacing an older one which had been in service since the turn of the century. It is a modern, fireproof, earthquake resistant, and attractive building.

The hospital is located within a compound with three residences for the American personnel, which now consists of two doctors and one nurse.

A beautiful little chapel is used for English-speaking religious services for those in the vicinity who speak or understand English. The entire compound, Dr. Roberts wrote, "is beautiful now with the leafing and flowering of the many plants and trees."

The hospital is staffed with 40 Iranians, many of whom have had a number of years of service. They are well-trained and responsible. As in the states, Dr. Roberts notes, it is the shortage of nurses which is the most acute problem.

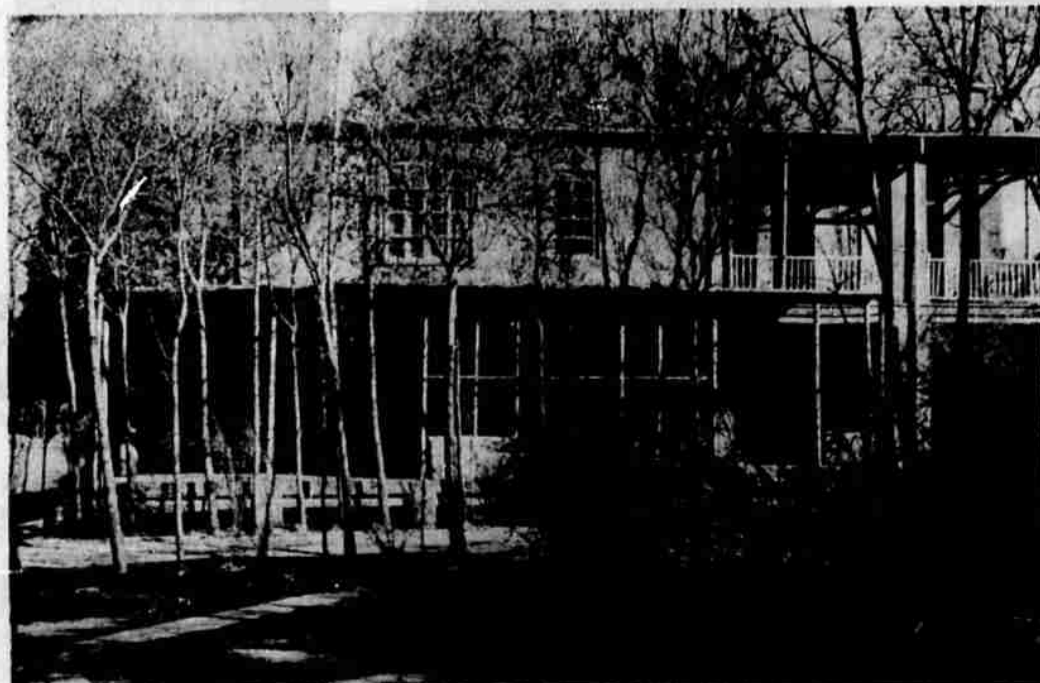
"There are just a half dozen of them. (I don't help this situation much because one of two multi-lingual nurses is always close-by to interpret for me.) These people do remarkably well even with less formal training than we are accustomed to expect in the States," Dr. Roberts said.

Patients From Wide Area

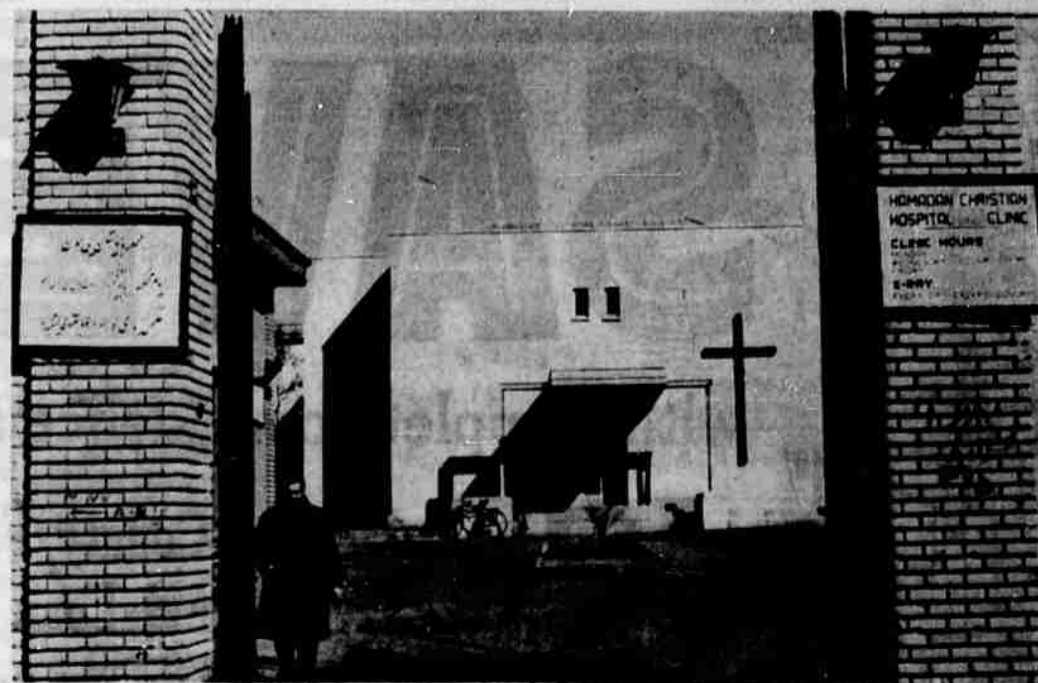
Patients are from a wide area, as far as 100 miles or more. They are of various ethnic groups. Dr. Roberts writes:

"We see a lot of Turkish speaking village people. From the northwest, we see Kurds in considerable numbers. They show up in their characteristic tribal dress, a dark-colored turban-like head dress and in the cold weather, many layers of warm clothing. There also are Assyrians, Jews, Armenians, and of course, most of the townspeople are Persians.

"Each of these groups has preserved its own language and some of its cultural characteristics. This provides an ever-changing spectrum of experience."



This residence is occupied by the Dr. Roberts family.



The front gate to the hospital in Hamadan.