



A NEWBURYPORT HIGH football game would not be the same without the familiar faces of John Stone and

Dr. Edward Dervan on the sidelines.

(Bill Lane)

City mourns loss of beloved, housecalling doctor

By JILL ANDERSON
Staff writer



Dr. Edward Dervan is shown here in a portrait photo.

NEWBURYPORT — Dr. Edward Dervan, 80, wasn't just any old doctor. He was the kind of doctor people waited hours to see just because they wanted to.

Dervan, who died on Wednesday, was a doctor in the city for 37 years, running a private practice out of his former High Street home, until he retired in 1987.

Dervan didn't require appointments, spent hours talking to patients, made house calls at any hour, and let a plate of cookies pay a patient's medical bills.

Over the years, he delivered more than 2,800 babies and serviced many Newburyport families. He also worked as the Newburyport High School football team's physician for 30 years and was honored with induction to the NHS Wall of Fame.

"He was a wonderful man to work for. He was filled with compassion," said Phyllis Packer, his former receptionist of 20 years. "If you were willing to wait your turn, he'd be willing to see you. And, when you got in his office, he'd sit there and talk to you."

She said it didn't matter how many peo-

ple were in the waiting room, he'd take the time to sit and talk to each person.

Packer said Dervan would say, "If you listen long enough the patient will tell you the diagnosis."

Dervan was a unique doctor compared to the medical world today. Dervan's son Edward Jr. said his father referred to the period after World War II, when he began practicing, as the "golden years" of medicine.

He never required an appointment; instead, Dervan held open office hours six days a week and dealt with patients on a first-come, first-served basis.

Packer said every day Dervan would start out going to the hospital, make house visits, then come to his home office where he'd spend the rest of the day with patients.

Edward Jr. remembers his father working in the office with patients until everyone was seen.

"The waiting room was always full," Edward recalled. "There was never an appointment ... if he had to keep going until midnight he would."

Dervan has six children, three sons and
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COURTESY PHOTO

In 1949, the year this photo was taken, Dr. Edward Dervan started his medical practice out of his High Street home.

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three daughters, all of whom had the liberty of watching their father practice in their home.

Daughter Keineth Webber said she remembers the police coming into the home one night with flashlights trying to wake him up to come to the hospital.

"We never locked the house," Webber said. "They'd come in saying, 'Dr. Dervan ... Dr. Dervan.'"

Webber said her father was really one of the last doctors who made house visits and used a barter system.

"If people didn't have any money, patients would give him a plate of cookies or brownies," Webber said.

Edward said he remembers getting a bag of lobsters one time.

And, the family dog, a Springer spaniel, was given to the Dervans in lieu of a patient's bill.

Dervan's bartering surpassed even his friends.

Jim Stehlin, former NHS football coach and athletic director, said once when he was sick, Dervan spent 45 minutes on the check-up. Afterward Stehlin asked Dervan what he owed him for the visit. Dervan told him that he couldn't charge anything.

"He said, 'You're my buddy and

the coach,'" Stehlin said.

Friends and family say Dervan's warmth and great smile made him such a popular guy.

"He had a soft way of talking," Stehlin said.

Although Dervan was often mild and soft-spoken, Webber said the only time he ever got mad was when she and her siblings were being too noisy during his office hours.

"Once in a while, he'd run out of the office and we'd be in back room fighting," Webber laughed. "He'd say, 'I can hear you through one, two, three, four walls,' holding up his fingers counting. He'd be mad. He ruled the roost with an iron fist, but never struck any of us. He was very quiet and calm, unless we disturbed his office hours."

Dervan, an avid football fan, even managed to take his love of medicine to the field, where he worked as the NHS football team physician for 30 years at no cost.

Norman Doyle, a former Newburyport School Committee member for 40 years, remembers asking Dervan to be the team physician for the NHS football team.

"He said, 'Sure,'" Doyle said. "He went to all the games anyway."

Doyle said he did the job for free

and was always the first person to get out on the field whenever there was an injury.

A well-known and well-liked man in the community, people often looked to Dervan as a leader.

Edward said when there were out-of-town football games, Dervan would travel to games, often with a trail of 15 cars following him.

"People didn't know where they were going," Edward said. "So, they saw Dr. Dervan and figured — there goes Dr. Dervan. He knows where he's going."

Edward said little did they know that his father didn't know where the field was, even though they'd all eventually get there.

"He was just a helluva guy," Doyle said. "He was very down-to-earth. When he came to talk to you, he'd sit down next to you, and you'd go on to have a nice conversation. He was a personable guy."

A funeral Mass will be held this morning at 9 a.m. at the Immaculate Conception Church on Green Street. Burial will be at St. Mary's Cemetery. Memorial donations may be made to the Merrimack Valley Hospice, care of Home Health Foundation, 360 Merrimack St., Building 9, Lawrence, Mass. 01843.