

HOSPITAL
ADMINISTRATION
ORAL HISTORY
COLLECTION

Lewis E. Weeks, Jr.

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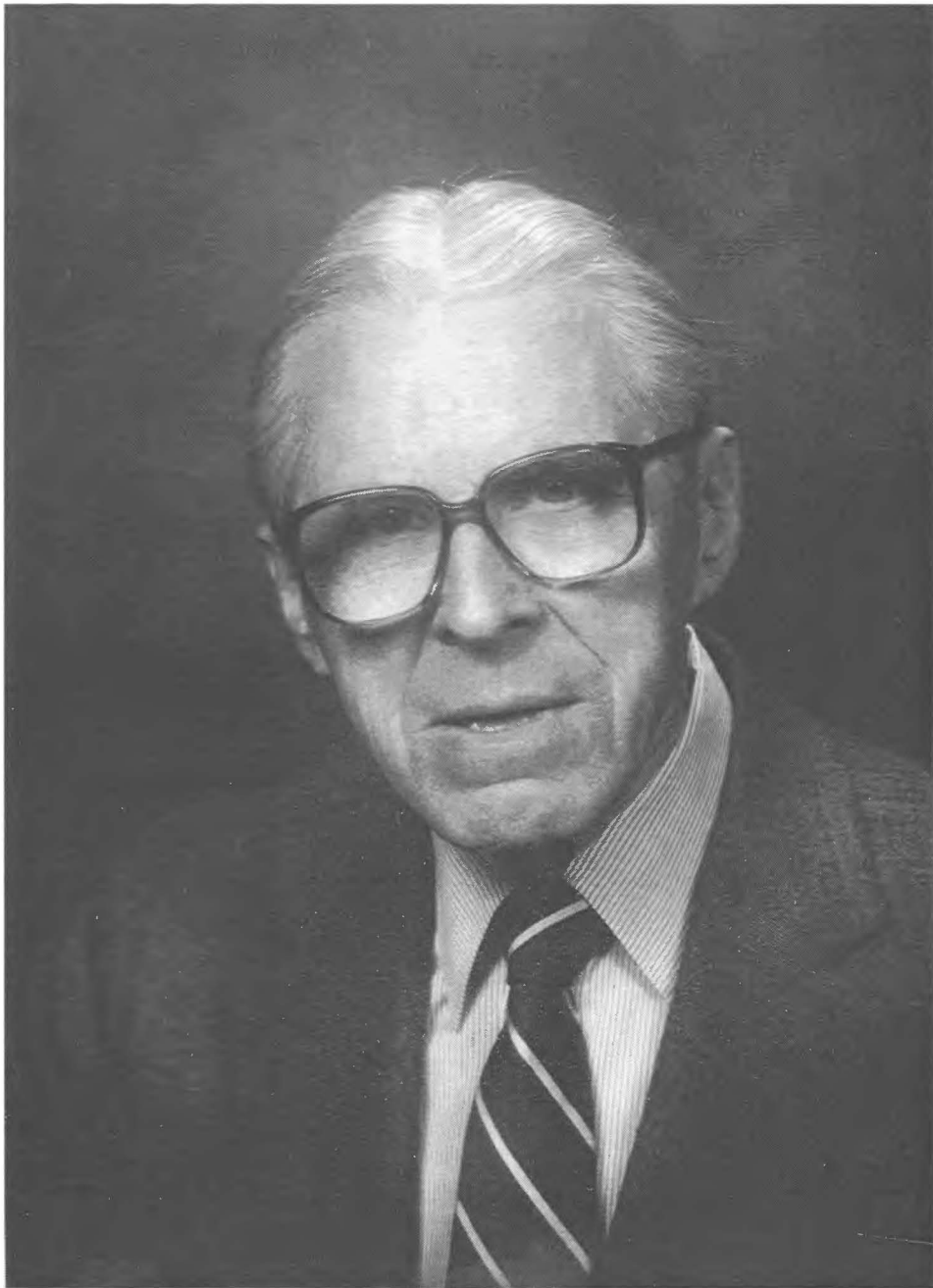
In First Person: An Oral History

Interviewed by Frances Weeks
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Lewis E. Weeks, Jr.

CHRONOLOGY

- 1907 Born June 14, Owosso, Michigan
- 1957 Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan,
B.A.
- 1958 University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan, M.A.
- 1962 Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan,
Ph.D.
- 1962-1975 University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan
Research Associate, 1962-1965
Managing Editor, Abstracts of Hospital
Management Studies, 1965-1970
Editor, Abstracts of Hospital Management
Studies, 1970-1974
Founding Editor, Health Administration Press,
1972-1975
Director of Publications, Bureau of Hospital
Administration, 1974-1975
- 1976-1984 Blue Cross Association, Chicago, Illinois
Editor, Inquiry
- 1978-1989 Hospital Research and Educational Trust of the
American Hospital Association, Chicago, Illinois
Editor, Hospital Administration Oral History
Collection, Lewis E. Weeks Series

MEMBERSHIPS AND AFFILIATIONS

American College of Healthcare Executives
Committee Member
Honorary Fellow

American Hospital Association
Member
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Administration History, Member, 1984-

PUBLISHED WORKS

- Weeks, L. E. Order out of chaos: the formative years of American broadcasting, 1920-1927. Doctoral thesis, Michigan State University, College of Communication Arts, East Lansing, 1962.
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It seems I have always been involved in some aspect of the health field. My father owned a drugstore in the Detroit area when I was growing up. I spent many hours in the drugstore, working after school and on weekends through my high school days. It seemed natural, or almost expected, that I should become a pharmacist as my father had. I passed the State Board of Pharmacy in 1928 when I was 21 years of age. I worked as a pharmacist for 25 years.

My first position was with a very professional type of pharmacy that did a large prescription business. Starting there in 1928, I worked steadily through those years just before the Great Depression. I was the youngest pharmacist in the store and the last one to be hired. When the store felt the severe downturn of business caused by the depression, I was one of the first ones to be laid off. By this time, I had a wife and son for whom I was responsible and jobs were almost impossible to find. After many weeks of looking for and finding no work, I was very fortunate to be hired by a large discount department store in Detroit. They were trying out the opening of a prescription department in the store. If the department proved successful, it would be a steady job. I was one of the first pharmacists to be hired. I was paid \$100 a month salary and worked approximately 60 hours a week.

The prescription department was a real success in that store. We soon had 20 druggists filling prescriptions. I worked as a

druggist on the day or night shifts and became a drug buyer for the prescription department. We did a lot of advertising in newspapers, on streetcars and busses, and in doctors' offices.

I became responsible for the advertising of the prescription department. The advertising work was very interesting to me. It was a busy life, and I learned a lot about advertising and store management.

When I was 40 years old, I bought my own drugstore in a village about 30 miles north of Detroit in Romeo, Michigan. Romeo was a town of 3,000 people. It was in an agricultural area of beautiful farms. (In recent years, a few of those farms have become the Ford Proving Grounds.) We did a good general drugstore business, and, surprisingly for so small a town, we developed a good prescription business. Because of the potential in this farming area, we soon were doing a veterinary medicine business. I enjoyed writing the advertising for our own business in our weekly newspaper. It was satisfying to be running a very successful drugstore, but it was an extremely busy life. I began to realize that most of my life was spent at the store, with very little time away from it for family or other activities of any kind.

As a young man, I had been very interested in journalism and communications. I had written and sold a few magazine stories.

I had always hoped that some day I would be able to pursue writing. Working at the drugstore so steadily, there was simply no time for writing or for leisure of any kind.

After several years as a store owner, I sold the drugstore and entered M.S.U. in the late '50s to study journalism and communications. Michigan State had an excellent school in communication arts. I received my PhD from M.S.U. in 1962. One of the outstanding experiences I had while working on my doctorate degree was the privilege of meeting Herbert Hoover.

I had written to Mr. Hoover explaining my interest in communication and the effect of early radio on our whole world. Mr. Hoover had made some speeches on radio, one of the first presidents to have been able, timewise, to do this. My letter to Mr. Hoover was answered with a suggestion that if I was in New York, he would be pleased to talk with me. I arranged to be in New York shortly after receiving an answer to my letter and did call on Mr. Hoover in November of 1961. Mr. Hoover was living at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel. Mr. Hoover, then 87 years of age, was a gracious host and talking with this fine man was an experience I will always remember and cherish.

After I received my PhD in 1962, I was offered a position in the University of Michigan School of Hospital Administration, which is a division of the School of Public Health. I worked on research

projects. I became director of publications and editor of the Bureau's Cooperative Information Center for Hospital Management Studies.

In 1965, Medicare brought many changes to the health field. Many hospitals were expanding services. Satellites were being added to the larger hospitals. There seemed to be large amounts of money available for health programs and technology. While at the University of Michigan, I was in charge of and published a quarterly journal called *Abstracts of Hospital Management Studies*. It was a very successful publication. At about this time, I started a press called the Health Administration Press for the purpose of publishing health-related books. The press proved to be very successful.

I had written several books while I was working at the university. One of them, *The Financial Management of Hospitals*, which I wrote with coauthor Howard Berman, is still regarded as a standard text and reference work. The seventh edition was published in 1990. In 1986, the press was bought by the American College of Healthcare Executives in Chicago.

After my retirement, I worked with the national Blue Cross Association editing a national publication called *Inquiry*. Also I wrote articles for a quarterly publication of American College of Healthcare Executives. I started a series of book-length oral

histories of outstanding people in the health field, people who were instrumental in starting programs such as Social Security, Blue Cross and Blue Shield, Medicare, etc. I felt there was a real need for information about these people. During the first years of the oral history work, I was given support by the W. K. Kellogg Foundation. After the publication and distribution of 39 volumes by the Kellogg Foundation, the American Hospital Association became interested in this oral history project for use in the American Hospital Association Library. The American Hospital Association offered to pay my travel expenses to continue these interviews and also agreed to pay for the publishing of individually bound books of each interview. I traveled to many states during the following years to do these interviews. My work on this project has been volunteer work. It was a privilege to meet these interesting persons. I have completed 79 oral histories, which are housed in the American Hospital Association Library. Each history has been corrected and approved by the interviewee. I hold the copyrights to each of these books. My wife, Frances, has worked with me on this series doing all the proofreading. She has worked with me throughout the years on many of the books I have written. Frances has always been very supportive and interested in my work, a silent helper to this cooperative work. It has been a cooperative work with many interesting people--with the American Hospital

Association and with Eloise Foster, the director of the American Hospital Association Library. I commend Eloise Foster for the fine work she has accomplished.

I am proud to be on the library board of the American Hospital Association. It has been a pleasure and an inspiration to work with this very able and well-informed group of board members.

For the past few years, I have been recovering from a very serious illness, and my life is moving along at a very slow pace. Work on the oral history series has stopped for the present time. I hope I may soon be able to continue to work on this project.