

Foreword

Some five or six years ago, Lew Weeks, with the encouragement of Howard Berman, began the monumental task of interviewing “movers and shakers” in the hospital and health care fields about their recollections of now-historic developments in which they had played prominent roles. More than 40 such oral histories have been completed so far, and a number of them are now available in the Bacon Library of the American Hospital Association. At some point in the compilation of the histories it occurred to Lew and Howard that many of them were concerned with the same important developments, although from different perspectives and with sometimes significantly varying interpretations or insights. This conclusion happily led to an effort to weave these threads into a whole fabric, of which the result is a fascinating and personalized history, *Shapers of American Health Care Policy*. The book covers a span of more than 50 years and illuminates both the events and the people who helped make them happen.

Here is a sampling:

- I.S. Falk and C. Rufus Rorem discuss in depth the Committee on the Costs of Medical Care, still considered the most far-reaching and compelling study of its kind in American health policy development. Both were staff members.
- John Mannix, Maurice Norby, and Rorem talk about the turbulent and often difficult early days of Blue Cross.

- The struggles to turn the American Hospital Association around from a weak and ineffectual entity to a viable and influential national organization are detailed by Mannix, George Bugbee, and Jim Hamilton.
- Bugbee and Norby review the Commission on Hospital Care and its significance at that time, followed by their account as to how the Hill-Burton legislation “really came about.”
- Certainly one of the most intriguing chapters concerns the enactment of Medicare and Medicaid, as described by several key people, including Wilbur Cohen, Wilbur Mills, Nelson Cruikshank, Kenneth Williamson, and Walter McNerney.
- Also covered by various individuals who were influential in such developments are the founding of the American College of Hospital Administrators, the evolution of education in health administration, and the evolution of the Association of University Programs in Health Administration.

Certainly this book provides an unusual and useful examination of the development of American health policy and practice, as candidly related by many of those people who were not only there but made it all possible. The field is indebted to Weeks and Berman for their efforts to gather, collate, and preserve these memoirs, which otherwise might not have seen the light of day.

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