

## **Chapter 24 - Sun Coast Goes Through Major Renovations**

All was going well at Sun Coast Hospital. By 1989, we had reached 300-bed capacity. We had become a comprehensive health care center caring for more than 32,000 patients each year. My fondest dreams and wishes had been granted.

We were rolling along in good shape, took Medicare and Medicaid in our stride.

Progress, however, is not always without its challenges. During this time, the federal government set new building code standards. All hospital structures with lumber and asbestos had to be removed, all corridors fire-walled. The Board of Directors tackled the asbestos problem along our corridors. In fact, eliminating the asbestos cost one million dollars.

Although the hospital had undergone five construction programs in 30 years, it was still in need of major renovation and expansion. Inpatient and outpatient areas needed consolidation and reorganization. We needed entirely new emergency, imaging and surgical areas to maximize patient convenience and staff efficiency.

The major renovation and expansion project totaled \$12 million. At a Board of Trustees meeting, I suggested we bulldoze the shopping center we owned next to the hospital, to build and modernize all new departments. The Board agreed.

We called a veteran administrator from Columbus, Ohio, Bill Conold, told him we needed to expand but were running out of land. He flew down to Largo at once and came up with the solution. "Put down a pad of concrete four feet thick. Set it in a pad of steel, attach "H" beams to this, build two floors but know that this foundation will support a ten story building."

Although a bond issue provided the major portion of financing for the project, the hospital needed an additional \$1.75 million to complete the overall project. For the first time in its history, Sun Coast Hospital launched a community-wide capital campaign to secure the necessary philanthropic support. This campaign reinforced the partnership that had facilitated its growth and development since day one between the hospital and the community.

We contracted with an architectural firm and a construction firm. The terms of agreement included one important component. The firms agreed to complete all of the work without Sun Coast Hospital losing one day of operation.

The project, the hospital's most significant to date, got underway. They tore out the small shopping center next door. In its place they built six new operating rooms, a new obstetrics department, X-ray department, emergency room, lobby, gift shop, admitting and discharge departments, and day surgery area.

Our new Pavilion, completed in 1992, has six large beautifully-equipped operating rooms. These are divided according to specialty needs including general surgery, thoracic and vascular surgery, eye, ear, nose, and throat surgery, plastic surgery, neurologic, orthopedic, urologic and gynecologic surgery.

By 1993, with this phase completed, we moved out of the old building into the new annex. True to their word, the construction occurred without a day of lost time.

We still had another expensive remodeling of the old hospital structure to complete. The original nursing home, its four operating rooms, recovery rooms, central supply, all had to go.

Upon construction of the new hospital areas and renovation of the old building, we finally had a completely new and very modern hospital. By 1995, Sun Coast Hospital met all building codes.

Since we are a teaching hospital, our operating rooms are quite large to fit young physicians who assist or observe surgery. All of our surgeons are teachers and take great pride in educating as they operate or make rounds.

After six years of hard work, all departments of Sun Coast Hospital are complete and sized for the 1990s and the next century. And adding floor after floor, by 2003 we had a five story building.

Then came the designing and the construction of the invasive cardiac department. We were truly moving ahead. Finances became tight with HMO'S, PPO'S, Medicare and Medicaid. The Board of Directors decided that we could no longer go it alone.

A decision was reached to affiliate with three local hospitals – two in Tampa: University Community Hospital, University Community Hospital at Carrollwood, and Helen Ellis Memorial Hospital in Tarpon Springs.

With a new, dedicated CEO, Larry Archbell and leadership from Norm Stein, President of University Community Health - the four-hospital system, plus the addition of many knowledgeable staff people from Tampa, we did better.

Probably there is no time in the history of our nation when expanding a hospital has been so very, very difficult. Many hospitals across this great country have had to close their hospitals, due to fiscal restraints. Fortunately, with the expertise of the combined forces of the four hospitals, we did quite well.

We are now a combined staff hospital – the medical doctors (M.D.'s) and the osteopathic medical doctors (D.O.'s) having equal prestige.





