



KELLY'S CORNER by Jan Kelly



The Original Dr. Daniel Hiebert, M.D.

A Provincetown Legend

Part 2

What did a man do to relax from all this? An occasional trip to the dunes with his camera. But the purchase of Captain Jack's Wharf afforded the doctor a sanctuary whenever a bit of free time permitted. He purchased it in the 30's from Jackson Williams, the fisherman who built it. There were no toilets—funnels in the floor—and it was inhabited by artists and fishermen, lively people, fully lived people. Dr Hiebert was not a 9-5 man. He worked outrageously hard, didn't golf or fish so those spare moments spent in enlivening company were a treat and a retreat.

Apparently it was some time later that a Mrs Easterbrook,

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sitting in at a bridge game with Mrs Hiebert chimed in, "Oh, Emily, isn't it wonderful that Dr Hiebert bought Captain Jack's Wharf?"

"What!" came the reply. Apparently Daniel had forgotten to tell Emily of the transaction. Well, it all worked out and some time later in the fifties, Ruth took over the Wharf as a rental property.

Before we had a Rescue Squad, the hearse was used as the ambulance. Coming back from a run to the hospital, Dr Hiebert took a well deserved nap in the back of the hearse. Suspicious of a hearse out at midnight when the driver stopped for coffee, the police stopped by and searched the vehicle. (Rum-running was a local art in those days and late night runs were checked regularly.) As they opened the back door, they woke Dr Hiebert who raised himself up to see what the trouble was. The police left so fast he never got to explain.

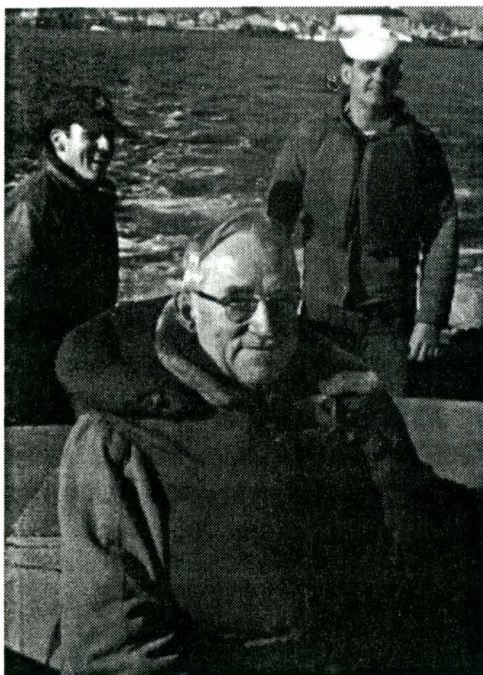
With so much work, so varied and demanding, a Rescue Squad was needed. So Ronnie White's father, Dr Hiebert, Doris Enos and twelve men began what is today a sacred institution in Provincetown. The front window of Dr Hiebert's office was

adapted to open wide enough for a stretcher to pass through. Any time of day or night people entered the office; constantly people... And one day, even a duck. The Watts' children's pet duck had a mishap with a car and so the teary-eyed Watts offspring brought the little quacker to the doctor's office. So Dr. Dan told the patients that they would have to wait a little longer; he left the grumbling group and went to tend to the upset children and their duck.

Dr. Hiebert became the Public Health Service Physician and the government hired him as a physician to the fishermen. He loved all the variety and caring, even more so away from 9 to 5. I saw him at 80 years old walking over planks from boat to boat to get to an injured fisherman. Bag in hand, wind whipping the boards, bouncing off reflecting waves and swaying hulls with his beige overcoat in trenchcoat style with a fur collar dampening in the driven east wind, he was just doing a boat call. To him it was not as dangerous as doing helicopter calls to destroyers or to heaving fishing boats rivaling *The Perfect Storm* circumstances.

He also spent a 19-hour stretch in the sick bay of a destroy-

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er caring for the survivors of a torpedo attack during World War II. The Coast Guard plowed him through to sick calls during blizzards. The awards, plaques, citations kept mounting up. Through it all, Dr. Hiebert kept an even keel enjoying all his ventures in a small town which offered challenges like no other.

Perhaps the most memorable citation is the American Medical Association Award for Doctor of the Year presented in 1961. In each state, the AMA doctors select a Doctor of the Year from among their peers, chosen for constancy, continued success in their profession and the awareness of fellow doctors. The honored doctors receive their awards at a national convention. Ruth waited in Provincetown to hear how the voting would go for the National Doctor of the Year Award. When the call came, Mrs Hiebert reported, "We heard Billy Graham speak and then we were off to a marvelous dinner party at Julius Monk's "Upstairs, Downstairs" and we met Julius Monk!" They never even waited for the voting.

The celebrations for the Doctor of the Year Award continued in Boston with a special dinner at Boston University, his alma mater. The Provincetown Inn held a celebration as did the Methodist Church. The entire town was proud and present. A fisherman stood up and showed a finger restored by Dr. Hiebert. "Remember this finger, Doc?" he asked, "I cut the end of it off completely in an accident. I brought the severed finger to you in my pocket. You sewed it back on and it's as good as ever."

"Without the drugs and techniques available to us today," Dr Hiebert humbly commented in 1960, "you couldn't do things like that. But 50 years from now there will no longer be any general practitioner. Every physician will be specializing. Whatever the advantages, the old human relationship between a patient and the family doctor will be lost and that's something invaluable in the art of healing."

And healing was something Dr. Hiebert knew a lot about. He performed his own x-rays, set bones, dispensed his own medicines claiming that the drug stores were too expensive. He learned much about symptoms and cures from the drug salesmen—it was part of his research. He was also a good diag-

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nostician. During the 30's when a teaching doctor at Mass. General heard that a patient was referred by Dr. Hiebert, he would call all his interns together to exhibit the value of a good diagnosis.

Dr Hiebert was a real general practitioner and he was good! He preferred not sending people to the hospital. I remember Heaton Vorse talking about "Dr. Dan's embroidery work"—his stitching. He could stitch up cuts and wounds in such a careful and methodical way that most injuries would heal scarless.

The story is told of two Navy fliers who were brought to his office for stitches, both suffering from extensive lacerations which demanded immediate attention. A Navy captain showed up and ordered immediate removal of the men to a hospital. Since the nearest hospital was fifty miles away, Dr Hiebert replied they could not be moved. "But I'm in command," the captain replied. "Not in my office," the doctor quietly replied as he continued his stitching. Minutes later an admiral appeared and reinforced the order. No change. The calm, polite and smiling doctor explained, "In my office, I'm in charge." Sensibly, they gave in...which was all they could do.

Dr. Hiebert served in the U.S. Army and was a patriot. In his public and private life, the American Legion ranked high. At Memorial Day services, parades and at dedications, he was always there wearing his American Legion hat. He served his town and his country well.

After his death, his daughter Ruth went through all the records offering each back to its owners. All unwanted records and those of the deceased were burned in an old coal furnace in the basement of their home which Dr. Hiebert maintained in case of a blackout so his patients could remain warm. Those records must have been so impressive. "Yes," says Ruth proudly, "the letters from people who passed through congratulating and thanking him; letters from follow-up doctors back home..." Without a doubt, Dr. Daniel Hiebert was an original, both professionally and personally.

