

From Ether Frolics to the OR

What Do You Mean 'The Operation's Over'?

Crawford Williamson Long (Long is a staff patient medical ward on second floor)

Crawford Williamson Long was born in Danielsville, Georgia, in 1815. He entered Franklin College—now the University of Georgia—at the age of 14 and then studied at Transylvania College in Kentucky. He received his M.D. degree from the University of Pennsylvania in 1839. Following graduation he spent a year in New York and in 1841 returned to Georgia and began a practice in the village of Jefferson. He was then 26 years old.

The village of Jefferson was about 140 miles from a railroad and was in what today would probably be called the "backwoods" of Georgia. Dr. Long's daughter wrote of the area in which her father first practiced medicine: "Much of the time in winter the dirt roads were impassable for vehicles, swamps were undrained and streams were forded. A journey of twenty miles was often an all day expedition full of thrills and dangers."

'Laughing Gas'

Although the village was not "on the main roads," the news reached its inhabitants telling of the wandering "chemistry" lecturers who were visiting some of the major cities in the South and using nitrous oxide—more commonly called "laughing gas"—to provoke "exhilaration, excitement and mirth-provoking antics," much to the delight of their audiences.

And it wasn't long before the Jefferson doctor was approached by some of the vil-

lage's young men, who wished very much to be in vogue and who wanted to "borrow" some nitrous oxide from the doctor to try it out among themselves.

But let's let Dr. Long tell his own story: "I informed them that I had no apparatus for preparing or preserving the gas, but that I had a medicine (sulphuric ether) which would produce equally exhilarating effects; that I had inhaled it myself, and considered it as safe as the nitrous oxide gas. . . . They were so much pleased with the exhilarating effects of ether, that they afterwards inhaled it frequently and induced others to do so, and its inhalation now became fashionable in this country, and in fact, extended from this place through several

counties in this part of Georgia."

Dr. Long's daughter pointed out in a biography of her father that by regarding ether as being as safe as nitrous oxide, he was "repudiating the teaching he had received as a student."

Bruises But No Pain

Ether seemed to have captured the doctor's interest. He wrote that he had inhaled ether upon various occasions "for its exhilarating properties" and afterwards discovered "bruises or painful spots" on his body, which had evidently been received while he was under the influence of ether. He also observed the same in his friends: "I noticed my friends, while etherized, received falls and

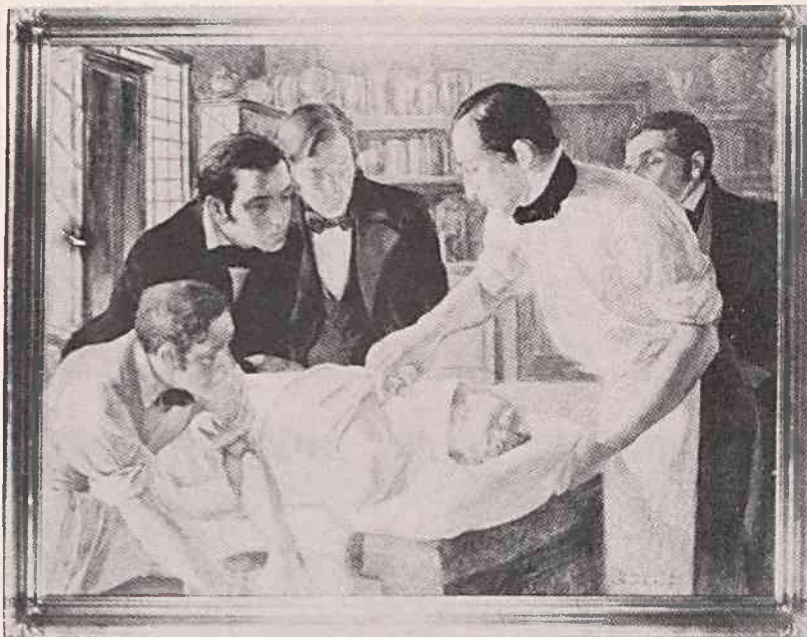
bangs, which I believed were sufficient to produce pain on a person not in a state of anesthesia, and on questioning them, they uniformly assured me that they did not feel the least pain from these accidents." The doctor explained at the end of the report from which the above quotes were taken: "These facts are mentioned that the reasons may be apparent why I was induced to make an experiment in etherization."

The patient to whom Dr. Long administered ether in a surgical operation had two small tumors on the back of his neck and consulted Dr. Long several times about their removal. Fear of pain, however, made the man put off the operation.

A Tumor and a Towel

"At length," wrote Dr. Long, "I mentioned to him the fact of my receiving bruises while under the influence of the vapour of ether, without suffering, and as I knew him to be fond of and accustomed to inhale ether, I suggested to him the probability that the operations might be performed without pain, and proposed operating on him while under its influence. He consented to have one tumor removed, and the operation was performed the same evening. The ether was given . . . on a towel, and when fully under its influence, I extirpated the tumor. It was encysted and about one-half inch in diameter. The patient continued to inhale ether during the time of operation, and when informed it was over, seemed incredulous, until

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The above is artist Maurice Siegler's conception of the first anesthetic. The operation, for removal of a tumor, was performed by Dr. Crawford Long, who is shown anesthetizing his patient with ether. Dr. Long later wrote: "As an inducement to Venable to allow himself to be the subject of such experiment, my charge for the operation was merely nominal, \$2.00, Ether, 25 cents." The operation was performed in Jefferson, Georgia, on March 30, 1842.

How to structure a program of prenatal education for normal pregnancy was the subject of a workshop held April 21 and April 22 at Duke University Medical Center.

Approximately fifty physical therapists, nurses and physicians attended the workshop, which was organized by the Duke Departments of Physical Therapy and Obstetrics and Gynecology.

The program featured not

Prenatal Education Workshop Held

only invited speakers, but also pertinent visual aids and demonstrations. A film, prepared by the N. C. State Department of Health, on the complete care of the pregnant woman and a video tape concerned with prenatal education were shown and on both days prenatal and postpartum labs were held in the physical therapy gym.

Dr. Niles Newton, noted psy-

chologist at the University of Mississippi Medical Center, was a featured speaker. She spoke on "Emotional Aspects of Pregnancy." Dr. Newton's husband is an obstetrician, and the couple has worked closely together on their research involving the pregnant woman.

Another featured speaker was Dr. Theodore D. Seurlis, Chief of the Maternal and

Child Health Division of the N. C. State Board of Health.

Other workshop speakers spoke on various aspects of prenatal educational programs.

Guest speakers included Lydia Holley, Assistant Professor of Public Health Administration at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and Mrs. Jayne Wiggins, a counselor at the Maternity Center Association in New York City.