

\$1,000, and second prize is \$500.

ping at local businesses boosts the

both will.

# SMITH

Continued from Page 1

everyone in Love County. Everyone was his friend.

“He surrendered his life to medicine, and he was going to perform that deed to the very end.”

Barker recalled Dr. J.T. O’Connell’s retirement a year ago. At that time, Smith approached her regarding his career.

“He said, ‘Don’t worry about me, I have no intention of retiring,’” she says.

Having worked for Smith for 32 years from the time he had a clinic downtown, Barker was able to witness the affection Smith had for the community and those he treated. He remained true to that compassion throughout his career. Thursday night, the clinic was closing because of inclement weather, with plans to remain closed Friday. Smith left the clinic and went to Homeland, only to return 10 minutes later with a patient.

“He saw a patient who had back pain, and he brought him through

the backdoor for treatment to get him through the weekend,” Barker remembers. “He was a pillar in the community. When he surrendered his life to medicine, he intended it to be a lifelong decision, and it was.”

Smith’s passion for medicine and the community extended beyond treating patients. He was one of those responsible for securing a hospital for Love County and, in later years, helping secure its future.

Barbara Sessions, hospital communications consultant, says Love County was the last county in Oklahoma to establish a hospital. Despite a failed effort in 1966, the community continued to fight for a hospital, in which Smith was an instrumental figure in clearing the barriers. The hospital opened on Jan. 30, 1972, and Smith was the first doctor to admit a patient, six hours before Gov. Dewey Bartlett gave the dedication speech to officially open the hospital.

“He took Dewey Bartlett around Love County in his Volkswagen, showing him why there was a need for a hospital,” recalls Pat Owens, Certified Family Nurse Practitioner. “When they were done, Bartlett said, ‘Yes, you

do need a hospital.”

At that time, Smith had the medical clinic on Main Street and was soon joined by O’Connor. O’Connor recalled finishing his training in Dallas and driving to Marietta to look at an opening for the clinic.

“That day, I knew I was coming here as soon as I met him,” O’Connor says. “We didn’t know anybody, and Dr. Smith was waiting for us. He was so personable, so friendly and reassuring because I was scared to death.

“Dr. Smith was making house calls back then. He would work in the day, close up in the afternoons into the evening. Dr. Smith knew everybody, and he had an encyclopedic knowledge.”

O’Connor retired in December 2012 and, during his medical career, he along with Smith saw significant technological advances in medicine. The two were able to share procedures they learned about throughout their career. And through it all, a bond was developed.

“My wife told me the other night, ‘You’ve been married to him as long as you’ve been married to me,’” O’Connor says. “It was a brotherhood.”

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