

# Dr. Beck has no regrets

■ Career for dermatologist nears end after four-plus decades at Olean Medical Group

OLEAN — A 44-year career in medicine is soon coming to an end. Dr. Art Beck, a dermatologist at the Olean Medical Group, will retire from his office in a few weeks to cutting fire wood and doing a little skiing.

While nearing retirement, Dr. Beck looked back on "one of the best decisions he ever made" to come to Olean and join the Medical Group.

Dr. Beck grew up in Amherst and went to Northwestern University, where he received his bachelor's degree in biology. He went on to attain his medical degree from the University of Buffalo and remained there to complete his internship and residency in dermatology and residency program at several institutions in Buffalo such as Buffalo General, Buffalo Children's Hospitals, Meyer Memorial and Roswell Park Cancer Institute.

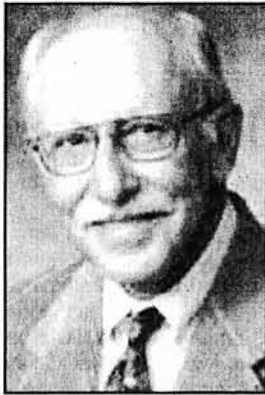
In 1961, Olean Medical Group Director Dan Souders invited him to interview for a position. Unlike many, Dr. Beck knew what he wanted and the Olean position fit the bill. He wanted nothing to do with large cities. Instead, he had hoped for something in Western New York at a smaller group practice where he could enjoy some personal time.

On his first day at the Medical Group, Dr. Beck hit the ground running. He saw 25 patients that day and it hasn't slowed down since.

He has seen thousands of patients since that first day and he hopes that he gave each one of them the quality care they deserved.

Dr. Beck reminisced about the early years of his practice and how, long before Medicaid, many patients couldn't pay a doctor's bill. They received their

treatments regardless and, often, he would return to his office from an exam room and find a basket of vegetables or fruit in return for services rendered.



Dr. Art Beck

"Before Medicaid, our practices were simpler. There were less hassles with insurance companies back then," said Dr. Beck. "Patient care has always been first and foremost to us but it was easier then. We didn't have the reams of paperwork, rules and regulations that we have now."

When first starting his practice, Dr. Beck was required to take patient calls every 15 days at the emergency rooms at Olean General Hospital and St. Francis Hospital. He assisted with many emergency situations.

He recalled one Christmas Eve, when emerging from midnight services, everyone from the church walked out into a blizzard. He and his family got home but almost immediately he received a call from the hospital. An 85-year-old woman had fallen and he had to "sew up" her lacerations.

Not expecting her to be released from the hospital that evening, her family returned home while they could in the evening's storm. However, after stitching her up, she felt fine and wanted to return home herself.

Dr. Beck and his young daughter, Lisa, who had accompanied him to the hospital, bundled up this elderly woman and drove her to her house in Weston's Mills during a raging storm. It was 3:30 a.m. before they got her to her door but she was able to spend the holiday with her family because of the Becks' kindness.

That trip to the hospital was

one of a few that Dr. Beck's two daughters made with him.

When talking to him, pride beams from his face when he begins to speak about his three children. His two daughters have both gone on to become doctors, possibly because of the times when they accompanied him to see patients. Meanwhile, his son is an attorney in Milwaukee and a "super dad," according to Dr. Beck.

The dermatologist relishes the fact he was able to spend some quality time with each of them and still maintain a busy practice.

An avid skier, Dr. Beck is one of the charter members of Holimont in Ellicottville. But he remembers when Grosstal (later called Ski Wing) was in operation. Several winter days, when he finished with his last patient of the morning, he would jump in his car, drive out to the ski center and get a few runs in before heading back to the Medical Group for his afternoon patients. He had his every move timed exactly, including the 10 minutes it took him to drive out and back.

However, his skiing and all other activity nearly ended when near disaster struck on July 4, 1976. Dr. Beck fell from a ladder at his house. He was completely paralyzed for a few weeks but surgeons were able to mend what the fall had damaged with a fusion procedure by noted neurosurgeon Dr. George Cohen.

As a result, Dr. Beck was back at his practice in four months and on the slopes the following season.

So when the State University of New York at Buffalo asked him to teach for a few years, he couldn't say no out of appreciation. His Wednesdays from 1977 to 1980 were devoted to the dermatology residents.

Additionally, community involvement has been important to him. The YMCA has been his first love but he has also been an elder at the Presbyterian Church and has chaired the United Way Campaign and

served on the board of Holimont. He has always been a member of the New York State and Cattaraugus County Medical Societies and was president of the county society in 1971. He is a member of the American Academy of Dermatology, the Central States Dermatology Society and the Buffalo/Rochester and New York State Dermatology societies.

Retirement won't come easily for this longtime physician but the osteoarthritis in his hip has forced him to finally seek an operation. This will be his first order of business when his last day at the Olean Medical Group comes in October. With rehab, he vows to be back on the slopes, and in the summer he will tend to his large garden and wood lot.

Dr. Beck said he'll have plenty to keep him busy but he'll miss the Medical Group — and his patients most of all.

Officials at the Medical Group said they will miss him. His positive attitude and cheerfulness brightened a room.

Now, his fellow physicians, administration, and staff are planning a retirement party for him in March, once he has recuperated from his hip replacement.

"Everybody helps everybody here and that's the way it should be," said Dr. Beck. "The collegiality of the fine physicians of the Medical Group is what I have enjoyed most."

He added, "I have enjoyed a quality of life here that I couldn't have enjoyed in a larger city and the Olean Medical Group has been just great."

John Weir, CEO of the Olean Medical Group, said, "I'm going to miss having Art as part of the group. His earnest devotion to his patients and to his colleagues has been simply exceptional. His long and dedicated career to a single community is extraordinary as well. He is my friend, as he is the friend of so many others."