

## REVIVE A MEMORY OF THE DR. ROMAN LESNIKA (1898-1975) Memorial Room in Sveta Ana in Slovenske gorice, Slovenia

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On 12. April 2014 an opening ceremony of the permanent exhibition of medical collection from the first half of the 20th century occurred in Sveta Ana in Slovenske gorice, in eastern Slovenia. We have named it The dr. Roman Lesnika Memorial room, because the collection belonged to him.

His daughter Romana Lesnika, retired architecture professor, kept at home in her apartment entire collection from her father death (1975) till now. In her father's heritage she saw great value, that could not be evaluated with money, that is why she did not sell the equipment and accessories to the potential buyers and collectors, which were very much interested in buying them. She wished that the memory of her father and his work would preserve, that is why she wanted to donate and not sell the collection, to someone who would restore, preserve and dedicate it to the dr. Roman Lesnika. She contacted different institutions and found common language with her father birth place Sveta Ana. We accepted her offer with great joy. The mayor of Municipality of Sveta Ana Mr. Silvo Slaček understood her wishes, suggestions and ideas and was very happy to receive such a generous gift. We prepared room in the place of health dispensary, where we have revived a memory of the dr. Roman Lesnika work and life. It is good to cherish this important piece of cultural heritage and it is right to honor a memory of a great man, which he certainly was. His fellow citizen from Mozirje and medical colleagues

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The first room

addressed him at the opening ceremony a great man with big capital. Many people from Mozirje that have fond memories of him attended an event. They are remembering him especially as a man who could not say no and who was any day and anytime available for anyone and ready to help. It was not only his profession to be a doctor, it was who he was in his heart and soul.

Dr. France Urlep summarized this nicely in his goodbye speech at a dr. Lesnika funeral, where he said that people in Zgornja Savinjska dolina had meeting, greeting, talking, calling and needing him for 45 years. His first few

years in Mozirje he was the only doctor far and wide, therefore he was needed all the time. His presence gave people sense of security and joy. He stayed in Mozirje almost for half a century, while dozens of doctors came and leave. We could really say that he was a hero in the front line of healthcare.

## BIOGRAPHY

Dr. Roman Lesnika (17 February 1898 - 18. June 1975) was born in Krivi Vrh in Sveta Ana at Štajerska region of Slovenia. His parents were school teachers at the Sveta Ana elementary school. His father Mihael (1864 - 1935) was also a school headmaster between years 1892 and 1925, mother Viljemina (1873 - 1956) was teaching until retiring 1927. He was visiting 5 classes of the Elementary school in Sveta Ana and 8 classes of the State grammar school in Maribor. At the same time (1916 - 1919) he served in Austro-Hungarian Army and was captured in South Tyrol and hold as a war prisoner in Italy for one year. Then he came back and he graduated on 7. December 1919. The same year he enrolled at the Faculty of Medicine in Graz, where he studied

for 10 semesters and visited evening Academy of Fine Arts. His great wish was to study art, which was his big passion but his parents want him to be a doctor and give him an ultimatum to pay him only a real education. He graduated in 1925 for doctor of all health.

Next 2 semesters he dedicated to dental specialization at the Dental clinic in Graz. From year 1926 until 1929, he worked at all departments of the General hospital in Maribor. At first he worked as an intern, then as an Internal department assistant, which he led independently. In 1928 he married Olga Sever and got daughter Romana, seven years later his son Roman was born.



Dr. Roman Lesnika

On 1. February 1929 he started working as a local doctor for entire health district Mozirje. As an only doctor far around he was a general practitioner, gynaecologist, obstetrician, pharmacist, dentist and even surgeon. Regular hours he worked at the dispensary, while the most of the work he did on the field. Mostly people came for him with a horse, because the terrain in Zgornja Savinjska dolina is pretty much demanding. Therefore his ride to the patients was most of the time a horse or a bicycle. After the World War II he bought a car, but he still kept his saddle at home. His daughter Romana remembers that sometimes he got up even three times per night: "He barely layed down into the bed, we heard someone throwing pebbles at the window and he had to get up again." Due to the large amount of work there was no more time for painting.

He also run his own hand pharmacy, until it was established public one in 1935. For his selfless humanitarian work and due to his dedication to healing and helping people the main committee of the Red cross gave him solemn recognition in 1937. During World War II he was healing and saving lives of partisans and everyone else and distributing them with medicines and other medical supplies, despite constant hard pressure and threats of an occupier that he will be moved. Based his bad health, he wasn't mobilized into the army. In that period of time the organisation of healthcare was quite weakened and he was not placed for a official general practitioner, so he performed a private practice.



The second room

After liberation he was placed by the district committee of Gornji grad for the official local and district doctor in Mozirje. Since 1955 he did entire health care for children and pregnant women, including vaccinations, medical check-ups of schoolchildren etc. at Nazarje Health center. One year later he started managing Health station in Mozirje and Nazarje. In 1959 he started with associate dental practice at Nazarje Health center. He retired in year 1968. He was also a member of Slovene Medical Association. Through his career he was additionally educating and learning about new techniques and methods of treatment. Even after his retirement he reached for medical literature and was interested in new findings in medicine. He liked to read medical books, poetry and books about the Arts. Poetry still had a special place in his life, it was bringing him peace.

### MEDICAL COLLECTION

It was entrusted to me an important work to make an exhibition from various objects, furniture, instruments, books and documents. I started working courageously with great enthusiasm, eagerness and respect towards dr. Lesnika. It was necessary to clean every instrument, magazine, bottle,...





Infra-red bulbs for physiotherapy

catheters. There are also glass and metal injections and threads for sewing in the antiseptic liquid. We can better understand and imagine instrument sterilization in those time, if we see metal sterilizers on display, which they filled with water, placed them above the burner and boiled it up.

On display is also a rich collection of very old medicines and ingredients in the bottles for making medicines, because dr. Lesnika had his own pharmacy. There are also not quite so old but nevertheless very interesting numerous medicines still packed in original cardboard packaging, pharmacy scale with brass weights, which he used at the preparation of medicines and scale for patients.

Bibliographic part of the collection consists of many preserved documents from 1919 and on, including school report cards, court transcripts and other formal court documents, medical results, personal confidential letters of patients, patients dental records, various forms for example check-in and check-out of communicable diseases, certificate of incapacity for work, x-ray records etc. On the shelves it can be seen Charles Darwin books from year 1884 and on, *Ars Medici* between years 1927 and 1937, collection *Neue Deutsche Klinik*, editions of *Zdravstveni vestnik* (Medical journal) from 1934 till 1974, *Paradentozna* (Paradentosis), *Glasilo zdravniške zbornice za Dravsko*



banovino (*Medical chamber Bulletin*), Farmaceutski vestnik (*Pharmaceutical journal*), Zobozdravstveni vestnik (*Dental journal*), Medicinska sestra na terenu (*Nurse on the field*) and many others. There is also a lot of booklets about diseases and treatments, advertising material, catalogues for ordering medical equipment, lists and price list of medicines and magazines in German. From the dr. Lesnika personal archive it is able to see postcards and photographs with great historical value for Sveta Ana, among them is a photograph of Sveta Ana from 1895.

We can certainly say that Dr. Roman Lesnika memory room is not only a great acquisition for history of medicine but it has also a significant meaning for cultural heritage and tourism in Sveta Ana.

Welcome to the Collection, run by the Municipality of Sveta Ana.

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