

Brief Biography Robert E. Wynia M.D.

I was born in Plentywood, MT to farmer parents in 1932. My father decided to no longer continue farming two years later, having had no crop over a nine-year period. With the proceeds from an auction, he purchased a Gamble Store franchise in Poplar, MT in 1934.

I therefore grew up in Poplar, graduated from high school there. During my years in Poplar, I delivered the Great Falls Tribune from age 6 until I graduated from high school. I also clerked, repaired appliances and small engines, learned the basics of small business.

During my high school and college years, I worked on farms, a ranch, the Bureau of Land Management, the ACS, a lab tech and assistant instructor, a "roughneck" on a oil rig, on a pipeline from Poplar to Baker. While in Medical School, I worked as a Surgical Tech at Montana Deaconess and Providence Hospital Seattle, and as a lab tech at Children's Orthopedic Hospital, Seattle.

Billings and Eastern Montana College were home for two years and from there I attended the University of Washington where I obtained my Bachelor's degree and applied for admittance to the University of Washington, School of Medicine. I was accepted as one of seven non-residents into my class.

Upon receiving my M.D., I continued my post-graduate training in Internal Medicine at the University of Michigan.

In 1962 I returned to Montana and joined the Northwest Medical Group in Great Falls, practicing Internal Medicine. I believed that it was important to take part in all hospital medical staff functions. As a result of this, I accepted election as Chief of the Department of Medicine in 1965 and served in this position on several occasions. This position carried with it the chairmanship of the Medical Records Division. Other chairmanships of Utilization Review, Credentials, By-Laws, Medical Education on recurrent occasions, kept me as a member of the Medical Staff Executive Committee for 24 of the 42 years that I was a continuous member of the active medical staffs of Columbus, Montana Deaconess and Benefis. I was elected Chief of Staff of Columbus Hospital in 1967 and was re-elected in 1968 (the first time this had happened in many years). Continuing Medical Education was a priority for me.

I also felt the importance of being involved in community activities. As a result, I became a member of the Chamber of Commerce, Optimists International, Masonic, Scottish Rite and Algeria Shrine. I participated in many civic events and my wife and I sang in the Great Falls Symphony Choir as well as performing Folk music for various organizations in the region.

Business investments included the development of the only Ethan Allen Gallery between Minneapolis, Denver and Seattle. The first Radio Common Carrier portable touch-tone radio system in Montana, telephone systems, property management and leasing.

I extended my knowledge and interests by taking the Dale Carnegie Course, joining the Toastmasters and auditing the Masters in HealthCare Administration.

Winona and I enjoyed three daughters and a fourth one 14 years younger than our third daughter. Thus we spent several years involved with the Great Falls school system and PTA.

Our daughters all received college educations, three of them have Masters in their fields of interest; the last one is now a Music Therapist in Virginia. We have 6 grandchildren, 3 in Maine and 3 in Great Falls.

Due to my involvement in medical administrative functions and an injury to my knee, my active practice involvement slowed. In addition, my wife developed back problems and complications from interventions, which resulted in further reduction in active practice and the final decision to discontinue active practice.

I was actively looking for a challenge that would take advantage of my years of healthcare involvement and knowledge when I received a call from Governor Schweitzer's transition team asking if I would consider the position of Director of the Department of Public Health and Human Services.