Sadie Lindeberg: Dr. Sadie, Doctor for Women

Sadie Lindeberg never married, but she had thousands of babies to call her own. Sadie was born in 1884, in a tiny community also called Sadie, some sixteen miles west of Miles City, the first non-native child born in that area. She graduated from high school in Miles City, and received her medical degree from the University of Michigan. After interning in Chicago for a year, she returned home to Miles City and opened a practice in 1908.

A woman doctor was a rare thing at that time; there were only three in the state. The cowboy with the injured foot who was her first patient was skeptical about her, as were other doctors in the area. Lindeberg consequently concentrated her practice on caring for women and children, particularly in delivering babies. There was no hospital at the time, so patients were treated in her office, in a local maternity home, or in their own homes. This required some trouble for Lindeberg to attend births. She reported huddling under buffalo robes while in a buggy during a blizzard, using a handcar on the rails, and trying to convince a train conductor that she was the doctor they were holding the train for. That conductor was still dubious until a few years later when Lindeberg delivered his niece's child. But after a few more years, "Dr. Sadie" was a fixture in Miles City.

Lindeberg maintained her practice in a Main Street office until 1950, when she moved her office into her home. Her records were lost in the move, but Dr. Lindeberg estimated she had delivered 8,000 babies by that time.

As well as presiding over family additions, Lindeberg also facilitated adoptions. Her records were mostly lost, but it turned out that many of them were forged anyway. This was done on her part to protect the mothers, many of whom were unwed. It is impossible to know how many adoptions she took part in, but enough so that adoptees refer to themselves as "Sadie's Babies."

After Dr. Sadie's death, what had been an open secret in the medical community was more widely revealed: the grandmotherly doctor was also regarded as one of the state's leading abortionists. Doctors in the Montana medical community understood that Lindeberg was performing abortions, which were illegal throughout her career, but none discussed it with her, nor challenged her on it. In fact, some of them were referring patients her way because they could trust her care of the patients. One such woman described her experience to the *Missoulian* in 1989, stating that she had signed a form stating that she had consulted Lindeberg for a bleeding issue, and the doctor had been unable to save the child. She further stated that Lindeberg initially refused to perform

the abortion as she was married, and only relented when she promised she was seeking a divorce and her husband supported the decision.

Lindeberg was still practicing after her 80th birthday in 1964. By this time, she had delivered three generations of babies in one family alone. Along the way, she adopted two daughters, had been named Woman of the Year by a local businesswomen's organization, and was presented an Emeritus Award by the American Medical Association after 50 years in practice. Dr. Sadie died in 1969, at the age of 84.

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Montana Women's History website: http://montanawomenshistory.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/109WHM-Lindeberg-Portrait-Custer-County-As-We-Recall-p-377-230x300.png, retrieved 9/4/18