Delivering small-town life

From the Midwest to multiple military bases and back, Stephen Miller leads a long-standing practice

A n average month at his current practice includes about ten deliveries, though there have been times over the years where he has delivered more than 40 babies in a month.

“There’s something amazing about being a part of delivering and holding a newborn,” says Stephen Miller, D.O., obstetrician and gynecologist, who has been part of delivering more than 17,000 babies in his career. “I see new things every day. It’s never boring and routine.”

Miller considers that variety of his current practice a bonus of rural living.

“Being in this field here [in Coffeyville], it allows me the chance to do a variety of practice and I’m still able to do deliveries,” says Miller. “From surgeries to general medicine, it allows me to do a lot of different types of practice.”

Following a 15-year stint serving in the military as a doctor, Miller settled in Coffeyville, Kan. in 1987 and has been a local doctor ever since.

The rural lifestyle was one he sought out for his post-military practice and for his family.

“I came here straight out of the military. I wanted to go to a rural community to practice,” says Miller.

The Coffeyville location was also near his aging parents who lived in Joplin, Mo. Miller wanted his children to know their grandparents, he says.

More than 25 years later, his parents have passed away and his children are grown with families of their own, but Miller is still enjoying life and practice in Coffeyville.

Variety paired with consistency

After 40 years in practice, Miller says the variety of the field keeps him passionate about the daily duties. Rotating students who ask challenging questions and look to him for advice doesn’t hurt, either.
“It keeps you on your toes,” says Miller. “They know a lot but they have a lot to learn, too. It benefits both of us.”

Miller attended medical school at the Kansas City College of Osteopathic Medicine in Kansas City, Mo., attended Eastmoreland General Hospital in Portland, Ore. for his internship and then to Naval Medical Center in San Diego, Calif. for residency.

“I was at large and small bases in the military,” he says. “I knew I wanted to come back to a smaller area, a place where I could be more closely available to my patients, more one-on-one.”

“Training in the military was certainly an advantage,” says Miller. “I came [to Coffeyville] being able to practice in an isolated area. I’m grateful for that.”

Miller often compares the similarities and differences to his military-doctor days, though he has enjoyed both.

“In the military, I was on call every other night and the number of hours was intense,” Miller recalls. “It was not unusual to do 60 [pap smears] in a morning. In my busiest day, I did 20 deliveries in a day.”

Miller, who is the sole provider in his practice, also enjoys being able to work with his wife of ten years, Paula, a nurse who has been in the nursing field for 27 years.

While serving in the United States Marine Corps, Miller practiced at bases such as Camp H.M. Smith on the island of Oahu in Hawaii and at Naval Air Station Lemoore in California.

When he began in Coffeyville, Miller was the only local obstetrician and gynecologist. Today there are three and all keep very busy, he says.