

Idaho Elks Rehabilitation Hospital now Idaho Elks Rehabilitation System

By Gaye Bunderson
IDAHO BUSINESS REVIEW

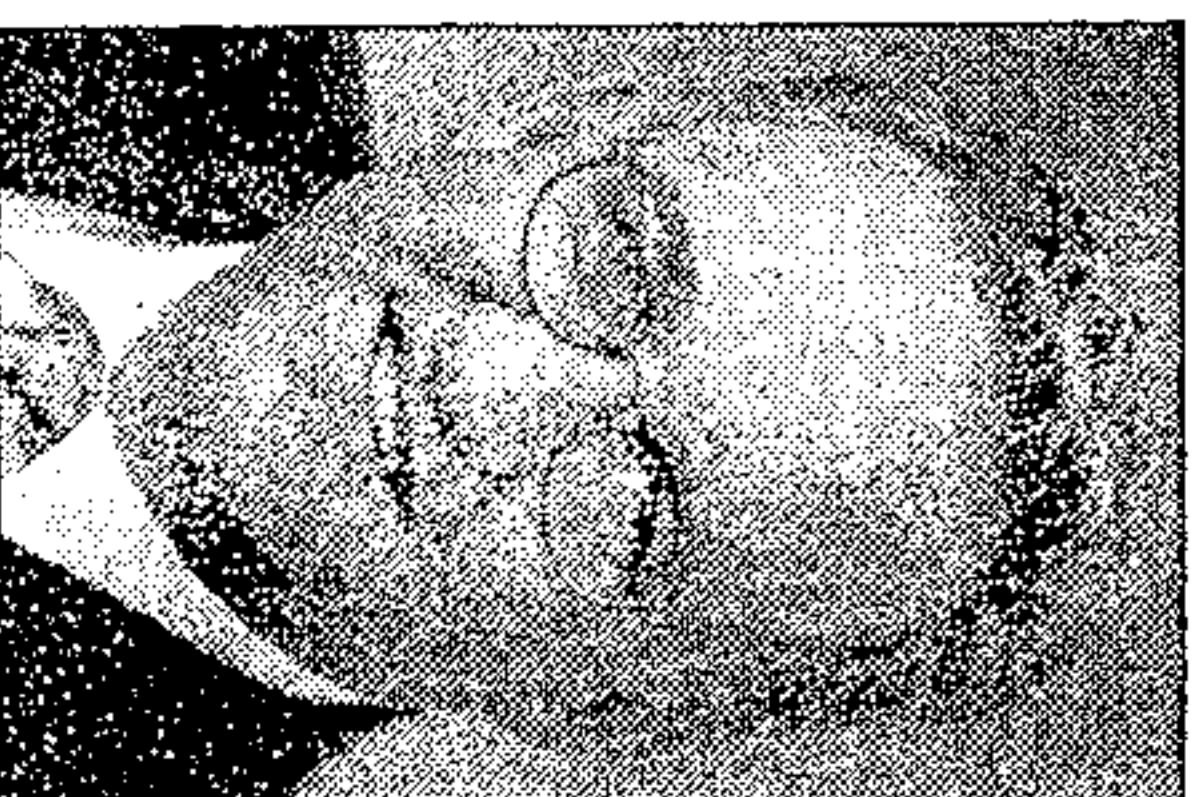
In 1947, a concern for polio victims prompted the building of a convalescent care facility by the Idaho State Elks Association. War and materials shortages hampered building efforts, but with ongoing work by the fraternal organization over the years, the Elks Rehabilitation Center eventually evolved as a respite care site for people with various crippling conditions.

In 1957, a medical facility was constructed on Fort Street in Boise that, through various transformations, evolved to become the Idaho Elks

Rehabilitation Hospital. Now, in 2008, current hospital administrator

Joe Caroselli said the hospital has branched out so much in both services and locations, this past summer it became known as the Idaho Elks Rehabilitation System.

The main hospital is at 600 N. Robbins Road in Boise, but the Idaho Elks Rehabilitation System also operates facilities in Nampa, Meridian and Ontario. It handles 1,200 inpatients a



Joe Caroselli

year and more than 15,000 outpatients, with an annual operating budget of \$50 million.

Caroselli attributes the growth to “pretty talented managers that had a vision for what we might be able to do,” he said.

IERS includes a Hearing and Balance unit, a Center for Wound Healing and Hyperbaric Medicine and a joint venture formed in 1996 with St. Luke’s called St. Luke’s Idaho Elks Rehabilitation Services, which goes by the acronym SLIERS. According to Caroselli, a new Boise Internal

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COURTESY PHOTO

The Idaho Elks Rehabilitation Hospital has grown extensively since its beginning in 1947.

Charity, coupled with fiscal conservatism, helps hospital meet needs

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Medicine Group is planned for the coming year, with a tentative opening date set for June.

Another segment of IERS is called Optimal Staffing, which was launched to help the hospital meet its staffing needs. "There's a tremendous shortage of talented individuals in health care," Caroselli said. "It takes a special kind of person in rehabilitative care."

The administrator said, "I just feel pretty good right now with where we are, but I would put [staffing needs] under the category of 'challenging.'" Currently, IERS has a staff of 733 people including doctors, nurses, therapists, social workers, administration employees and other workers.

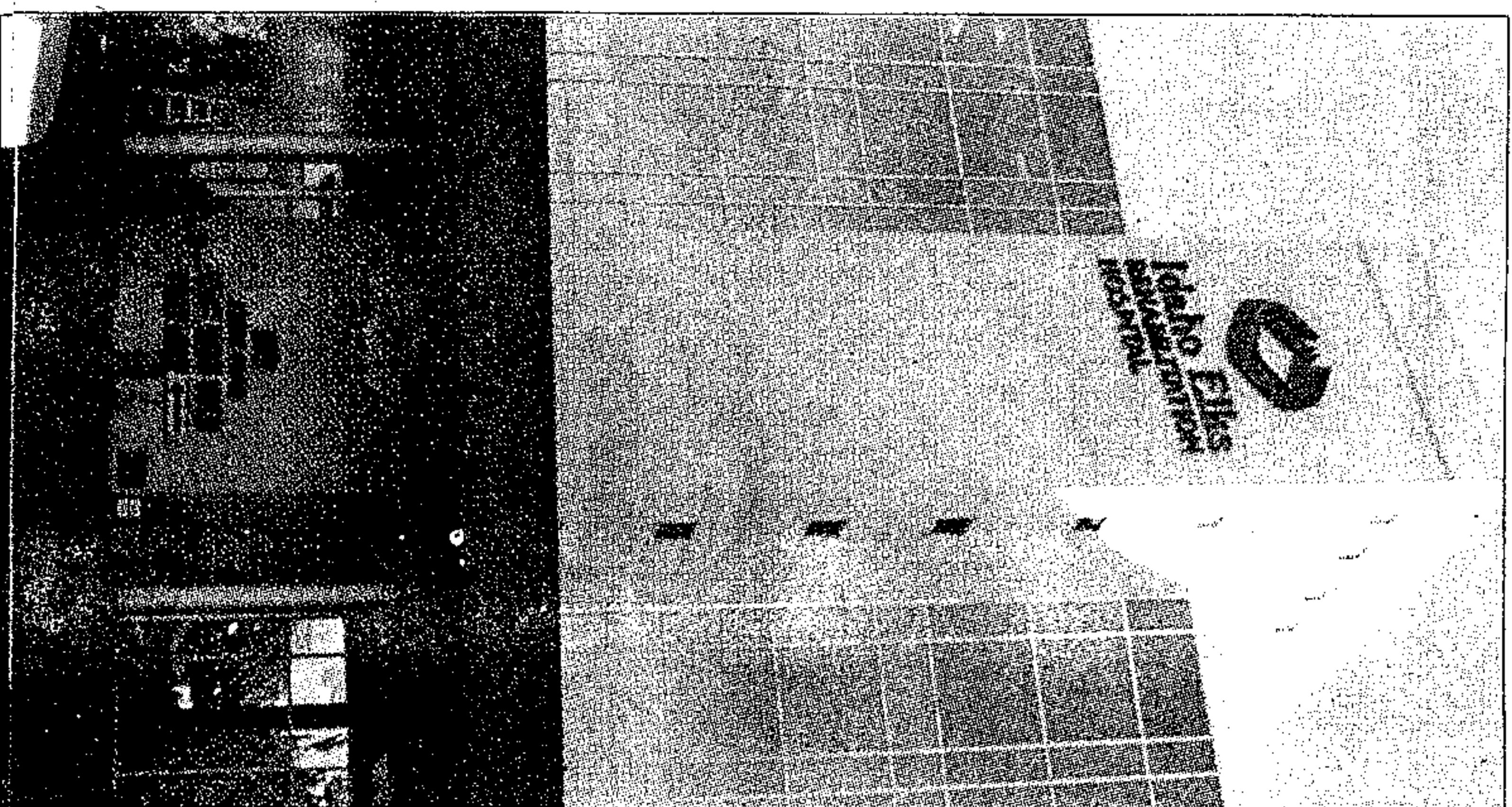
"There's a lot of lip service in other institutions about caring for their fellow man ..."

— Joe Caroselli, Elks Rehab

The hospital faces the usual challenges involved in patient remuneration for services, but the generosity of the Elks and some individuals helps the hospital realize available rehabilitative care for everyone. "Many of our patients have insurance, but many [are recipients of] their generous contributions through the Elks and the community," Caroselli said.

The hospital has received millions of dollars in charity care, according to Caroselli, who especially praised the Elks organization for its commitment. "The Elks birthed this baby because of their principles of charity, justice and brotherly love, and for their fidelity," he said. "There's a lot of lip service in other institutions about caring for their fellow man, but the Elks really do it."

Only time will tell how much the current global financial climate will affect



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The Idaho Elks Rehabilitation System's main facility is located at 600 N. Robbins Road in Boise.

Idaho Elks Rehabilitation and other medical institutions; but Caroselli, speaking from his own 30 years experience, said, "When there's an economic downturn, demand (for health care) increases, but ability to pay decreases.... It's anecdotal, but such times are a hard time for people."

The Elks are fiscally conservative, Caroselli said, and so is the hospital. "We keep prices low, take no risks, save money — we're just conservative."

He said the hospital's business model, rather than a silo organization, is a matrix organization focused on a goal-oriented team approach.

Elks, medical community partnership a good fit for everyone, says board chair

By Gave Bunderson
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Chairman of the Board of Idaho Elks Rehabilitation Hospital Timothy L. Fleming called the medical facility "one of the crown jewels of the entire Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks."

An area attorney, Fleming has served on the board for four years and is a member and past president of the Caldwell Elks Lodge #1448. He said the Idaho State Elks Association — which includes the 21 Elks lodges and their 10,500 members throughout the state — is extremely committed to the hospital and said it is the fraternal organization's major project.

Fleming believes that such partnerships between volunteer groups and the medical community offer a way to make high-quality health care in the U.S. more available and affordable. "The challenges of health care in our country that exist today will only be met by organizations like the Elks who insist on high standards and quality patient care," Fleming said. "Strategically, we will continue to explore future collaborative efforts with like-minded entities and individuals."

Elks lodges and individual members contribute financially through general donations, memorials, charitable trust funds and annual campaigns such as the Food Caravan. "[The Elks] are dedicated all year round to the Food Caravan, a nearly 50-year tradition," Fleming said. "This year, their efforts resulted in

almost \$120,000 in food and cash for the hospital."

Also, according to Fleming, many Elks members and their spouses volunteer at the hospital on a regular basis.

Fleming believes the hospital staff will remain "driven to explore opportunities for providing enhanced rehabilitation services to meet the needs of patients."



Timothy Fleming

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— Timothy L. Fleming,

Idaho State Elks Association and Idaho Elks Rehabilitation Hospital

"The latest example, Boise Internal Medicine ... is in the works," he said.

"Patient care was our top priority when we began in 1947, remains our top concern today and will continue in the future," Fleming said. "The mission of the hospital — to give people the opportunity to live life to its fullest — will never waiver."