



Fritz as sophomore



... as junior



... as senior

They called him Dr. Crazy

(From A1)

Common Cold." Later, Pauling would hail Klenner's work as "pioneering." In 1982, Klenner was called "the father of orthomolecular medicine" in *Omni*, a prestigious popular-science magazine.

Klenner's work with vitamin C led him to other vitamins. He began experimenting with B vitamins for neurological disorders, primarily multiple sclerosis, a crippling disease for which medical authorities say no cure is known.

Dr. Klenner claimed a cure lay in massive injections of B-complex vitamins, a claim doubted by the Multiple Sclerosis Society. Nevertheless, multiple sclerosis victims, many desperate and looking for miracles, began flocking to Dr. Klenner from all over the world.

Miracle worker on the fringe

Dr. Klenner was well aware that he was operating on the medical fringe with his vitamin treatments and the old-time home remedies he often recommended. But he seemed unconcerned. Other doctors in Reidsville and elsewhere thought of him at best as an eccentric maverick. Some considered him a quack and a kook.

They were skeptical of his treatments and his claims. They noted that his claims came only from clinical observation and were not backed with controlled experiments. They believed him quick to detect diseases that weren't there, often basing his diagnoses on a single symptom among many possibilities. They believed that he sometimes held out false hope to those who had none, and that his treatments not only were often ineffectual but sometimes dangerous.

That kept few patients away. Dr. Klenner's clinic always was crowded. Ailing people often waited hours to see him.

New patients, many having traveled hundreds of miles, sometimes were startled on arriving at Dr. Klenner's office. In 1960, he had moved up the street to larger quarters on the second floor over Mann's Drug Store, later Rite Aid. There he opened a clinic with several treatment rooms. A simple hand-lettered sign on the glass of the ground-floor door offered the only identification: "Fred R. Klenner, Diseases of the Chest, Limited General Practice."

To climb the rickety stairs and walk into Dr. Klenner's office was to step back in time a half century. It was an old-time doctor's office, a shabby place, dingy, dimly lit and dusty. The treatment rooms were cluttered with medicines, food and paraphernalia, the ceilings stained, walls splashed. Waiting room walls were covered with homilies, jokes, price schedules and children's drawings.

The doctor's personal office was furnished with stout antiques. Hornets' nests found by Dr. Klenner, an avid outdoorsman, hung from overhead pipes. A grandfather clock chimed the hours. A Bible always lay open.

Any patient's qualms about the surroundings usually were quelled quickly by Dr. Klenner's powerful presence. He was a big man with bushy eyebrows, a prominent nose and soft brown eyes that declared concern and authority. His commanding aura was calming and reassuring.

"You felt better when Dr. Klenner walked into the room," one patient said. "And when he touched you, you knew everything was going to be all right."

"He was the kindest, most caring and most giving man I've ever known," another said.

"He was as kindly and gentle as a big old bear," a family friend said.

A genius, his patients called him. Sincere. Dedicated. Devout. Wise.

He quoted the Bible to them. He prayed with them. And at night, at home, they knew, he prayed for them. Sometimes he would even anoint them with sacred waters from Lourdes, the Catholic shrine in southwestern France.

They adored him. For some, the feelings verged on worship.

Dr. Klenner helped them when others couldn't, they declared. He never sent bills, never pestered those who couldn't pay. Some patients he never charged at all. Many considered him and his unconventional methods vital to their very existence. That was why they

kept coming back to him for years. To them, Dr. Klenner truly was a miracle worker. He could do no wrong.

Papa's word was law

The burden of replacing such a man, perhaps even surpassing him, weighed heavily on the son. His father's expectations were high, and the pressures began to show early on Fritz.

A classmate from elementary school remembered Fritz putting his head on the desk and bursting into tears when a teacher handed back graded test papers. The classmate thought Fritz must have failed the test. Fritz had gotten a B-plus and was upset out of fear of what his father would say about a less-than-perfect showing.

Dr. Klenner reveled in his son. Friends and patients don't remember him happier than the day Fritz was born. He beamed to those who congratulated him and handed out not cigars but a local product — packages of Lucky Strike cigarettes wrapped in blue ribbons.

From the time Fritz was a toddler, he and his father were best friends. As Fritz grew, his father seemed almost jealous of his attentions. Fritz had no friends, and his father discouraged him from developing any, not allowing playmates to come to the house.

The big brick house on Huntsdale Drive in one of Reidsville's older upper-middle-class neighborhoods was Dr. Klenner's refuge, his sanctuary, and few outsiders were allowed to invade it. Those who did found dark rooms and unbelievable clutter. Books and papers were stacked everywhere. In some rooms, there was little floor space left for walking. Visitors sometimes had trouble finding a place to sit.

Dr. Klenner collected guns, old clocks, cut glass, coins and strange odds and ends that caught his attention. These were everywhere. He hoarded canned foods and stacked them in case lots throughout the house. He seemed comfortable only in clutter. Far into the night, he would sit surrounded by it, listening to classical music, reading or writing his medical papers.

Some neighbors considered Dr. Klenner secretive, almost reclusive, and his house an eyesore. The shrubbery in his yard grew wild, the grass high. Stacks of building materials, rusting vehicles and unusual machinery parts occupied the yard. Service people were reluctant to approach the house, fearing the big German shepherd Dr. Klenner kept inside.

Years later, Fritz would recall a lonely childhood spent in this house. He would talk of filling his time reading his father's books, practicing his cornet, studying with fascination his father's weapons.

Over and over, he would tell one particular story that seemed to have great significance to him.

In the late '40s, Dr. Klenner bought 256 acres of land at an estate sale handled by his father-in-law. It was rugged, wooded land on the Dan River near the towns of Leaksville, Spray and Draper, later merged as Eden. Dr. Klenner called this place "the Mountain."

Whenever he wasn't working, he was apt to be there, and he always took Fritz. They would tramp about, fire weapons and search for an elusive Bigfoot creature Dr. Klenner believed to live along the river. Dr. Klenner had made plaster casts of unusual footprints and sent off droppings to be analyzed by the Smithsonian Institution in his efforts to identify the creature. He also believed that fissures created by ancient lava flows lay under his land, and he and Fritz blasted holes with dynamite searching for them.

One day when Fritz was about 10, he was supposed to go to the Mountain with his father. He was in his room playing with a radio when his father got ready to go. His father called impatiently to him, but Fritz dawdled. By the time Fritz got downstairs, his father had gone without him. Fritz never got over it. He had failed his father, and his father had rejected him for it. That he could not bear.

Pleasing his father was foremost in Fritz's life. His father was Prussian, an autocrat. Papa ruled. His word was law, and his family obeyed. Fritz never dared question or challenge him. The son became parrot and mimic of the father.

Dr. Klenner was highly opinionated and unyielding in his positions. He had strong feelings against blacks, opposed integration and supported George Wallace in



Fritz, second from right, as a sophomore member of the library club at Reidsville

his bid for the presidency. Although he treated blacks at his clinic, he kept a separate waiting room for them right into the '80s.

He was strongly anti-communist, a supporter of the right-wing John Birch Society. He sympathized with American Nazis and Klansmen. He sometimes handed out anti-communist pamphlets in his office. He believed that communists had infiltrated all levels of government and were about to overtake the Western Hemisphere. He saw conspiracies all about and feared that the collapse of Western civilization was at hand.

His devout Catholicism was rigidly conservative and tinged with mysticism. He spoke often of Armageddon, the ultimate battle between good and evil, believed it was coming soon and intimated at times that he knew the actual date.

In all these things, Fritz was his father's son. Not only would he hold these same feelings all his life, he would amplify and act on them.

A life of fantasy

The strongest feelings in Fritz's life, other than those for his father and mother, seemed to be for guns. His father gave him a German Luger when he was in the seventh grade. Even then Fritz could recite muzzle velocities and other technical details of a wide range of weapons. While other kids sneaked free drugstore reads of comic books, Fritz concentrated on gun magazines.

He also became fascinated with Adolf Hitler and German history and drew swastikas on his notebooks. He developed a love for military paraphernalia as well, often wearing an Army fatigue jacket and other military attire to school.

In junior high and high school, other students thought him odd. He had no interest in sports or girls. He spent much of his free time at his father's clinic, where he assured patients that someday he, too, would be a doctor working alongside his father. He never considered any other options. That, after all, was his father's plan.

In 1969, at the beginning of Fritz's senior year at Reidsville High, Reidsville schools integrated. Dr. Klenner would not allow Fritz to attend. Instead he went to Woodward Academy, an expensive boarding school on 36 acres near College Park in Atlanta.

Three years earlier, Woodward had been a military school. But it had become co-educational and was known for its strong discipline and strong Christian emphasis. At Woodward, Fritz belonged to the rifle team, rifle club, pep club and band. He took first place in the science fair and graduated ninth in his class of 138. His father was proud.

In the fall of 1970, Fritz enrolled in the University of Mississippi, where both his sisters had gone. He was a pre-med student, majoring in biology. His life was right on track.

But in college, Fritz's life began to take strange twists and turns.

At Ole Miss, he fell for a girl, his first love affair. They began to talk of marriage, became engaged, broke up. Fritz apparently was devastated by the breakup, but he rarely talked about it later.

He did talk about other things. He told of wearing a pistol on campus and working as an undercover narcotics agent. He talked about taking secret military training in Georgia and of being jumped by a group of blacks and fighting them off single-handedly.

Fritz had begun to live a life of fantasy.

After four years at Ole Miss, he still hadn't received a degree, so he enrolled in a summer school session in 1974. His grades had been all right but not exceptional, only slightly above average. He had some

D's. It was hardly a record likely to get him into Duke Medical School.

After the summer session, Fritz needed only three hours of language credit to get a degree in biology. He'd completed nine hours of German, a language in which he and his father sometimes bantered, and that fall he signed up for a correspondence course for the final three hours. He never finished, but at Christmas he went home and told his family that he'd graduated, that his diploma would come in the mail.

Fritz went to work in his father's clinic. In May, after the diploma still hadn't arrived, his father demanded an explanation from the university. A dean wrote back to say that the school had no December commencement and that Fritz had not yet earned a degree because he hadn't completed his final German course. Fritz told his father that enemies in the language department had intercepted his work and he would straighten it out, but he never received his degree.

In 1976, while working in the clinic, Fritz met and began dating Ruth Dupree, a Meredith College student and the daughter of a patient. He was making plans then to go to medical school, considering many possibilities.

Near the end of that year, he announced his acceptance at Duke Medical School. His father fairly glowed with pride.

In January 1977, Fritz rented a \$240-a-month, one-bedroom apartment, 5-G, in Holly Hill Apartments on LaSalle Street in Durham, just a couple of blocks from the Duke campus. Every Monday morning, he would leave Reidsville in the new BMW 320 his father bought him, drive off to Durham to attend classes and return on Friday to work in the clinic and talk about his studies. His father soon was boasting to patients about how well Fritz was doing at Duke.

During that year, Ruth and Fritz announced their engagement. They planned a Christmas wedding. Invitations already had been sent out when Fritz suddenly revealed that he wouldn't be able to go through with it. He had stomach cancer. The wedding was canceled.

Within a year, Fritz would be miraculously cured. It would not be the last time he would contract serious and life-threatening diseases, only to be saved by his father's miracle cures.

By 1978, Fritz was spending a lot of time at the Colonial Gun Shop in Hillsborough, owned at the time by John Forrest. Fritz presented himself as a doctor at Duke. Although Forrest thought Fritz looked a little young to be a doctor, he didn't question it, and they became friends.

Forrest had a garage behind his house, where three nights a week, he, Doug Birch and Bruce Robinson, both mechanics, would work on BMWs. Fritz started taking his car there. Soon he was hanging out at the garage almost every night. He would come wearing a white doctor's coat with a Duke logo on it and a stethoscope in the pocket.

Wherever he went, Fritz carried a doctor's satchel filled with medicines, syringes and medical tools. He also carried a sackful of vitamins. Since infancy, he had been dosed heavily with vitamins, and he had become not only a vitamin junkie but a vitamin evangelist. He gobbled vitamins by the handfuls and advocated them to whomever would listen.

Forrest and his friends thought it strange that a doctor would have so much time to spend hanging around a garage. Some nights they thought he'd never leave. Finally, he'd amble off, saying he had to make rounds at the hospital or check on research animals. Behind his back, Forrest, Birch and Robinson had a name for Fred, as they knew him. They called him Dr. Crazy.

(Continued on A7)

'Whether he's clairvoyant or crazy remains to be seen'

Fritz Klenner had several lovers — women he sensed were vulnerable. One friend for three years found herself involved in a love affair with him during 1983. These are excerpts from her diary. Ann is her daughter. The name has been changed.

Nov. 10, 1982 — I am constantly anticipating that perhaps Fritz and I will develop an affair. We've been thru so much together — his divorce as well as mine, Ann's birth, his cancer and at one point seeming sure death. Now I long to touch him.

Dec. 23, 1982 — He's been here (my house) only once. He finally did touch me, but only upon leaving.

Feb. 10, 1983 — Yesterday Fritz came by and gave Ann a cute little puppy on a heart and me a necklace he made. Today I met him in Greensboro for, again, moments. It is always a touch and a promise of what is to come.

Feb. 16, 1983 — I had a chat with Fritz at the store today and my head still reels. I do seem to attract curious people. He is a survivalist, which I can understand and certainly have leanings toward, but where I'm for retreat, he is for action. Too much Vietnam and religion.

He's ready to defend his fellow man and has reason to believe that will come

about in the imminent future. If you believe that, then it's hard to see any reason to work for today. If all life is to be dismantled, does it really matter if I get a shelf put up in my closet? I do hope I get to share my reasoning with Fritz some day. Forever elusive!

Feb. 23, 1983 — I had a long visit with Fritz last night. Whether he's clairvoyant or crazy remains to be seen. The only real difference is whether or not you guess right, and I'm sure he'd as soon be a crazy.

But he definitely foresees nuclear war, and he plans to be a survivor. Romance of romance, he has invited Ann and I to go along and, despite all, I agreed. So there is his cousin Susie and her two boys, his sister Mary and her daughter, Lynn, and Ann and I so far that I know of in the party.

The tea leaves or whatever he reads say between now and the spring thaws in Europe are the times to worry the

most. And naturally it is with great reasonability and justification that he reads these messages. And I try to roll along in my normal pattern, wondering once again if there will be a tomorrow. But, too, there still is romance, and I must admit Fritz has charmed me.

March 29, 1983 — With Fritz, I am beginning to sense that my needs from him are more than he understands how to give. He's on his own trip just like everybody else and only sees others as they are reflected in his eyes. That should be the joke of the world, that all the world we see is only ourselves in a multitude of mirrors.

April 6, 1983 — Last night I actually went out for supper with Fritz. Fritz has bought property in Idaho and wanted to know if Ann and I would move out there. In theory anyway, he's beginning to dream of something other than disaster.

April 11, 1983 — Fritz came to supper with wine. I had great hopes that meant a long evening, but instead he left at Ann's bedtime.

April 19, 1983 — I saw Fritz again momentarily. I do fear we delude ourselves about each other because we do not see enough to understand what's really going on. Oh, but I so hope — that's the name of it all, just hopes, no realities and lots of fears.



Fritz in '82