



Dr. D. William Scott (Part I) -- 4/9/2007

*By Tina Mathews, CRRL Intern, editor
Interviewed by Sue Willis*

Dr. David William Scott, Jr., is a native of the Fredericksburg area who was 91 at the time of this interview in 2003. He shares with us his vast knowledge of the changing landscape of the area as well as changes in the medical field since he received his degree over 50 years ago. Dr. Scott also served in WWII and shares with us here some of his experiences dealing with leprosy among other things. He was one of the first doctors using penicillin and so many other drugs that are so common today. I hope that you will enjoy it as much as I did.

Interviewer: Good evening, Dr. Scott.

Dr. Scott: Good evening.

Interviewer: Today is July 1, 2003. We are just very glad to see you today.

Dr. Scott: Thank you.

Interviewer: Just out of curiosity now, when were you born?

Dr. Scott: December 7, 1911.

Interviewer: That makes you... I can't add; how old does that make you?

Dr. Scott: 91.

Interviewer: 91. Great! It's not good news, but did you hear about Katherine Hepburn this week?

Dr. Scott: Yes, I heard.

Interviewer: I have read a couple of articles about you so far and the one that I particularly liked was Goolrick's. John Goolrick interviewed you once and he wrote an article about how you always wanted to live in Fredericksburg. You wanted to stay here.

Dr. Scott: I'm sorry. I don't remember that far back.

Interviewer: Where were you born? In Fredericksburg?

Dr. Scott: Right here in Fredericksburg.

Interviewer: You were born at home?

Dr. Scott: Yes.

Interviewer: Where was your house? Where did you live?

Dr. Scott: 1100 Charles Street. That's on the corner of Charles and Amelia.

Interviewer: Has that always been the Scott house?

Dr. Scott: Yes, ever since 1824. [The house was built in 1824, but the Scott and Doggett families did not own it until 1872. He clarifies this later.]

Interviewer: 1824! So that was who ... your great-grandfather?

Dr. Scott: My great-grandfather bought it.

Interviewer: Who was your great-grandfather?

Dr. Scott: Hugh Stephens Doggett. He was rather well known in Fredericksburg, having been Mayor several times [Doggett was mayor from 1877-1880, one term], and having been a captain in the Virginia Grays and having had several other positions, of course.

Interviewer: How did the Doggetts get to be Scotts? They married a Scott-? If the Doggetts bought the house in 1824, or built the house...

Dr. Scott: They did not. The house was originally built in 1824 for the rector of St. George's Episcopal Church. The previous house had burned and this house was built for him. And he sold it several years later [correction: 1853] to the brother of the mayor of Fredericksburg; I don't remember his name [Franklin Slaughter]. He kept it until ... well he had died or was incompetent [he had been declared incompetent in 1869] and in 1872 my great-grandfather bought it from the other man's daughter [Franklin Slaughter's wife].

Interviewer: So, that was a Doggett who bought it then, in 1872.

Dr. Scott: Just his daughter. [This is not correct; Hugh Stephens Doggett bought it]

Interviewer: Oh, a daughter-ah! And she was a Scott then.

Dr. Scott: She was the heir to the father. [Hugh Doggett bought the house. His daughter Fanny married William Scott in 1868. Fanny was the only surviving child of Hugh Doggett, whose other children had died in infancy or childhood].

Interviewer: This sounds strange but there are so many Scotts in this town. Are you all related-- or not at all?

Dr. Scott: I don't know. It's possible that we might be, but we don't see them closely enough to keep track of it.

Interviewer: For instance, my neighbor is Susan Scott Neal, who writes the newspaper articles.

Dr. Scott: Susan is my first cousin, once removed. Her father was my first cousin.

Interviewer: All right, thank you. I always have trouble with those "first removed". You're one who understands those?

Dr. Scott: Yes.

Interviewer: You said you were born in that house and then you grew up in that house?

Dr. Scott: Yes.

Interviewer: All the way through high school?

Dr. Scott: Yes. Up until I went away to college. After that, I never lived there constantly until after the war when I came back. We stayed there until we could find a place of our own.

Interviewer: Yes. And that would be with your wife. That would be Margaret...

Dr. Scott: Margaret Tucker Scott.

Interviewer: I was wondering what her maiden name was. Where did you go when you returned from the service?

Dr. Scott: When I came back from the service, we lived at 1100 Charles Street until we bought a house [713 Mary Ball Street]. We stayed there, I think, 10 years and then built a house out near Oak Hill Stables. It was a nicer house and more what we wanted. As time passed, my father had died and my mother had died. My two sisters wanted to have less responsibility so they wanted an apartment so I took over the house [at 1100 Charles Street again.]

Interviewer: When was that that you took over the house?

Dr. Scott: [We renovated it and moved in] in 1980.

Interviewer: And you lived in it again until...

Dr. Scott: Until very recently, the last 3 or 4 years, I guess. My son has been living there since.

Interviewer: David lives there.

Dr. Scott: Yes.

Interviewer: And then you went to Chancellor's Village, I believe you said.

Dr. Scott: Yes.

Interviewer: Well, compared to some people, you did your share of moving.

Dr. Scott: Well, until the service years I lived in Virginia. When I joined the service, I was stationed in Baltimore and served an internship. I was then assigned to sea duty for convoy escort and anti-submarine duty. I was over there for approximately a year. I came back and was sent to Chicago. I remained in Chicago until I resigned from the service. That was all a total of six years.

Interviewer: And what service were you in?

Dr. Scott: The Public Health Service as a basic service. Then I was assigned to the Coast Guard, under the Navy, for sea duty.

Interviewer: I see. But you could practice as a doctor when you were doing that.

Dr. Scott: That's what I was doing. That was my assignment. I was medical officer on a convoy escort, escorting ships across the North Atlantic. That was cold!

Interviewer: I bet it was-you were supposed to stay inside! We have major things that we need to discuss which we won't all do tonight. One of the items we would like to discuss is about your doctor years. Another topic we would like to discuss is about your home. And, we always like to know if you have other hobbies, besides being a doctor. Although being a doctor might have kept you too busy to have hobbies.

Dr. Scott: Which do you want to do?

Interviewer: If there's time ... are you too tired now? Should we stop and do it another day?

Dr. Scott: No. I can talk to you for a while yet.

Interviewer: Let's hear about your doctor time. I think that is very important. You went to Randolph-Macon College?

Dr. Scott: That was pre-med. And then I went to the University of Virginia Medical School.

Interviewer: And then you went to Baltimore, did you say?

Dr. Scott: I went to Baltimore for an internship. When I finished that, my commission in the Public Health Service was activated and after another year of internship as a junior service officer, I was assigned to sea duty as a medical officer with the Coast Guard, under the Navy. The Coast Guard operated under the Navy during wartime and especially for this type of thing. There are strictly Navy personnel over the Coast Guard in all aspects.

Interviewer: What type of physician were you?

Dr. Scott: At that time I did most any thing that came along. As time went on, I specialized in internal medicine and I studied and became a Fellow of the American Board of Internal Medicine and a Fellow of the American College of Physicians. And that helped boost me up in the service.

Interviewer: After you were out of the service, where were you practicing? Did you come back to Fredericksburg?

Dr. Scott: Yes, I came back to Fredericksburg. I resigned my commission in Chicago. I had gone up from a Lieutenant JG, which is the same as a second lieutenant. I had gone up to Lieutenant Commander. When I resigned and came back home, I had planned to take a month off before I went back to work. I got back home on the first of December. I had been corresponding with Dr. Philip Cox and Dr. Lloyd Bush, having known that they had just opened the Professional Building on Caroline Street. The day I got home, I went down to see them to arrange for my office to open the first of January. And Dr. Cox said, "What do you mean, the first of January? I've got appointments for you right now!" So I had appointments and one of the first patients became and remained a patient of mine throughout my practice, along with her children when she got married and had children.

Interviewer: I don't know where you mean when you say The Professional Building on Caroline Street. Where was that building?

Dr. Scott: On the corner of Caroline and Amelia. That was where we remodeled the old Tinder House.

Interviewer: Oh, okay. Now it is the Tinder House -there is a Sullivan on the corner and then is the Tinder House next?

Dr. Scott: No, the Tinder House is on the corner of Caroline and Amelia, the northeast corner.

Interviewer: Was that named after the family that had lived there?

Dr. Scott: Yes.

Interviewer: Then you and the other two doctors made it into a clinic?

Dr. Scott: Yes.

Interviewer: And the two doctors were Dr. Cox and Dr. Bush?

Dr. Scott: Yes.

Interviewer: I have heard of Dr. Bush. I thought he lived out on River Road.

Dr. Scott: He owned a house out there. But he didn't live there. First of all, he lived down on Caroline on the block below the Tinder House, where the old Mr. Birkhead the school superintendent at one time. Then he later bought what was the Stoffregan house on the corner of Amelia and Caroline also, but across the street from the Professional Building.

Interviewer: Did the three of you practice there for quite a while?

Dr. Scott: Well, no. Actually by the time I got settled, another doctor, Dr. Gordon Jones, had come in and opened an obstetrical practice. Not too long after that, a third man Dr. C. P. Ford, came in and opened a pediatrics practice in that building.

Interviewer: What time are we talking about?

Dr. Scott: This was in the forties. [He returned to Fredericksburg in December 1946].

Interviewer: Was your practice joined with the other doctors?

Dr. Scott: No.

Interviewer: Were those the only doctors in town at that time?

Dr. Scott: No, there was Dr. John Cole, Dr. Thomas Dew, and Dr. Blight Harrison and Dr. James Willis. There were at least a dozen here at that time.

Interviewer: There were quite a few doctors for a small town.

Dr. Scott: Yes. For a small town, there were a number.

Interviewer: Which is good -- we need doctors today, don't we?

Dr. Scott: There are over 200 here now.

Interviewer: I know. But we have a lot more people! So you stayed and worked in that building until you retired?

Dr. Scott: No, I left there after several years, I don't remember exactly how many. But we decided we had other doctors who wanted to come and we decided that building was out of date and didn't have

any place for patients to park. So we bought some property up opposite what was the new hospital on Fall Hill Avenue.

Interviewer: We'd call it the old one today?

Dr. Scott: Yes. And we built the building across the street from that.

Interviewer: Was that the three of you who built that or some other doctors as well? Was that you and Dr. Cox and Dr. Bush?

Dr. Scott: Well, Dr. Bush decided not to move over there. Dr. Cox and I and Dr. Jones and Dr. Earnhardt, who had come in at that time, so there were four of us, and Dr. Painter had also come in. I don't recall anybody else. But new people came in and occupied the rest of the building.

Interviewer: I didn't catch all the names. You said Dr. Earnhardt ?

Dr. Scott: Dr. Earnhardt had come into partnership with Dr. Jones in obstetrics. He was there and Dr. Earnhardt came in and went in with him.

Interviewer: You were across from what we call the old hospital on Fall Hill, correct?

Dr. Scott: Yes.

Interviewer: So you are too young to remember anything about the older hospital that is behind the library?

Dr. Scott: The old River Flats building. I remember when they used it.

Interviewer: What did they call it?

Dr. Scott: Well, it had always been called the River Flats Building. It was a rooming house is what it was. I don't know if it is still there or not.

Interviewer: It is still there. It is apartments. It's not the wooden building; a brick building was built for the hospital.

Dr. Scott: It was wooden back then.

[Dr. Scott is talking about the original wooden building, which he remembers from his early years. As the interviewer, I was talking

about the second hospital, the brick building on that same space. Dr. Scott actually practiced in the brick hospital building on Sophia Street until the Fall Hill Avenue hospital was built in the early 1950's.]

Interviewer: Then did you stay there [Medical Arts Building] until you retired?

Dr. Scott: The new hospital had been built on Fall Hill Avenue, just before we built our building. That is why we built ours, where we did, across the street from the hospital. Years later, we sold that building to the hospital. They wanted the space. A number of years later, they decided they needed more space and that is when they started building the new hospital on the hill. Now they are adding another 100 rooms.

Interviewer: And when you retired, your office was still across from the old hospital on Fall Hill Avenue?

Dr. Scott: Yes.

Interviewer: Do you remember what year you retired?

Dr. Scott: 1980. That was right after I had an injury to my back, and had a disc operation, which was unsuccessful. Six months later, I had another one. This one was successful as far as getting rid of the pain was concerned. But it left me with a paralyzed bladder and a paralyzed bowel, which I have had ever since. That was why I had to retire.

Interviewer: That must have been hard on you. Dr. Scott: After a couple of years I had learned to control it enough that I could have continued a limited practice. But I had been away from it by that time for several years, so I decided not to.

Interviewer: That must have been difficult for you. You obviously enjoyed your practice a great deal, didn't you?

Dr. Scott: Yes.

Interviewer: I am assuming that you had a great many patients.

Dr. Scott: I did. I don't know how many, but I had plenty!

Interviewer: I never have understood what a patient does when their doctor retires. How do they decide where the patient goes? Does the patient just decide?

Dr. Scott: The patients decide. A doctor can recommend someone.

Interviewer: Where do the records go?

Dr. Scott: The records go to whomever the patient decides to see.

Interviewer: Were there any new techniques taught while you were a doctor? Lots of them, I suppose?

Dr. Scott: When I graduated from medical school, penicillin had not been discovered. Sulfanilamide had just been discovered during my last year in medical school. So during the next several years, while I was in the service and on shipboard, I tried to keep up with the literature and when they became available, I used the new drugs. After the experience as a ship's doctor, I was transferred to Chicago, at the Marine Hospital. I started using the new drugs as they came along, and also during my practice from 1946 until I retired in 1980.

Interviewer: Many changes! Well, we can talk about that some more. I think we need to stop for tonight, and we'll continue on another night. Would that be all right?

Dr. Scott: That will be fine.