

Sally Foote Hubby

Recollections of Dr. Brad Walker:

An account of growing up in Cornwall would be incomplete without mentioning the importance of Dr. Brad Walker in the lives of my brother and sister and me. When you climb trees, walk on stone walls, ski on ice, play in haylofts, run through poison ivy, and get stung by bees, you need medical help on a regular basis. We thought of the waiting room in Dr. Walker's village home as if it were a part of our own house, and there must have been times that he muttered over seeing the Foote children there so often. I clearly remember the hooked rugs and the rocking chairs and the clay and tin ornaments which decorated the room and were made by Katie Walker. I remember the tall glass-front bookcases in Dr. Walker's front office that held an array of bottles and jars, cotton and syringes, and the big tongue depressors which I dreaded. I remember his full head of snowy white hair and the way his glasses sat so far down at the end of his nose that when he looked at me he had to tilt his head back to see through them. I remember how mesmerized I was as I watched the ash on his Kool cigarette get longer and longer and even longer....and still not fall off....as he puffed and padded around the examining table, wrapping my twisted ankle or stitching up a cut.

Once I had a wart removed, which to my ten year-old personality was extremely interesting, and so thinking that all the world would be equally fascinated by it I asked Dr. Walker if I could keep it. He put it in a little glass vial with some liquid, and I kept that wart on my bureau all summer long. He never spoke very much, but somehow he made me feel brave when I wanted to cry. At home our Pop maintained a First Aid cupboard, but if our mishaps went beyond the home remedies of iodine, tweezers or an ice bag, off we would go to see Dr. Walker in the village and, amazingly, somehow Dr. Walker always seemed to have time to see us. We mended fast and soon forgot our splinters and scrapes, and happily continued our childhood lifestyles without a backward glance or a lesson remembered about how to be more careful.

We were completely oblivious to the really challenging medical cases Dr. Walker faced in his practice as a "country doctor". Only as a teenager did I finally become aware of the long hours and late-night house calls he made, the comfort and advice he gave, and of the hundreds of babies he delivered. He seemed straight out of a Norman Rockwell painting. Indeed, had Norman Rockwell known Brad Walker, I believe he would have painted him over and over again, caring for the residents of Cornwall. In one of those pictures, I would be the little girl with bandages on both knees, who did not realize then that I was in the care of someone very, very special.