

Pat and Jerry Blakey
Interview by Jean Bouteiller

Dr. Walker was dedicated and worked tirelessly. Pat was impressed with how he came to the house when someone was sick, often late at night. He would sit at the side of the bed, “and he had that way of looking at you, like he could see right through you. I think he had more than just a medical ability, he really had the ability to see into you,” Pat said. When she was in high school she had a hypothyroid condition and had to have a breathing treatment from Dr. Walker every week. The only day her father didn’t work was Sunday. They didn’t have a car, so Dr. Walker would get up early every Sunday and meet them and do the treatment, which went on for weeks. Dr. Walker never stopped working, right up until he died. Pat remembered seeing Dr. Walker stop in at the nursing home to visit her elderly aunt in the early to mid 1970’s. She said he was barely able to get out of the car and walk into the building, but still he came.

They both pointed out what seems amazing to us now that everyone’s medications would be left on a tray in the vestibule, so patients could pick them up. Some of the medications were very potent. Her mother, for example, was on Thorazine, a very potent medicine. Anyone could pick them up, and you could see what your neighbors were being treated for. You could even send your children over to pick them up.

They don’t remember Katie being in the doctor’s office, except one time when the whole family had gone in for their polio vaccines. Everyone had received his or hers and it was Jerry’s turn. As soon as Dr. Walker came over to him he passed out onto the floor. Katie heard the crash, came in and took the children out to the waiting room so they wouldn’t be scared. She also answered the phone sometimes. Once, when Dr. Walker wasn’t in, Pat called because one of the children had eaten some mushrooms out in the yard. Katie suggested that Pat get the child to the hospital, because they could be poisonous. The child had her stomach pumped.

Dr. Walker didn’t talk much when you were in his office, mostly just direct questions. If you came in for a physical exam for school or insurance purposes he would ask why you were there. Often he would just quickly check your blood pressure and pulse, ask you how you felt, and send you on your way. If you weren’t sick or injured he didn’t want to waste his time on you. I had this experience as well. One time Jerry hurt his back and shoulders while moving heavy rolls of carpet. Dr. Walker asked what he was doing when he got hurt. When he heard the answer he said that Jerry “was built too light for that. Why don’t you go and drink a few more beers and put a little weight on.”

Dr. Walker had his Nash car with the passenger seat that folded completely down. He was able to take patients to the hospital in this way.

When asked about payments and insurance, the Blakeys said that they didn’t have insurance at that time and didn’t know if anyone did. Pat distinctly remembered what he charged for the birth of each of their children...\$50.

Pat's sister, Nancy (Benedict), spent some time as Dr. Walker's secretary. Pat remembered there being a nurse there at one time, whom she thought was from Goshen, but she could not remember her name. She also remembered there being a woman doctor that he worked with or conferred with, and Pat thought her name was Dr. Dolan.

The Blakeys said that Dr. Walker started what is now the Visiting Nurse Association (not sure of the exact name), but that the name was W. Bradford Walker Nursing Association, or something similar. They are quite sure it began with his name, and I remember that too.

They said that in the main entrance of the Charlotte Hungerford Hospital (before it was changed) there used to hang a large portrait of Dr. Walker (perhaps when he was Chief of Staff). They said it was moved to another room, or office when the entrance was changed. It would be nice if we could find it. If we can, perhaps we could get it on loan for the exhibit.

They said that the son, Tom, who had been the doctor, was deceased. He had been a diabetic. Because of the diabetes his vision had deteriorated so much that he could no longer do any surgical procedures.

They talked about Dr. Walker playing the piano and singing. He could remember huge, long verses of humorous camp-like songs. He used to come to the annual meetings at the First Church of Christ (now the United Church of Christ) and play the piano.

They remembered the waiting room as being comfortable and very homey.

On some additional points, they said that Katie was instrumental in starting zoning in Cornwall in 1942. This is something quite interesting, and I can check into records in the town vault to see if there is any indication of this.

We also wondered if there would be a way to find out how many Cornwall babies were delivered by Dr. Walker, and if any were delivered in his car.