

Dr. Bradford Walker

During the years when Dr. Walker was THE doctor in Cornwall he was a pivotal figure in the community. He touched the lives of most of its residents, and of many in nearby towns.

My family moved to Cornwall in 1940 when I was twelve. Dr. Walker became our family doctor. My mother was a nurse, one critical of doctors. Dr. Walker more than met her standards. He took care of my childhood ailments, always coming to the house, no matter what the weather, nor how busy he was. He was gruff, but he cared, and that was a great comfort.

One year my parents and I were invited to have Thanksgiving dinner with the Walkers. This was in 1945. My father had just returned from a job as a war correspondent in China for Harper's Magazine. In the Walker dining room there was a telephone, on a long cord, that sat on the corner of the dining room table, right by Dr. Walker's elbow. Several calls came in during dinner. Dr. Walker patiently answered each one.

After my marriage, and when Henry and I were living in Milldale, CT, I made the decision to have Dr. Walker deliver my first baby in Torrington rather than going to the much closer hospital in Waterbury. Dr. Walker delivered three more babies for me, all with the minimum of pain killers. He was a doctor who encouraged breast feeding when many doctors and hospitals found it too much trouble.

Dr. Walker was known for his fast driving when on the way to the hospital or some emergency. I remember one night when one of my children was on the way and Dr. Walker arrived in my hospital room in the middle of the night and sank into a chair with a sigh. He then reached down to tie his shoe laces. He had been intent on getting to the hospital before my baby arrived, and had not taken the time to tie his shoes before leaving Cornwall.

Over the years my parents and I were invited to Cornwall parties, often at the home of Dodie and Merrill Prentice, where the evening would end up with an overflow of people sitting on the floor singing and playing guitars. I particularly remember that Dr. Walker's verses for "Three Old Ladies Stuck In The Lavatory" were choice. He also sang another special ditty about a billy goat. It was funny, and a little bit risqué'.

In the summer when I was 16 I worked for a month or so in Dr. Walker's office in his Cornwall home answering the telephone in the afternoon. This gave his wife, Katie, a chance to shop or just get out of the house. At the time Dr. Walker was without help in that office. Calls came in from all over Cornwall and nearby towns. I realized then how many people depended on his medical help.

How different it is today when almost no doctors make house calls, or take the interest in the people of a town in the way Dr. Walker did.

Virginia Walker Hart (no relation) April, 2011