

Dr. John Trenton Tucker

interviewed by

Mrs. W.A. Schmidt

May 7, 1975

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ORAL HISTORIES OF FORT WORTH, INC.

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July 31, 1893

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My name is John Trenton Tucker. I was born July 31, 1893. My parents were Nanno McDonald and Trenton Moses Tucker. My mother came from Dayton, Ohio and my father was born in a covered wagon without the attendance of a physician near Rogers, Arkansas in 1870. My parents were married in Fort Worth, Texas.

My mother was raised by her grandmother since her mother died. My father's profession was a wholesale drug house known as H. W. Williams & Co., which at the present time is known as the Southwestern Drug Company on West Vickery Street here in the City of Fort Worth.

My father had two brothers and two sisters. They've all passed on. One of them was the superintendent of mail carriers here in the City of Fort Worth. The other one moved to California. I know nothing about him.

I had one sister and one brother. Both are dead. I'm the oldest one. My sister died in 19-- I don't know the date when my sister died. She died of childbirth about 42 years ago. My brother passed away about two years ago in the City of Ada, Oklahoma. He attended college at Texas A&M for approximately two years and pulled out. He worked at various and sundry jobs with not much success at any of them. I went ahead and went into the medical field. My wife influenced me. She was in training here at St. Joseph's Hospital where I was an intern. We got married and had our son about three years later. She talked--nothing would do but he should go to medical college which he did. He graduated from the University of Texas. He served in the Army about 28 months in the South Pacific Area. He and I built a little office building at the corner of West Third and Taylor Street in the downtown area. I disposed of that about four years ago to the certain bank. We moved to the present location about two weeks ago.

Interviewer: This is a beautiful building. As a well central located area, I would think then that you had patients from all over the City of Fort Worth.

Tucker: I did, principally of the African race and of the Mexican/American population. The first time I practiced medicine was with a great and dear friend of mine, Dr. E. P. Hall, Sr. I stayed with him approximately about nine or ten months time. I then went with Dr. Bacon Saunders who built the Flat Iron Building. I was with him up until the time of his passing. And from then on, I have been out by myself, which has been quite a long time.

Interviewer: Did you always want to be a doctor?

Tucker: My mother's brother was a doctor here in this city - Dr. R. D. Talvot. T-a-l-v-o-t or v-o-double t, I don't know which it is. That was one thing that influenced me. I took my training pre-medic at TCU. I'm an alumni of Baylor Medical College. Post graduate work at Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota --

shared a hospital in New Orleans under a very loveable character who's passed on now. I can't think of it right now, but anyway he was a very devout gentleman who said, "If any of you roughnecks want to go to church sometime and confess your sins, I go to Mass nearly every morning about 6 o'clock." Well, I don't know how many took the gentleman's invitation up. I took it up about one or two times, and I never particularly got too much out of it--being a protestant. If a fellow can't preach a good sermon, he doesn't last very long in our church. I'm a member of the Christian Church of Disciples of Christ of America. Riverside Christian Church of--honorary member. I've never changed it, and I never go back to it either. I don't go to church. I was operated on for a malignancy nine years ago. They took about three feet of intestines. And I've been kind of a semi-invalid since then. I practice until about twelve o'clock, and then I pull out and go home. I go home to a lovely woman I've been married to for over fifty years.

Interviewer: I take it then that you affiliated with this Riverside Church at an early time.

Tucker: I did. I was an honorary member. I was an original charter member of the church due to the influence of the First Christian Church. I married this girl. She's a Roman Catholic--very devout. She wouldn't change her religion for anybody. And I didn't really expect her to and wouldn't want her to. I believe in religion of the soul--both in religion and in politics. I voted for my good friend, Nixon--and down the river where he went.

Interviewer: You mentioned that your father held property in the Riverside area. Could you tell me exactly what property this was and what became of this property.

Tucker: It was in the southeastern part of Oakhurst division. He had fifteen acres there and a fellow by the name of King who developed this addition--was a very successful man, too. It was right this side of Mount Olivet Cemetery. It's all filled up now with houses. My father died in 1921--years ago.

Interviewer: Well now did he have this property just as an investment?

Tucker: That's all. He owned about 80 acres farm land that his father had left him up this side--right east of Saginaw. We were on a little creek called Little Fossil Creek. We lived in Riverside most of the time.

Interviewer: I'm a little confused here because now he was born up in Arkansas.

Tucker: And they moved directly to Weatherford out here--this side of Abilene since his father was in the Civil War. His father was a member of the Cavalry; his twin brother was shot dead on a little battle they had down in Louisiana or in Mississippi. And he's been gone since 1917 or 18-- thereabouts. And his wife, too. He was a farmer. And he was an Englishman born in Birmingham, England. And a very successful gentleman and a very religious man. He was a very devout honorary member of the Birdville Baptist Church. And I remember, I stayed with them for about--oh 2-1/2 or 3 years. We went to church every Sunday. He was a deacon in his church. His name was Aaron Trenton Tucker. That's where I get the Trenton. And my grandson is Trenton. He's majoring in business administration and marketing and gets his degree in November or December.

Interviewer: Now if you were with your grandparents considerably, I'm sure there's things in your recollection when you were a child of what went on in that area.

Tucker: Well what went on was principally a childish dream you might say which was magnified by two hunting dogs and a double barrel shotgun, a fishing line that fished in Little Fossil Creek; and the results usually consisted of a few Perch and a small Catfish. And my grandmother said, "Oh my gracious, have I got to cook this again?" I hunted Quail which were abundant at that time. We had lots of wildlife, and years ago you could hear the wolves howl at night. When I lived there close to this creek, we would light a lantern and let it burn because wolves have a habit of going back and forward under trees in which turkeys and chickens will roost. And the first thing they know, they'll get dizzy and fall to the ground becoming a victim of the wolf--the big bad wolf. Oh, I had a ball! My magnificent obsession was a great little lady about 5 feet tall and weighed about 180 pounds. She's my grandmother. Well, she was a lovely lady and wonderful cook and a very peaceful woman. She made her own lye soap. She added a lot of lye to the big, black pot. And we made hominy in the same pot, I think. That I'm not sure of, but she cured her own meat and we had our own smoke house. She cured her hams with sugar and honey. By the time that September and October had rolled around again things were a little bit rancid and rather beginning to get old and obnoxious to you. She was always pleasant--always happy and always had a smile, and her pet was Johnny--me. I was a rotten kid. When I came back home, my father said, "Well, I'm going to give you a week to straighten up and then if you don't you know what's coming." He paddled me once in a while, but he was a very lenient man. And he was a good pal of mine. We went fishing together--and hunting. He died prematurely. He wasn't but 49 when he passed away. He had cancer of the lungs. And my mother remarried again a few years later. My grandmother died about 1915 or 16. They are buried at Mt. Olivet about 150 feet west from my father, mother and sister near where the W.W. I Canadians are buried. I was suppose to run their place. She died--when I was about 15 or 16, and my father said, "Well, you're going to make a doctor. You've always wanted to be-- and I'm going to give you the money to go to TCU. I want you to quit high school in your 11th grade." We graduated in the 11th. I quit in the 11th and went to TCU which had just moved up here from Waco about 1909. I took about a year and a half out there of pre-med. Then I went to medical college. I had no trouble in medical college except the first year I didn't think I'd ever make it. They were all foreign subjects, and I took psychology and biology, chemistry. Organic chemistry was very difficult. I didn't think I'd ever get it. And I wonder now if I didn't do a little cheating once in a while. I was in World War I a very short time. At that time I was rejected on account of a heart murmur that I had due to rheumatic fever as a teenager. The doctor at that time was my mother's uncle or sister's brother, Dr. Tolbett; and he was in attendance when I was born. ^{Talbot} The first mayor of the City of Fort Worth was in attendance with my mother. His name was Dr. Burch. Because my mother said soon afterward she never could get Dr. Burch. He was always waiting on some confinement--O.B. case. So she used Dr. Grammar who is an uncle of these two Grammars out here on that 8th Avenue Clinic there with Dr. Armstrong. One of those Grammars died about six months ago with a bad heart. I didn't know him, but I know his brother who is still located there. He and I meet there quite frequently. I think he goes to All Saints most of the time. Anyway, that's the history that I gave you--and it's all true.

Interviewer: You obviously were in the first group that went to TCU after it moved. Can you describe.

Tucker: There was one building. I don't know which one that is now. I don't think it was the Administration Building. My boy went to TCU. He's got a BS from TCU. Good God! I was lucky enough to get an MD because we were poor people. We didn't have any money. We had land. We had plenty to eat and an old two-story house on this farm. I still love the memory of it. In fact, I live too much in the past. They say-- "Don't do it", but that's all you have to think of.

Interviewer: How did you get back and forth between school and where you lived. Now were you in Riverside at this time?

Tucker: Yeah, I lived on North Sylvania. We had horses all the time. And I rode a horse to town. We had livery stables then, and I kept my horse in a livery stable. When I went to high school I did. Then when I went to TCU, I think I hitched him up anywhere I could find a place to hitch him up there then. And for a while I drove a cart. My father always guaranteed me he'd always help me get an education, but he developed cancer of the lung when I was a senior in medical college. But he did see me graduate. And he did see this boy (Doctor son) over here when he was born. He was just seven or eight months old I think when he passed on. Yes, he saw his grandson and said he was glad he was a boy. I was red headed--and my nickname was "Red" for quite a while. Freckle-faced and skinny. My wife just hates red hair. I said, "How in the heck did you ever marry a red headed man." She said, "I guess it was because I loved you."

Interviewer: Have you done most of your practice at St. Joseph's?

Tucker: I've done all of it at St. Joseph's. I don't go to the hospital anymore. I quit. I'm 81 years of age, and in two more months I'll be 82. My wife wants me to quit. She says, "I don't know whether you'll be happy or not, but I'll put up with you."

Interviewer: Now did you just have the one child, or do you have other children?

Tucker: No, I have only one child. Well, we established a trust fund for our grandchildren. Every three months, each one of them gets a certain amount. My youngest granddaughter is going to TCU in September or whenever it starts. My boy is a very comforting and loving son. He's treated me very kindly, and we've made him the administrator of what little we have.

Interviewer: Could you by any chance identify this picture? Is this the old Harris Hospital?

Tucker: I'd say yes right quick. Right there on West Rosedale and Fifth Avenue. It's been torn down since then. I'll say one thing for Charlie Harris--that he was a very competent surgeon, he didn't drink. He never did come to St. Joseph's because he had his own hospital, and he was a very competent surgeon. Dr. W. Durringer was also a competent surgeon; and Dr. W. C. Durringer, his nephew, was a very competent man. Old Dr. Durringer took most of his post graduate work in Germany. Dr. W. C. Durringer, and Dr. Bacon Saunders was the cream of the crop. Maybe I say that because I was with him for ten or twelve years. He was very brilliant. To show you how brilliant he was, he had a LLD from Baylor University at Waco conferred on him. And he was Chairman of the Trustees of TCU for years and years and years. And if you'll look at the First Christian Church--their building stone in the corner of the church--you'll see his name there as Chairman of the Building Committee. Bacon Saunders. He built the Flat Iron Building which

sadly is vacant today. Anyway, Dr. W. R. Thompson was an Eye, Nose and Throat doctor here. Dr. Gray--both of them very competent men. Of course I omit the names of many men as doctors but anyway, why, Dr. Bell was a very brilliant old fellow. He had two sons that were physicians, Dr. Bell and Frank Bell. Frank Bell just died here about four or five years ago. Dr. Bell's been dead sometime. Where Tarrant County Building & Loan Company is there on Fifth and Taylor -- and his wife -- (knock--knock).

Beall