

EARL STORIES

Collected, edited, and arranged by Calvin Mercer

CONTENTS

- DR. EARL TREVATHAN'S 50-YEAR PERSPECTIVE ON OUR CITY
Installment 1—The Early Fifties
- DR. EARL TREVATHAN'S 50-YEAR PERSPECTIVE ON OUR CITY
INSTALLMENT 2--MY BAPTISM IN POLITICS
- DR. EARL TREVATHAN'S 50-YEAR PERSPECTIVE ON OUR CITY
INSTALLMENT 3--DR. HUMBER'S ELECTION AND SPYING ON THE
OPPOSITION
- CITIZENS RESPOND
- DR. EARL TREVATHAN'S 50-YEAR PERSPECTIVE ON OUR CITY
INSTALLMENT 4--GREENVILLE'S GROWTH
- DR. EARL TREVATHAN'S 50-YEAR PERSPECTIVE ON OUR CITY
INSTALLMENT 5--CITY PARKS, GREENWAYS, BEN FRANKLIN, AND
FORTUNE 500 COMPANIES
- DR. ANDREW BEST--A 1963 "REPORT TO THE PEOPLE"
- SAVE THAT BABY
- Feedback from Citizens
- THE NIGHT DOWNTOWN GREENVILLE DIDN'T BURN
- CITIZEN FEEDBACK ON THE EARL STORY, THE NIGHT DOWNTOWN
DIDN'T BURN
- A NICKEL'S WORTH
- CAPTAIN THOMPSON
- "Precious Cargo, Coming Home: A Look Back in Celebration of Memorial
Day"
- FIRST STOPLIGHT IN PITT COUNTY
- SATURDAYS IN SMALL TOWN USA 1933, FOUNTAIN, HEAD LICE
- Pigeon Troubles
- HOT AS HELL
- My First Pork Bar-B-Que
- Sound and Smell of Rain, Nature's Concert—An "Earl Story" with a VERY
Funny Ending"
- NEIGHBORS
- How We Selected a Dean For the Newly Established Four-Year Classes,
East Carolina University School of Medicine
- Heritage
- The Greatest Generation

DR. EARL TREVATHAN'S 50-YEAR PERSPECTIVE ON OUR CITY

**PRESENTED AT GREENVILLE, NC COUNCILMEMBER
CALVIN MERCER'S "GREENVILLE GOOD GOVERNMENT"
RALLY AT THE HILTON IN JUNE 2015.**

**TAKE A JOURNEY THROUGH GREENVILLE'S
HISTORY**

In the next few newsletter editions, I'll give excerpts from Earl's talk. Here you'll meet interesting figures and get Earl's perspective on important moments in our city's history. Among the people you'll meet are:

Booger Scales, Dr. Andrew Best, Jim Fleming, Dr. Malene Irons, Dr. Ray Minges, Supt. C.C. Cleetwood, Dr. Leo Jenkins, Dr. Henry Aldridge, Mayor Eugene West, Hartwell Campbell, Dave Whichard, Dr. Robert L. Humber, John Howard, Charlie Horne, Father Charlie Mulholland, Henry Harrell, and Dr. Ralph Brimley

**COUNCILMEMBER CALVIN MERCER'S
INTRODUCTION OF EARL TREVATHAN AT THE GOOD
GOVERNMENT RALLY**

In my public service, I've been greatly blessed to have the support, mentoring, and friendship of some really incredible people in our city. Central place on that list is our speaker. Our keynote speaker said keep this introduction short. Many of you know Dr. Trevathan, but for those of you who may not I want you to have a sense of the honor it is to have him speak to us.

I'll start with a quote from **Dr. Tom Irons**, a great citizen of our city in his own right. He said:

"Most pediatricians are loved by their patients. Earl Trevathan is loved by just about everybody and respected as much as anyone I know."

As a pediatrician in private practice in Greenville for 23 years and then as a member of the Brody School of Medicine faculty, Dr. Trevathan both elevated and expanded the scope of medical care for children in eastern North Carolina and beyond.

He served four years in the U.S. Navy during World War II. Following his medical training, he joined a group practice here in 1954. Twelve years later, having recognized a lack of pediatric neurology care in eastern North Carolina, he went back for additional training in this specialty.

He returned to Greenville and began to work with a large population of children with

neurological and mental health disorders, especially those from families of limited means

I'll leave out dates and details and just list the service--you can imagine the deep service this list represents:

- President of the Pitt County Medical Society
- Chief of the medical staff at Pitt County Memorial Hospital
- Chairman of the North Carolina Pediatric Society
- Board member, NC Tuberculosis Association
- President of the Pitt County Tuberculosis Association.
- In 1977, Dr. Trevathan joined the Brody School of Medicine faculty as clinical professor of pediatrics and pediatric neurology and later professor of pediatrics
- Pitt County Department of Public Health--he served over time as medical consultant, board vice chairman, and acting director. The Pitt County Health Center was re-named the "Earl Trevathan Jr., MD, Public Health Center" in 2012
- Extensive, breakthrough work with the Crippled Children's Program of the North Carolina Department of Human Resources.

Here's a special line on his resume for me. He has always been active in his community, and not just in the health care realm. He served on the **Greenville City Council in the 1960s**. He has this broad perspective on the importance of the democratic political process and good government.

He also found the time and energy to be a leading advocate for environmental and conservation issues in the state. He was among the founders of the North Carolina Nature Conservancy and an early leader of the northeastern North Carolina chapter of the Sierra Club.

On a personal note. I recently worked with Earl on a project, not yet realized. He brought forward the idea and vision, pulled together the key people, and pushed this project along. Early on he said, very simply, *"I don't want any credit for this, I just want to see this happen for our people."*

No one better exemplifies good citizenship, good government, and community service than Dr. Earl Trevathan. We are delighted to have him speak at tonight's Greenville Good Government Rally.

DR. TREVATHAN: Installment 1—The Early Fifties

I recall an experience in 1986 when my wife, Ruth, and I led a Rotary Exchange Group of five young business ladies to Australia for a five week visit to communities in New South Wales. Often we spoke at Rotary Club meetings. At one Club with a ladies night crowd, I spoke briefly and before I could sit down a distinguished gentlemen stood and began commenting on US and Australia trade relations as it related to the sheep wool.

He was forceful, deliberate and passionate. "The United States sneezes and Australia catches pneumonia," etc., etc.

The audience was getting a little edgy. I was looking a bit bewildered trying to prepare how to respond. When he finished his tirade I slowly proceeded to the microphone, paused, (you could hear a pin drop) and looked straight at the audience and said, "What did he say?" The crowd bellowed with laughter, including the gentleman, and the evening ended on a good note. I tell you the story because I don't want anyone to look at this neighbor when I finish and say, "What did he say?"

I assure you that Greenville, in the early 1950's was no shining city on a hill. The facts:

- Our narrow Main Street was built for horse and buggy.
- There was one stop light, at five points.
- We had one city park, on Elm Street, in the flood plain, with two asphalt tennis courts.
- There were two railroad lines bisecting the city.
- A land-locked teachers' college.
- Tobacco market warehouses on each quadrant of the city.
- A scenic river with raw sewage floating by. Interesting stuff.
- A five-doctor private hospital
- A city with a slogan: "Our Greenville, Yours if You Come".
- A baseball team called "The Greenville Greenies." Now that is imagination.

This was post-World War II and many of us were furthering our education at government expense on the GI Education Bill. Farmers in Pitt County were getting price support for their major income producing crops by limiting production and the crop stabilization allowed for a farmer to survive economically.

In the congress Senator Lister Hill of Alabama and Rep. Burton of Missouri sponsored the Hill/Burton Act which provided funds to build public hospitals in areas of need. Our local governmental bodies petitioned our representative in the congress, Herbert Bonner, to help us obtain funds for such a hospital. My father mailed me a newspaper clipping of the proposal when I was in medical school in Denver.

From that beginning there is a story to be told. Call it good government if you wish.

Five local physicians had to agree to close their privately owned hospitals so the new, modern hospital could be built. It was opened in 1950. Choo Choo Justice was made All American in football that year. Secretary Ewing, in President Truman's Cabinet, crafted legislation that would provide federal funds for health insurance for the low income citizens. It went nowhere, until 65 years later when the congress adopted the Affordable Care Act.

The new public hospital changed the face of medical care in our region. An open hospital brought physicians, board certified specialists, ENTs, OBGyns, ophthalmologists, internal medicine doctors, psychiatrists, surgeons and pediatric specialists to Greenville.

The right individual was made the president of our "college"--Dr. Leo Jenkins. Next, the college was elevated to university status. Dr. Jenkins had a vision. WE were becoming a medical center--a medical school should be next. You know the rest of the story. Recall those five physicians who gave up much for a greater public need.

NEXT INSTALLMENT--MY BAPTISM IN POLITICS

DR. EARL TREVATHAN'S 50-YEAR PERSPECTIVE ON OUR CITY

PRESENTED AT THE "GREENVILLE GOOD GOVERNMENT" RALLY AT THE HILTON JUNE 2015. SPONSORED BY GREENVILLE, NC COUNCILMEMBER CALVIN MERCER

MY BAPTISM IN POLITICS--INSTALLMENT 2

DR. EARL TREVATHAN'S 50-YEAR PERSPECTIVE ON OUR CITY

My baptism in politics, if you can call it that, occurred with the campaign of Dr. Robert L. Humber for North Carolina State senate.

Dr. Humber was well known far and wide. He was a Wake Forest and Harvard graduate and became a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford. In France, with an international law degree, he became legal counsel for a Texas Oil Company, married a French citizen and they had three children born there. In Paris in 1940, the day before the Nazi invaded Paris, he fled the city with the aid of his Greenville neighbor, Jim Fleming, made the arduous trip to Lisbon, Portugal, and boarded the USS Manhattan for the US.

In America he promoted peace through the World Federation for which he became famous. This was before the United Nations was established.

Back in Greenville in the late 1950's several of us "young turks" thought Dr. Humber would make a good candidate for State Senate. I recall us "young turks" being Dave Whichard, Charlie Horne, Booger Scales, Henry Aldridge and myself. We approached Dr. Humber and he was reluctant. Jim Fleming probably talked him into running.

At our first meeting someone suggested the first matter of business was to select his campaign committee. Humber's response was *"You all are my committee."* None of us, including Dr. Humber, knew a thing about politics.

We began by attending a Pierce Fellowship Meeting on Contentnea Creek in Grifton. Here was gathered our local yellow dog democrats, "Tammany Hall" heirs apparent who were selected for the upcoming election. When our group walked into the meeting the presiding judge announced, *"Here comes the Boy Scouts."* Their chosen man for Senate was a local lawyer, Henry Harrell.

Support for Humber grew slowly. Booger nick-named him "the Horse," and we were to ride him to victory. Some wondered if we should call his cosmopolitan wife "The Mare."

The next thing we had to do was hide his big old black Cadillac Limousine ... a political liability in those days. We locked it up in Jim Fleming's garage. Next, we had to buy some flannel shirts. Those black suits with white, starched collar shirts were a killer. I rode him around the county in my little Ford Falcon. With Humber in his flannel shirt, we were two of the "good ol' boys."

NEXT INSTALLMENT--SPYING ON THE OPPOSITION

DR. HUMBER'S ELECTION AND SPYING ON THE OPPOSITION--INSTALLMENT 3

PRESENTED AT THE "GREENVILLE GOOD GOVERNMENT" RALLY AT THE HILTON JUNE 2015. SPONSORED BY GREENVILLE, NC COUNCILMEMBER CALVIN MERCER

DR. EARL TREVATHAN'S 50-YEAR PERSPECTIVE ON OUR CITY

In the last installment, Dr. Trevathan explained how he and friends came together to work for the election of Dr. Robert L. Humber for NC State Senate. –Calvin Mercer

We all had our assignment. I was to spy on the opposition. One night I learned that their campaign committee was meeting in Lawyer Harrell's office next to the courthouse downtown. Dave Whichard and I went down there to check it out.

The office door was closed but we could hear what was said over the door transom. There was a chair in the hall so Dave brought it for me to stand on. I could hear everything spoken. And this was long before Watergate.

Dr. Humber won his election by 200 votes. He co-sponsored legislation to establish the community college system in this state. He supported increases in teacher pay. He raised funds to help build the NC State Art Museum.

One of the most contentious times in the political life of Greenville was in the early 1960's. Most of our citizens were for or against public housing needed for those people being displaced by the downtown redevelopment project--slum clearance. In a divided city, each side had its arguments, whether to tackle the problem with federal funds or respect proper rights and let city ordinances requiring house upgrades help resolve the problem.

The referendum with the election in 1962 for federal support passed but the elected mayor and council did not favor the referendum. Thus, for two years the city was in gridlock and nothing was accomplished regarding housing or slum clearance. Two years later it was an even more intense campaign to resolve the issues one way or another. The previous mayor, Gene West, ran again. Ed Waldrop urged me to run. Making up the ticket of those supporting the projects were Hartwell Campbell, CEO of TV Station WNCT; Dr. Ralph Brimley, ECU; and John Howard of Greenville Tobacco Co. A rather strong ticket, even if I say so. We were elected. Animosity rapidly subsided; citizens stepped up and served on commissions and authorities and the work got done. The lesson I learned was how much could be accomplished with team work, industrious city officials, and respect for one another.

I shall briefly mention another period of great unrest in our city and the nation. It was in the 1960's when racial strife over integration was rampant here and over much of the state. Greenville made some good decisions during this time and we thus warded off turmoil, confrontation with police, and riotous behavior. There were street demonstrations but no gunfire. A near eruption occurred when Golden Frinks, a demonstration organizer, was jailed and his bond was not accepted by the magistrate, whose excuse was that his office was closed for the night.

There were many individuals who knew it was time to step up and speak out and challenge the status quo.

- Dr. Andrew Best, a black physician in Greenville, was the go between person bridging the two races for meetings and dialogue. He was well respected and was wise beyond measure. More than any person he helped hold the city together and find solutions. Dr. Best's roots were in the very segregated, rural section of Lenoir County.
- Father Mulholland. He helped organize the Good Neighborhood Council and conducted countless meetings late into the night.
- Dr. Malene Irons, mother and pediatrician, who demanded the hospital change the way we were segregated to integrated services.
- Dr. Ray Minges spoke for the medical staff in expediting integration.

- School Supt. Cleetwood worked hard resolving school conflicts.

NEXT INSTALLMENT—READERS RESPOND—“RIDING MY HORSE DOWNTOWN”

CITIZENS RESPOND

I've received so much positive feedback about the first three installments in this newsletter of Dr. Trevathan's reflections on 50 years of Greenville's history that I thought I'd take this half-time break to share a sampling. Dr. Trevathan's stories kicked up many memories from readers. –Calvin Mercer

I used to ride my pony to Wahl-Coates and tie her to a tree and I also rode her downtown and put her in Savage stables. My street of Rocksprings was dirt. Interesting times I miss.

Calvin, we LOVED reading Earl's history. Thank you for sharing this. I'm in a family memories writing class with him and every week we look forward to his stories. Greenville is truly blessed to have him.

Calvin, thank you for paying honors to Dr. Earl Trevathan for the many good deeds for people of Greenville and so many other areas and countries. He is a smart, humbling and wonderful person. I am so glad that he is being recognized. I am honored to have known him since I became a member of our church and he cared for our daughter when she was born. Thanks to Dr. "Earl" and to you for taking your time to honor him in your email.

Hey Calvin, I have enjoyed receiving your letters for several years. You do a great job of keeping us informed about the politics of Greenville and I appreciate this a lot. Really enjoyed this. Thanks,

Thanks a lot for this continuation with Dr. Trevathan and post with the three of you pictured together. When we moved to Greenville, he was one of the first pediatrician for our son. We mostly attended the Presbyterian church with him and his very wonderful wife Ruth.

Thank you for this newsletter, fascinating to learn how elections were run in the "good ole' days".

Earl was my pediatrician when I was a kid. He literally saved my life when I had double pneumonia. Came to the house, put me in a cold bath (I was 10) and took me to the hospital. He's been a friend, along with his family. He was ahead of his time and maybe still is. You have a great person in your corner.

Any way I could get a copy of Dr. Trevathan's 50-year perspective? I see a wonderful learning opportunity for our high school students.

Please do print Earl's remarks for all of us who were unable to be at your Hilton's campaign event. He is such an inspiration and a treasure to be shared with as wide an audience as possible.

Calvin--I was among those unable to hear Earl Trevathan's talk about Greenville history at your campaign rally, and also among those who so highly respect this unique, wonderful man. So, I will look forward to excerpts about him and from his talk. Thank you.

Calvin, as you may or may not know, in those days Earl was the father of my best friend and I was across the street at the Trevathan's as much as I was at home. I remember many of these things like it was yesterday. He was and is very close to my family and was and is a second father to me. We all need to take his lessons seriously. I know I do.

Thank you so much for including this speech in your newsletters. It provides a wonderful historical perspective for Greenville, also. Students can't see pre-today in Greenville and don't realize the tremendous growth that has occurred and continues to occur. This perspective helps to glean appreciation for how far we've come.

I enjoyed reading this. I grew up in Black Jack and remember Five Points being the center of town and going on Saturday afternoon. Brings back some great memories and provoking thoughts for the years to come for Greenville.

Wow, what an inspiration. He basically told the whole story of Greenville.

He has inspired me to study Greenville history--this place where I have unfurled my roots.

Earl's address was spot on, full of useful history and insights, and suggestions for a cooperative council. At his age, he is still thinking ahead about what we need to do in this community. Thanks for having him speak.

A lot of the feedback consisted of short comments, such as:

That was great.

Thanks for an interesting read.

Interesting story form Earl. Thanks for publishing it.

These Trevathan stories are great.

Thank you for sharing more about Dr. Trevathan's perspectives and historical reflections.

I love Earl's talk. What a wonderful citizen of our community.

NEXT INSTALLMENT FROM DR. TREVATHAN—"GREENVILLE'S GROWTH"

DR. EARL TREVATHAN'S 50-YEAR PERSPECTIVE ON OUR CITY

*Here's the next installment of Dr. Trevathan's **sometimes humorous, always interesting** remarks. A councilmember from the 1960s, Dr. Trevathan drew upon Greenville's history to urge **sound planning, partnerships, integrity, transparency,** and other good government principles to carry our community forward in the coming decades. I'm honored and appreciative of the long support of city elders like Dr. Trevathan who share their wisdom and leadership and, along with the energy and new ideas of a younger generation, make our city a vibrant intergenerational hub of eastern North Carolina.*

GREENVILLE'S GROWTH--INSTALLMENT 4

DR. TREVATHAN'S REMARKS

Greenville's growth has been phenomenal. I could never have imagined a city of 90,000 or 25,000 students at our university.

During these years of growth we have had good leadership, both mayors and councilmembers. Individuals holding office have at times shown tendencies to be miffed or disrespectful when in disagreement with fellow members. Citizens don't expect agreement and harmony on all issues, but it is not good to have animosity or bitterness as part of the governing process. It is a poison. No one wins. In such situations words should be well measured and spoken only if constructive. A lot of good groundwork should be done outside the council.

This can also be an issue with our employed officials. They have always been approachable in my memory and respect shown them is critically important. It is the city that has much to lose when valuable department heads choose to leave us.

We should acknowledge that the State of North Carolina pours millions of dollars into this city annually for state operated services. We owe the State accountability and wise decisions--a livable, safe city for our people and those who continue their education here.

I like Calvin's "Mission Statement." It says it all. (Editor's note: The "Mission Statement" is found at the bottom of this newsletter in purple.)

In 1970 Secretary John Gardner, in the Johnson administration and founder of Common Cause, wrote: "We all agree and share a common purpose to:"

- create excellent public schools

- protect the environment
- preserve livable communities
- enforce the laws
- administer justice

I think it is obvious to all that this rapidly growing city is not keeping up with our needs, especially traffic issues. We have one of the highest accident rates in the state and with the university we have a young driver population prone to misjudgment and accidents. Yes, accidents are caused by speed and alcohol but also often by inferior street design. We are improving. Note the roundabout at Portertown Rd.--beautiful design, which results in fewer accidents. Let us plan more roundabouts and mediums.

Our streets are too congested to carry traffic at 45 mile per hour. Cut the limit back to 35 MPH. Our rural area roads are deadly. At intersecting roads, move the stop signs to the middle of the road, not on the right side near bushes. And add more right turn lanes to avoid rear end collisions. Keep an eye on Highway 264 east.

At all costs avoid strip development like Greenville Blvd., which is sure to happen unless we scream. We didn't scream enough in 1965 when Greenville Blvd was laid out and a developer threatened to remove his property from inclusion in the city if limited access and parallel service roads were constructed.

NEXT INSTALLMENT: CITY PARKS, GREENWAYS, BEN FRANKLIN, AND FORTUNE 500 COMPANIES

DR. EARL TREVATHAN'S 50-YEAR PERSPECTIVE ON OUR CITY

CITY PARKS, GREENWAYS, BEN FRANKLIN, AND FORTUNE 500 COMPANIES--INSTALLMENT 5

In spite of much progress in securing parkland and open space in recent years, I fear we are not keeping up with needs in the west and southwest area where much development is occurring. If the city could park property in this area now rather than facing prohibitive price later. If only.

Many years ago when Lynndale was proposed for inclusion into the city the council tried to establish a formula whereby a small acreage would be designated for a park for each 100 acres for development. The home buyers didn't want a park. Most had beach houses and country club membership for recreation. Parks would attract the wrong crowd. Of course no one thinks that way today.

Let's look at our nation's history. Benjamin Franklin helped lay out the plat for the city of Philadelphia in 1760 and included a park or open space for every fourth block. He named the streets after trees.

Minneapolis was recently called by the Wall Street Journal the "nicest city in America." I took a tourist trip there last summer to learn why they have that distinction. The Mississippi River separates it from sister city, St. Paul. The ice age left the area with 17 lakes which have been spared shore line development left for public space. It has the largest population of bicycle riders in the country, and it has 18 Fortune 500 companies. When the city was founded in 1854 the charter stated 17 percent of their budget was to be for recreation and parks.

Several years ago our city council made a visit to Columbia, MO, a sister city, comparable in size to Greenville and with a University like ours to discuss issues, problems and seek solutions. Town and gown stuff. I thought it was a good idea. Cities across America are doing interesting things.

Chattanooga, Tennessee is noted for its Greenway system. Natchez, MS has struggled for years to make the transition from industry loss to historical interest. They have tried to raise money for sidewalks and repeatedly failed. The city street department director had an idea. He redesigned the city with "trails" and markers instead of sidewalks, then applied to state, private citizens and endowments and raised two million dollars. I hope our bond fund for sidewalks will allow for some imagination and beauty.

There is so much good going on in this city. I must express my pride in what I see about me. Recently, in my church I walked by the sanctuary and had to stop and listen. The Epps Middle School orchestra was performing before a full audience of family and friends. Imagine. Minutes later I drove up Elm Street passing by Stallings Stadium and saw it filled with spectators and families watching the young athletes play ball.

That same week Ann and Vince Bellis took me on a tour of the Greenway section along the river where Tar River apartments were. Such a beautiful section and I was surprised to see the activity there---joggers, walkers, singles, doubles, dogs on leashes, bikers.

And I'll mention the miracle of the medical district, remembering those who worked months hammering out the zoning ordinances that became a workable creation. Thank you, Ruth, and others.

THIS IS THE LAST INSTALLMENT FROM DR. TREVATHAN'S SPEECH AT THE HILTON EVENT. HOWEVER, GOOD NEWS. EARL HAS SENT ME A FEW OTHER PIECES THAT I'M PLEASSED TO HELP DISTRIBUTE IN FUTURE NEWSLETTERS.

DR. ANDREW BEST

A 1963 "REPORT TO THE PEOPLE"

Thanks to Dr. Earl Trevathan for providing a hard copy of this inspiring 1963 address by Dr. Best, Vice-Chair of the Pitt County Interracial Committee, to the Greenville Rotary Club. It is entitled "A REPORT TO THE PEOPLE."

This well-crafted speech provides an interesting look at a slice of life in Greenville, now more than a half century ago. Indeed, it refers to the tone and tensions that characterized much of our nation in that turbulent decade.

Dr. Best speaks about the "responsibility of shaping the future of a community, a people" and tells his audience "you hold the complete fate of our community for a hundred years to come." The speech is bold and direct, asserting that "All is not well in our city and community." He said the community has assets but also many liabilities. To avoid the worst troubles of many communities, Dr. Best said people of all races must draw upon the best of the community and be brave, courageous, clear-thinking, tolerant, patient, and in communication.

He said if "required responsible leadership" does not prevail, then "we may rest assured that irresponsible leadership will fill in the vacuum to the detriment, and possible disaster of us all."

He refers to local events and situations, such as a threatened boycott and the inability of a visiting black choir to secure motel accommodation. He shares about his own childhood in segregated Lenoir County.

The full speech can be found by clicking <https://files.constantcontact.com/670eb50e301/76c27e81-9197-482c-a3c1-3abb84c0050d.pdf>

SAVE THAT BABY

NOTE: I was with Earl yesterday at an event, and learned that we both getting much positive feedback from the community about the "Earl Stories." Earl has given me a couple more stories, which I'll feature in future newsletters. It's a good sign that so many citizens are hungry for stories about the history of our community. For now, check out this opportunity to hear directly from Dr. Earl Trevathan in this **ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW WITH DR. TREVATHAN**

<https://digital.lib.ecu.edu/60339>

In this interview, Dr. Trevathan discusses the history of health care in eastern North Carolina, the difficulties that arose when East Carolina University first attempted to create the medical school, and how general health care has advanced in the last fifty

years. Topics mentioned in this interview are relevant to the years 1954 to 2001. – Calvin Mercer

By Dr. Earl Trevathan

“Doctor, do all you can to save my baby,” were the first words I heard as I walked into the hospital room of Beatrice Maye, on July 20, 1954. I was the Pediatrician for Mamie Maye, just delivered, and weighting less than three pounds. Because of a fertility problem, Mrs. Maye could not have more children. She had a 5-year-old son at home. Mr. Maye was a principal of a county school and Beatrice was a school librarian. They were well known educators and very active in community affairs.

I felt the pressure of her concerns as I tried to be reassuring that I would do all that was possible to meet the baby’s needs. This was before integration, so the preemie was placed in an Armstrong incubator in the “colored” nursery, at least providing warmth, isolation, and oxygen as needed. On the fourth floor of the hospital was the “white” nursery, and it had a very new Air Shield Isolette with several newer features, monitoring devices, lights etc. I had much respect for the experience of some of the nurses in that nursery, too. Mrs. Maye’s appeal must have gotten to me.

Without forethought, I took that baby up to the white nursery and put it in the new Isolette. The skin color of all small preemies is pink, so I assumed no color code was broken. It didn’t occur to me that family members would be coming to the fourth floor to see the baby or whether that would cause a ruckus.

When I returned to my office, I received a call from Mr. C. D. Ward, Hospital Administrator. He said something like, “You know that placing that baby in the white nursery is against hospital policy”. He said he had spoken to the Chairman for the Board of Trustees and was told to respect hospital policy. Later in the day Dr. Malene Irons, Pediatric colleague, stormed into Mr. Wards office and apparently got his attention. She threatened to take up the matter with the medical staff. Dr. Irons got something done because I got word from Mr. Ward that an Isolette for the colored nursery, costing a few thousand dollars, would arrive in five days.

This might have been the beginning of integration of the hospital, but it was six years later when the medical staff took action to integrate. Dr. Andrew Best, a black physician, was a major leader in getting this accomplished, peacefully. He was a mild tempered man, who knew it would take time and patience to work through integration successfully and without violence. Pitt Memorial was one of the first hospitals in the state to do so.

After 54 problem free days in the nursery, Mamie Maye was discharged home as a healthy infant. In childhood she loved music and took piano lessons. She majored in music in college and joined the music faculty of the University of Nebraska. Years later, I went to her mother’s funeral and to my delight Mamie Bryan played Sebelius “Finlandia” on the piano as part of the service. My thought was, “What a success story.”

Beatrice Maye, educator, writer, community leader, was duly honored for her good works. She was proud of her daughter. So was I.

FEEDBACK FROM CITIZENS

'll soon publish another story Earl sent me, "The Night Downtown Greenville Didn't Burn." For now, I've received many positive responses about the series written by Dr. Trevathan. There's much to learn here that can be useful for those who lead our city. Here below is some feedback I've received, beginning with an extended, very thoughtful response. --Calvin

PEOPLE NEED TO GET OUT MORE--Reader Response

Thanks for the excellent series by Dr. Trevathan. People need to get out more, and some of the decision makers are among those that can be the most myopic. I recently visited Charleston where my daughter lives. We have no excuse not to learn from others.

Charleston has a strong history to attract. But it also has sidewalks in every new development and multiple swimming pools and park areas in large developments. In our daughter's development, a park has sufficient room for a pick-up football or soccer game, a nicely designed playground, parking spaces all around, and organized food trucks on Fridays to bring the community together and offer outdoor entertainments. There are trails that end between and on the edges of the developments and containment ponds that have fountains for aeration that attracts ducks, turtles, and alligators. The HOA maintains these spaces for the benefit of the homeowners

There are also excellent art galleries and museums, children's museums, a train museum, and an aquarium. The county has a well-organized recreation program that includes several spray parks and an excellent water park run by the county. True, Greenville does not have historical attractions, but is it possible that we could have? Have we explored our Indian heritage or our history as an inland port? Have we jumped into ecotourism in the same way that Windsor, N.C. has, or embraced the development of the arts district in a way that appeals to even slightly more mature crowds? Have we taken an interest in our African-American community to acknowledge their history with the Rosenwald Schools, the history of separation of schools now merged to be better than the sum of its parts? An aside with that is that we need to separate the needs of ECU to form a broader identity.

If our imagination only extends as far as how many buildings we can place on a block, without a clear direction of how that can grow in a more dynamic, rich way, we will forever be an ugly stepsister to those places that see the jewel a well-planned city can be.

Dr. Trevathan's wisdom and words are still needed. I've enjoyed this series.

COLORED RESTROOM SHOCK--Reader Response

What a great story, "Save that Baby." In 1967, I drove across the country to participate in the "Washington Semester" program at American University. The Civil Rights Act had been passed a couple years before, but I still remember the shock of seeing a restroom labeled for "colored" at a Dairy Queen, or someplace like that, where I stopped to get something to eat.

OTHER FEEDBACK--Reader Responses

He was my doctor when I was a kid---saved my life. A friend now.
The "Save that Baby" Maye story was heartwarming.

What an inspiring story. How wonderful to know that there are people who stand up for what they know in their heart to be right. Thank God Dr. Trevathan, Dr. Irons and Dr. Best did that and that is what made them community activists and leaders.

Thank you for that important information. That made me feel special today.

Thank you for this, Calvin. We knew them all. Our fifty-two years in this area creates a true perspective.

THE NIGHT DOWNTOWN GREENVILLE DIDN'T BURN

By Dr. Earl Trevathan

During the 1960's eastern North Carolina was ridden with racial strife and unrest. In California the Watts inferno was on everyone's TV screen. Greenville was trying to peacefully work itself through many tedious steps of integration of businesses and schools. There were demonstrations and marches in most cities here in the East. Committees and Interracial Councils were actively working to find common ground where progress could be made.

In August, 1971, in Ayden, NC, a highway patrolman had an altercation with a black man and believing his life was in danger the patrolman drew his gun and killed him. Threats and fear reached a fever pitch in both the white and black races. Outside organizers poured into Greenville. One black leader and organizer, and well known in our part of the state, was Golden Frinks, "The Great Agitator" he was called by some. He was field secretary of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and organized protest rallies and marches in most of Eastern North Carolina.

On the night of September 9, 1971, a permit was requested by Frinks to allow a march in the downtown area. It was denied by the Chief of Police, citing threats of rioting and difficulty with crowd control. Golden Frinks initiated the march anyway and was promptly arrested and placed in the city jail. The crowd demanded he be granted bond and be released so the magistrate set the bond at 4500 dollars. The money was raised quickly, but the Magistrate, Fountain Harrington, would not grant release, stating it was after hours and personnel had departed for the night. Furthermore, there was no place to secure the money.

About this time in another section of town the Interracial Council was conducting their monthly meeting. Word got to them that there was a ruckus developing downtown around the jail. A large crowd gathered and demanded that "Frinks be freed or downtown would burn".

The interracial Council adjourned and Dr. Malene Irons and my wife, Ruth, members of the Council, visited the site and they were told by bystanders that something had to be done. This was an angry crowd crying "Burn baby, Burn." It was 11 P.M. when Ruth arrived home and found me sound asleep. She awakened me and said, "You must get up and go downtown immediately or there will be bad trouble. You know some of those people and you can do something or else someone is going to get hurt."

I put my clothes on and reluctantly drove to the trouble spot, not having a clue what I could do to relieve the situation. Having served on the City Council, I did know the city officials. On arriving I found Green Street full of blacks in small groups making much noise. I asked a cop if D. D. Garrett or Dr. Andrew Best, two black community leaders, were in the crowd. He said he had not seen them. A member of the crowd did come up and showed me the 4,500 dollars in a wad of bills. Several other people gathered around and told me what was going on. The jailer had gone home. I was told the City Clerk had keys to the courthouse.

On a pay phone I called H. L. Lewis and told him the situation, and he said he had no authority, suggesting I call Judge J. H. Roberts. Judge Roberts was asleep and seemed confused over why I was calling. I described the situation and what needed to be done. I told him if he would order Mr. Lewis to take the bond money and release Golden Frinks he would be saving the city from a riot and more. Judge Roberts knew who to call and in a few minutes someone came to the jail and released Golden Frinks.

I departed for home and didn't linger to see if the crowd would disperse. It was 1:30 A.M. when I got home, and Ruth was sitting up waiting for me. If she had been asleep that would be grounds for divorce. I knew she was worried. It did take awhile for me to fall asleep.

FEEDBACK ON THE EARL STORY, THE NIGHT DOWNTOWN DIDN'T BURN

BOMB IN THE SCHOOL WHEN I WAS IN THE TENTH GRADE

This was the same time that a bomb was placed in Ayden-Grifton High School and detonated. The bomb was placed close to the auditorium and, luckily, the class scheduled to be there had been cancelled. No one was injured but everyone was frightened. I was a tenth grader sitting in Biology class when all this occurred. I love reading about Dr. Trevathan. Thank you. Old Greenville stories are good too. Though I was born and raised and still live here, some of them escaped me.

THE KLAN AND A SNIPER ON THE ROOF

I was just reading your newsletter about racial unrest in Greenville during the 1960s and 70s. I'm reminded of the day in 1992 when The Klan conducted a march in downtown Ayden in order to attract new members. Ayden is where I live, and I witnessed that event.

At that time, the town manager denied them a permit to conduct a march. While I would never support The Klan, I do recognize and support The First Amendment which protects the right of the people to peaceably assemble.

That was an interesting time. A week before the march, an FBI officer knocked on my door, and told me a sniper would be placed on my roof, and I had no choice in the matter. Police from several surrounding towns separated the crowd from the marchers. It was a very tense hour or more.

Do you have any information about the public swimming pool in Greenville that was filled in when Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act in 1964? Retired faculty have told me about it, but without much detail.

OTHER FEEDBACK

Thank you for posting this story. These important details of local events often are overlooked. I am so thankful the Trevathans were compassionate and involved with the social issues of that time.

A NICKEL'S WORTH

By Dr. Earl Trevathan

In the hot summers after 1932, one of the great joys and relief for the kids of my generation was the Farmville swimming pool. It was built with WPA funds in the early years of the Roosevelt administration. For five cents we could play and cool off in the chlorine treated water for one hour.

That is, if you were white. I don't remember any black child indulging. I don't remember ever asking why.

We would rush to get to the counter, lay our nickel down, swing left into the men's dressing room, pull on our bathing trunks, and dash into the pool at the sound of the bell. We had to step into a pan of water with a chemical to prevent athletes' foot, which was prevalent, before jumping in.

The pool was usually full to splashing kids. The life guard was Horton Roundtree, he sat in a high mounted chair midway of the pool, and he kept an eye on all that was going on. He later became our state senator. We older boys spent our time diving off the low diving board or seeing how far we could swim under water. There were no plastic toys and gadgets in those days. At five o'clock, when the pool would close, we would stand by to watch Horton dive. His beautiful swan dive and back flips were something to watch.

We were then looking for a ride home to Fountain, at times hitch hiking, smelling like chlorine and ready for supper. Farmville had no swim team, but other nearby towns had them. All the larger town had WPA built pools of varying sizes. Tarboro had Olympic size lanes and some fast swimmers. Goldsboro had the best divers in Buddy Crone and Prince Nufer. and they had a high board for spectacular diving. They both went to Carolina on the swimming team, winning many trophies. Wilson had the prettiest pool, in the middle of a large city park, covered with trees and landscaping.

I remember vividly the first time I swam in the Greenville Pool. It was located downtown next to the ECU campus and was a nice place to dump us children when the parents were in town shopping. As usual, we moved quickly to get into the pool at the beginning of the hour for more swim time. I put my coin in the counter, turned swiftly to the left, by habit, and dashed into the dressing room. Only this time finding myself standing in the middle of the girls dressing room filled with girls with varying degrees of undress.

They screamed. I fled. I swore next time in a new pool I would read the signs before entering.

Those pools were public funds well spent. They were the key recreation activities in summer for so many young people. In the 1960's integration was underway, and many of the pools closed. By that time all of our cities had country clubs or private pools. Greenville, in later years, built a beautiful public pool in the western area of town and has been a valuable facility for many.

CAPTAIN THOMPSON

NOTE: The periodic series of stories from Dr. Earl Trevathan, long-time Greenville pediatrician, have been among the most popular editions of this newsletter. I think Earl is one of the heroes of our city, and I'm honored help distribute his stories to a wider audience. The story below is a tribute to those who serve in our armed forces. –Calvin Mercer

By Dr. Earl Trevathan

It was September 20, 1945. The war was over, and my ship was moored in the harbor at Manilla Bay. Being a Pharmacist Mate 3rd Class in the Navy, I was anticipating a lot of work and responsibility as we were awaiting the boarding of 300 former prisoners of war, many of whom were suffering from malaria and parasite infestation.

Practically all of Manilla was destroyed by the Japanese, and the stench and rubble made it nearly impossible to administer any definitive care on shore. Loading and unloading docks had to be improvised for our ship to take on passengers. The Filipinos in large numbers were busy putting gang planks in place and unloading supplies on their backs.

Across from our ship was a Dutch ship unloading troops from Southern France. They had just arrived after 52 days at sea and looked weary and tired and not in shape for duty. On the other side of us was anchored the Carol Lombard. I remembered when it was launched and christened by Clark Gable.

The first to board our ship was four British officers with papers for the captain, I supposed. An hour later our passengers began coming up the gangplank to salute and come aboard. They were British and Canadian, mostly, but a few were American. You could recognize officers, because they were better nourished and had experienced less abuse.

I spent over an hour visiting with Captain Thompson of the British Army. He was taken prisoner by the Japanese in Hong Kong in December, 1941, after a 17-day battle. He assured me that any infamous tales of cruelty I would hear among the passengers of our ship would not be exaggerated. Since my specialty field in the medical corps was malaria, we talked about that disease and how it was treated in Hong Kong before he was captured. Captain Thompson told me of the amazing surgical work done by British surgeons on the Japanese who needed medical care.

We talked about the American cinema industry, and the Captain noted that the last movie he saw in 1941 was "Manhunt". He expressed a great desire to see America and especially to visit Hollywood. Thompson's unit was brought to Manilla from Hong Kong by an Australian ship after the British Navy took the city at the end of the war. Captain Thompson had three sons, ages 11, 9, and 6, and a wife he had not seen in four years. I could easily imagine why he would say, "I can't realize what is taking place." I enjoyed his British accent. He reminded me of Donald Crisp in the movie, "How Green Was My Valley."

There was so much to observe on board as these passengers made their way about the ship. Their clothing was pieced together with parts of a uniform, so it was hard to tell what army unit they came from. Many were officers and of very high rank. Some were rather elderly and quite dignified. There was very little noise or conversation about the ship. What were they thinking at this moment, realizing they were preparing to go home after 4 or 5 years of imprisonment?

Most of the men were very thin and malnourished. Their skin was stained yellow from the drug, atabrine, given to them for malaria. Skin ulcers were common. Some had missing arms or fingers. Pellagra and other vitamins deficiencies were evident in nearly all of these survivors. My most concern was with those who were in a stupor, or dazed, condition, and I wondered if they realized what was happening In their lives.

The greatest thrill was when our ship got underway moving towards the United States. The sun was setting, and the stench and smell of the destroyed city was changing to the clean air of the sea. The clouds were resting on the mountain tops and it was cool. The flying fish on each side of the ships bow were escorting us towards home.

MEMORIAL DAY

June 6, 1944. D-Day. The large seaborne invasion of Normandy that initiated the liberation of France from Nazi Germany in World War II. This is a good day to help more widely circulate Dr. Trevathan's memoir, for those who missed it.

“Precious Cargo, Coming Home: A Look Back in Celebration of Memorial Day”

By Dr. Earl Trevathan

Daily Reflector Section D “Look” Section, 5/26/19

Reader Hansy Jones suggested The Reflector publish the following memoir about the end of World War II from Dr. Earl Trevathan of Pitt County in honor of Memorial Day. Trevathan, who was in the navy, shared it with the paper. Our ship, the USS Gosper, a Navy casualty troop transport vessel, was returning from the Philippines in early October 1945. The war had just ended and the invasion of Japan was no longer anticipated.

From the ravaged and war-torn city of Manila we brought aboard our ship 300 American, British and Canadian former prisoners of war. I was a Pharmacist Mate Third Class assigned to help provide medical care for these malnourished, malaria and parasite-ridden soldiers. Their wasted extremities, swollen abdomens and atabrine-yellow stained skin were the marks of four years of imprisonment.

Our destination was San Francisco, where families of our POWs would be waiting for their loved ones. About a day out from the continental United States, Radioman John Leonetti received a message from Naval Command to proceed to Seattle as Frisco docking was filled. Disappointment, yes, but then we were advised that all the family members of our “precious cargo” would be flown to Seattle to meet our arrival at the army's expense.

Twenty-four hours later and we were nearing the American continent. By mid-morning we were covered by a blanket of fog so we made our way very slowly, neared and nearer, taking no chances, not even trusting radar, having gotten our passengers this close to their last destination.

We knew that land was about us, only the fog prevented the liberated from seeing their Canada and their USA for the first time in four years. Slowly the fog lifted on the starboard side and the men were ignoring their first cold wind in years to see the warm sun break in its afternoon position and to see the trees along the shore of Washington state. Everyone was on deck shivering in the wind and as night fell we could see the lights from mining operations on Canadian soil.

The seagulls were gone for the night and lights from a city shone faintly overhead. Slowly, the Gosper moved forward like a stranger, all alone, approaching the little port of Victoria, British Columbia, where we were to disembark our British and Canadian former prisoners of war.

We seemed to be slipping up on a quiet little town that was preparing for sleep. An orange moon was rising and made glittering reflections on the water and on the windows of houses.

A little tug came out to meet us and nudge us into the harbor. The Gosper looked like some giant coming in, with the shoreline so close by.

But — we were no strangers. Suddenly, there was a blast from the tug as if to tell the town that a stranger was arriving, and all the citizens knew what was aboard our ship. Instantly, sirens sounded, horns blew, ship whistles let go the greatest noise imaginable. Then spotlights filled the air, lit up the harbor and covered our ship, and it was then that the tense souls aboard realized we were getting a hero's welcome home. And oh, what a welcome.

No one on the ship spoke a word. All were too thrilled and emotional to utter a sound. The whole city of Victoria, B.C., had turned out to welcome us.

A hush fell over the crowd, choked with emotions as the stretcher cases were the first to disembark down the gang plank. Then the revelry resumed and one by one members of the families came forth to embrace their long imprisoned loved ones. Precious cargo, on American soil again.

After World War II, Trevathan became a pediatric neurologist and practiced for decades in his native Pitt County.

FIRST STOPLIGHT IN PITT COUNTY

By Dr. Earl Trevathan

Our favorite store was Mr. Claud Owens' drug store. He stocked several health items, appliances, and bed pans, and his overhead fans keep the store cool. He had round tables where we could sit and sip our fountain-made cokes if we had any money to cover the cost. To hear Mr. Owens wiggle that spoon in that coke glass to stir the syrup was worth waiting for.

About that time, on the corner a cinder block service station was built. The blocks were made on the site and I was fascinated watching the process. Ruby Stancil put a small restaurant there, the town's first. I got a part time job, pumping gas and selling beer. Boars ale was a best seller. Ten cents a bottle.

There were other ways to make a little money. Used drink bottles could be returned for a penny apiece. I sold magazines, such as *Ladies Home Journal* and *Country Gentleman*. And the *Grit* newspaper. I delivered milk to three customers at daybreak. My uncle Hardy milked the cow. The Bank of Fountain was on the other corner. Behind that iron barred screen worked Mr. Jimmy Horton. Daddy served on the bank board and it had survived the depression. An initial investor was my grandfather, Henry Turnage, and some of that stock has passed down to my brother and me, through BB&T. A nice little inheritance.

The first stop light in Pitt County was put up in Fountain. Like a real town, we were proud of it. On that corner was Riddick's Esso Station. And in the back was Ernest Mosley and his auto service shop. There was always a car up on the rack over the grease pit. Mr. Mosely could fix anything. Up front was the ice cold drink box and it was a landmark.

We had security in town with Chief Bryant and a jail. The Chief was so labeled because of respect. He was a heavy weight, had big arms, and had that pistol hanging on his right hip, right out of *Gun Smoke*. He made his rounds at night punching his clock at several designated spots in the business area of town. One winter night we had a real John Dillinger experience. Our Chief walked up on an active bank robbery. He ordered, "halt, don't move". Pistol shots were fired, and Chief Bryant was hit in the thigh. He fired back. The robbers abandoned their acetylene tanks used to cut open the safe, leaped into their get-a-way vehicle, and fled the scene. Now that was big city stuff. We "made believe" cowboy kids were so excited we searched the bank building the next day to find bullet marks. We mimicked drawing our cap pistols, firing from the right hip and holding the flashlight up and away from our bodies.

Our jail was about as large as two outhouses, and the walls were as thick as a fortress. If Chief was making an arrest, we guys would watch him put on the handcuffs and follow him to the jail and lock the door. Most often the jail bird was drunk, so there was no resistance.

About 3 p.m. several Saturday afternoons in the tobacco market season Jefferson's Merchandise Store would have a "drawing" to promote business. When you shopped

there, you would be given a ticket for every dollar you spent, and the matching ticket was put in a slotted wooden box. Dawson Jefferson would park his flatbed truck in front of the store and a hundred people would stand around as a young child pulled out three prized ticket worth five dollars each. My dad would give me any ticket that he earned from making purchases. I had observed how the child reached into the box to retrieve a ticket, so I bent the ticket to make a right angle, easy for the child to grab. That resulted in two winning tickets for me. Smart me.

The R. A. Gardner business was managed by his son-in-law, Albert Mercer, who handled the money loaning and insurance. He was always dressed in a black suit and white shirt, immaculate looking, befitting the black Packard car he drove. Rumor was that Albert was a Republican. If so, he was the only one in town.

SATURDAYS IN SMALL TOWN USA 1933, FOUNTAIN, HEAD LICE

NOTE: The "Earl Stories" have been quite popular, and here's another one about Fountain. Earl is such a treasure and an unassuming one. I worked with Earl on a couple of projects when I was on the Greenville City Council. Here's my own typical "Earl Story."

Earl wanted to make a worthy project happen for the community, and he needed help. My colleague on the Council Dr. Rick Croskery, Earl, and I sat down for coffee at the Scullery. The first words out of Earl's mouth were, "Now, Rick and Calvin, I want to get this done, because it'll be a good thing for the community. But I don't want any credit. I prefer my name not be used. I just want to get it done."

--Calvin Mercer

By Dr. Earl Trevathan

Reflecting back on those long ago times, living in Fountain brought precious memories of my childhood days. I had just turned nine years old. I had a bicycle. I had a dog, Topsy. There was a town full of young people. I had a brother and two cousins in our family.

There was one day in the week that was so special. It was a Saturday. Country people would come into town to shop and also to socialize. If it was early October, the weather was cool, and the town smelled like tobacco. Or smelled like money, the farmer would say. There were so many people on the sidewalk that you had to step onto the street for space to walk.

Mack Smith had a parched peanut rig in front of R. A. Fountain and had a good business at five cents a bag. One would crunch the shells along the sidewalk stepping on those spent peanuts. A wad of chewing tobacco in the gutter was another reason to watch your step. Around the corner along the brick wall of Smith and Yelverton there was always several people propped up there absorbing the warm sunshine and greeting friends riding by. A majority of those coming into town came by wagon or Hoover cart and tied up their mules on log railings back of the stores, provided by the merchants. The smell of horse manure, the abundance of flies and empty wine bottles set the scene.

The main street in Fountain had recently been paved with concrete. I remember that being done. It was mostly a hands-on operation with shovels, rakes, and wheelbarrows, and workers with rubber boots did the work. The job was a WPA project that the Roosevelt administration had initiated. Every store in town had a WPA poster in the window. Years later the town constructed a wastewater system and a deep well for water. That was progress.

The financial strength of our little rural town came from the farming economy, and that was mostly tobacco. There were four merchants in town who sold food and supplies and also financed the farmers' crop. The merchants were in the farming business, also. In the Great Depression many farmers lost their land when they couldn't pay their debts to the merchants. They would then drop down to the lower class as sharecroppers. If there was any money left over the family could buy a stand of lard, overalls, and brogan shoes.

Mr. Herman Owens had a grocery store about midway on main street. Here you could get fruit and bananas, cereals, and meats. My mother had an account there so she paid Mr. Owens every month for our goods. I remember one month it was 30 dollars and she had a conference with the adults at home as to how we could reduce the expense.

Leonard Brothers was our barber. His sister was Mrs. M. D. Yelverton. They came to Fountain from Manteo and brought their speech accent with them. We would imitate their dialect as an unkindly jester. A hair cut was 25 cents. He put a board across the arm rest for children to sit on while he slowly snipped away. It was difficult to stay awake.

After my brother got a haircut, on one occasion, Mr. Brothers informed my dad that Blacky, my brother, had head lice. Now there was a minor crisis at home that evening. My grandmother was with us at that time and she organized the attack. She put a clean

white pillow in our lap and with a very fine tooth comb she would pull this through our hair and look for any of those little boogers on the white pillow. There was some kind of smelly purple salve put on the head for eradication. At school you could tell which child had the affliction because the remedy was to cut off the hair. If you looked ragged headed everyone would know why.

Pigeon Troubles

NOTE: NOTE FROM MERCER: *I've been reading about World War II and and the lead-up to this horrific period in human history. Earl's story provides a glimpse of how life goes on in a local community, even in the midst of such severe international events that were unfolding, as Earl and his brother enjoyed life in Fountain and Greenville. The story also gives a snapshot of downtown Greenville in the mid-1930s. Wow.* –Calvin Mercer

By Dr. Earl Trevathan

Growing up in a small southern town we children had to create our own entertainment and not infrequently it would lead to conflict, at least according to our parents. We did the usual “taking a dare,” such as climbing to the top of the local water tank at night, carving our initials on the town’s favorite tree, driving the family auto around the block at age 14 when the grown folks were out of town, and throwing rocks at the overhead street lights after dark--and occasionally making a hit.

In the summer of 1936, there was another confrontation but not in our town. On this day my dad asked my brother and me if we wished to go with him to Greenville where he had to attend to a business matter. This was always a pleasing experience for he often stopped at his favorite fillin’ station to buy us a Coke. Riding in the cab of his green dodge pickup truck to a big town was exciting. For some reason we had to comb our hair and put on our Buster Brown shoes. Country comes to town, guess you would say.

Parking was always a problem in Greenville, so dad drove to the alley behind Blount-Harvey’s store to park, leaving my little brother and me in the cab, as trusting as ever. The alley parking area was unpaved and with the usual mud puddles and surrounded with wooden storage buildings, stables, and hitching post for mules and wagons.

Our critical eyes could not keep from watching those pigeons flying in and out of those pigeon boxes over the sheds. Getting on top of the shed and taking a peek for squabs was a cinch. My brother and I were really in the pigeon business. I had obtained a pigeon care merit badge in scouting and knew a lot about pigeons. But we didn’t have any of those white, speckled ones that caught our attention. Being the older brother, I suggested he climb atop the shed and check out what might be in the nest.

My brother was 8 and I was 13 years old and the whole adventure seemed harmless to me. I stood on the ground and coaxed him along as he relayed his findings. Squabs were there with wing feathers.

Someone must have been observing our escapades, for suddenly an adult with his apron flying in the breeze came running out the back door of the Busy Bee Café shouting with a foreign accent, “You steal my pigeons, you steal my pigeons”! My best Boy Scout pleading did no good. The man could not be convinced we were not crooks with a record of stealing pigeons. He waited for my brother’s decent from the shed roof, then grabbed him tightly by the arm and said, “We go see the police.” In vain I pleaded his case of innocence as I trotted along behind.

Were we going to jail? How did dad know where we were? How do they punish little folks? Who would hear our side of the story? Why did the old man have to squeeze my brothers arm so tight that he was complaining it was hurting?

A block away at the police station we were met by an officer who heard the complaint. The officer made the man release the arm and swiftly ushered us into the office of the chief. As we stood there before the chief shaking with fear, the chief barely looked up from his desk as he directed a question at the older brother, me.

In a calm voice he said, “Son, where are you from?” In my creaky voice I answered, “Fountain.” “You mean you don’t live in Greenville?” “No sir. We were waiting for our dad to do some shopping.” At that moment the chief must have decided we were not pigeon criminals and said we could go. He apologized for the inconvenience. As we departed the police station, I could hear the man with the foreign accent still complaining about our stealing his pigeons.

The trip back to Fountain that afternoon with Dad was very quiet, indeed.

HOT AS HELL

NOTE: For those who have encouraged me to post more “Earl Stories,” here’s another one, appropriate for the end of the most sultry “Dog Days” of summer.
–Calvin Mercer

By Dr. Earl Trevathan

Recently, my granddaughter asked me, “Papa, what was it like long ago without air condition”. My thought was, “has it been that long?” I started thinking of the many ways we tried to “beat the heat” in those days, when all the doors and windows were screened and open, the ice was in an “Icebox” on the back porch, and those living in town had an oscillating electric fan sitting near a window.

This was before Roosevelt gave the rural people electricity in the early 1930s. Ice came from the “icehouse” in big blocks about three feet by a foot and a half, wrapped in a heavy canvas blankets and delivered on the back of a pick-up truck or wagon. The driver took his ice pick and chipped out a block about a foot and a half square and with his tongs brought the ice to the back porch, slinging it into the icebox. It was fun to follow the wagon and pick up the chips that fell to the pavement and then cool off by sucking on the ice.

I think children endured the heat better than adults. As a child we stayed out of doors all day. If not weeding the garden or working in tobacco, we played hard most of the day. After lunch my mother required us to rest an hour, during which time we were to read. Perhaps some of you remember Jack London and "Call of the Wild" and "The Five Little Peppers and How They Grew." Everybody knew where the swimming holes in our creeks were. This was before swimming pools were built in our towns. Swimming holes were the best relief from the summer heat anywhere. If nature didn't provide vines from a large tree to swing out over the water, then someone would hang a large hemp rope to accomplish the same purpose. Cheap recreation.

Sleeping on hot nights was a problem. The humming of an electric fan and movement of air helped. No bed cover was needed. Many homes had a large fan in the upper story or attic, moving the air to the outside. Too hot to sleep, adults often moved from the bed to the porch where the night air was getting a bit cooler, to get relief. The most common device for moving air was the hand fan. Every woman had a pleated, colorful fan in her pocketbook. Fans were available everywhere with advertisements.

In our church every pew had fans provided by Farmville Funeral Home, and they were put to good use in July and August. In the rural areas the Primitive Baptist Churches had large windows, and their services went on for two or three hours with every worshiper flapping their fans, trying to get some relief from the heat. Remember, in the early days there was no electricity. Fans served another purpose also. They kept the flies away.

People in the country usually had a shallow well that served many purposes. Well diggers dug about 15 to 20 feet down before reaching a pure cool water vein. The well was wood framed with a shingle roof and shelf space where the galvanized metal bucket rested. On a nail hook was a metal or gourd dipper for cold water, and that was a treat. The cold water in the well served as the refrigerator. In a half gallon mason jar filled with milk, one would tie a strong cord around the top and lower it into the water, preserving fresh milk for a few days. The icebox required attention. The melting ice dripped down through a small pipe and into a metal pan. Before it overflowed, it had to be emptied or else you had a mess.

After World War II, many vets married and returned to school. The University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill brought army barracks onto campus, creating eight apartments in each building. They wouldn't pass for human habitation today, but at that time of meager means, my wife and I thought it was heavenly. The housing people supplied us with an icebox for the kitchen. We were on the second floor and could just about see our neighbors through the cracks in the floor below.

There was another problem we had to deal with. The icebox came with a pan to place underneath to catch the water from the melting ice. As busy as we were as new students, we would forget to empty the pan of water. Below, the Williams family would take their broom and bang on the ceiling under the icebox when it was overflowing and dripping on their kitchen table. We remained good neighbors, though.

My First Pork Bar-B-Que

NOTE: A lot—a whole lot—of positive feedback has been given to Earl and me about his stories circulated in this newsletter. So, kick your feet back, forget about viruses for awhile, and enjoy. More Earl stories will be coming. –Calvin Mercer

When I was very young my family would occasionally visit relatives in Chapel Hill. A real treat was to go to Josh Turnage Barbeque for a meal in Durham. Josh was a cousin of my mother. This writing is more about Josh than my early addiction to pork barbeque.

At the beginning of the Duke Medical School the new Dean, Dr. Wilbert Davison, had a recruiting resource that played a small part in the ritual of securing a favorable impression from individuals visiting Durham, mostly from Johns Hopkins School of Medicine. That resource was Josh Turnage Barbeque.

Josh was a cousin. He was the oldest child of Aaron and Carrie Speight Turnage. His father, Aaron, was the younger brother of my grandfather, Henry Calhoun Turnage. As a young man, Josh was a cotton buyer and worked himself up to full time employment with Erwin Cotton Mills of Durham, NC. He became a major official of the company and was well known in the area.

One thing Josh missed being so far from his Pitt County home was pork barbeque. Thus, in 1920's he established a weekend retreat in the country just outside the city of Durham where he began cooking Eastern Carolina style barbeque and Brunswick stew for his friends on weekends. Word got around about the good food and fellowship, so he was encouraged to commercialize. With the help of Jimmy Warren, they established a successful business.

In early 1930's, Dr. Davison was appointed dean of the new medical school. He was a pediatrician from Johns Hopkins, a jovial, portly man who became a friend of Josh Turnage for no less reason than his love for Josh's barbeque. An added attraction at the gathering place was a back room where a home-made libation and cigars were evident. No wonder prominent medical school department heads: pathology, surgery, physiology, pediatrics and more were recruited to create the foundation of a future great medical school at Duke.

There is no monument to Josh Turnage on the Duke campus. Old timers still talk about the good food and fellowship of this quaint little shack in the woods, adjacent the Duke University campus. The idea of a barbeque restaurant must have caught on in eastern North Carolina because every major town had well known establishments that satisfied hungry, working citizens. We all knew Wilbur's in Goldsboro, Bob Melton's in Rocky Mount, Parker's in Wilson, Respass Brother's in Greenville, and more.

Sound and Smell of Rain, Nature's Concert—An “Earl Story” with a VERY Funny Ending”

NOTE: Although the “Earl Stories” are quite popular with this readership, I hit the pause button as much of the country became troubled by COVID-19. The pandemic, along with the related economic, educational, and other issues, will be at the forefront at least into sometime next year. So, we all have to settle in for the longer haul, attending to the various facets of our lives as much as possible and finding new ways to contribute.

The “Earl Story” below is a reminder to be creative and savor the little things of daily life in the midst of national and personal challenge. So, I’m resuming the “Earl Stories,” historical and humanitarian reflections by a Pitt County icon, Dr. Earl Trevathan. I came to know Earl personally when I was on the Greenville City Council, worked with him on a number of projects, and have the deepest respect for his integrity, wisdom, and commitment to community. His stories, while not explicitly about the challenging issues facing our community and country, reflect values and wisdom that are sorely needed in these days. And, a story like the one below reminds us to appreciate the seemingly small things. --Calvin Mercer

By Dr. Earl Trevethan

Rain was the lifeblood of our farming. The only rhyme I knew about rain was, “Rain, Rain, Go Away, Come Again Another Day.” The other words I remember were, “Pray for rain.” That is because dry spells were a mid-summer experience when I was a boy. April and May were usually good growing months on the farm, because rains came on a regular basis and we could predict a good crop of corn or tobacco.

In the hot month of July, there often was a dry spell of two weeks. The crops were showing their lack of rain. The soil was powder dry, the green corn leaves were curling up to conserve moisture, and the tobacco broad leaves were drooped and looking lifeless. It was anxiety time and a common saying was, “Pray for rain.” That’s all you could do. The farmer was always dependent on the good will of the Lord.

The blessings would often come late into the night after an insufferable hot day. In bed you felt sticky with sweat. You didn’t even need a sheet. There was no air conditioning in 1935. Flashes of lightning sent ghost shadows around the bedroom. Then the boom, boom of thunder announced the arrival of rain. Dogs are frightened by thunder, so our dog came to the front door and whined and scratched until my dad let him in the house to crawl under the couch.

Dad, in his bath robe, would take a chair on the front porch and savor the sound and smell of rain. I knew he was there, because I could see that red tip of his Old Gold cigarette when he took a draw. It was music to his ears, he would say. First, the large drops fell and sounded like popping popcorn. Then, the harder, smaller drops hit the roof, sounding like kettle drums. The gurgling noise came from the overflowing gutters. When the rain began to slack off Dad would return to bed. He didn't miss a beat of nature's concert. The morning after a night's rain was a refreshing time--the blue sky and earthy smell in the air, the vivid green color of the crops. Prayers were answered.

I remember a story told by my grandfather about an event when he was a boy. Living in a small house with several siblings, he was relegated to sleeping in an upstairs room, which was actually just attic space. It was quite a walk to the outhouse. One night during a hard rain, my Grandfather Henry had to go, meaning, had to pee. There was a two feet by four feet window in his space, which he pondered while needing to relieve himself. Henry decided to go over to that window, lift the lower sash, lean forward, and let go.

It was raining hard, so no one could hear whatever noise he was making. It just so happened that his father was standing below at the side door relishing the much needed rain. He felt this warm "rainwater," with a foul smell, splash down on the top of his head. Henry said his father gave him a whipping like he will never forget. Henry lived long enough to have indoor facilities in his old age. There are many legendary stories about outhouse experiences still left to be told.

NEIGHBORS

Amanda Ruth was born with limited "smarts" you might say. Much like Forrest Gump, but she didn't have the breaks he did. Her family was over-protective and kept her from developing even a small bit of independence. Even in her 40's she still dressed in little style. She didn't drive a car, nor did she look after her business affairs. Self-expression was all but absent. Few heard her talk.

When all of her family members had died except one cousin, many worried what would happen to Amanda Ruth. She was left alone in her home. Could she take care of herself?

In a few weeks she began to walk a block down her street to briefly visit an elderly neighbor. This was a short visit in which she would sit on the front porch and rock a few minutes, then she would get up and return home. She was always received warmly, with an attentive ear and show of kindness.

Soon visits two or three times a week became a regular occurrence. Then, visits would be accompanied by a little gift of food or nuts or other shared items and in return, her neighbor shared her interest, with conversation and a show of concern.

The warmth of friendship, neighborliness, and sharing gifts began to do more for Amanda Ruth than just break up a monotonous day. Kindness and caring began to

kindle a new “spark” in her and new creativity. All could see a “new person” in her community.

Amanda Ruth began to be a regular presence in her church, with neighbors providing transportation. She began to create some of her own clothes and shared in food preparation for church functions. Her comfort in the presence of other people began to improve and she began to talk more freely. She became surprisingly conversant on local matters.

Was this person emancipated? Liberated? Discovered? Most likely, Amanda Ruth was a person revealed by kindness and caring given by a friendly neighbor.

The elderly friendly neighbor was my mother, 97 years old.

How We Selected a Dean For the Newly Established Four-Year Classes, East Carolina University School of Medicine

Note: In these times, when the medical side of town is playing an important role in the COVID-19 pandemic, it's appropriate to reflect on the history that brought us to being the medical hub of eastern North Carolina. –Calvin Mercer

By Dr. Earl Trevathan

The School of Medicine was the successful end of a 10-year struggle. First, a one-year class as an appendage to the University of North Carolina School of Medicine. Next, effort to add a sophomore class independent of UNC, which didn't happen. Then, an affiliation with Pitt Memorial Hospital or build a new medical school hospital. Didn't happen.

The hurdles included the North Carolina Board of Higher Education, the North Carolina General Assembly, collaboration with UNC--Chapel Hill, and the practice physicians in Pitt County. The final hurdle was the Liaison Committee on Medical Education, American Medical Association. It would take a book to cover the subject matter dealt with over those 10 years before the approvals came and the money was pledged.

In July, 1975, under President Bill Fridays direction, a dean's search committee was appointed by Chancellors Fordham and Jenkins. I was put on that committee by Dr. Fordham who was a classmate of mine at UNC School of Medicine. The committee chair was Dean Wally Wooles who had been dean when the one-year class was created. A nationwide search was begun, and applications poured in from all over the country.

As the weeks went by, the committee was busy meeting and screening the applicants and reviewing letters of recommendation. We set number ratings until we settled on the top ten. Dr Jenkins was monitoring our work, urging us to “move along.” In October we had settled on three candidates and Dr Wooles suggested we make personal inquiries about the three top choices.

One of the three was from the Medical College of Virginia, and since I did my pediatric training there, I volunteered to make a call to someone I knew. Dr. Bill Laupus was chairman of the Pediatric Department, taking that position the year I finished my residency. I knew him very well and he was familiar with me. He would be a good resource contact.

I’ve forgotten the name of our finalist candidate, but Bill knew him well and gave me a thorough impression of the individual and his qualifications for the deanship at East Carolina. We conversed about fifteen minutes, and I thanked Bill for his help, wished him well with his job as Chair of his Department.

At that point there was a long pause and silence. I didn’t know whether to hang up or not. Then, in his very soft voice he said, “Send me an application.” I rose out of my seat, about to shout. I knew how fond Dr Wooles was of Bill Laupus, so I called him immediately and said, “Wally, we have our dean.”

Shortly after that, the committee met. We discussed Bill’s accomplishments: Chair of the Department of Pediatrics, Medical College of Virginia, and the same at University of Georgia. President of the American Society of Pediatric and much more. His wife was from Ahoskie, NC. The application was forth coming, as was the unanimous vote of the committee. I’m sure Dr Wooles shortly put Dr Jenkins at ease. The only hurdle left was for Jenkins to send his choice to President Bill Friday and the Board of Governors. That happened. Bill Laupus lived up to all expectations.

Heritage

There is something satisfying about saving, preserving something of great value—A Heritage.

I can imagine the feeling that enveloped Conner Eagles and Les Turnage in successfully getting the Village of Yesteryear project accomplished and the satisfaction that their daughters must feel knowing that it is now well placed in its new home and preserved in perpetuity just on the outskirts of Greenville, NC.

What is a keepsake? Why do we save things that have no use or functional value to us? When is it clutter? When is it priceless? In my family, my grandmother saved very little—she even threw away my grandfather’s civil war uniform. My mother saved everything—her thousands of pictures and old magazines, and even my baby cap and carriage.

Our heritage is what we are made from, our inheritance. Collectively, it is the larger fabric of our past. From it we see and feel and experience an emotional attachment. My personal relationship to the ancestral home of my family that I am restoring provides me pleasure beyond ability to explain. My mind is transformed, just to reflect, to imagine, to feel what it is like a long time ago.

The story of our past is often told in museums—the repository of items, tools, writings, pictures, art and on and on.

The “attics” everywhere are filled with these keepsakes from the past. Some are worthy of public ownership and should be preserved for future generations. Pitt County needs such a repository, a Heritage or History museum. Our state government supports this type of facility providing guidance and tax breaks for homes and property of a long-age generation.

As we get older, we become more sentimental, more appreciative of things old, remnants of the past. That explains my interest. Clinging to something precious, something priceless, and that is what Heritage is all about.

(Comments spoken to Friends of Yesteryear, Myrtle Grove, 2012)

The Greatest Generation

By Dr. Earl Trevathan

A book by Tom Brokaw, so named, inspired me to attempt to locate three of my closest military friends during the time we served in US Navy during WWII. Even though I assumed some of these men were now dead, I had hoped to reach family members and learn what happened to them after the war and if they were a part of the “Greatest Generation.”

During the time I spent at Navy Midshipman school at Columbia University, I had a roommate from Akron, Ohio, who was several years older than me, and from whom I learned a great deal. After I was denied a commission as an officer because of my myopic vision, I was transferred to Pharmacist Mate school. I was very despondent. My roommate’s name was Ford Dickerhoff, and as I learned later, he wrote a beautiful letter to my parents that included kind remarks about my attributes, such as easily making friends. He predicted I would have a good future.

Ford was first on my list to locate, and I hoped to learn something of his life. There are many ways today to find an individual. I started first with a phone call to Akron, Ohio. The friendly operator answered, and after giving her the name I wished to contact, she replied, “There is no such listing of this individual.” There was a pause, and then she said, “I have a Ford Dickerhoff listed in San Clemente, California”. I said, “There can be but one in this country with a name like that.” She replied, “I’ll ring him up.”

“Hello,” a female voice answered.

“I am Earl Trevathan from Greenville, North Carolina, calling for Ford Dickerhoff,” I said.

"I know who you are. I am Ford's sister. He is in the shower after removing his cast for a broken back from a fall," she replied. "He spoke of you often. I'll have him call you back, shortly".

I had found a member of the "Greatest Generation." Ford had finished his Navy career with rank of Lt. Commander. He settled in southern California with his sister and was highly successful in real estate. He never married. He was active in Rotary International and became Lt. Governor of the southern California district.

Ford asked me about my navy duty, which was aboard an assault hospital ship in the south pacific, bringing POW's home from the Philippines. With that information he told me about his neighbor whose life story was just published in a book, "Unbroken." He thought I would enjoy reading it. That I did indeed, and it was a best seller for a year. It made a good movie.

Another close friend aboard ship in the navy was Tom Meany, from Austin, MN. Tom's uncle was a long-time head of a labor union. When I called the operator in Austin, I found that there were several Meanys in that city. I spoke to a Tom, Jr. Yes, he said he was Tom's son, and his father served on the USS Gosper with me.

Another member of the, "Greatest Generation." Tom became a successful lawyer and was on Vice President Walter Mondale's legal staff. He had a winter home in Florida and often drove through North Carolina. His son told me Tom Sr. died three years ago.

Gene Jenkins was also a friend and befriended me in a very special way after our ship returned to the US. We were docked in Bremerton, Washington, only a day and a half drive from my fiance's home in Grand Teton National Park, WY. I was very disappointed to learn my ship's section didn't draw leave time, so I could make the trip and have a week with my future in-laws. Gene saw my plight and kindly gave me his leave time. I asked him what I could do for him. He replied, "Bring me back one of Lassie's puppies." Lassie movies were the movie hits at this time.

Fifty years later, I attended a ship reunion and heard that Gene would be with us in Fort Worth, Texas. Around the luncheon table with the small number of veterans gathered, I told the story of how Gene had been so kind to me in giving me his leave time. For this he only asked for one of Lassie's puppies in return. I handed him a large package, and in it was a stuffed look alike dog, named Lassie.

Gene Jenkins and his wife edited newspapers in a town in West Texas and he was a writer. He died about five years ago.

For a couple of individuals, I could not find any of their family members.

Of that generation I think we would all agree, good marriages and the G.I Bill were the catalyst for success and the start of a good life. We had purpose, we had supervision, we were provided for, we grew in wisdom, and most of us survived war.