

A Step Back in Time

By Bobbie Sue Shelton



Dr. Joshua Epps Stephenson

Dr. J. E. (Joshua Epps) Stephenson was born in 1888 and was the son of George White and Lucy Elizabeth Epps Stephenson. Joshua Epps' dad was a farmer and lived in Spring Hill, TN. He was educated in Spring Hill at Branham-Hughes Military Academy. While in school he once told his dad that he wanted to quit school. His father agreed, if only he followed in his footsteps each day on the farm, so he decided that school would be the easier of the two options.

After finishing Branham-Hughes in the early 1900's he decided to enter the U. T. Dental School in Nashville, TN. When Joshua Epps left to go to Nashville, he had with him a suitcase of a few clothes and a five-dollar bill that his

dad had given him. His dad would send him a little money from time to time and that wasn't very often. Since he was a single man when he started his dental practice in Eagleville, TN., on Nov. 21, 1911, he also went to Westmoreland, TN, about 70 miles one way, one or sometime two days a week for about two or three years. "Doc" as everyone called him lived at McRae's Hotel, which was right in the middle of Eagleville. The present Dairy Bar is located on property that was the hotel's front yard. His office was upstairs over the Eagleville Bank building. The Eagleville telephone office and Miss Pearl Tucker's apartment were also upstairs in the bank building. Sometime after moving to Eagleville, building a dental practice and meeting people in a new community, Doc had a blind date with a nice young lady, Mary Claire Hughes. She was born in 1892 and was the daughter of David Henning and Lucy Holland Jones Hughes. What they did or where they went on that blind date is not known but it is known to the family that Mary Claire told Doc that she didn't like going out with strangers. Doc took her at her word and didn't call on her for four or five years. He gave her time to feel that he wasn't a stranger anymore and they started dating. Five



The Stephenson Family

Dr. and Mrs. J. E. Stephenson and Family

years after he moved to Eagleville in 1916, they married. When they first married, they lived in the McRae's Hotel. They bought their first new home, the second house on the right side of Hwy 99, going toward Murfreesboro. This house is still in the family. Doc's and Mary Claire's granddaughter, Suzanne McClaran and her husband, Johnny, has lived there since 1975.

In 1936, Doc moved his dental practice to Murfreesboro, TN. His office was located in the Murfree-Clark Building on East Main St. He brought his instruments home each night and made house calls to people that were unable to go to his office. He commuted to Murfreesboro from Eagleville and had regular riders each day. Mrs. Lady Mary Williams taught 1st grade at the Training School, a school affiliated with Middle Tennessee State College, and Miss Carmine Jackson taught at Crichlow, a Murfreesboro City School. Many riders were students that commuted to Murfreesboro to attend Middle Tennessee State College. He also helped students by giving them part-time jobs to help pay for their education. They worked as dental assistants and secretaries.

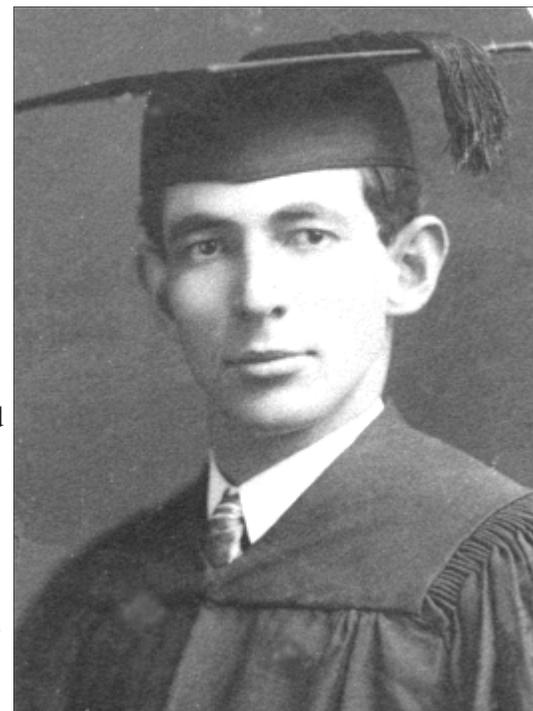
From 1936 until the time he no longer practiced in the 1940s, the most he ever got for pulling a tooth was \$2.00. As long as he practiced dentistry he also gave Mary Claire \$1.00 each day in case she needed some money. Jane remembers going to Nap Tomlin's Pie Wagon to get sandwiches for lunch and there would be money left over.

Mary Claire and Doc had two sons and four daughters, all educated in Eagleville, except for Walter who finished high school at Central High School in Murfreesboro. He went there so he could play football. Each of the children except one, Holly who died young, went to college to further their education. Doc died in 1949 and Mary Claire died in 1975. Children:

George Hughes Stephenson was born December 12, 1917. He graduated from the University of Tennessee, majoring in Agriculture. He served as a county agent in Benton Co. and Greene Co. Being told he would be drafted in the army in WWII, he resigned from his job and volunteered into the Navy. Much of his time was served in the Mediterranean Sea during many bad battles. When the war was over, he came home to enroll in dental school at the University of TN, Memphis. When George was in Knoxville, going to school, he had a blind date with Flo Irwin. When he went to Memphis to U.T. Dental School, he met Flo again. She was a dietitian at John Gaston Hospital. George and Flo married in 1948 in Memphis and after he finished dental school, they came back to Middle Tennessee to live and work. George set up his dental office in Murfreesboro, and Flo was a dietitian at the Alvin C. York Veterans Administration Hospital in Murfreesboro. George died March 30, 1984. They had two daughters: Kitty Claire and Mary George.

Elizabeth Holland (Holly) Stephenson was born May 7, 1920 and died August, 1922 when she was only two years old. It was said that every store in Eagleville closed and everyone went to her funeral.

Walter Henning "Bub" Stephenson born April 23, 1922 and died in 1991. He didn't want to go to college so he went to Lockheed Air Craft Plant in California and worked there about a year before he found out he was going to be drafted into the army, so he volunteered in the Air Force in June of 1943 and soon was sent to Saipan and Iwo Jima. He was in many battles and while in service he decided that getting an education was very important. He enrolled in U.T. Jr. College in



Dr. Stephenson at Graduation From Medical School



Mary Claire Hughes Stephenson

Martin, TN in pre-med. After he finished medical school, he came back to Middle TN and practiced medicine in Cross Plains and Gallatin. After many years of practicing medicine he took a leave of absence from his medical practice and in 1978-79 he and his wife, Walter Mai Bell Stephenson, daughter of James Walter and Manor Little Bell, (another Eagleville family), who got her education in Eagleville and M.T.S.U., went to Liberia, Africa through the United Methodist Church Global Ministry, as a medical missionary and a schoolteacher. Walter and Walter Mai had 3 children: Walter Henning Stephenson II, (Steve), James Epps Stephenson (Jim) and Betty Holland Stephenson (Holly).

Ethel Virginia (Sis) Stephenson was born July 24, 1924 and was never married. She went to U.T. Jr. College at Martin, TN for two years, finishing the other two years at Knoxville with a degree in Home Economics. She went from Knoxville to Yale University to enroll in nursing. She finished nursing and worked in New Haven, Conn. for several years. While there it was discovered that she had a blood deficiency (aplastic anemia). She came back to Tennessee so she would be close to her family and got a teaching job on the faculty at U.T. Nursing School in Memphis. She was a very devout Christian and belonged to the Methodist Church in Memphis. Her boyfriend was the pastor of the church. She would not marry him because she knew she had an incurable condition. When Sis died in 1956, he preached her funeral.

Pauline "Paul" Stephenson was born August 21, 1926 and also went to U. T. Jr. College in Martin, TN to get her pre-nursing courses. After finishing there she was accepted and enrolled in Vanderbilt Univ. School of Nursing. While in school she and her husband, Allen Pollard Crick, who grew up in the Rover Area, lived in Eagleville with her mother, Mary Claire. After both Pauline and Pollard finished their college requirements, they moved to Manchester TN where Pauline worked as a registered nurse and also supervising nurse. She worked as the Middle TN Regional Supervisor of Health Occupation for several years. During this time she also received her masters degree of nursing from U. T. Knoxville. She was very devoted to her profession. Pollard, her husband, also got his education in Eagleville and on to U.T. Jr. College in Martin, TN. He finished U.T. at Knoxville with a degree in engineering. He worked at Arnold Engineering Space Center at Tullahoma, TN. They lived in Manchester TN. Pauline's died in 1980. They have 3 children: Paula Jo, Michael Allen and Lee Ann.

Mary Jane Stephenson, who was born December 1, 1928, didn't want to go to college at all but her dad and mom said she had to. Walter and Pauline were both at U.T. Martin, so she decided to go there also. Jane went the summer and fall quarters of 1946. After Christmas break, she was told that if she would be happier at M.T.S.C in Murfreesboro, she could stay at home, but Jane decided to go back to Martin. By the time she had gotten to Martin, Jane wished she had stayed at home. Now she was in Martin, so she and some friends went to the movie. As soon as they got back from the movie, she packed her trunk and suitcases and called the train depot for the train schedule to Nashville. When arriving in Nashville, she called her parents and was on her way to M.T.S.C. the next day. Her father, Dr. Stephenson died in July of 1949, so she dropped out of school and taught the second grade in Eagleville for two years while staying at home with her mother. In the summer of 1951, Jane went back to finish college. She wanted to finish now because her parents had wanted her to so badly. She got her degree in Health & Physical Education. Jane actually got two degrees that week. She received her B.S. degree and also her MRS. Degree. She and Milton Simpson married the day after she finished college. Teaching at Rockvale School was

the first position that Jane had after getting her degree. The next two years she taught at Chapel Hill. At both schools she coached Jr. High girls' basketball teams and taught at the Jr. High level. Leaving Chapel Hill, Jane came to Eagleville to teach the second grade, her favorite of all, and taught that grade until she retired after 31 years of teaching. Milton also got his high school education in Eagleville. When he and Jane married, he was engaged full time in farming. He farmed until the early 70s and at that time he changed to construction and part time farming. Milton and Jane have two daughters, Suzanne and Rita Jane.



Mary Claire Hughes and Dr. Stephenson

Suzanne married John Stanley McClaran, son of J. W. and Dorothy Gillespie McClaran and have a son, John Davy who teaches and coaches at Chapel Hill, TN. He married Melissa Daugherty and they have a son, John Ryley, born in 2002 and a daughter, Catherine Grace (b. & d. 1-24-2005).

Rita married George Edward Boyd, son of Sam and Sally Boyd of Rockvale, TN. Their daughter, Gretchen, married James Lucas Thompson, son of Jim and Billie Jo Owen Thompson. They have a daughter, Elizabeth Rose "Lizzie" (b. 9-25- 2002).



Dr. Stephenson (4th from the left) in Medical School