

LUCILLE WARNER

Interview 50a

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Marie Davis, Interviewer

Dorothy Farley, Transcriber

Retyped by Daniel Guerrero

ABSTRACT: Nurse Lucille Warner recalls her time in Diboll as the town and company nurse. Along with Dr. Dale and the doctors that followed him, Mrs. Warner treated company employees, their families, and Diboll's citizens when they were ill or injured. They delivered babies, treated wounds, performed medical tests, and dispensed medication from their office in the commissary or on house calls. Eventually, company insurance began to cover hospital births for babies, and Mrs. Warner and the doctor would travel to Lufkin to deliver Diboll's newest citizens. Mrs. Warner retired in 1976 as a plant nurse and secretary.

Marie Davis (hereafter MD): Today I am talking to Lucille Warner. Her address is P.O. Box 197, Diboll, Texas. Today's date is February 14, 1985. My name is Marie Davis. Lucille, where were you born?

Lucille Warner (hereafter LW): In Lufkin, Texas. Dr. Peyton Denman's father delivered me.

MD: What were your parent's names?

LW: My father was Thomas Maxfield Anderson and my mother was Mary Leah Larue.

MD: What did your father do for a living?

LW: He was a schoolteacher. He got his diploma from Huntsville and he taught school for a while and he was the first elected county school superintendent. He was superintendent for a year and then he went back to teaching.

MD: What are your children's names?

LW: My oldest daughter is Sandra (Seekings) and Jean Marie (Wright).

MD: And then you have some grandchildren?

LW: Four grandchildren.

MD: Any great-grandchildren?

LW: Four great-grandchildren.

MD: When did you first come to Diboll?

LW: In 1940.

MD: How did you find out about the job here?

LW: I was working at Taylor Clinic at the time. I had been working with them. It was up over Taylor Hardware. Dr. T.A. Taylor and Dr. Robert. I liked it real well. Mr. Temple wanted me to come nurse Mrs. Temple and then he said he would give me the company job so I came on down here and later Dr. Robert called and asked how much I made and I told him and he said he would give me more than that if I would come back. But I told him that I liked it down here. Had the company insurance and everything and that I had rather stay down here.

MD: The first doctor you worked for was Dr....

LW: J.R. Dale.

MD: J.R. Dale. Now can you tell us something about your typical day in the office?

LW: Well, there would be cuts, foreign bodies in the eyes, and so many different things. And about the second day that I was there, well, Dr. Dale told me that a lady was coming in with in-growing toenails and when she came in, for me to go ahead and clean it up and deaden it and then call him in there and he would remove her toenails. So a lady came out there and I asked her what was her trouble and she said she had real bad in-growing toenails and wanted to see Dr. Dale. So I carried her in there, cleaned her toenails up and deadened them and went and got Dr. Dale. And I thought he looked at me awfully peculiar and he took her toenails out and after she left, he said that wasn't the lady that I was expecting, but they needed it anyhow. Another time right after then, a man came in. I remember him real well, and said he had foreign bodies in his eyes. And Dr. Dale told me to get it out and so I put something in his eye and got the foreign body out. And I knew him well and called his name and I said there is something in your other eye. I will get it out. He said, "No um, you needn't get it out." No. I said, "Of course, I will. I know that it is bothering you and I will get it out." I pulled it down to get it out and his eyeball flew out on the floor. And I screamed until you could have heard me for a block. And Dr. Dale came running in and asked me in no uncertain terms what was wrong. And I asked the man why he didn't tell me he had a glass eye because it looked so natural. And he said, "I just didn't want to, ma'am." So that shook me up.

MD: I guess so. Did you all....you all delivered a lot of babies, didn't you?

LW: Yes. We delivered so many babies and sometimes two in one night. And I kept three sterile OB packs and when we would have two and as soon as I would get in of the morning, I would go ahead and fix the packs up and sterilize some more. And I sure wish that I had kept a count of the babies that I helped deliver and their names. And the first

baby that I helped deliver was for Dr. Rushing in East Mayfield, a Temple plant. And he kept a little book and put down the names of the babies that he delivered and I started to, but I never did do it. And I want to give credit to Willie Dell Warnock, a registered nurse that was there then, that got me started to working and taught me everything that I know and gave me her books, taught me how to keep things sterile. And she still lives in Pineland. She was the...she went on to Pineland from there and she has been retired for a number of years and I still see her often. Not as often as I would like to.

MD: You give her credit for getting you interested in nursing?

LW: Interested. I sure do and it made me think the way it came about was, we were friends and I would go to the office and she got me started to working. And I remembered how my father wanted me to be a nurse. He gave me that book to read about Florence Nightingale and told me that he wanted me to be a nurse and I was sure grateful to her.

MD: Okay, when somebody came to the office, did they have to pay if they worked for the company?

LW: No. They didn't pay if they worked for the company. Everybody paid \$1.25 per month doctor's fee. So we would have to.... make house calls and it didn't make any difference what was wrong if they called us we had to go. Sometimes when we got there it would be for a bad cold.

MD: You didn't get anything extra for a house call?

LW: No, and later on the insurance company went to paying \$15.00 for baby cases and for the ones that worked for the company. And I remember the first one very well, because the man said that was his \$15.00 and he wasn't going to give it to the doctor. It made Dr. Dale real unhappy, but Mr. Henry Temple told him to give the man his money and that he would put out a letter and let people know that that \$15.00 from the insurance company was for the doctor and he did that.

MD: When somebody did not work for the company, would Dr. Dale see them?

LW: Yes, he would see them and he would charge them, but if they told him that they didn't have the money, he would attend to them anyway.

MD: Could you tell us something about some of the more interesting baby cases that you...

LW: Oh, some of...all of the company houses had electricity, but so many that we went to... the outside didn't have electricity and we would have to hold lamps. Somebody would hold them or I would hold it for Dr. Dale and also so many of them were in one room. All the family would be in there and we had to work real quietly to keep from

awaking them. We were really blessed; we never did wake the children. So I was grateful for that.

MD: Did you ever get stuck in the mud when you had to go out at night after it had been raining in the country?

LW: I don't remember ever getting stuck because if it was real bad and we had to go out in the country the people carried us out there in their own car. They knew the roads and so we didn't. I remember one case in the country that we went to. It was right after I came here and I didn't know my way around very well. And after we had been there a little while, Dr. Dale sat down in some gum. Got it on his trousers and he insisted that I had to go and tell his wife to send him another pair of trousers that gum was on them. And I told him that we could put ice on it and get it off that I would get lost, I didn't know the way back, but he made me go and I left very unhappy and wishing that I wouldn't find my way back. But I made it back all right and we got the baby delivered.

MD: Now, when you first started to work, where was the office located?

LW: It was upstairs over the commissary and there was an old elevator there that if people wasn't able to walk up the stairs, they came up that elevator. And it was three or four rooms, I believe it was. And my laboratory was in the back and the first-aid room in the front. One doctor that came there said "I would tell them that I was a nurse or a laboratory technician one, I wouldn't keep running from the front to the back" and I said, "Well, I don't mind."

MD: Did you ever keep patients up there? Were there beds..?

LW: No. There was a bed up there, a table, and we gave Diathermia treatments on, but we never did keep any patients up there.

MD: Did you ever go to the hospital?

LW: Yes. We went to the hospital when a patient wanted to go to the hospital. Well, we went with them. I had... I took a course in laboratory and X-ray work after I came here and Miss Bernice Jones was the technician then and I took that course and I would do blood counts and make the X-rays and if they had to go to the hospital, well, they usually wanted me to go with them, too. So Dr. Dale would assist with the operation, but they would let me go in the operating room with the patient, too.

MD: What were your duties, more or less, in helping Dr. Dale in the operating room?

LW: Well, giving shots, and so many routine things, but then he taught me to suture and soon he was having me do all the suturing. I didn't mind because I would deaden it and do the best I could and I guess I was doing all right because I never heard any complaints.

MD: [unintelligible]

LW: Yes. After the insurance company went to paying that \$15.00 and too, so many people had insurance, well, they wanted to go the hospital. But Dr. Dale never had delivered a baby in the hospital and he didn't want to go. Said he wasn't going. And so I talked to Virgie Burchfield that was in the delivery room and told her that I was going to get him to bring the baby cases up there. They wanted him to go and for her to stay right by Dr. Dale and help him. She said she would. And the first case we had was Henry Lawrence. Mr. Lawrence came up the stairs and Dr. Dale wasn't in the room then, and he said, "My wife sure wants doc to deliver this baby, but he won't go to the hospital and she wants to go to the hospital." I said, "Well, he will go to the hospital." And he said, "Oh, I am so glad." And Dr. Dale came in about that time and I left out and when I came back he was real unhappy and wanted to know why I told Mr. Lawrence that he would take his wife to the hospital to deliver that baby. And I told him that we were going to have to start delivering... going to the hospital to deliver or either quit delivering because they wanted to go to the hospital because they had the insurance. So Henry Lawrence was the first one and they got along just fine.

MD: [unintelligible]

LW: Fifteen dollars. Fifteen dollars. No, he couldn't charge the company employees anything... outside the fifteen dollars.

MD: What was your salary?

LW: When I first came I made sixty dollars a month, but when Dr. Robert Taylor called and wanted me to come back up there, well, Mr. Temple knew about it and they said they would pay me more, so he gave me a twenty dollar raise.

MD: When you retired, how much were you making then?

LW: I was making \$3.56 an hour then, and if I was called out at night, the plywood company was really the main one that would call me out at night for injuries, and so I got paid extra for that.

MD: Do you have any more stories about Dr. Dale? How would you describe him to a person?

LW: Well, so many people thought he was hard hearted. And he wasn't really. If somebody didn't treat him right he didn't forget it, but if they treated him right, he remembered them and he was good to them. And if they came in there and didn't have the money and told him they didn't, he would treat them. And if they came in for the delivery of a baby and told him they didn't have the money well, he would deliver the baby. But if they told him they did have the money and they really didn't, it really made him unhappy.

MD: Who were some of the other doctors that you worked for that would come in?

LW: Well, the first doctor that came there to help Dr. Dale was a doctor from Corrigan. And I can't remember his name. And then the next one was Dr. Harrington. He stayed there quite a while and then there was a Dr. Beasley came and helped him. And Dr. Montgomery stayed there quite a while and Dr. Dan Spivey stayed quite a while.

MD: Dr. Dale worked didn't he, until he died? He didn't retire, did he?

LW: He didn't retire. He worked until he died. He was assisting with an operation and he had a smothering spell and he went back to the doctor the next day, but they couldn't find anything wrong. But I went in one morning and he was on a cot in there. It was on a Saturday morning. I knew there was something bad wrong with him and he had sent quite a few patients to Dr. Ledbetter in Houston. And I called him and he told me to send him down there as soon as he could. And Dr. Dale had heart failure and he never did come home.

MD: After Dr. Dale died...I mean, before he died, you all had moved your office, hadn't you?

LW: Yes. About 1948 or '49, I believe it was. After Mr. Arthur Temple came here, he built the present clinic now behind the office and we moved over there.

MD: After Dr. Dale died, how did your duties change?

LW: I stayed there three months by myself. Of course, I could call Dr. Clements or Dr. Spivey or some other doctor and they would advise me and so I was there three months before they got another doctor and that was Dr. Rice. And after he came there, his wife was a nurse and he wanted her to work for him, so they put me as a plant nurse over at the personnel office.

MD: That was where you were working when you retired? What did you do as a plant nurse?

LW: Well, I did all the first aid and I was the receptionist and did all the first aid and kept all the first aid kits for all the people in the woods crew and ordered all the supplies and I signed people up to go to work. And I was secretary to Mr. Joe Denman, Mr. Kelsey Roach, Mr. Jack Sweeny, Mr. Carroll Allen, and Mr. Dave Mitchell at different times. But the last one that was there was Mr. Sweeny when I left. He was real nice to me.

MD: Before we go on, do you have any other stories that comes to mind about Dr. Dale?

LW: I remember one. There was a man that would come get Dr. Dale and would say his wife was having a heart attack. But he had been going fishing and when he would start to go fishing, she got to where she had a heart attack. And Dr. Dale went a few times and then there wasn't anything wrong with her, so he told the man not to come get him

anymore, to go on fishing that there was nothing wrong with his wife. So the man went on and it worked for about a year, but he weakened and she said she was having a heart attack when he started to go fishing. He came and got Dr. Dale and it made him real unhappy and he wrote a prescription for some weak vanilla water for him to sit up and give a teaspoon full every fifteen minutes all night.

MD: He got even, huh?

LW: He sure got even. The man didn't come get him anymore.

MD: Just before you retired, who was your immediate supervisor?

LW: Mr. Vernon Burkhalter, the personnel manager was my boss.

MD: What year did you retire?

LW: May 9, 1976.

MD: Since you have retired, what have you...what do you spend your time doing?

LW: Well, I haven't spent it very profitable. Only gardening. I really like to garden. I can use a garden tiller and I would raise flowers all time and furnish the church with flowers so long. But last year I didn't do any of that. I haven't been feeling as well.

MD: You have always been active in church, in the church, the Methodist Church. Did you belong to any other clubs?

LW: In the church?

MD: No, besides the church...Pilot Club.

LW: No, I joined that but that took up too much of my time away from home and I didn't continue that. I liked it. It is a real good organization.

MD: Well, you never knew when you were going to be called out, did you?

LW: No. While I was working for the company, too, I was chairman of the credit committee for the credit union, too.

MD: From the time you came here in 1940 until you retired did you see a lot of changes in Diboll?

LW: Oh, yes. So much...so many changes.

MD: Since you were so active in church...what were some of your duties?

LW: Well, I was chairman of the finance committee awhile and I was communion steward for fifteen years. And I was a member of the board and I am treasurer for the Sunday school class now.

MD: That is something that you have always enjoyed, isn't it?

LW: Yes. Very much.

MD: Can you remember any other duties that you had for the company that we didn't include before?

LW: Yes, when I first went to work in the personnel office, I had to blood type all the new employees. Blood type all the new employees and keep the file on them and if any of our employees needed blood, I could get their type and know where to go to find the donor and the company would furnish a car to carry them to the hospital to give blood. But later we quit that because they had the blood at the hospital. And I was...when I first went over there I was secretary to Mr. Denman. Well, I hadn't had much experience in that and I would use the hunt and peck on the typewriter. But he said he didn't know how in the world I could type as well as I did and as fast and he always let me make a rough copy double-spaced. And he was real nice to me. And also Mr. Sweeny was nice. Mr. Roach and I had a little differences about that at first. He wanted a letter perfect, three copies, and I told him, Mr. Denman let me make it double-space, but he didn't want it. But later he let me do that and we are the very best of friends now. He is as good a friend. He and his family. As good as I have...of course; Mr. Sweeny was always nice to me.

MD: Lucille, when you and Dr. Dale were delivering so many babies, did anybody... did many people name their babies for you all?

LW: Yes. Quite a few did. Dr. Dale wanted to fill out the birth certificate right after the baby was born. Even if it was two o'clock in the morning. And he was real unhappy if they didn't have a name. And we would go back the first thing the next morning so we could fill out the birth certificate. If they didn't have name, he didn't like it a bit. So we delivered a girl and a boy one night. And they didn't have a name for either one of them, so we went back the next morning and they still didn't have a name for the girl. And he said, "Well, I think 'Lucille' is an awfully pretty name." So they named it "Lucille" and we started out the gate. And I said, "Where are we going now, Dr. Dale." And he said, "To that other baby." I said, "It's a boy, isn't it?" Yes, and he knew he had had it and we got over there and they didn't have a name. And I said, "I think 'John Richard' is a awfully pretty name." And they named it "Richard C." and one of them wanted to name it, "John Richard Dale, Jr." but he told them that was against the law.

MD: Lucille, do you remember how long or when Dr. Dale was here?

LW: Well, He was here in the '20s and then I don't know just what year he left. It was during the '20s. And he went to Corrigan and then he came back when Dr. Clements left

and that was 1938. I wanted to tell about another baby that was named for me. And I was sure glad that she is living. That was before Dr. Dale had started taking OB cases to the hospital and so this lady's baby came prematurely. And she just weighed a little over two pounds. And there was no one else there to help, so just as soon as I could, Dr. Dale told me to take the baby and take it to the hospital. And I carried it up there by myself and I carried it in and sat there waiting a few minutes for some of them to come. And so the nurse said, "I'm sorry, we can't take that baby. It wasn't born in the hospital." And I said, "Do you mean that you are going to let this baby die, because she wasn't born here?" And she said, "How old is it?" And I looked at my watch and said, "She is forty-five minutes old." So she said, "Well, we'll take it." And they took it. So she has grown up to be a fine young woman and she was named for me. And I do want to say that I really do think a lot of Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Temple, Jr. They have always been real good to Doug and myself. They are really good friends and the kind of people, if they know you one place, they know you in another. And that is like I read in a book on etiquette, "Anybody that is anybody don't look down on anybody" and they are that kind of people. And I do want to say when I was in the personnel office that I had two good friends, Geraldine Poulard and Betty Baskette and that's.....

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