

Museum on Main Street, Smithsonian Institution

A Doctor Who Made House Calls, Alexander City, Alabama

My dad's name was Dr. Harold Dark. He practiced medicine in Alexander City for many years, over at the old hospital and at the new hospital. He worked very hard in his office. He had an office down on Madison Street. My sister and I recently went in the office. We just had to reminisce a little bit and go through the office, looking at it. But the thing I remember about Dad's medicine practice was he would go on house calls, and sometimes at night, he would get a call to come out to someone's house, and I would always beg to go with him.

Now I was just a little girl, so I'd get in the car and go with him, and when he would go into the patient's house, I would be left in the car. And it would be very dark and always very scary. And when he would come out, I'd always say, 'Well, Daddy, what did they have?' And he would always say, 'They had epizootics.' And that was his way of maintaining patient privacy.

I can remember seeing dogs and foxes and things along the sides of the road. Their eyes would light up at night, and it would make me think of the big bad wolf, and really frighten me.

Mom, as I've said before, was an artist. She studied art at Sophie Newcomb. And then she came here and painted. And she would always take me out with her; sometimes, in the afternoon, we'd go out. She would sit with her easel and paint out in a field or a pasture. Maybe painting a barn.

And I would go with her and play. And too, she would always take her camera around with her. And when she would see an interesting house, a barn, she would say, 'Stop.' And she would pull up in these people's houses. If it was an unusual house, she'd start making pictures. And, I would just be, 'Let's get out of here.'

I guess that's about all I can think of to say now that, other than you know all of our children and descendants that might see this, you are loved. You have been loved by your parents and your grandparents.

And I hope you enjoy this today. It took all my courage. That's it. Thank you so much.