



PDA PROFILE

Dr. William Trice

By Dr. Stephen T. Radack III, Editor

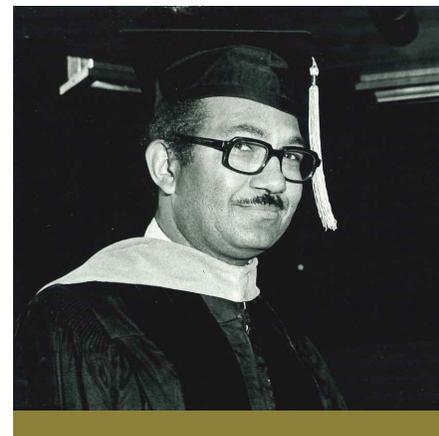
Spending a couple hours with any person who has lived for 90+ years can be enlightening, but spending those two hours with a person who has lived the life – both professionally and personally – Dr. William B. Trice has, can seem like time is going at the speed of light. I had the opportunity to spend that enriching time with Bill back on a cold Friday last December. It had taken some back and forth with his daughter Dr. Angela Trice-Borgia to make that time possible. Bill is now in a nursing home facility spending his time getting his legs working again and ready to dance at his grandson's wedding later this year.

Being from Erie, I have been fortunate enough to have spent many hours over the past 30 years talking to Bill and his wife Dr. Mildred Trice. I feel like I could have written about Bill without even sitting down for those two hours in December, but as always there were new details I learned about him that I had not heard before.

William Trice was born on January 28, 1924 in Newton, Ga. He was raised in Weirton, W.Va., when his father came north to work in the steel mill in Weirton. After high school, Bill matriculated to Georgia State College and it was there that he met his beloved Mildred. They got married when

he was 19, and shortly after Bill enlisted in the United States Navy and was off to the South Pacific Theater to serve as a Navy steward in World War II. Bill had his first dynamic exposure to dentistry when a naval dental officer in Hawaii invited him to see the removal of a globumaxillary cyst. The event peaked Bill's interest and right there he knew that he wanted to pursue dentistry after his time in the Navy was over.

After the war, he returned home and joined his young bride at the University of Pittsburgh to complete his undergraduate degree and then his DMD in 1953. Like any new dentist, he wondered where to go to start his dental career. As luck would have it, a dental salesman from Erie, Charlie Nier, who ran a company called Dental Service, told Bill to take a look at Erie. And the rest as they say is history.



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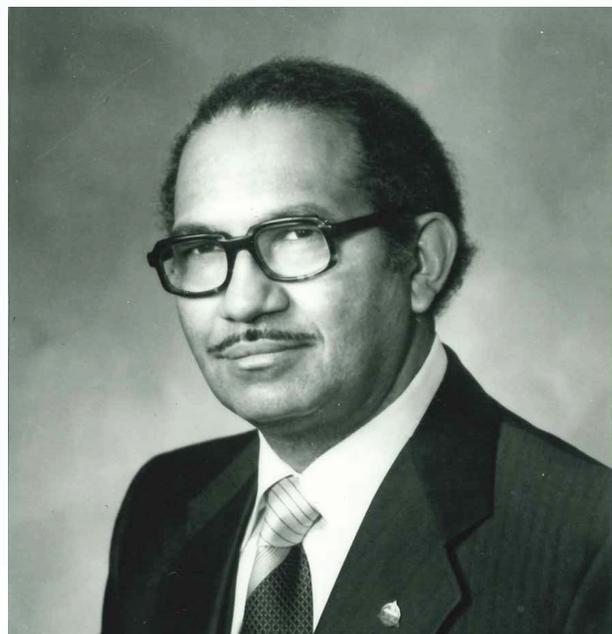


The Trices at PDA Annual Session in 1980.

Bill started his practice of general dentistry in Erie in 1953 and retired last year after 62 years, spending the last half of those years practicing beside his daughter Angela. I still recall Bill giving me a call in February 2015 and letting me know he was hanging up his white coat. He told me the hands are still good, but he was starting to have some problems with his eyes. I know it had to be a very difficult decision to step away. Bill loves dentistry and will tell anyone who listens what an amazing career it was for him and how many opportunities it presented him.

I knew Bill was Mr. Organized Dentistry from the years of listening to him report on his various activities at our local Erie County Dental Association (ECDA) meetings, but I wanted to know how he got his start. It was not unlike many of us. He was invited to attend a local meeting by a colleague, Dr. Barrett, and he was immediately impressed by the fellowship of the ECDA members. Shortly after joining the dental association he was recruited by Drs. Chet Bixby and Larry Veiheffer to join the board of directors. The fuse was now lit on Bill's rocket rise through organized dentistry. After the ECDA, it was on to the Ninth District, serving two terms as the president, and then PDA, being elected president-elect and serving his term as president in 1979-80. What was unique about that election is that Bill had not previously served as a trustee or officer, and he is believed to be the first African-American president in our association. Not that he would care about that. Bill would tell you he never played the "race card," he was just a member dentist.

After his presidency concluded, Bill decided to run for ADA Third District trustee to replace Dr. John Bomba. Unfortunately another member of the Ninth District also wanted to run for trustee. The district would have its meeting to vote on who would be endorsed by the district. ECDA, wanting to support Bill, rented a bus, loaded it up with our members and headed south for the meeting and the vote. Dr. Bill Booth won the endorsement of the district, but both Bills ran anyway, and in a three-way race with Dr. Alex McKechnie, neither Bill won. So that is a bit of the famous "bus" story some of you may have heard and the start of Bill's ADA journey. As ADA trustee, Alex chose Bill to be the representative of the Third District on the Council on Legislative Affairs. In his last year on the council Bill was elected chair and with then ADA president, Dr. Arthur Dugoni, was scheduled to meet with the Secretary of Health and Human Services, Dr. Louis Sullivan to discuss some ADA advocacy issues. To make a long story short, both Bill and Dr. Sullivan were both born in Georgia and members of the powerful black fraternity, Alpha Phi Alpha. They hit it off immediately, and in the end ADA got what it came for! Ladies and gentlemen you can't make this stuff up and it is just one of the amazing stories I and many others who have been fortunate to know Bill have heard over the years. Bill later ran for and was elected ADA First vice president, serving from 1991-1992.





Dr. Trice enjoying himself at the 2004 Annual session with Dr. Jay Eshleman (left) and former Journal editor Dr. Rich Galeone (center).

Bill spent many years in dental education as well as his private practice. An expert in electrosurgery, he was on the faculty as a visiting lecturer at his beloved Pitt as well as Alabama, Connecticut, Detroit, Emory, Loyola, LSU, Maryland and West Virginia University. He noted that he also had the opportunity to travel the world to lecture. Bill was the coordinator of continuing education for the University of Pittsburgh's programs in Erie for many years. He served in the Department of Dentistry at Hamot Medical Center for over 30 years.

I was interested to know what changes he had seen in his over 60 years practicing dentistry. He immediately said it was a change in the image of a dentist. He believes that the profession has moved further than any other from a trade to a healer. We are now part of the "medical puzzle" and there has been a change in perception of the dentist and dentistry integrating with the health care team. As these changes occurred he noted that there was a change in how his medical colleagues treated a dentist.

His advice to young dentist colleagues is to join the ADA. He would encourage them to stay close to dental leaders and to 'pick their brains.' They have a wealth of knowledge. Your ADA is your only "lifeline in a storm," and he urges us all to give it our full support. He said that no "man is an island" and he has been privileged to stand with the members of the ECDA, Ninth District, PDA and ADA. He only hopes that every young dentist could have the wonderful mentors he has had during his career, noting Drs. Harry Archer, Leonard Monhiem, Harold Hillenbrand, Arthur Dugoni and of course that naval dental officer who invited him to see that first dental

procedure back in Hawaii. Bill made it a point to tell me that so many years later that man joined the Trices for Bill's presidential party at the conclusion of his term as PDA president. That had to be something special.

Asked if there was anything he would do differently, he told me he would do it exactly the same. He said he feels like he has been the luckiest guy.



Saying the Pledge of Allegiance at the 2010 Annual Session.

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Mildred and Bill dancing at the 2010 Annual Session festivities.

"I am a blessed man. Dentistry and Erie have been great to me. Can you believe a black guy living a dream like this, Steve? Married (over 60 years) to a PHD?" he asked me. He said he was proudest of his family (Dr. Mildred, daughters attorney Sheila Trice Bell and Dr. Angela Trice Borgia and his grandchildren), serving as PDA president, ADA VP and CLA chair and of course lecturing all over the world. He made sure to include delivering the commencement address at his daughter Angela's graduation from prep school. I found this an amazing statement from a man who had spoken before so many large gatherings of colleagues, politicians and "students."

Our time together flew by and he wanted to share one last story with me. He told me about working in a cement factory in Weirton, W. Va. as a young man. There were many older men there who cussed and used bad language. Bill, wanting to fit in one day decided to do the same. He said the owner came up to him, pulled him aside, jacked him up and told he was not like those guys; he was raised better than that and he needed to get out there and make something of himself.

Bill and Mildred affectionately call each other "mommy" and "daddy." Bill also has taken to calling a few of us in Erie his "sons." I, along with Drs. Jim Hissom (a native son of Weirton) and Andy Kwasny, am privileged to be one of those "sons" and to consider him one of my mentors. Bill is a force in our dental community and the community at large.

*"I am a blessed man.
Dentistry and Erie have
been great to me."*



He was always where the action was, dressed sharp and sporting those dark rimmed oversized glasses. I got up to leave, shook his hand and said goodbye, hoping to see him again soon. He told me to say hello to my "lovely bride" and

my daughters. That's Dr. William B. Trice. We all should be so fortunate to know this man.



2014 at the Hotel Hershey for the President's Reception.

Dr. Trice flanked by Dr. Steve Radack and Dr. Andy Kwasny.

