

Ethel Scott  
Cornwall  
Interview by Jean Bouteiller

Ethel and Howard Scott's first experience with Dr. Walker came when he did their blood tests for their marriage license. Their relationship changed dramatically with the birth of their first child, Arlen, in the spring of 1946. He seemed to be a healthy child. However, things began to unravel by the time he was two, with many bouts of colds and pneumonia.

Dr. Walker was perplexed by the boy's condition, but a woman doctor from New York, who sometimes worked with him in Cornwall, had seen similar symptoms before. They soon determined that Arlen had what would be the first case of cystic fibrosis that Dr. Walker had ever seen. The woman doctor wanted to send Arlen to New York Hospital, but Dr. Walker said no to that, feeling that it would be worse for the child to be so far from home.

While the couple sometimes brought Arlen to Dr. Walker's office, most of the time he stopped by their house to check on Arlen. This happened much more frequently after they had diagnosed the cystic fibrosis, but he occasionally stopped at other times to see how Arlen was doing. Often his visits occurred on his way home from his rounds at the hospital, sometimes as late as 10 PM or so. He visited with Arlen, checked his vital signs, and often laid the child over an arm of the sofa and pounded his back to break up the mucous in his lungs. After completing the checkup he would sit in the rocking chair and often fall asleep for a short nap of 10 minutes or so. Ethel thought he enjoyed the quiet of the house after a busy night at the hospital. If the couple's second child, an infant, was in her basket Dr. Walker would pick her up and walk around with her.

These visits continued for nearly three years until Arlen's death shortly before his fifth birthday in the spring of 1951. Ethel and Howard didn't have much money, but sent him \$20 or \$25 when they could. Dr. Walker, however, never talked about fees and never ever sent them a bill.

Ethel said, "He was so good with children. Arlen was never afraid of him. But one time we had Lynn (their third child) at Dr. Walker's for a checkup. She was about two. He checked the children frequently for signs of cystic fibrosis. He took hold of her arm for some reason and she kicked him in the shin. He was pretty surprised!"

In 1962 Howard was not feeling well, not eating, and losing weight. He refused to go to the doctor and wouldn't let Dr. Walker come see him, saying he would be okay. Dr. Walker did not push Howard to allow a visit, "He never pushed anyone in that way," said Ethel. Not until Howard passed out was Ethel able to call Dr. Walker. He got Howard to the hospital in the ambulance, where they determined that he had diabetes. But it was too late. He died two days later.

While Dr. Walker is famous for his cigarettes, he never smoked in or around the Scott's home.

When asked about Dr. Walker's wife Ethel replied, "Katie was quite a gal." She was known to be very forward and opinionated. Many in town would laugh and wonder how the good doctor put up with her, though, Ethel never had any kind of a problem with her. Katie was very involved with the town and especially active with the Woman's Society. Ethel never saw Katie in Dr. Walker's office, but sometimes she would meet patients at the front door.

Dr. Walker's son, Tom, was also a doctor, who worked in his father's office in Cornwall for a time according to Ethel. Eventually he moved to Litchfield (?) and worked at Charlotte Hungerford Hospital.

Ethel's memory of the woman doctor that sometimes worked in Dr. Walker's office was that she donated her time. It could be that she was some type of an intern. However, she was familiar with cystic fibrosis, so hard to know.