

DR. ROBERT WILLIAM THURMAN

b. 2 February 1906, McMinnville, TN

d. 13 September 1998, Putnam Co., TN

Stray Leaves from Putnam County by Mary Hopson, pgs. 113-114.

I can remember coming to Cookeville when I was about 10 years old with my dad, mother and brother. We were going to Monterey from Sparta to visit my mother's family, **Mr. and Mrs. T. E. Goff** and children. At that time, the road that is now 10th Street was just sand, deep enough to get stuck in with our old T-Model Ford. I also remember coming with a group of young people to see the Putnam County Fair. The fairground was located on the northeast corner of Washington and 10th Street (the old Algood Road). And, after World War I, about 1918, I remember my dad bringing the family from Sparta to Cookeville to see Alvin C. York come through on a passenger train going to Jamestown on his way home from war. He stood on the rear platform of the passenger car and waved to the crowd that had gathered to see him.

Sometimes when I was a child, we would come to Cookeville in a taxi that carried the mail from Sparta to Cookeville. The family would spend the night in an old hotel across from the depot called the Duke House, I believe. It was located about where the old Shanks Hotel was later built. The next morning, Jube Cummins, my uncle would come after us in a wagon and team and take us to his house for a visit. The trip there was another ten miles of rough riding. We greatly enjoyed our visit to the old Cummins Mill to see some of our relatives. Mrs. Jube Cummins was my daddy's sister.

I have mentioned these trips to let you know how we traveled in old days as well as my knowledge of Cookeville at that time.

It would take several books to tell you about the good times my family had together – hunting, fishing, traveling, ect., up to 1924. We were all musicians and enjoyed playing together, but a lot of those good times ended after I graduated from high school and went off to college to study Dentistry. I finished dental school in 1929, and I had planned to practice with my dad who was a dentist in Sparta. However, Dr. J. O. Cummins, my first cousin and a dentist, had fallen out of a cherry tree and broken his hip. He persuaded me to take over his practice and take care of his family until he could come back to work. It was about six years before he came back to work. By that time, I had built a practice, so I just stayed in Cookeville. It was hard to make ends meet in those days. The depression during 1930, 1931, and 1932 made it hard to exist.

When I came to Cookeville, the population was about 3,500. Most streets were not paved, and sometimes it was hard to drive from West Side to the square without getting stuck in the mud. There were not many cars, and I remember when it was not unusual to see a team of oxen coming through town. The Tennessee Central Railroad was in operation, and you could go to Nashville and back on the train.

I started my practice in the office of Dr. J. O. Cummins located in a building just about where the police station is now. It was upstairs over the old Strand Theatre. Dr. Max Winningham, a dentist, was also located in the same building. We had for out assistant Miss Bessie Dickson, a daughter of John E. Dickson, a Cumberland Presbyterian preacher who also sold insurance. We paid Bessie \$5.00 a week to help us. That wasn't a bad salary in those days. In comparison, I think I collected \$29.00 the first month I practiced.

It was not long before Bessie and I were married (1932) our first baby was born in 1934; we named her Corinne. She was born in Sparta in the home of my parents. Two weeks later, we rented an apartment in Cookeville. It was located on the corner of Broad Street and Church and belongs to the Greenwoods. Our apartment and the office were on the same floor of the building. I did my own decorating and repairing for the apartment and office, and the rent was only \$12.50 a month. We heated the place with oil stoves and had an oil stove to cook on. During the first 4 ½ months there, my wife had a severe infection. The mother of the late Dr. L. T. Reeves, a nurse, took care of my wife and baby during that time.

Just to give you an idea of how times have changed for dental work, for some time after I started practicing dentistry, I received \$1.00 for simple extractions and sometimes not that much. My fee for cleaning teeth -

\$1.00 (sometimes \$2.00), and I made gold crowns for \$5.00. For root canals in the anterior teeth, the fee was \$5.00. I had many sets of dentures in those days, and I did the laboratory work myself. I charged \$30.00 for an upper and lower set. For a full extraction, regardless of how many teeth the patient had, plus a full upper and lower set of dentures, my fee was \$40.00.

My first patient was Billy Carlen, I believe, and he was just eight years old at the time. The oldest patient I ever worked on was A. W. Smith. He was 99 years old and made another appointment the last time he was in my office as a patient. I was 79 years old at the time. A. W. Smith still had most of his natural teeth. He was a former dean of T.P.I. and lived to be 102 years old.

One of my first patients (who continued to keep regular appointments until I retired) was Mrs. Henry V. Lewis.

In addition to practicing dentistry, I was a musician and took time to play a trombone in the T.P.I. marching band and the symphony orchestra for eight years. I was not a student at T.P.I., but they needed a trombone player, so I kept playing. I also liked string music, and I played a guitar in a band with Frazier Moss, the World Champion fiddle player. Bill and Dottie West and a few others were in the band. In addition to playing the guitar, I did some singing and played the French harp. We had a lot of fun playing for entertainment, etc., and my children really enjoyed the sessions.

My wife, Bessie, and I had three children, and all have various degrees from Tennessee Tech. My older son, Robert, Jr., is manager of Donelson Branch of Fidelity Federal in Nashville; he is also a vice president of that savings and loan institution and is active in emergency medical activities. My younger son, Dewey Dickson Thurman, is a mathematics instructor at Tennessee Tech, keeps statistics at Tech's basketball games, and bowls and plays golf. My daughter, Corinne, is a Reading Specialist and teaches reading in the White County school system. She is an avid animal lover. My wife, Bessie, was a teacher in the Putnam County school system, and operated a private kindergarten in our home for many years.

I hope you have enjoyed this bit of history of Cookeville and my own personal history – Dr. R. W. Thurman.

(1930 census 1st Civil Dist., East of Walnut St., Cherry St., Putnam Co., TN: Dwl: 211-42-44 – **J. O. Cummins** is head of household, 37 yrs. old, TN (24 yrs. old 1st marriage). Occupation: Physician Dentist, md to **Willette**, 37 yrs. old, TN (23 yrs. old 1st marriage). Children: Lucinda, 10 yrs. old; Mary S., 8 11/12 yrs. old; Jno Jr., 3 9/12 yrs. old; Claricle Cummins, 1 4/12 yrs. old. All born in TN. Also living in the household: Mary Cummins, sister, 35 yrs. old, TN. Occupation: Teacher Public School. Also living in the household, **Robert Thurman**, cousin, 24 yrs. old, TN. Occupation: Physician Dentist). **John Oliver Cummins**

Dr. Robert William Thurman Obt.

COOKEVILLE - Funeral services for **Dr. Robert William Thurman**, 92, of Cookeville will be held at 1 p.m. on Tuesday, Sept. 15, from the chapel of Hooper & Huddleston Funeral Home. Burial will be in Crestlawn Cemetery.

The family will receive friends from 1-4 p.m. and from 6-9 p.m. today at the funeral home.

Dr. Thurman was dead on arrival at Cookeville Regional Medical Center on Sunday, Sept. 13, 1998.

He was born on Feb. 2, 1906, in McMinnville to the late Robert Benjamin and Willie Goff Thurman. Dr. Thurman was a retired dentist and a member of Central Church of Christ in Sparta.

His family includes his wife, **Bessie Thurman** of Cookeville; a daughter, Corinne Johnson of Cookeville; two sons, Robert William Thurman Jr. of Brentwood and Dewey Thurman of Cookeville; six grandchildren, Dr. Robert Jason Thurman of Cincinnati, Ohio, Robin Schappert of Henderson, Nev., Terri

Taylor of Murfreesboro, Tana Taylor and Dean Johnson, both of Nashville, and Jill Cassford of Cookeville; and one great-grandchild.

In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by a brother, Tom Thurman.

Bro. Glen McDoniel will officiate at the services.

Information provided by Thurman Funeral Home of Sparta.

Published Monday, September 14, 1998 12:27 PM CDT: Herald Citizen Newspaper, Cookeville, TN

Bessie (Dickson) Thurman Obt.

COOKEVILLE -- Funeral services for **Bessie Thurman**, of Cookeville, will be held at 2 p.m. on Wednesday, Dec. 17, 2003, from the chapel of Hooper-Huddleston & Horner Funeral Home. Burial will be in Crest Lawn Memorial Cemetery.

The family will receive friends from 2-4 p.m., and from 6-9 p.m. today, Tuesday, Dec. 16, at the funeral home.

Mrs. Thurman died on Sunday, Dec. 14, 2003, at her residence.

She was born on March 27, 1907, in Pinkney, to the late John E. and Launa Yarbrough Dickson.

Mrs. Thurman was a retired teacher.

Her family includes a daughter, Corinne Johnson of Cookeville; two sons, Robert William Thurman Jr. of Brentwood, and Dewey Dickson Thurman of Cookeville; six grandchildren, Terri Taylor of Murfreesboro, Tana Taylor of Smyrna, Dean Johnson of Oak Ridge, Jill Cassford of Cookeville, Robin Schappert and Dr. R. Jason Thurman, both of Nashville; and two great-grandchildren.

In addition to her parents, she was preceded in death by three sisters, Murl McLaughlin, Blanch Clark and Euna Davis; and two brothers, Frasier D. and John Dickson.

Bros. Glen McDoniel and Gary Hampton will officiate at the services.

Thurman Funeral Home of Sparta is in charge of arrangements.

Published December 16, 2003 12:39 PM CST: Herald Citizen Newspaper, Cookeville, TN

Dr. Robert William Thurman, b. 2 February 1906, McMinnville, TN - d. 13 September 1998, Putnam Co., TN, s/o **Robert Benjamin & Willie Goff Thurman**. He married **Bessie Dickson**, b. 27 March 1907, Pinkney, TN - d. 14 December 14, 2003, Putnam Co., TN, d/o **John E. & Launa Yarbrough Dickson**. Dr. Robert & Bessie Thurman and both buried in the Crest Lawn Cemetery, Putnam Co., TN. **Dr. Robert Benjamin Thurman**, b. 1 December 1880, TN - d. 16 October 1967 & his wife **Willie (Goff) Thurman**, b. 24 January 1889, TN - d. 20 September 1967, both buried in the Highland Cemetery Section Q, White Co., TN. Also buried in same cemetery: **Thomas Oliver Thurman**, b. 13 February 1909, TN - d. 5 February 1974, s/o Robert Benjamin & Willie Goff Thurman. And the wife of Thomas Oliver Thurman, **Mildred (Lowery) Thurman**, b. 15 July 1909 - d. 28 June 1996, and their children **Tom Thurman Jr.**, b. 31 August 1935 & his wife **Sarah Jo (Snodgras) Thurman**, b. 24 April 1936 - d. 12 October 1995. **Infant Thurman**, b. 23 February 1933 - d. 23 February 1933.

Jube H. Cummins, b. August 1860, TN – d. 1938 md **Ginevra (Thurman) Cummins**, b. May 1862, TN – d. 1938, sister of **Dr. Robert Benjamin Thurman**. Jube H. & Ginevra are both buried in the Smyrna Cemetery, Putnam Co., TN. Also buried in the same cemetery: **Willette (Hutcheson) Cummins**, b. 30 January 1893, TN - d. 11 July 1956, buried in the Smyrna Cemetery, Putnam Co., TN and **John Oliver Cummins Jr.**, b. 13 July 1926, TN - d. 7 December 1930, and **Jubal Morrison Cummins**, b. 26 December 1923 and **Lyda Estelle Cummins**, b. 29 July 1885, TN - d. 29 March 1953)

(1900 census 10th Civil Dist., Jackson Co., TN: Dwl: 34 – **Jube Cummins** is head of household, 39 yrs. old, b. August 1860, TN md 17 yrs. to **Genova**, 38 yrs. old, b. May 1862, TN, 5 children born, 5 children living. Children: Lida, 14 yrs. old, b. July 1886; Carl, 10 yrs. old, b. June (?) 1889; **John**, 7 yrs. old, b. Oct. (?) 1882; Annie, 5 yrs. old, b. September 1894 & Jube Cummins, 1 yr. old, b. August 1899. All born in TN).

(1910 census 10th Civil Dist., Jackson Co., TN: Dwl: 133 - **Jube H. Cumming** is head of household, 49 yrs. old, TN md 27 yrs. to **Genova**, 47 yrs. old, TN. Children: Lida, 24 yrs. old; Carl, 20 yrs. old.; **John**, 16 yrs. old; Mary, 15 yrs. old; Henry, 11 yrs. old & Gillie Cumming, 8 yrs. old. All born in TN).

(1910 census 1st Civil Dist., Sparta, White Co., TN: Dwl: 22 Family: 24 -**Robert B. Thurman** is head of household, 27 yrs. old, TN. Occupation: Dentist Own Office, md 5 yrs. to **Willie**, 21 yrs. old, TN, 2 children born, 2 children living. Children: **Robert W.**, 4 yrs. old, TN & Thomas Thurman, 1 2/12 yrs. old, TN).

(1920 census 10th Civil Dist., Gainesboro & Livingston Rd., Jackson Co., TN: Dwl: 12 – **J. H. Cummins** is head of household, 59 yrs. old, TN md to **Genova**, 57 yrs. old, TN. Children: Carl, 30 yrs. old; Mary, 24 yrs. old; Henry, 20 yrs. old & Gillie Cummins, 18 yrs. old. All born in TN. Also living in the household: Francis Dyre, boarder, 18 yrs. old, TN).

(1920 census 1st Civil Dist., Sparta, White Co., TN: Dwl: 305-180-200 -**Robert B. Thurman** is head of household, 36 yrs. old, TN. Occupation: Dentist, md to **Willie**, 28 yrs. old, TN. Children: **Robert**, 13 yrs. old, TN & Thomas Thurman, 10 yrs. old, TN).

(1930 census 1st Civil Dist., East of Walnut St., Cherry St., Putnam Co., TN: Dwl: 211-42-44 – **J. O. Cummins** is head of household, 37 yrs. old, TN (24 yrs. old 1st marriage). Occupation: Physician Dentist, md to **Willette**, 37 yrs. old, TN (23 yrs. old 1st marriage). Children: Lucinda, 10 yrs. old; Mary S., 8 11/12 yrs. old; Jno Jr., 3 9/12 yrs. old; Claricle Cummins, 1 4/12 yrs. old. All born in TN. Also living in the household: Mary Cummins, sister, 35 yrs. old, TN. Occupation: Teacher Public School. Also living in the household, **Robert Thurman**, cousin, 24 yrs. old, TN. Occupation: Physician Dentist). **John Oliver Cummins**).

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