

# REMEMBERING DR. CHARLES HUSE HALE

Contributed by his great grandson, David House

My dad was born in a boarding house across from the Hugo depot on Sept. 22, 1919. But for almost all of the first 13 years of his life, he lived with his mom and grandparents, blue-eyed Dr. Charles Huse Hale and his wife, Isabella "Belle" Gordon Darnall Hale, in their home in Boswell, about a block west of Restland Cemetery where they're all buried.

Dad thought of his grandparents as his parents. Of course, his mom was his mom to him, but she was away at college in Durant, getting her degree in education so she could teach, and dad was romping around his grandparents' house in Boswell. One of my favorite pictures of my dad is a portrait taken of him when he was about four years old. He was sitting in his grandfather's leather-covered wingback chair in the living room, holding a copy of the Daily Oklahoman.

Dad worshipped Dr. Hale, an easy-going gentleman in every sense of the word, who didn't mind if his little part-Indian grandson hung out with him at his office -- a one-story brick building that he built on the main road through Boswell. The building is still there. In the back are cabinets. On the plank shelving are great-grandfather's "books" for a number of years, written in pencil.

Great-grandfather Hale was born April 16, 1874, in Spearsville, Union County,



photo early 1940's

Dr. & Mrs. Hale

contributed by great-grandson David House

Louisiana. He graduated from medical school in St. Louis. While a medical student, he worked nights at a flour mill to bring in enough money to keep his family cared for. He'd earned the tuition by moving out to New Mexico where he and one of his brothers each made improvements on sections of land then sold them. I'm not sure when he and his family moved to Boswell.

Once, some young men pulled up in front of the Hales' home in a mule-drawn wagon. One of them ran to the front door, pounding on it and calling out for Dr. Hale. He met them at the door, asked what was wrong. They told him that their father was in terrible pain. They'd laid him in the wagon and brought him all the way from some distant rural area as fast as they could, which wasn't very fast because they couldn't jostle their dad too

severely. With every bump he'd groan in excruciating pain.

"Bring him in", Dr. Hale told the men. He directed them to place the gentleman on the couch. Dad, of course, was all eyes and ears because of the excitement and stood near his grandfather as Dr. Hale examined the fellow. He quickly diagnosed the problem -- a urinary tract infection that had caused so much swelling that the poor fellow hadn't been able to urinate in a couple of days. Ultimately, Dr. Hale catheterized the gentleman and asked dad to bring a big bucket and set it on the floor next to the couch. As dad returned with the bucket, Dr. Hale quickly grabbed it with one hand, pulled it close then dropped one end of a length of narrow rubber tubing into it. Then Dr. Hale completed the catheterization. Immediately, a powerful flow of urine shot through the tubing and into the bucket. Dad remembered how the gentleman sighed with relief over and over until he'd completely drained his bladder.

He thanked Dr. Hale profusely, but Dr. Hale was all business. He told the gentleman that he was going to give him some antibiotics but that he also would have to leave the catheter in place for a few days until the infection was quelled and the swelling eased. "Do not take this tube out," Dr. Hale told the man. "If you do, you're going to have the same problem all over again." He told the man to come back in a few days to have the catheter removed and to get more antibiotics. Away they went. But, three days later, they were back. The man had pulled out the catheter because it was a nuisance; his urinary tract was again swollen shut,

and he had to endure another bumpy wagon ride to Grandfather Hale's. But this time, he took the medical advice to heart, endured the catheter for as long as it took and recovered from the infection.

On another occasion, dad recalled how they were sitting on the front porch one summer evening, playing gin rummy. Grandfather Hale was smoking a pipe full of Prince Albert pipe tobacco. A neighbor from a few streets over was walking along the road in front of the Hale residence and called out a greeting to Dr. Hale who returned the greeting and wished the fellow well. "You're a good man, Dr. Hale," the gentleman called out, "but it's too bad you're going to hell." Dad said the neighbor was a member of a Christian denomination called the Church of Christ and believed that anyone who was not a member was doomed to spend eternity in hell. Playing cards and smoking further increased the likelihood. "Well," Grandfather Hale replied to the gentleman, "I guess I'll take my chances."

Dad told us other stories that I can't remember in full -- stories about making ice cream in the backyard, standing by while Grandfather Hale used his chrome-plated bone saw to perform a leg amputation, eating his way through a mountain of boiled corn on the cob that a patient had used as currency (many patients paid Dr. Hale with chickens, vegetables, fruit, etc.).

Great-grandfather Hale died of a heart attack on that leather couch at his home on April 25, 1944. Dad was in the U.S.

Army's combat engineers in Belgium, and it broke his heart when he heard about his grandfather's death. It was doubly hard for him to take because he couldn't be there to help Dr. Hale, a man who had done so much for so many during his life. That included my Grandfather House. At one point after he and grandmother married on June 2, 1919, in the Hales' home, grandmother wrote a check for \$300 on her dad's account, cashed it and gave the money to Grandfather House to open a grocery store in Hugo. The bank made sure first that Dr. Hale would authorize the payment. He angrily approved it and Grandfather House got the money, opened the store and went out of business in a matter of a few months.

There are elderly residents of Boswell in the area who remember Great-grandfather Hale very well. I met one of them about four years ago when I visited the insurance office that's operating in what was Dr. Hale's building. There was an elderly Choctaw gentleman sitting in the waiting area with his grandson who needed auto insurance. When he heard me mention that I was the great-grandson of Dr. Hale, he got up right away and walked over to me. "You're Dr. Hale's great-grandson? He delivered me. And you know how my parents paid him? With two chickens and some vegetables. He was a great, great man. Everybody loved him."