



Georgia Dent Di Pietro

(3/15/2006 Transcription; 4/4/2006 Edit)

Interviewee: Georgia Dent Di Pietro
Date of Interview: January 16, 2004
Interviewer: Ginger Nieman Corson
Transcribed by: Donna J. Williams, February 25, 2006
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Edited by: Georgia Dent Di Pietro, April 4, 2006

GC: "Hi and welcome. My name is Ginger Nieman Corson, and today is January 16, 2004. We're in Edgewater, Maryland, where I have the privilege of interviewing Georgia Dent Di Pietro whose grandfather was Shady Side's doctor, George Thomas Dent. Now Georgia, [Ms. Corson moves out of view of the camera.], can you tell me how you are related to Dr. Dent?"

GDD: "He was my grandfather. He had two wives. His first wife was Julia Carr, and she died in childbirth bearing my aunt who was Julia Pembroke Dent Best. And then he married Ida Belle Hartge Dent, and they had a son, George Hartge Dent, who was my father."

GC: "How much time did you spend in Shady Side growing up?"

GDD: "I spent every summer of my young life, either on weekends or visiting my then grandmother. Dr. Dent died in 1936, but my grandmother lived on the property for another 20 or so years, and we would visit almost every weekend from, let's say, May through October, November, and then she would come for two months and live with us in Baltimore County and then two months in Bethesda where my aunt lived."

GC: "So, what took you all to Baltimore County? Why were you living there?"

GDD: "My father and mother resided there. After they were married, that was where they lived. My father spent his boyhood in Churchton. He went to the Charlotte Hall Military

Academy, then to the University of Maryland; later he met my mother, who was from Baltimore; and they settled in Baltimore County.”

GC: “Do you know how they met?”

GDD: “Through a mutual friend.”

GC: “What was your Dad’s profession?”

GDD: “He was a civil engineer.”

GC: “Does your Mom have a profession?”

GDD: “She was a teacher and taught school for four years, after they were married and then retired to become a homemaker.”

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GC: “Do you know where she taught?”

GDD: “In Baltimore City.”

GC: “You don’t know the name of the school?”

GDD: “I don’t, no.”

GC: “So did we mention your Mom’s name yet?”

GDD: “No, we didn’t, and she is still alive. She just celebrated her 97th birthday last month, and she was Helen Feaster Dent, and she resides now in Gaithersburg.”

GC: “Where were her people from?”

GDD: “In the Frederick County area of Western Maryland.”

GC: “Do you know the history of the Dents and where they came from?”

GDD: “I know that Dr. Dent originally came from St. Mary’s City in St. Mary’s County, and that is where he is also buried. He apparently started practice in Ridge, Maryland, which is near St. Mary’s City, I believe. And the first date that he shows, in his ledger, which may have been in Ridge, or it may have been in the Shady Side/Churchton area, I’m not sure of that, is 1889.”

GC: “Do you know what month this was?”

GDD: [Mrs. Di Pietro looks into the ledger.] “The first date that I see is April the 4th, 1889. And the ledger is kept by last name of the patient and it shows the date of service. Apparently there was a numerical code because there are numbers that follow, and a numbering system

was used to describe whatever the reason for the medical service was, and there's no description of the number. For instance, a Mr. Evans, on April the 8th was treated for a '67', whatever a '67' was, and he was charged \$3."

GC: "Those darned '67's ... don't you hate it when that happens!" [Laughing]

GDD: "And it goes on, then.. but it's all categorized by last name."

GC: "By last name...so it's like he's got the 'A's in there and the 'B's in there?"

GDD: "Yes. They're not in alphabetical order. They're in order by date."

GC: "Oh, well I recognize the name 'Evans' from Shady Side."

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GDD: "Well, there's a 'Langley', here's a 'Hopewell', 'Smith' ... well, that could be any body. 'Clark', Capt. Charles Cullison."

GC: "OK. All right. I take that back. I don't recognize any of those other names."

GDD: "But some that are later, there's a 'Franklin' and a 'Thompson' ...and my goodness, Matthews ..."

GC: "Definitely Shady Side."

GDD: "Scott."

GC: "Definitely Shady Side."

GDD: "Dennis, Turner, Wood, Thomas, and Glover..."

GC: "So back in the 1880's and 1890's if I was .. if I had one of those darned '67's and I needed a doctor, how would I get a hold of Dr. Dent, and what would he do then?"

GDD: "Well, he did have an office in his home. There was a waiting room and a small office, and adjacent to the office was what I would call sort of a laboratory where he could mix medicine and made medicine there. He also made house calls, but we're talking originally in horse and buggy days. As a matter of fact, he apparently was well known for traveling by horse and buggy, and apparently in a rather relaxed fashion, because one of the stories that someone told me not too long ago, as a young boy he was walking on the roads in Shady Side and doctor came along and stopped and offered this young man a lift or a ride. To which he responded: 'No thank you, doctor, I'm in a hurry today'." [Laughing]

GC: "That's great! Now what's the last date in there?"

GDD: “1895. 1889 was the first, and 1895 is the last date. So I’m sure he either had other ledgers, which I don’t have, or went to a different system because he practiced until his death in 1936.”

GC: “Do you know what he died from?”

GDD: “Heart failure.”

GC: “Now can you tell us a little bit about the house and where the house was located.”

GDD: “As a matter of fact, I can start with the original deed of the property. The original deed I have framed, but I have a copy.” [Begins to read from the copy.] “This is a copy of the original deed for the property that still exists on Dent Road, and this is dated March the 5th, 1863, and it describes the property as courses and distances of the tract of land surveyed for Ulysses G. Owings, lying in the swamp in Anne Arundel County, adjoining the

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land of William Crandall, John Atwell, Ann Norris, Francis Brashears, Francis Crandall and G. Winterson, containing and now laid for 30 acres, 3 roads and twelve perches.” Signed by a ‘Franklin’, looks like it could be a ‘J’. or ‘T’. Franklin, Anne Arundel County, March the 5th, 1863.” Shows a sketch ... sort of a layout of the property and the meets and bounds.”

GC: “Can you hold that up and I’ll zoom in on it.” [Mrs. Di Pietro complies.]

GDD: “Now I have some pictures of the property. [Shows black and white photographs.] “This is a picture that shows ... if you can make it out, the house, garage, chicken house, corn crib and barn.”

GC: “Are any of those buildings still standing?”

GDD: “The only one still standing is the garage. The house was struck by lightening and burned to the ground in 1973, and the other outbuildings had been taken down some time before that.” [Holds up another photo] “Here’s a picture of the front of the house and the lady in this picture is Ida Belle Hartge Dent, my grandmother, Dr. Dent’s wife.”

GC: “Do you know who the other gal is?”

GDD: “I don’t.”

GC: “Now isn’t something still standing there at the house ... at the property? Isn’t the gate still there?”

GDD: “The gate’s still there. Good memory!” [Holds up another photo] “Here’s a side view of the house.”

GC: “That’s a very nice house.”

GDD: "It was. Yes, it was a nice house." [Holds up a different photo] "And here's another one, an older one. [Another photo is shown.] "And on the side, on the north side is this very large boxwood bush which is, because it grows so slowly, hundreds of years old."

GC: "And the last time we were there, you showed me the deer sleep there."

GDD: "I did. The deer sleep there. They parted part of the boxwood, here's another shot. [Holds up photo.] "But they've made that their home." [Another photo.] "Here's a photograph of Dr. Dent and Mrs. Dent." [Then another] "This one is of Dr. Dent and his daughter, Julia, my aunt."

GC: "And what was her name again?"

GDD: "Julia Pembroke Dent Best."

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GC: "And where did she live in later years?"

GDD: "In later years she lived in Bethesda. She was born in 1900 and died at age 90 in 1990" [Shows another photo of a group of people.] "This is a photograph of Dr. Dent, his daughter, Julia, son, George, my father, and my grandmother, Ida Belle, or Miss Belle, as she was called, or Cousin Belle by a lot of the relatives." [Photo of two children in a boat is shown next.] "This is a photograph of Julia and George as children. Julia is holding a doll and George is operating the boat. And speaking of boats..." [Shows another photo] "this is George a little bit older, standing on a rowboat at the boathouse."

GC: "Can you read the name of the boat?"

GDD: "Atlas." [Another photo] "Here is a photograph of George and Julia. Must be cold, they're wrapped up pretty well."

GC: "Their outfits kind of match, don't they?"

GDD: "Yes." [Another small group photo] "And here's another of Doctor and Mrs. Dent, and these two ladies, I have no idea who they are." [Shows a sepia-tone photo.] "This was a photograph of my father, George Hartge Dent, in his uniform from Charlotte Hall. He was a boarding student at Charlotte Hall, and Aunt Julia was a boarding student at what was then St. Mary's Seminary in St. Mary's City." [Another photo of two boys is shown.] "This is my father and Alfred Sellman Best, who was a classmate at Charlotte Hall who later married my aunt. The Sellman family home, which is still in existence, is on Contee Wharf Road, which is where his mother's family resided." [More 'modern' photograph is then shown.] "Now we come to a little later generation. This is my aunt Julia, and we raided the trunk in the attic of the house and found these clothes from way back when and dressed up in them."

GC: "So that's you on the right?"

GDD: "This is me."

GC: "Could you guess what year that was?"

GDD: "Yes, I think it was 1949." [Shows another one.] "This was even an earlier picture. This is me, and this is Mary Ann Weems, who was a cousin." [Shows a toddler in the water.] "These are a little bit out of order but this was wading in the Chesapeake Bay...pretty young, not sure just how old I was at that time."

GC: "Great picture."

GDD: [Now holds up a color photo.] "This is a later picture, this is in either ... depending on what map you see, it's called either Deep Creek or Dent Creek. Deep Creek is probably the

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one you see the most often but that is a misnomer; because if you want to get out into the creek and then into the Bay, you'd better wait for high tide."

GC: [Laughing.] "Kind of like Greenland – it's not green!"

GDD: "Yeah. But this is Aunt Julia, my father, and the two ladies on the pier are Eleanor and Francis Owings who were first cousins to my father and would often visit. They resided in Annapolis. And Eleanor, or 'Nelly', as she was known, was the Clerk of the Court; and 'Fanny', or Frances, was an anesthesiologist and they were two sisters that never married and lived together on Duke of Gloucester Street in Annapolis."

GC: "Go ahead and give the address since you know it."

GDD: "Oh, 202 Duke of Gloucester Street."

GC: "Now we've talked a lot about Dr. Dent and his family, so let's talk about you for a minute, for a couple minutes. Just go ahead and start from the beginning, like when and where you were born."

GDD: "The beginning...January 25, 1941."

GC: "Oh, you've got a birthday coming up here very soon."

GDD: "Very soon. Born in Baltimore. Spent my early life in Baltimore County, specifically, Woodlawn. Went to school in Baltimore County, then to the University of Maryland where I met my husband to be."

GC: "No brothers and sisters?"

GDD: “No brothers or sisters. No first cousins. All my relatives that are in Galesville and Shady Side, and Churchton, etc. are distant relatives, some of which I’ve never met. I know they’re there! No, no sisters, no brothers. Married in 1964 and moved to New England where I spent 30 odd years. My husband was working at that time for Black & Decker, and that was the reason for the move. And then I spent some 26 years in the natural gas distribution business, primarily in Connecticut. When he passed away in 1994, I decided that I wanted to come back home, and so I sold my home in Connecticut and live now in Edgewater; but feel very close to the property on Dent Road, and that is one of the reasons why I located to this particular area.”

GC: “Well let’s talk more about the property then. Dent property has obviously seen a lot of history. Let’s just talk about the property for a minute.”

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GDD: “Because Dr. Dent was some 20 years older than his wife, his second wife, he was well aware that he would probably die before her. And with my father and my aunt living elsewhere, she more than likely would be alone. And the property is 30 some acres and is sizable, and he was concerned about the fact that she would be left alone. So in his routine and travels in his practice, he let it be known to his patients that when he died, he was going to come back and be sure that the property remained undisturbed, and he advised everybody that that was the way it was going to be, and nobody should dare trespass or in any way damage the property. And he must have been pretty effective because up until recently, that has been the case.”

GC: “Now talk about after the death of your grandmother and the condition of the house, and vacant and unvacant...and that sort of thing.”

GDD: “She died in, I’m not sure whether it was ’58 or ’60. But the house was intact, and my father and mother and aunt and uncle would frequent it on weekends, kept gardens and maintained the house for many years up until the time when my father George Hartge Dent died in 1971; and after that period, my aunt and uncle were getting older and were less able to make as many trips and as frequently. And then in 1973 the house was struck by lightning and burned. But up until that time the property had not been damaged in any way.”

GC: “I want to hear about your second sense ... your sixth sense.”

GDD: “Well, just prior to the fire, it occurred to me that there were many antiques and a lot of memorabilia in the house that was being neglected. So I convinced my husband to rent a truck and we drove it from Connecticut and I took lots of items from the house that I could take with me. So I’m lucky enough that I do have a few things that keep me in mind of my family and the family home and, fortunately, keep memories alive. I couldn’t have taken everything. The rest of the items were all destroyed in the fire, but I’m lucky enough that I have a few things.”

GC: "OK, and we'd like to see those things."

GDD: "Ok. Before we do that, one of the things that I do have, [Mrs. GDD picks up a book.] "Doctor kept a diary, and this was written just before his death in 1936, and I found two pages that I thought were sort of interesting. The first is March the 1st, a Sunday, and he writes: 'Clear, with a raw, northeast wind. Temperature 38. I certainly was glad to see J.P. and Sellman Best, my aunt and uncle. They came in about 10:30. Lillian came at 1:30 and had lunch. Very glad to see her.' Lillian was Miss Lillian Worthington from Annapolis, who was also a frequent visitor, and she also lived on Duke of Gloucester Street across the street from Cousin Eleanore and Frances; and she also had a lady friend that lived with her, Miss Frances Bennett, who had been a teacher in Shady Side many, many years ago."

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"And here's another entry on Sunday, March the 15th. Interesting, too, a Sunday: 'Clear and warmer. Temperature 56. Mild wind, southeast. Mr. Blake, Minnie and son came at 3 PM. Mr. Blake came for physical examination.' "Mind you, this was a Sunday." 'I am sorry to say I found blood pressure 210. Urine shows diabetes. Heart not diseased but fast and weak. Lill and Mrs. Elzey came in for a few seconds as the Blakes were leaving. After supper, Oscar Hartge, his wife, two children came at 8 pm and left at 9:30. Really enjoyed this visit very much.' "One of the other items that I just happened to just think of, I don't know the year, but very early on in his practice, he had a sick child, that he was puzzled as to what was the problem with this child. And he did his research and read his medical books; and finally diagnosed the young boy with Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever. And it was the first case of Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever in Maryland."

GC: "So are you ready to take a little tour?"

GDD: "Sure." [Camera moves to get a better view.] "This is a medal which belonged to Julia Carr, which was Dr. Dent's first wife, and it reads: 'To Julia Carr, Junior Class, For Excellence in General Study, June 11, 1885.' That's on the back, and on the front it reads 'Baltimore Women's College'. [Shows another object.] And then this was the watch and chain that my grandmother, the second Mrs. Dent, Ida Belle Hartge, used to wear as a signature piece."

GC: "Is there an inscription in there?"

GDD: "Just her initials. I – B – H, which was Ida Belle Hartge." [Moves to another object.] "Then this case was Doctor's instrument case, which was in his office and laboratory, and there's some interesting bottles and containers."

GC: "Like for measuring?"

GDD: "Yes, and I imagine, for dispensing medicine."

GC: "OK. Does that say anything on it ... that bottle?"

GDD: "Omega Oil. It's green. Trademark: 'The Omega Chemical Company, New York'. And the rest are just some family memorabilia."

GC: "Do you want to show the gun?"

GDD: [Walks over to two items standing in the corner of the room.] "These are two old shotguns, I guess, that were from the property."

GC: [Camera moves to framed object.] "And here's the deed, and it's framed, but unfortunately, from the glare we can't really see..."

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GDD: "You can't see it, but here's the one that I read from, the copy of, earlier."

GC: "Actually this isn't too bad...focus on that bottom part..."

GDD: "Here are some apothecary jars that originally had medicine in them, but as you can see they house sea shells from my shell collection for decorative purposes. An old photograph and frame, unfortunately I don't know who this is [holds up oddly shaped framed photograph.] It's a beautiful piece. Then here's a scale that was used for measuring medicine, and a piece that was used for mixing medicine, and a mortar and pestle. More apothecary jars and two lanterns, port and starboard, from one of the boats. This was the nameplate that was on the front of the house for Dr. Dent's practice. This is an old barometer that was in the house; I can't tell you exactly what this lantern was used for, but it came from the house as well. [Camera moves again.] This was a camera which Dr. Dent had, and it stands on a tripod; and the camera part can be taken off and is housed in an old square box when not in use. The clock came from the property, and I think these were a pair of Doctor's glasses.

GC: "That clock is incredible. Does it still work?"

GDD: "Yes it does."

GC: "Do you have to wind it?"

GDD: "You have to wind it."

GC: "The pendulum is beautiful; that's incredible."

GDD: "This is a ship's model. It is a Spanish galleon, and my father made it from scratch, no kit, in the 1930's."

GC: "No kit!"

GDD: “No kit! And as a matter of fact the story goes that he and my mother used tea to stain the fabric for the sails. And she remembers quite well that he cut up one of her knitting needles and put holes through them for some of the pieces on the side of the boat.”

GC: [Camera moves to a photograph on the wall.] “And what do you call the creek?”

GDD: “Well, I call it ‘the creek’. There again, it depends on whom you talk to, but at one point, this area right over here was a landing field for Deep Creek Airport.” [Moves to another item.] “This chair was Doctor’s office chair, which has been refinished and reupholstered. This lamp came from his office as well. An oil lamp. This chest was which is Clark’s O.N.T. spool cotton came originally from the Crandall Store which was on the corner of Dent Road and Muddy Creek Road.”

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GC: “Herb Crandall – I’ve heard stories about that store.”

GDD: “Yeah, and a little known fact, I guess: O.N.T. stands for ‘Our New Thread’.”

GC: “I never would’ve figured that out.”

GDD: “Well, that’s a good trivia question.” [Moving to other objects.] “These are just some family pictures. My mother, my father.”

GC: “Where’s your father?”

GDD: “There was my father.” [Pointing to an older black and white photograph.] “This is another clock that came from the house. This one is china as opposed to the wooden one that we saw downstairs.”

GC: “Do you remember what room it was in?”

GDD: “In what we would have called a sitting room, not really a living room. But there was a fireplace and it sat on the mantle in that room. These are sleigh bells, which Doctor used to put on his horse when he made his house calls and rounds, particularly around Christmas time. This was a small chest from one of the bedrooms in the country place, and this is an old coffee grinder that you could grind your coffee beans. [Shows more old black and white photographs.] Picture of my father and aunt as they were growing up, and this picture is of grandmother, Ida Belle, going visiting in her row boat, probably going to visit her cousins in Galesville. She’s got a hat, a long skirt and a pole to help her propel her little boat. As the story goes, because it was such a long way from Dent Road all the way around to Galesville, Doctor would take her to Chalk Point and they would call, and I mean holler, over to Galesville across the water. And one of the relatives would send a boat for her, and she could come and visit for the day, and then go back and Doctor would pick her up in the evening at Chalk Point to take her home.”

[Tape and interview stop suddenly.]

