

Dr. Ida B.S. Scudder

There is no doubt that family background has been the major factor in molding my life, and I am grateful that I come from such a family.

On my father's side the Scudders descended from two English cousins who came to America at the time of the great Puritan migrations, Thomas in 1632 and John in 1635. Their descendants made a large family. I come from the Thomas Scudder branch, many of whom became clergymen and doctors.

In 1819 the first American doctor to go to Ceylon and later to India where he was to spend the rest of his life was a John Scudder. After completing their educations in the United States, his several sons and one daughter returned to India. Succeeding generations have followed either to India or Arabia as doctors, ministers or teachers.

The member of this family who had the most direct influence on me was my father's sister Dr. Ida Sophia Scudder who lived and worked in India from 1900-60. She started a hospital for women, a nursing school, and finally a medical college for women. In her lifetime she saw this institution become the Christian Medical College at Vellore, South India. This outstanding medical college is now entirely administered by Indian personnel and staffed mostly by Indians with a few foreign professionals.

When I was born, my father Lewis Weld Scudder was so pleased over the arrival of his first daughter that I was named Ida Sophia for his sister and Belle for my mother, the former Cora Belle Jackson. This unwieldly name of Ida Belle Sophia Scudder made me rebel strongly as a teenager. It took me a good many years to accept it, learn to be myself, and be glad of this rather famous name.

On my mother's side the influence was equally strong but less spectacular. My mother was the daughter of William Jackson, a machinist, born and trained in Birmingham, England. At 18 years of age he came alone to the United States where, with the help of an uncle, he obtained work in his trade. After his marriage to Louisa

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Drake, they lived for some years in Newark, New Jersey. Eventually they went to Nebraska to farm and raise a family of seven children. My mother, the ^{2nd} ~~third~~ daughter, X became the "boy" of the family working closely with her father on the farm. She cared for animals, herded cattle, rode horseback and was, in her own words, a real "Western girl". She was the first woman in the region to ride astride causing some shock in the community.

Because of a need for money my grandfather ^{for several years} returned to New Jersey for ^{the} three ~~winter~~ ^{months} ~~years~~ to earn enough to keep the farm going. The only outside help was a hired farm boy. These were extremely difficult years. The stories of those pioneering days are exciting ones. They helped develop in my mother a strong spirit and willingness to cope with difficulties. These outstanding qualities in her no doubt helped me, too, in later life.

On a neighboring farm the family of Dr. John Scudder, II, came to live. He had four sons besides my father Lewis Scudder and my aunt Dr. Ida. Dr. John went to Nebraska to regain his health by living an outdoor life. The family stayed for only about three years, he to return to India while the children remained in the United States to be educated. Aunt Ida went to Northfield Seminary in Massachusetts. My father as eldest stayed to keep the farm thinking this would become the family home in later years. Lewis and Cora Belle Jackson became engaged to be married. Living alone and struggling with the farm work he had neglected his health. Seeing this my mother insisted they be married soon. They lived on the farm for about three years where their first child, a son, was born. However, my father felt "called to the ministry" and with great courage they went to Chicago where he entered the Moody Bible Institute. In Chicago a second son was born. Father became a Presbyterian minister upon graduation and served in many small towns in Nebraska until he was named "home missionary" on the Winnebago Indian Reservation in that state.

I was about a year old when the family left the small town where I was born. My earliest childhood memories are of life on the reservation. It was a strenuous life for both my father and mother. He had to travel out into the country by sleigh

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in winter and by horse and buggy other times. Two other sisters were born there - one died of pneumonia following whooping cough. For me life was happy * climbing trees and being outdoors with animals. Mother again shocked sensibilities by dressing me in overalls.

Because of declining health my father moved the family to Oklahoma where he had a number of small pastures. The small public schools I went to were not very good in those days. I finished high school in Oklahoma but Father and Mother recognized that although I had sailed through school at the top of my classes, I had not learned how to study. With great sacrifice (money was scarce) they sent me to Northfield Seminary in Massachusetts. It was thought I could finish in one year but I was a victim of the 1918 influenza epidemic and was very ill. After three years I graduated in 1921. It was a wise decision that I go to Northfield for under the influence of some fine teachers I acquired good study habits and learned to reason. I remember in particular an excellent geometry teacher in math class. This repetition of high school years meant that I was three years older than my classmates the rest of my school days.

In 1921 I was admitted to Mount Holyoke. Knowing that it was a good college, that it was nearby and in a beautiful place similar to Northfield may have influenced my choice. I also had a small scholarship and could earn some of my expenses by working and living in co-op dormitories. Everyone at Northfield worked so I was used to this. I think I also felt more comfortable at a women's college.

At Holyoke I was a good average plodding student, never outstanding in either scholarship or leadership. I majored in zoology and minored in chemistry. Not until my senior year did I decide to study medicine. Because of this late decision I had to change some of my last year's courses to have those needed for my admission to the Women's Medical College of Pennsylvania. Adding Physics I and an ^{other} additional course in ["]heat meant a hectic last year at Holyoke.

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Life at college was good. We studied hard. I especially enjoyed the out-of-doors, hiking and snowshoeing. We had no cars and so did not go far afield. I also sang in the choirs and enjoyed this immensely. The professors I most admired were Drs. Ann Morgan and Elizabeth Adams, both of the zoology department. My only regret has been that I missed a chance to broaden my knowledge. Less science and more history, art and literature would have enriched me. This, however, was my own fault for not planning better and delaying my decision regarding the future. My training at Holyoke was, of course, good in skills of exactness and accuracy, especially in the course in quantitative chemistry. One lack was not recognized and corrected; I was a very slow reader. Reading courses such as economics were an agony. In those times not much attention was paid to training in reading skills. Even today this remains somewhat of a handicap.

From Holyoke I went directly to medical college. The decision to study medicine was finally settled when Mrs. John Keator of Philadelphia offered financial assistance. She underwrote all four years of medical school and was a staunch friend. The faculty of the Women's Medical College of Pennsylvania demanded much of us those four years. Of the 33 who were admitted 17 graduated in 1929. During my senior year I had the opportunity to undertake a bit of original research in lieu of a final examination. This was fun and lots more work than the examination would have been since the two of us involved had a fairly large colony of mice to care for.

My internship was spent at the Albany Medical College Hospital in Albany, New York. I was the only woman intern. I was accepted as intern only because their leading surgeon Dr. Arthur Elting knew a member of the Scudder family and insisted I be given a chance. Previously there had been one other woman who had not stood up under the pressure. Despite the fact that all my education had been in women's schools and colleges I had no difficulty in working with men. It was a challenge to measure up especially since the other female intern had not succeeded. I am glad that after this time women were always accepted as interns at Albany.

It was my intention to specialize in pediatrics and then go to India. But in order to earn some much needed money I worked as a resident physician in the Chil-

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dren's Community Center in New Haven, Conn., where children were admitted before being adopted or cared for in foster homes. The center was under the direction of pediatricians of the Yale Medical School. It was a good experience.

In 1931 a sudden call came from Vellore asking me to go because of the illness of one of the staff. When I left for India in April, I was surely not as well prepared as I should have been. Vellore at that time was a small medical school for women giving a diploma - not a medical degree. The 250-bed hospital was for women and children only. Almost all the staff were foreign - American or English. There was a "lower grade" school of nursing.

My first five years in Vellore were exceedingly difficult years as I was too unprepared for the tasks that were mine to do. However, the support and understanding of my aunt Dr. Ida S. Scudder helped keep me from "sinking" under the tremendous challenges I had to meet. During this time it became evident that this school must be prepared to give a degree in medicine under Madras University. Consequently I returned to the United States to specialize in radiology, a needed service at the school. From 1936-39 I worked the first two years in New York in the Post Graduate Hospital and in the Bellevue Clinics and the last year in England to obtain the Diploma of Medical Radiology and Electrolgy at Cambridge University (DMRB Cantab).

My life as a member of the staff at Vellore was exciting and demanding. During those years the medical school became a college, the school of nursing became a leading college preparing nurses for the B.S. in nursing. The hospital grew into a large and excellent facility. The present Christian Medical College and Hospital are now entirely administered by Indian personnel and almost entirely staffed by Indians with very few foreigners.

During those years (1931-70) we "weathered" the effects of the war, depression, and great political change as India struggled for and obtained its independence from England. At the Medical College changes were also taking place. I, for one, wore many different hats - acting at different times as hospital superintendent, registrar of the new medical college, vice-principal and one brief year as acting director.

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My chief medical contribution following along with the growth of the hospital was the development of the radiology department - first the Diagnostic Radiology Department and later the Radiotherapy Department. The best memories I have are those of working with and teaching some of the finest Indian medical students and doctors and nurses, of starting special training courses for Diagnostic and Radiotherapy Radiographers, and of being able later to call in for consultation doctors whom I had helped train.

Other memories are of patients - especially the village people whom we grew to admire for their strength - as I headed one of the Roadside Medical Teams traveling into the villages regularly once a week. These clinics served a very useful purpose in the days when transportation was poor and people could not get to medical help. At that time health knowledge by the populace was minimal. It is good to know that roadside medical service has now been replaced by more efficient community medical programs directed by the college for training the students in community clinical techniques.

I am grateful to Mount Holyoke for the good solid academic foundation I received. In retirement I enjoy gardening, birdwatching, and travel when I can.

Also there are speaking engagements that give me a chance to share my life and love of my work and India.