

The following information was obtained from the Perquimans County NC Gen Web page at <http://www.ncgenweb.us/perquimans/family/lifethomasumphlet.htm>

## **LIFE OF DR. THOMAS LEONARD UMPHLET**

Contributed by: William Umphlett

THOMAS LEONARD UMPHLET

Born: November 6, 1908; Perquimans County, North Carolina

PARENTS: William Franklin Umphlet and Florence Walters Umphlet

GRANDPARENTS: Charney and Martha Spivey Umphlett  
Thomas Bryant Walters and Margaret Stokes Walters

MARRIED: Margaret Douglass---1936 until 1981  
Pattie Vaughn Swift—1983 until 1995  
Helen Watkins Horner—1996 until his death 18 December 1997

CHILDHOOD: Had an unusual, but interesting childhood due to the death of his mother in 1915 when he was six years old. His father was a farmer, general farm store merchant, owned and operated a gristmill, cotton gin and lumber mill. Grandparents were farmers, had herds of cattle and sheep. Both sets of grandparents were born prior to the Civil War. For the years following his mother's death, he lived with his paternal grandparents, returning home to his father and new step-mother for four years, when his father was killed in a mill accident. After his father's death in 1923, he lived with his maternal grandparents in Hertford until he finished high school in 1927.

EDUCATION: Early schooling was in a one-room, one teacher school. (Tom says this is why he never learned to read and write.) While living with his maternal grandparents in Hertford, he attended the Hertford schools, graduating from high school (Perquimans County High School) in 1927.

Formal education was also erratic:

1927—to Davidson College for one year

1928—to University of North Carolina for two years and two summer schools

1930—to Wake Forest Medical School for two years

1932—transferred to University of Pennsylvania, graduating with a medical degree in 1934

Served as physician at Dorothea Dix State Hospital in Raleigh for six months in 1934

Internship and Residency: Grasslands Hospital, Westchester County, New York, as rotating intern for 1 ½ years; solo resident physician of internal medicine and contagious diseases for one year; chief resident of medicine and infectious diseases for 1 ½ years.

PRACTICE: Returned from New York in late December 1938, with wife, Margaret Douglass (a Research Bacteriologist), with whom he opened his office for the solo practice of internal medicine in the 800 block of Hillsborough Street, Raleigh, N. Carolina. He and Margaret set up the first State Board of Health office-approved laboratory in Raleigh. Moved his office to 109 N. Boylan Avenue in 1947; was later joined by the following physicians: Isaac Wright, Benjamin Ferdon, Phil Miller, Don Campbell, and Phil Ashburn.

Upon beginning his practice, became member of staff of Rex Hospital, the old St. Agnes Hospital and Wake County Memorial Hospital. During World War II he served as a surgeon, U.S. Public Health Service. He was the president of the Rex and St. Agnes Hospital Staffs,

chairman of the Rex Hospital Executive Committee and was Chief of the Medical Service for ten years.

He was the president of the Wake County Medical Society (from which he received a 50 year pin for service to this medical community). He was the president of the Raleigh Academy of Medicine and of the Royster Medical Society. He was a Fellow of the American College of Physicians. Other memberships included the AMA, the Medical Society of the State of North Carolina, the Raleigh Society of Internal Medicine and the North Carolina Society of Internal Medicine. During his tenure as Chief Physician of the Wake County Tuberculosis Sanatorium for ten years he made the decision to close the facility due to the advent of new drugs for the control of tuberculosis.

#### NOTE OF INTEREST:

While a resident at Grassland, conducted an experiment under sponsorship of Rockefeller Institute in the treatment of Cerebral Syphilis with malaria caused by the bite of a carrier mosquito. The experiment was conducted on 20 patients and seemed to have a favorable effect on all, but not curative. The introduction of the malaria germ was by the bite of the carrier mosquito, which caused a fever of 106 to 107 degrees each day. The fever of the patient would be reduced on alternate days with quinine.

Also while at Grasslands, experimented with the treatment of all types of pneumonia with horse serums. The patient's blood was analyzed to determine the type of pneumonia, and the appropriate horse serum administered. This method proved to be effective in the treatment of all types of pneumonia except type III.

One of the most interesting cases in practice was a tubercular patient who developed meningitis, which was assumed to be tubercular. However, studies proved that it was caused, not by the tubercular germ, but by the lymphocytic meningitis virus. There were two other cases, which followed further proving that the lymphocytic meningitis virus was carried by infected mice.

He was involved in all of the above studies.

#### PERSONAL NOTES:

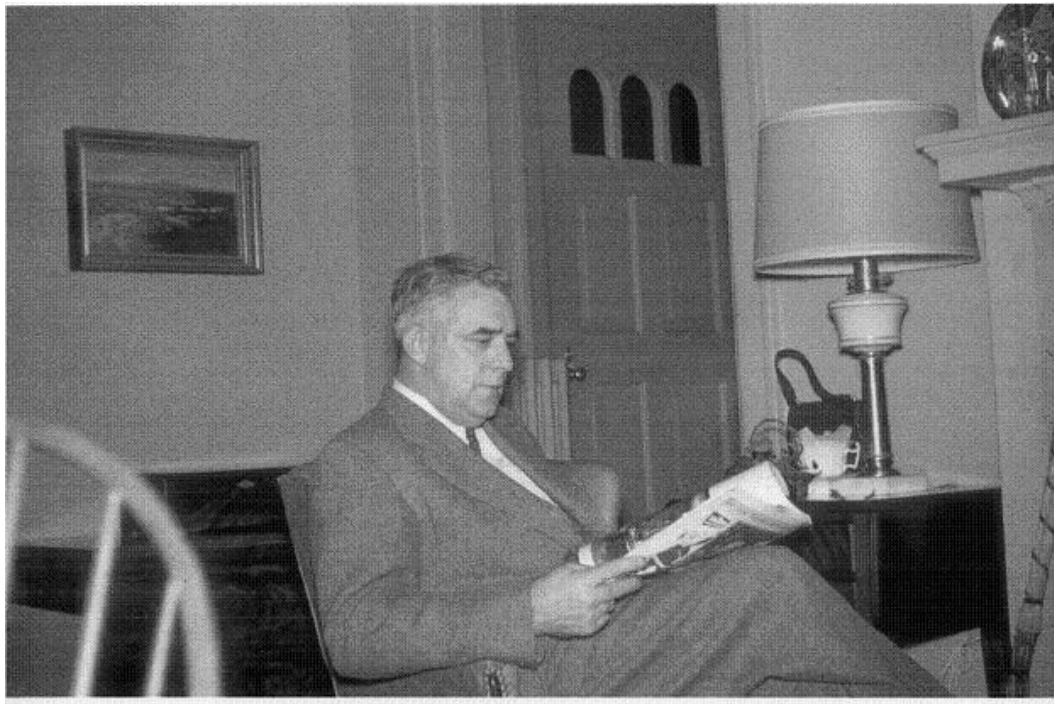
While at Dorothea Dix State Hospital, he was offered a position by the Superintendent, Dr. Ashby, as a physician joining the other four physicians on the staff. He refused the offer in order to seek further training, i.e., internship and residency.

Upon finishing residency, was also offered a position as an associate professor at French University in Beirut, Lebanon. With tongue in cheek, he felt that this was very appropriate since he had flunked French II his first semester at Carolina, which the Dean made him take on five different occasions and which he proceeded to flunk five times. However, after his first year of medical school at Wake Forest, one of the conditions under which Dr. Kitchin let him in was that he take French; for two sessions of summer school he took French and, would you believe it, made a "B"—but still could not speak a word of French.

He felt, looking back, there was no doubt he made the right decision to return to North Carolina and follow a most career as a physician in the private practice of internal medicine with his first wife, Margaret (Peg). Peg died following a long illness in 1982 and he decided to retire and be available for his associates in the practice he started.



**Thomas Leonard & William Moulton Umphlett**



**Dr. Thomas Leonard Umphlet**

Note: One "t" was removed from the name Umphlet. It is not know for certain if Dr. Umphlet or his father William Franklin Umphlet changed the spelling of the last name from Umphlett to Umphlet.