

# *Biography of Dr. Edward J. Scarvalone*

As a child on family visits to New York City, I occasionally went to my uncle's dental office where I experienced the sights, smells and sounds that produced such a mysterious fascination to me. My uncle, a first generation Italian, had achieved this lofty position and was esteemed by family and friends, and I thought that perhaps I, too, could become a dentist and imitate him.

My elementary schooling was at a one-room school which I attended before attending Liberty Central High School. I pursued a college entrance degree, although the probability of attendance seemed unlikely. The severe depression of the 1930's meant that there would not be family financial support. However, my principal came to my rescue by calling me out of class in my senior year to say he was submitting my grades to the College of the City of New York if I approved. I matriculated to CCNY in September 1937.

In 1940 I applied to and was accepted at New York University College of Dentistry. The perception was at that time that if one could survive the rigors of City College, a student should do well at NYU. In 1941 the Army and Navy moved in to take over dental and medical schools, and we were placed in an accelerated program. The day we graduated in 1943 we became officers in the dental corps.

In the next years I served in three installations, the major one at Camp Blanding in Florida, which was an infantry replacement center whose population remained at 165,000 troops throughout the war. It was our responsibility to control these soldiers' dental problems in 21 weeks, 19 weeks, or 17 weeks, depending on how great the demand was for replacements. Most of these 18-21 year old individuals had never seen a dentist before, and we had to resolve their fear before we could treat them. It seemed ironic, however, to work so diligently to preserve their mouths when many of them might not survive, and this Army experience gave me a different outlook since I had previously been isolated from the realities of the consequences of war.

In January 1946 I was transferred to Fort McPherson in Atlanta, Georgia, a permanent installation, where I was free to do all aspects of dentistry. In August of that year I was separated from Army service, and I moved to Poughkeepsie in 1947. I worked briefly in the dental department of Hudson River Psychiatric Hospital under the direction of Dr. J. Harold Morris before establishing my own

practice on North Clover Street. After five years there I increased the size of my office and moved to 202 Hooker Avenue before going to my present office at 7 Fox Street. For many years I was also affiliated with St. Francis Hospital Dental Department. This was because Dr. Walter Stevens called me and asked me to serve.

While at Camp Blanding I met and married Polly Christie, the love of my life for 57 years. Together we raised six children: Carol, an English professor at Dutchess Community College and the parent of two Vassar College graduates; Susan, a social worker formerly with the pediatric oncology department at Johns Hopkins Medical Center and now associated with a group at Mercy Hospital that deals with the severe depression following breast cancer surgery; Patrice, a conference interpreter in simultaneous translation of French, German and Spanish; Polly, who holds a Ph.D. in clinical psychology and, along with her partner Cathleen Adams, is in private practice in New York City; Edward, Jr., for many years a United States Attorney and now with a major law firm in New York City, who lives with his wife, Hillary, also a lawyer, and has raised two children; and Maria, who lives with her husband Rami and two daughters in Brooklyn and works part time doing television shoots for a German TV company.

I joined the Dutchess County Dental Society in 1949 and have held this membership for 60 years. I passed through the chairs of the Society starting from 1960 until 1964, when I served as secretary, treasurer, vice president and then president. The intellectual stimulation and exchange of ideas I experienced at dental meetings has served me well, and it's always interesting to return to my office and apply and test what I've learned.

Now, after 61 years of practicing dentistry, the field still holds the same fascination as it did when I was a child. To me, dental science is a lifelong study, and since 1948 I have continued to take courses above and beyond those needed to satisfy yearly requirements. As dental science has evolved, so have I as a dentist. Over the years I have been fortunate to treat three generations of patients, some of whom I met when I first started my practice. I would be remiss if I didn't mention a significant member of my office family. Susan Heupler came to my office as an intern from the Dutchess Community College Dental Assistant Program in 1972. We've worked side by side since then, and both patients and I appreciate her intelligence, outgoing personality, warmth and commitment to the office, as well as her technical ability in assisting me in complex procedures. Indeed, her easy and calm manner puts all at ease.

I am honored to receive the Walter Wallace Stevens Award for Meritorious and Distinguished Service, a particular honor because I knew Walter Stevens very well and he mentored me in so many ways when I started my practice.