Information on Dr. Paul R. Maxwell compiled by Norman Rozeff, Harlingen Historical Preservation Society, December 2006

Dr. Maxwell's, and his wife Leah M., presence in Harlingen is first documented in the 1931 telephone directory for the city. He is listed as a physician and surgeon (bone specialist). His offices are on the third floor of the four-year old, Rio Grande National Life Insurance Building. At nine stories it is the tallest building in Harlingen and the Valley too. It will remain so into the 1960s.

In 1934 he is also apparently assisting in a newly-opened, specialty Maternity Hospital. This is a spacious two-story clapboard building located at 705 N. 1st Street, about five blocks north of downtown Harlingen. This building still exists as does the skyscraper. The latter is for the most part abandoned and a white elephant. The old hospital is dilapidated and has been subdivided into three low-rent apartments.

By 1937 the Maternity Hospital had moved to 1117 W. Harrison Street where Dr. Martin Bernfield appears to have been in charge as he was likely at the adjacent Valley Clinic at 1115. By 1939 both are gone.

Dr. Maxwell by 1938 has moved his offices to the fourth floor of the same building, often referred to as the Baxter Building because of its builder's name. He remains there along with numerous other professionals.

In the years 1941 through 1948 neither he nor his wife are to be found in the Harlingen phone directory. It is possible that Dr. Maxwell may have practiced elsewhere or even that he was serving in the military in this period as an officer-doctor.

In 1949 he is once again listed in the Harlingen phone directory with his offices in the to the McClendon Building downtown at 305 E. Jackson, Harlingen's main business street. He is listed here through 1952. There is no 1953 directory on file. In the 1954 directory and thereafter Dr. Maxwell is no longer to be found.

In the early 1950s when the Harlingen Air Force Base did not medical facilities for dependents, Dr. Maxwell attended the births of Air Force wives. One husband recalls a small white building used as a private maternity facility. It was supposedly somewhere between the base and the high school on Marshall Street but has not been pinpointed as of this time.

The doctor apparently did not practice at the major hospital in Harlingen, the Valley Baptist Hospital on F Street, or, if he did, no record of it has come to light.

The Maxwells moved their residence quite frequently while in Harlingen. Most were modest homes as far as can be determined from existing structures. In 1931 they are at 802 W. Lincoln. This may have been the most luxurious house in which they lived. It is a large two-story Spanish style white stucco building with red tile roof and separate garage. In 1935 they have moved closer to downtown into a small yellow-brick veneer cottage at 1006 E. Filmore Avenue. By 1937 they reside at 1018 E. Taylor in an attractive red brick one-story house. The location is on a street nicknamed "Silk Stocking Row" for its fancy homes. In 1939 they are at ¼ Mile Rio Hondo Road, a somewhat countrified location. In 1941 prior to their departure from the scene they are listed in rooms at the Madison Hotel on Van Buren Street. This large-three story building is Harlingen's second best hotel and provides suites for permanent residents. Upon their return in 1950 the Maxwell residence is 1014 E. Taylor, a quite small yellow brick house now in considerable disrepair. Dr. Maxwell's wife is now listed as Jeanne. If this is correct,
either his first wife, Leah, has died and he has remarried or he has divorced and remarried. In 1952 they live at 404 Dan Moody (Arroyo Drive). This is now Arroyo Avenue. This house right on the Arroyo Colorado is an attractive, nicely-maintained cottage set well back from the street with a spacious lawn.

Harlingen History

Monday, February 20, 2012 2:00 PM
From: "Brian Maxwell" <BMaxwell@millcreekcap.com>
To: nrozeff@sbcglobal.net
Mr. Rozeff:

For some reason I have been thinking about my family history recently. But mainly on my mother’s side. Nonetheless, I googled my paternal grandfather’s name – Dr. Paul Maxwell – just to see what I would find. He has been deceased now since the mid seventies and I only met him a few times. I am not even sure of his middle name.

It took 2 attempts, but I found your story http://cameroncountyhistoricalcommission.org/Dr.%20Paul%20Maxwell%20and%20a%20Military%20Client.htm. Wow!

I am not sure of the chain of events, but Leah was his first wife and my grandmother. There are three sons; Gerald, Richard and David from this marriage. My father is Richard and he is now 78 years old living in Pittsburgh. He is a retired dentist. His health is weak, so maybe that is what has subconsciously caused me to be curious about our heritage. My brother (also a dentist) has my grandfather’s old mortar and pestle. We had his old doctor’s bag for years growing up. It was filled with old, scary looking drugs and equipment.

I believe there is a daughter – Paula – from the second marriage and I know there is a son – Jamie (presumably James) from his third marriage to Margaret (Peg).

I have heard many country doctor stories and about early days in Texas. There has definitely been talk about living on a farm or ranch. My Dad had a pet Chicken (probably dinner one night) – perhaps this location is “¼ Mile Rio Hondo Road, a somewhat countrified location” that you mention.

I have never been to Harlingen, but it is interesting to know some of these places still exist. My grandmother and her sons moved back to Ohio after the divorce. Her maiden name was Shelt.
Anyway, I thought this may be of interest to the history page.

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