



## Raised in Esmont

By Richard Heath, DDS

My father was the USPS Rural Mail Carrier and on occasion, I would ride with him. If there was snow on the ground, I would have to get out and run to the mailboxes while he drove. When we went down Porters Road, we would stop at Lize Simpson's store for a Pepsi. That area is now known as Simpson Park.

My dad would take me to Purvis Store to wait for the school bus, then he would go on to the Post Office to pick up mail for delivery. We would often pick up Mandy Grey to take her to Purvis Store where she worked for Mrs. Purvis. Little Pete Purvis, my good friend, would take Mandy back home, often driving his dad's big dump truck, when he got home from school. On the same trip, he would deliver groceries.

When I was old enough to get a driver's license (1951), I bought a Model A Ford car for \$55. I earned this money by baling hay for Tanner Mawyer, earning \$3/day. I only weighed 100 pounds at the time, too small to throw hay bales so I had to drive the big truck which was hard for me as well. I was 5 ft tall when I left for college and 5ft 11in when I finished.



Dr. Heath's Model A Ford

Driving home from Esmont, I would always stop and pick up workers who were walking home from working at the Dust Plant and State Road Maintenance. Very few people had cars at that time.

Little Pete and I would pool our resources to buy gas for the Model A. Gas cost 25cents a gallon and we could ride around all day on 2 gallons.

I got expelled from school because several of us painted some things on the car that we thought were pretty cool. The one that got me expelled was "Girls, if you smoke, don't put your butts in here." That was considered risqué language at the time!

Charles Hamner, Little Pete and I often played basketball together. With me being 5 feet tall and Pete about 5' 2" and Charles about 6 feet, Charles definitely had the advantage. Charles went on to grow even taller and is now known as the "Biofather of N.C." as he developed 22 pharmaceutical products currently on the market, 15 of which are OTC products (Over the Counter).

Sgt Frank Peregory's family cemetery is on my family farm property. When we bought that land, the cemetery came with it. Sgt Peregory's parents are buried there along with his siblings. John Peregory, Sgt. Peregory's uncle, lived in an old shack near the cemetery so we would often go check on him. He died in that shack and Thacker Bros came and put him in a casket which a number of us young boys had to carry to the cemetery because it was not passable by hearse. My parents and other neighbors paid for his funeral.