

Dr. Rufus Samuel Vass
South Person Street
Raleigh, N. C.
July 7-12, 1939

Dr. Rufus Samuel Vass

"I was born in Raleigh, N. C., on May 23rd, 1887, the son of Samuel Nathaniel and Eliza Haywood Vass. My father was a professor at Shaw University at Raleigh, teaching Latin and Greek. He was educated at Shaw University himself, being among the early graduates of that fine Negro college.

"I attended the public schools in Raleigh and then went to Shaw. After getting my A. B. degree, I attended the Leonard Medical School at Shaw for four years, obtaining my M. D. degree in 1912. I practiced medicine at Smithfield, Johnston county, during 1912 and 1913 and then returned to Raleigh. With the exception of the time I spent in the United States Army during the World War, I have practiced medicine in Raleigh since returning from Smithfield.

"Joining the army early in 1917, I was sent to Fort Des Moines, Iowa, for training. After remaining at Fort Des Moines a few months, I was commissioned a First Lieutenant of the Medical Corps and later promoted to Captain. I went to France as a member of the 368th Hospital Unit of the 92nd division and I saw service in the Argonne and Vosges. I do not care to even discuss the horrors of war.

"Returning to the United States in the spring of 1919, I came back to Raleigh and again began the private practice of medicine. I was married to Luatle Jeffries in 1920. My wife is a daughter of the late Norfleet Jeffries and Serena Jeffries, who had lived in the home of the servants on the beautiful Benehan Cameron Estate, near St Marys School, nearly all of their lives. My wife's mother was owned by the Camerons before the Civil War put an end to slavery. Her father lived nearby and he moved to the Cameron home when they were married.

"My wife taught in the public schools of Raleigh for 12 years before we were married. She and her three sisters graduated at Shaw University and all of them either are or have been teachers in the public schools of Raleigh or elsewhere in the State. We have never had any children.

"Because of my large practice, my wife and I do not go in for much social activity. We take a nice trip every summer during my vacation, visiting different sections of the country. We are planning to go to the World's Fair at New York within a few weeks. If I can possibly arrange to be away long enough, we may go on out to the Pacific Coast and visit the San Francisco Fair, too. A busy doctor has little time to devote to social activity. My wife and I try to visit a movie once or twice a week and we go for a ride every night.

"While I like to play tennis and other outdoor games, my great hobby is bird hunting. I go to the woods with my dogs every afternoon I can spare during the hunting season. I always keep four to six fine bird dogs. I think hunting is one of the best ways to forget about work. Yes, I am considered a pretty good shot and we usually get tired of quail before the hunting season ends.

"I have my office here at home and my wife takes the place of secretary and nurse. Yes, I have much office practice. Persons who have minor complaints come to see the doctor more and more each year, instead of having the doctor visit them. However, some of them should have stayed in bed and let me come to see them. There are those, you know, who refuse to give up and go just as long as they can stand on their feet. That is a fine spirit, but some times they waste a lot of energy coming to my office that they may need later on if they really have something seriously wrong with them.

"I think we have a mighty fine home. We have nine rooms here, five bedrooms, a living room, kitchen, dining room and my den. Yes, I think the furniture is wonderful. My wife has wonderful taste, so I left the furnishing of the home entirely up to her, as I do everything else in connection with the operation of a home.

"Father lived with us during the last two or three years of his life. Mother died in 1919 and he lived alone in our old home until I forced to him to come and live with us. There were only two of us children, myself and my sister. My sister married Dr. Urbane F. Bass of Richmond, Virginia. He was the only Negro Medical officer attached to the American Army, killed in the World War. He was killed in the battle of Metz. My sister is now living at Fredericksburg, Virginia.

"After father quit teaching, he became Secretary of the Religious Education of the National Baptist Publishing Board of Nashville, Tenn. and he traveled much throughout the South. Before accepting that position, he represented the American Baptist Publishing Society of Philadelphia, Pa. in the Southern States. Father not only was the distributor of religious literature for many years, but he wrote much of it.

"My wife and I are members of the Negro First Baptist Church of Raleigh and she regularly attends the services there. I go with her when I can possibly spare the time away from my patients. Religion is the greatest thing in the world and I wish there was more of it.

"I am a charter member of the Norwood Post of the American Legion; The North Carolina Medical and Pharmaceutical and Dental Association and local Secretary of the Scruggs Medical Society.

"My relations with the white people have always been very pleasant. I have always been treated all right by my white friends and I have tried to treat them right. Trouble between the Negro and white race is due to misunderstanding, I am confident. I believe if the white people would

read our newspapers like we read the papers published by the white race, we would be better understood. I am a regular subscriber of the Pittsburgh Courier and the Baltimore Afro-American. They are finely edited newspapers and they fight for the very same things that the papers of the white race fight for. The average Negro simply does not know how to be anything but patriotic. He loves the United States with all of his heart and most of them loves the Southland. Our newspapers drill patriotism and loyalty to American institutions into the heads of their readers every issue. As a matter of fact, our papers are getting to be so finely edited by Negro editors, one can hardly tell our newspapers from the large white dailies.

"I can't say that the Negro gets justice in the courts always and neither does the poor white man. Yet, I don't consider this condition is altogether a racial proposition. Many Negroes go into court without a good lawyer and he is likely to receive the full penalty of the law if he is just halfway guilty, or not guilty at all. Of course the identical thing happens to the undefended poor white man. I suppose all of these things will be straightened out some day and every defendant who goes into court, whether he black or white, will be properly represented by counsel, whether he can pay for such services or not.

"Negroes are badly discriminated against when it comes to being paid for their work. I simply cannot see why a white man should be paid \$18 per week for the very same work that a Negro is paid \$10 per week. That is exactly what is being done in Raleigh. Both are laborers and I think they should be paid the same wage for the same work. Yet, I am confident all of these things will eventually be straightened out to the entire satisfaction of both races.

"There is one thing certain and that is: We've got to live side by side, so why can't we be friends, respecting the rights of each other at all times."