

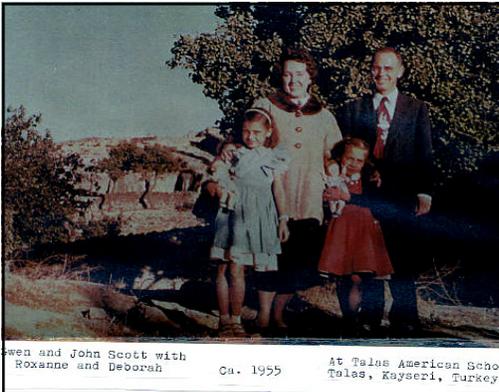


## A Lifetime of Loving TURKEY: John and Gwen Scott - Teachers in Turkey for 37 years

By Roxanne Scott Barry

My father, John W. Scott, first went to teach in Tarsus, Turkey from 1937-1940 as a young college graduate of Carleton College in Northfield, Minnesota. He taught English, math, and science at the *Tarsus Amerikan Koleji* and he lived with his students in the BIG dorm on the top floor of Stickler Hall. He loved his students and was like a father to some and a brother to others. He was a young teacher and looked youthful at the time so his principal, Mr. William Sage Woolworth, actually suggested that he grow a beard so he would look a bit older than a few of the *lise* boys he taught! John Scott loved teaching literature and science to his students and he enjoyed helping them with homework and discussing many interesting issues of the day. John Scott was a great photographer and recorded his time in Tarsus with many fine photographs. He also loved history and was

keenly interested in Turkey's role in the world. He was deeply interested in world peace and understanding among all nations and believed that Turkey, still a young nation then, would make a great impact in the world one day. He was thrilled that on one occasion he and his students had a chance to see the visionary leader of Turkey, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk! Atatürk was to come through Tarsus one afternoon by train. So the whole school got dressed in their neat school uniforms and "kaps" and all marched down to the train station to wait for Atatürk. The teachers were as excited as the students and they had a special gift for Atatürk as well. When he arrived they greeted him with their school song and presented Atatürk with "the first box of grapefruit" grown in Tarsus, Turkey.



Gwen and John Scott with Roxanne and Deborah Ca. 1955 At Talas American School, Talas, Kayseri, Turkey

After three years teaching in Tarsus, John Scott returned to the States to marry the woman who had patiently waited while he taught abroad. Though they had not seen each other or even talked on the phone for three long years, my mother, Gwen Stinger, had been able to clearly imagine John's life in Turkey because of the MANY detailed letters he wrote to her almost weekly! Many a month they had gazed at the same full moon only on opposite sides of the world so it did not take him long to persuade her to become Mrs. Scott! In 1946 they returned together to Turkey, a land they would call "home" and where they would raise their two daughters, Roxanne and Deborah, for the next 34 years.

This time, Mr. and Mrs. Scott were assigned to work at the *Talas Amerikan Orta Okulu* near Kayseri, Turkey. This school, perched high on a hill overlooking the Kayseri plane and in view of beautiful snow covered Mount Erciyes, was to be their home and workplace for the next 14 years. John Scott became the principal and Gwen Scott taught English and became John's constant help and companion in running a boy's school with 128 young boys (Prep -Orta) whom they treated like their own sons. The students came as little 12-year-old boys to the Talas Orta School. Often their parents would say to my parents: "Eti sizin, kemiği bizim" as they left their little boys to live up on the hill in Talas with the American teachers. The students left four to five years later as young, responsible older boys ready to study more English and be "leaders" in the schools they matriculated into. Many went on to the *Amerikan Koleji* in Tarsus or *Robert Lisesi* in Istanbul. Many of these students did become "leaders" in business, education, medicine, law, journalism and the arts, both in Turkey and the world.

Besides running a school, often a 24-hour, 365-days-a-year job, which John Scott thoroughly enjoyed, Mr. and Mrs. Scott were always interested in promoting activities for their students to exemplify

the motto of the Talas School: 4H “ Head, Hand, Heart and Health”. Because the school was almost all boarders, on many weekends there were school activities of sports, hand gliders, hikes, picnics, planting trees on nearby hills to help with reforestation, visits to historic places of interest such as nearby Cappadocia, and even Ankara, the capital. I remember going on some of these hikes and being carried on the shoulders of a willing “Abi”. The Saturday evening plays “piyes” in the dorm basement of the “Konak” were always fun! They were a way to “practice” English and because there were no girls, all parts were played by the boys of course. I remember being impressed at how “beautiful” one of the boys looked in make up and girl’s clothing. Later that student went on to become a star on Turkey’s national stage! Music, plays, boy scouts, and carpentry shop (where skis were made to sled down snowy hills in winter) were some of the many extra activities the boys learned as they also practiced English with their foreign teachers who supervised them every weekend. The *Talas Orta Koleji* truly was like a BIG family. My sister and I asked my parents one day if we might ever have a brother, they responded that we already had 128 of them!

When it was time for my sister Debby and me to go to *ilk okul*, my parents sent us to the local school in lower Talas. This was one of the best decisions yet, because my sister and I loved being with our best friends and learned Turkish very well, a treasure for the rest of our lives. Every morning we recited along with our Turkish friends: “Türküm, Doğruyum, Çalışkanım...”

In 1960 when I started orta school at The Üsküdar American Academy for Girls in İstanbul, my parents decided to move to İstanbul where they could be with their children as they continued their education. They taught at the Üsküdar American Academy for girls for the next 20 years. Through their work as teachers of English and science they continued to promote international understanding, hard work, social service, love of education, good values and love of life. Mr Scott was the head teacher for many community service projects the Üsküdar students participated in such as the book mobile, orphanage visits, teaching English to workers’ children, work camp projects in nearby villages, tree planting in the Atatürk Korusu .... Many a weekend our little car, which we affectionately called “Johnny”, would carry happy Üsküdar students to and from a tree planting ceremony or a local orphanage trip. Many summers the Scott family spent in Work Camps in various parts of Turkey where they directed international university students in projects which built village schools, roads, and brought water to Turkish villages. These were the kinds of activities that they believed would help promote international understanding, peace and cooperation among people and teach young people what hard work and democracy is all about. They loved their students, believed in Turkey and that through working together we can make a difference in world peace wherever we live. They were loved and honored by their students and colleagues alike.

Sadly Mr. Scott passed away at age 60 from a heart attack, while still teaching at Üsküdar. Mrs. Scott decided that he should be buried in Turkey where he had spent so much of his life. Mrs Scott continued to teach her beloved Üsküdar students until she retired at age 65 to live in the United States closer to her children. However, she now has joined her beloved husband John Scott as they lay side by side in İstanbul, Turkey “back home”. Even though she had been away from Turkey for almost 30 years there were 100 of her beloved students and friends at her gravesite on June 6<sup>th</sup> 2009, many in their 50s, 60s and 70s, to bid her farewell and honor both Mr and Mrs Scott’s legacy of Loving Turkey for a Life Time.