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An Interview with Dr. Joseph George

An Oral History Conducted by Emily Powers

Heart to Heart Oral History Project

Oral History Research Center at UNLV
University Libraries
University of Nevada Las Vegas

Preface

Dr. Joseph George, Jr., was born, raised, and educated through high school in Sudlersville, Maryland. He describes his college career at the University of Pennsylvania and earning his MD degree at University of Maryland in Baltimore. There were only 15 students in his high school class and 114 in his medical class.

After graduation and two years of country medical practice, Dr. George joined the Army in 1942 and became a flight surgeon. His duty assignments took him to Africa, England, and St. Petersburg, Florida, doing physical exams for pilots and flight crews and treating soldiers with mental problems. He was discharged in 1945 and headed for California, but describes his change of mind when the train arrived in Las Vegas for a brief stopover.

Dr. George liked what he saw, a typical small western city, and decided to stay. He mentions the original hotels and hospitals and names many of the doctors he knew in the forties and fifties. He opened his family practice in an office on Fourth and Carson and later moved to a location on East Sahara. Over the next forty or so years he delivered more than 6,000 babies at various hospitals in Henderson and Las Vegas.

Dr. George shares several anecdotes and stories, names a few notable Las Vegas patients, and comments on historical incidents that occurred here. He gives his opinions on changes he has seen in medical practice and the need for improved psychiatric care in the valley. He also talks about keeping in touch with former patients, high school classmates, and the members of his medical class at University of Baltimore.

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All transcripts received minimal editing that included the elimination of fragments, false starts and repetitions in order to enhance the researcher's understanding of the material. All measures have been taken to preserve the style and language of the narrator. In several cases, photographic images accompany the collection and have been included in the bound edition of the interview.

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Good afternoon. This is Emily Powers. Today is April 8th, 2008. And I am in the home of Dr. George.

Excuse me. Allergies.

Oh, yes. How are you doing today other than the allergies?

Okay.

Can you state your full name for the record?

Yeah. Joseph Mathias George, Junior.

Great. When were you born?

May 20, 1913.

And where were you born?

I was born in a little, small town on the eastern shore of Maryland, Sudlersville, S-U-D-L-E-R-S-V-I, double L-E, 250 people.

Wow.

That's where I went to school lo these many years ago.

Yes. And what are your parents' names?

Joseph Senior and Lillian Nelson George.

And what did they do there in Maryland?

My father in later years had a grain elevator. Early years he did plumbing and electrical contracting.

And did you have siblings there?

I had one brother.

And what did he do?

Mostly he worked at the grain elevator.

Family business.

Uh-huh.

So how did you decide to go into the medical field? When did that come about?

I went in the medical aura way back when I was in late grammar school. And I always enjoyed that sort of thing. And that's where I pointed towards.

So from a very early age you started taking interest?

Yes.

You were born in Maryland. Did you go to high school in Maryland?

Yeah, I went to high school in Sudlersville. It was a small high school comparatively. I had 15 in my graduating class. My brother, who was a year ahead of me, was one of 11. He was the only boy in the class.

Really? Lucky him.

But there were only 11 grades in high school in those days. I graduated in 1930.

And then where did you go after you graduated?

I went to the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia and I got a B.A. degree.

Did you do the science?

The diploma's all written in Latin and I can't even read it.

Really? How did you decide to go to University of Pennsylvania? Did you have a scholarship?

No. But we used to go up to Philadelphia a lot to the baseball games. The Philadelphia Athletics were in the American League and we went up to a lot of ballgames there. And we went past Franklin Field, which is the football stadium of the University of Pennsylvania. They hosted the Army-Navy game every year. So I was quite familiar with the football programs there.

Did you play sports in college?

College, I played soccer.

That's great.

Yeah. I lettered in soccer and enjoyed it very much. I always loved soccer.

And what did you get your bachelor's degree in?

In the college my major was English and my minor was botany.

Interesting combination. I'm studying English right now. And they say that's one of the better majors for medical school or law school just because it's a lot of reading and writing.

So did you know at that point you were still planning on going to medical school?

Yes.

Okay. So you felt that was good training?

Right.

And where did you go after University of Pennsylvania?

I got my M.D. degree at the University of Maryland in Baltimore, Maryland.

Okay. So you moved back closer to home.

Uh-huh.

How far away was your hometown from where you went to college?

Oh, a hundred miles.

Not too bad.

Not too bad. Distances were not as great in those days anyway. You didn't go that far.

How many people were in your medical class at Maryland?

We started off with 114 and ended up with 100 even.

Do you know what happened to the other 14?

The ones that I knew flunked out.

So what kind of classes or training did you receive when you were going through medical school? What was that like?

Well, it was a tough medical school. Anatomy and all the other courses were taught by excellent instructors. And we really worked hard to get all the way through.

I can imagine. It's hard work.

So after you went through classes there, you did a residency?

Yeah. At the University of Maryland Hospital in Baltimore.

And what was your experience in residency? What kinds of things did you do or were you responsible for?

At one time or another practically everything. They wanted to give us a broad spectrum of medicine.

So did you specialize in any type of medicine when you were in school or were you just general?

No. It was all general. Every student had the same course. There was no specialization in medical school at all.

What were the demographics of your medical class? Were they all male?

We had I think eight females and all the rest were male when we started and we wound up with

four females and 96 males.

Wow. Interesting, though, that there were females at the time going to medical school.

And how did you pay for medical school? Was it very expensive at that time as it is now?

Not like now. No. It was relatively inexpensive in those days. It was a state university and the tuitions were very mild.

So after residency did you move to Las Vegas at that point or were you there for a while?

No. I went into country practice for two years in Sudlersville, Maryland. And then I volunteered to go into the Army in World War II.

Can you tell us a little bit more about that, what you did during the war?

I went in July of 1942. And I went to the Medical Field Service School for a number of weeks in Pennsylvania. Then I went to flight surgeons' school at Randolph Field, San Antonio, Texas. And I was a flight surgeon the rest of the war.

Where were you sent once you went overseas?

I was sent overseas. My first assignment was to North Africa and then to England where I spent the bulk of my overseas' time.

You were mostly in England during the war?

Mostly.

So what types of things did you see in North Africa? What typical cases would you handle?

Well, the flight surgeons' office is primarily one that handled pilots and flight crews. And you did physicals and you checked them to make sure they were in condition to fly and all that sort of thing. But a lot of them developed chest infections or nose and throat infections or what have you and you had to be able to clear them to be able to fly at high altitudes.

Right. And vision tests and those types of things. You were the one to make sure they were --

Yeah. The flight surgeons were there to take care of the flying crews primarily. We took care of a lot of others, of course.

Did you ever have to perform surgeries after a battle took place or were you more just on the side of preparing people to fly?

We took care of the first aid type of things when they came back from flights. If they were injured in one way or another, we took care of that and then referred them on to one of the regular hospitals.

So how many doctors were working with you at any given time?

It all depended on what base you were on. Sometimes there were several and sometimes you were the only one as a flight surgeon.

And about how many soldiers would you be responsible for at any given time?

Oh, the various flight crews usually had a matter of 25 to 30 crews. There were ten in the crews. I was always in heavy bombers, ten in a crew.

Did your responsibilities change much when you moved to England at the end of the war or were you pretty much doing the same thing all the way through?

Pretty much all the way through.

Was it very different once you moved to England, less violence, or did you feel in less danger?

Well, in North Africa it was primarily transient crews going through on the way to the British Isles whereas the person who was -- we had a lot of psychiatric problems from the flight crews at one time or another.

It seems like that's something that you hear about now a lot that's becoming more of an issue, just the posttraumatic stress of being in that situation.

Yeah. We did a lot of work in that field. And when I came back from overseas, I was assigned to a psychiatric hospital in Florida.

So you were working in Florida at a psychiatric hospital. Where in Florida did you work?

At St. Petersburg.

Was that in 1945 that you went there?

I went there until I was discharged in September of '45.

And then you went straight there. And how long did you work in Florida?

You mean at this psychiatric hospital? Almost a year.

And what types of things would you deal with there? What did you see?

People who came back from overseas had various psychiatric difficulties. A lot of them were not

in combat. We had people who were in very isolated areas, Breathlin (phonetic) or whatever, and got cabin fever.

So what kinds of treatments would you prescribe to people returning?

Mostly psychotherapy.

Were there many prescriptions written or drugs or none of that?

We didn't do much in the way of medications.

Okay. So you were there for a year. And then where did you go from there?

I was on the way to Los Angeles. All the fellows that I ran into from California during the war were pumping up California as a place to go to practice after the war. So I decided I would head to Los Angeles and at least look around. So I wind up here accidentally. Everybody traveled by train in those days except a few by bus. But for long distances the train was the main media. All the way from the Midwest out here we heard about Las Vegas. And the train stopped here. In those days the engines were all steam, no diesel. Because of that they had to disconnect the engine here at the station and run the engine down to where they could fill up their boilers with water, which took about three-quarters of an hour. And then they would come back. So as a consequence when they got to the station here at Fremont Street, everybody poured off the train and went to Fremont Street to play the slot machines.

As a consequence I walked into the Sal Sagev hotel -- Sal Sagev is Las Vegas spelled backwards -- which was right on the corner of Main and Fremont. I was still in uniform. And the bellhop there saw my insignia and he asked me where I was going to practice after the war. And I said I was going down to Los Angeles to look around. And he said why don't you look here first because we need doctors? So he went over to the desk to see if there was a room. In those days a hotel would only keep you for three days. You couldn't stay longer. Fortunately, there was a room on the third floor. It was a three-story hotel. There was a room there. So I stayed the three days and I looked things over and I liked what I saw. So I wound up staying.

What did Las Vegas look like when you first arrived? What were your first impressions?

Well, Las Vegas was a typical small western city. In those days it was approximately 15,000 people. And I loved the old Las Vegas. We had at that time two hotels. The one that we preferred, of course, was the Last Frontier, which the locals really enjoyed. The El Rancho, which

later burned down in the mid 50s, was the other one that was here at that time. But the downtown Las Vegas was very active and a lot of people went particularly to the downtown areas because there were only two hotels on the Strip.

Was the housing pretty centralized or were people spread out?

Very centralized because 15th Street was way out.

I can't believe that.

Were you traveling alone when you arrived in Las Vegas?

Yeah.

So you didn't have a family yet?

No.

You were able to kind of just settle where the wind took you.

Yeah. I was just looking around to see what I could see.

What hospitals were in Las Vegas? Was there only one at that time?

The Las Vegas Hospital downtown, which was on Ogden at Eighth Street, and what is now University Medical Center, which then was Clark County Hospital. It had three wards there; one surgical, one medical and one obstetrical and gynecology. And as a consequence the hospital was very tickled to see another doctor come around.

So when you walked into the Las Vegas Hospital, what procedure did you go through to get a job there? Who did you meet with? Do you recall?

I didn't get a job there right off the bat, but I volunteered. Dr. Jack Cherry was the superintendent at that time and also practiced there at the hospital. My office was downtown at Fourth and Carson.

And what did you do when you were there? What types of --

General practice of medicine. It is interesting that in those days the old western city was still in effect. The curbs were three-feet high so people could step off a horse or out of a buggy right onto the sidewalk. And that was the front of my office all the way down the street. But there were still a lot of trees including fruit trees of one sort or another.

And did you work with other doctors in that office or did you have your own practice?

No. I was always in solo practice.

You always were your whole career?

Yes.

Wow. So you handled a lot of family cases?

Uh-huh. I did a lot of deliveries.

What was that like at that time in terms of standard procedure?

Most of my deliveries at first were at the general hospital, Clark County General. The obstetrical wing was very active. I delivered a number of babies in the home in those days because a lot of them were done in the home.

I was going to ask because I've heard some nurses talk about home visits for that type of thing. So in terms of medication was most of it just natural childbirth?

You mean childbirth? Yeah. Use no anesthesia. Most of them received no medication at all.

And they ran fairly smoothly?

Yes.

No complications?

Never had any complications at all.

That's good. What other types of typical cases would you handle? I've heard some nurses talk about snakebites being common and things that we wouldn't really think of now. Did you have any rare cases like that?

Well, we had scattered cases of snakebites and scorpions and what have you. But they were not really a prominent part of your practice.

So the most common thing would just be colds and flu and everyday illnesses that you'd see?

The routine things, uh-huh.

Were there any epidemics or outbreaks of anything that you can remember over the years?

Well, we had a polio outbreak in the early 50s. Polio, of course, was not conquered until they got the vaccines in the end of the 50s. But there were a lot of cases that were admitted into the hospital. In those days if they had a bulbar type, the more severe type of paralysis of the chest and so forth, they were put in an iron lung to breathe for them and hope that nature would conquer the poliovirus ahead of what your treatment would worry about. But, of course, some of them died; some of them lived.

Would you say that a majority lived?

Most of them lived, yes.

I was going to ask if you were familiar with Dr. West?

Charlie West?

Yes.

Yes.

We read a little bit about him and I was wondering if you could tell me more about him being one of the few African-American doctors?

He came here in the 50s. He was the first black doctor. He was quite capable. He had a good practice. He hospitalized at the university -- well, the Clark County General Hospital it was in those days. It later became the Southern Nevada Memorial Hospital and then University Medical Center, same hospital.

Right. It went through a lot of changes.

What was practicing medicine like in terms of race relations during the 1950s and 60s?

I never had any trouble at all. In fact, I delivered babies on the West Side area where the blacks resided. And I would go over there at night and not even give a thought to my safety because you were not unsafe.

So it was pretty tolerant for a city?

Yes.

Did you hear about any other parts of the country; that being an issue at that time? Did you have friends living in other regions?

Probably did, but I don't -- I'm not all that familiar with what went on at other places.

It didn't seem to be too much of an issue, though, here.

Not here. Not until the big ruckus came up in the 60s. But certainly in the 40s and 50s, we had no problems at all.

Who were some of the other doctors in town that you were familiar with over the years?

Dr. James Swank, who had come here during the war from Pennsylvania. The Las Vegas Hospital group: Dr. Stanley Hardy; Dr. Clara Woodbury; Dr. Malcolm -- I forget what Malcolm's first

name was. He left in 1946 and retired. He was a member of the State Board of Medical Examiners when I came and took my boards. Dr. Gerald Sulvane, Sr., was still in the Navy when I came here. He got out later in 1946 and came back. Dr. John McDaniel was in the Army Air Corps and he got back in 1946. Let's see. We only had -- I was the 13th member of the Clark County Medical Society. Now there are 3,000 or so.

And you said you came here and took your boards. What did that consist of?

It was an oral examination by the State Board of Medical Examiners.

And was it a very rigorous process or did you feel comfortable?

Well, they asked questions. And if you knew the answers, it wasn't rigorous.

So you felt like you had a pretty good medical education?

Yes.

Were there many medical schools in the country? I forgot to ask that. I mean did you have a lot of choices? I know you went back to Maryland. So there might not have been.

I don't know. I imagine there were around 40 medical schools in those days.

But did Maryland have a reputation at that time?

Yes.

So the 13th member of the American Medical --

No. Clark County Medical Society.

Oh, Clark County Medical Society. And who was the head of that? Was there someone in charge?

Well, the presidency rotated around.

Do you remember some of the prominent leaders in the society when you first started out?

Did you ever hold a leadership position?

I was president of the Clark County Medical Society in 1953. I was president of the United States Medical Association in 1966.

And what types of duties did you have as president of those associations? Would you meet frequently?

Of course, you met with various agencies. You met with various people around the community and tried to answer any questions or smooth over any difficulties or whatever.

Did you have many difficulties?

A few, but not too many.

Were you a part of any other community organizations throughout the years?

I joined the Las Vegas Kiwanis Club in 1946 and also the Elks Lodge, no.1468, in 1946. And I was very active in the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Post 1753 here.

Were there a lot of members in each of those organizations? Did they grow a lot over the years or did you have a pretty steady membership?

Well, we had a pretty steady membership in the earlier days. As the town grew, of course, you added members.

What types of things did you deal with at the Veterans of Foreign Wars?

Anything that had to do with helping veterans that were either down on their luck or were having health problems or whatever. We got a lot of them admitted into hospitals down at the coast because we had no veterans' hospital. I did most of the veterans administration work in Las Vegas until 1973 when the Veterans Administration Clinic first came in here.

And where was that located?

At Henderson.

And before that you said you would have to send them to other veterans' hospital. Which ones did they mainly use before we had one?

Long Beach. Van Nuys. San Fernando. Wherever they had a vacancy in whatever you needed. And some of them we sent down to Arizona to Whipple Hospital in Prescott, Arizona.

Did most of them have -- was it like psychiatric needs and the same types of things you were dealing with in Florida?

There were some psychiatric. I took care of a number of psychiatric problems here. But most of them were anything from tuberculosis to Lord knows what.

Do you think that the government took pretty good care of its veterans at that time or did they have trouble getting medical services?

Well, we had difficulty if there was not a bed available down in one of the hospitals. We called around and hospitalized people as far away as Wyoming and South Dakota if we had to.

Wow. But they always got the help they needed somewhere?

Yes.

That's good. Las Vegas has a reputation now as having one of the largest veteran populations.

Yes.

Was it the same case back in the day; that a lot of veterans would come here?

Percentagewise, yes.

Why do you think that is; that Las Vegas has always been a popular place?

Well, of course, Nellis, originally Las Vegas Gunnery, which was during World War II -- a lot of those people stayed. Later when it was Nellis Air Force Base, the various veterans would stay in town after they were discharged. Of course, some of them drifted around wherever and would light up here at the end.

Can you tell me a little bit more about your family life and when you got married and started having children?

My first marriage went kaput during the war while I was overseas. I've kept a very strong relationship with the four children from that marriage. Then I married one of the nurses from UMC in 1950. I have two daughters from that marriage, one of whom is a schoolteacher here in Las Vegas and the other one is a surgeon up in Anchorage, Alaska.

Oh, wow. I heard it's beautiful there. Never been.

In the right time of year it's gorgeous.

Yeah. It can get pretty chilly, though.

Who was the nurse you met at UMC? What was her name?

Dorothy O'Donald.

Great. And you had two daughters, one of whom still lives here and the other is a surgeon. What about your four other children? Did any of them follow in your footsteps and become doctors themselves?

My oldest daughter was an RN. My second daughter was an LPN from University Medical Center. And my son who lived here for a number of years is now in Atlanta. And then I had a daughter who is now in Austin, Texas.

Wow. Pretty widespread family.

Yes.

That's good, though. You can visit different areas of the country.

But, fortunately, we're on excellent terms with all of them, including my wife.

Great. And how many grandchildren do you have?

Twenty-eight.

Wow. That breaks my grandparents' record. I thought we had a lot. That's great. And any of them involved in the medical field?

In the medical field? Oh, God.

Any doctors or nurses?

My daughter is the only doctor. Most of them are in various other fields. No, I don't think any -- a couple of them are nurses, but there's nobody in medical practice.

So you said that your office was at Fourth and Carson?

Uh-huh.

And how long were you in that office?

Fourteen years.

And what years were those?

February 4, 1946, for 14 years. And then I was at 637 East Sahara for 30-something years, which is now PepBoys.

It has changed a lot.

Across the street from Marie Callender's.

Okay. I know where that is.

So you were at that location for how long ago? I'm sorry.

Thirty-three years I guess.

And so you retired in 1993; is that right?

I worked -- let's see. I have to think.

It's hard to remember all the dates, too.

I think I retired in 1986.

Did you see the demographics of your patients change over the years, having been here such a long time?

Not to any great extent. I did a lot of obstetrics. I delivered more than 6,000 babies, most of them here in Las Vegas or Henderson. I delivered a lot of babies out at St. Rose de Lima Hospital in Henderson.

Any other hospitals that you worked in a lot?

Sunrise Hospital.

Do you think that most of the hospitals have been pretty comparable in terms of care and service?

We never had any problems with any of my patients. I thought they got very good care. Rose de Lima Hospital is still a very good hospital. And UMC is certainly an excellent hospital, and Sunrise Hospital, also.

Right. I know that there were some private hospitals at the beginning.

Las Vegas Hospital started before World War II. They were strictly a private hospital. I did some of my cases there, also, before it finally closed. But I went down to -- what was the name of the one down on Sahara?

I don't know.

It was Sahara and Burnham. Women's Hospital I guess it was.

Why did Las Vegas Hospital close?

I think because the doctors got older and decided they would retire.

Was there much difference, do you think, between private and public hospitals in terms of affordability and that type of thing? Did you have wild care (?) clients?

I think their clientele at Las Vegas Hospital enjoyed their services there and got along well.

So you did a lot of deliveries you said at the Women's Hospital?

I beg your pardon.

You did a lot of deliveries at the Women's Hospital?

I did mostly pediatrics there.

And what do you think that your biggest mark on the medical field over the years has been?

Do you think it's the number of deliveries that people remember?

To me, yes.

That's a huge amount. What other things do you think that people will remember about

your years as a doctor?

Well, fortunately I had a lot of excellent patients, everything from federal judges to local judges to people in all sorts of fields here. And I think I took adequate care of everybody and everybody that could survive -- there were a few, of course, that died of heart attacks or what have you. But I fortunately came out with an excellent reputation, which is the main thing.

Yes. That's great.

Can you tell us some of the people that you saw over the years, whether they were judges or senators or people involved in the Las Vegas community who you saw?

Well, Judge Roger Foley the II. Judge Roger Foley, his son, and various others, many others. Tom Foley, who is a judge here in Las Vegas. Thalia Dondero, who was a very good friend and patient. And Harvey Dondero, her husband, he was certainly a wonderful person. He was at the school district for many, many, many years. There have been so many others over the years.

And I'm sure you've seen their children and grandchildren, a lot of families and generations.

Yes. I delivered some daughters of kids that I delivered.

Wow. That's amazing.

So how do you think that the city of Las Vegas and our hospitals have changed over the years? What are the biggest advances that you have seen?

Well, it's more scientific today, but less personal. Unfortunately, a lot of the hospitals get blamed for some of the things that occur. There's no question that they're culpable. But they get blamed for a lot of things that actually are not the fault of the hospital. The volume is so much greater today. It's a different ballgame as far as the practice of medicine today. Fortunately, I practiced in a simpler time.

Do you think that the future will continue on this track or do you think that something will have to happen where it goes back to that personal care?

I would hope they go back to more personal care. I did a lot of home visits for people who were ill. And that was abandoned for a number of years by so many doctors, but is starting to come back now, fortunately, because if you have a patient who is really ill, you need to go to the home and see them and do what is necessary. You get a much better idea of what's going on in the home by seeing how the relationships are with parents and with kids and what have you. You get a lot

of knowledge you don't get by just seeing them in your office.

Right. It would be nice to see more of that in the future.

Well, this has been great. Is there anything else that you'd like to add about people you worked with or any other stories you'd like to share?

You've got so many stories. How many Christmas cards did you use to get from patients and send out to patients over the years?

Oh, that's a good one.

Oh, God.

You'd be surprised.

Hundreds.

Six to 700 average. And he still gets letters and cards from patients thanking him and remembering the good days.

Wow. That's really nice.

People have been very devoted.

That's great. You have quite a legacy.

Well, family practice was mine by choice. And if I did it over again, I would still be in family practice. With a specialty you see a person and you may never see them again. And with family practice you're seeing various members of the family over and over, over the years. And it's a much more satisfying thing to me.

You see their growth and development. It seems like you really got to build some close relationships with people that way.

Yes.

That's nice. Anything else that you'd like to add?

Well, there have been so many years that I can't remember a lot of things.

You'd be here for days. He had very good relations with blacks, African-Americans, over the years. There were as many of those as anybody else. It was an equal footing.

When I came here the blacks in the area were primarily from Tallulah, Louisiana, or Fordyce, Arkansas. And when one came in the office -- are you from Fordyce or Tallulah? Because you knew it was one or the other. I had an excellent relationship with so many of them. In fact,

Dorothy, my wife, would bake a cake and we'd take it over like on their 80th birthday or whatever to their home and sit down and visit with them. No. We had no trouble at all with the older folks. The younger ones, some of them are a little different.

Yeah. A little bit tougher to get along with sometimes.

Yes.

But they grow out of it eventually.

Hopefully.

She might enjoy that story about the fellow who went through your window down on Carson in the office. What was that story with the patient?

Oh. I had a veteran patient. As I was saying I took care of most all the veteran stuff here. He was a schizophrenic and had been a patient of mine for several years. He unfortunately resembled a guy who attacked the jailer at the county jail and escaped and they were looking for him, all the police in the area. This patient of mine who was just downtown innocently -- he worked at the Desert Inn -- started walking back to the Desert Inn. And he got part of the way when the police car saw him. And he somewhat resembled the attacker of the jailer. So as a consequence he was pulled back to the jail and they interviewed him and determined it wasn't him. So he was walking back to the Desert Inn to sleep overnight and he got picked up again. And he was brought back to the jail. And the jailer said no, it wasn't him.

My office was just a block and a half from the courthouse. And so he pulled the screen off my waiting room window and just plunged through the window. The next morning I was on the way to testify at city court for seven o'clock. And I went down to Carson and saw that the screen was off. And I looked in -- and the window was broken -- and here was a guy sleeping on the rug in the middle of the room. And I called the police to come over because I wasn't going in to investigate myself. And poor guy, he had a real flare up of his schizophrenia. He went back to work out at the Desert Inn, but I took care of him for a number of years after that before he died.

And why did he go into your office again, just to hide from the cops?

Just to hide from the cops.

They kept arresting him. So he needed a quiet place.

They must not have had much communication. So he kept getting picked up. But you cared

for him for several years after that?

Yes.

Did he stay in town?

For quite a few years. Then he went down to the coast and died I think at Long Beach Naval Hospital.

So you kept track of most of your patients, where they ended up?

Very well, yeah. If they left town they usually floated back from time to time.

I was going to ask, too, why it was you think that the African-Americans came from those two cities? I forget what the two --

They came to work at the plants out at Henderson, the magnesium. That's why it's called Basic Magnesium. They recruited large numbers to come and work at those plants.

Okay. So that's why they ended up from those two cities.

Did you ever treat people who worked in those plants or at the Test Site? Did you ever have to deal with people in those cases?

No. The various doctors who worked at the Test Site took care of them primarily.

They had their own doctors?

Uh-huh. I examined people for EG&G special projects who worked out there at the 51 area. I examined all those that were in that area.

Well, any other stories you'd like to get in before we stop for the day?

I don't know.

Wasn't there a woman who graduated in your medical class? She was married to someone else in the class and recently died over in England.

She just recently died.

She just recently died, and was very accomplished.

My two classmates married right after we graduated from medical school. He later became the professor of medicine there at the University of Maryland Medical School and his wife was a professor there. She did a lot of volunteer work over in the Vietnam area, but usually over in Cambodia or one of the other countries at the refugee camps. She did a lot of work of that sort.

What were their names, your classmates?

Theodore Woodrow and Celeste Woodrow.

So you kept in touch with them. Any other classmates that you kept in touch with over the years?

Well, my roommate at the university hospital was a native Baltimorean. And he went in obstetrical practice there. We always visited him when we went back.

Do you think that most people kept in touch with their graduating class?

I think a lot of us kept in good contact with a lot of classmates, yes.

And everyone kind of ended up all over the country?

Yes. Yeah. We have about ten that are still surviving in my class. One of them lives in northern California with her daughter and the others are mostly in the Baltimore area.

They kind of stayed around.

Uh-huh.

So are you happy you got off the train in Las Vegas and stayed there?

Oh, it's been wonderful. I couldn't have asked for a better place to practice. We of course -- and my wife agrees. Las Vegas in those days, earlier days, was a much nicer place to be. Now it's a hectic pace to go anywhere it seems like.

It's grown a lot that's for sure.

You know, there's one more story, Pop. The mentally ill fellow, the one guy who axed his mother.

Oh, that was when I was at Baltimore. They brought this guy in and he was in his 20s, a severe schizophrenic. And he had taken an ax and split his mother's head, killed her because he thought she was poisoning his soup. And I was in the emergency room when they brought him in. I asked him why he just didn't eat the soup? He just looked at me strangely and said I never thought of that. So you could see the twisted mind of a schizophrenic.

How was mental illness handled? Did you have a lot of cases in Las Vegas?

There were no psychiatrists here when I came. No psychiatrists until in the 50s. I did most all the psychiatric evaluations for the county, district attorney and so forth because I had psychiatric experience in the service.

So when you had to testify in court sometimes that would be the case?

Yes.

Wow. Well, you dealt with all different types of cases it sounds like.

I did a lot of testifying in court. The psychiatric facilities here are far better than they used to be. But there are still some holes in the psychiatric care.

What do you think could be improved?

More money and more facilities.

Just a lack of services.

It's not going to occur under the current circumstances of a tight budget.

It seems like we need more money in a lot of areas.

What year are you?

I'm a senior.

I thought you were too poised to be a freshman.

Yeah. I have a little bit of experience, but still not done. I have one year left. But I'm going to come back to Nevada. I'm a native. So I want to come back and help solve some problems here.

That's great. Political science?

Uh-huh.

Do you figure on someday running for office?

Yeah. I think so. We'll see. It all depends. But I think as Las Vegas continues to grow and just all the budget issues and education issues and health care issues that I definitely want to take part in helping alleviate some problems.

That would be fine.

But it's a good place to live still. I have hope.

To me I've never thought of leaving because I like the area, I like the weather and I like the -- whatever. But I just liked it so much more when it was small. Of course, I was raised in a tiny town.

Right. You've really seen it change from night to day.

Yeah. When I was being raised in a town of 250 people, you knew everybody in town. You knew them by practically what they had for breakfast or whatever.

I bet. Well, you said your high school class had how many people?

Fifteen.

Did you keep in touch with them, too?

Very well.

That's good.

Oh, wow.

All that's not my hair because part of it's the bush behind it.

I was going to say that's quite a bit of hair. That is great.

Well, I've really enjoyed getting to know you and your story.

Nice to meet you, Emily. And good luck to you in your endeavors.

Thank you.