

I. I know that chronology and all that is something that's not hard to fill in so I would like to begin with a couple of words and a couple of questions— to just kind of talk. If there is anything you don't want to answer just say that. Two questions for a starter. I think everybody has a hero, or many heroes and I wonder if you had any heroes and the other question is that everything we are goes back to our parents.

L. I think that's true. You don't realize it. And the older you get the more you see that. I do all the time (hand gestures) and I think, well, my mother did it that way, or that came from Daddy. I even think that about my feet. They are my Daddy's feet— they really are. And just, you know, the way I shake my hands and arms— the way I move them. Like this, it used to aggravate me to death.

S. It did, because she used to wear an arm bracelet.

L. Yes she did and she used to do this all the time and that just bothered me and now (laughing) I do the same thing. To me—well you don't realize it— I think a lot like Dad did.

I. How's that?

L. Well, he never said very much but just sort of plondered along in his own footsteps and came out with what he...

S. Well, he read a lot.

I. Your father was a banker?

L. He was a lawyer too.

I. A lawyer and he didn't talk much?

S. It depends on the situation. He was always with a book in his hand.

L. ... not really in court. He was a judge most of the time but he still didn't talk. He listened.

I. Do you find that you do that too?

L. I believe I listen pretty good, don't you Sus? Unless you get my ire up then, boy look out!

I. Do you know when that's going to happen?

L. It's liable to be anything— if it irritates my insides and there may not have been a reason in the world to it.

It's mostly always feelings. I go by feelings, I don't go by sense.

I. Do you feel better after or do you wish you hadn't?

L. I don't know that I wish I hadn't, but I'm sorry I did.

I. Would you say that your father was one of your heroes?

L. Yes, I don't know that I was striving to be like him but, as I tell you, I didn't go by thinking...

I. (to Susie) If you think back, can you see that your parents were a big influence?

S. Oh, sure, I can see a lot of things. I do things especially like my mother. Of course, my mother was mentally sick too. She became so ... She may have been all the time we were growing up— she was sick a lot, and, of course, as a child you don't know what the sickness is. We had plenty of aunts and plenty of relatives, I mean, we were not — we were sheltered, let me put it that way. Somebody loved us.

I. Are you from Kentucky too?

S. I'm from Louisville. (Name pronounced Hallblieb) (Ibe).

I went to high school there, Ursuline Academy and then I went to Nazareth College (clinical at St. Joseph Infirmary) for my nurses training.

I. You always knew you wanted to be a nurse?

S. Oh, yes, I was always going to be a nurse— I said it for so long that I had to do it to save face. Oh, I did everything, I dressed dolls up like nurses— I was always going to be a nurse and I loved starched white uniforms, white starched uniforms, I really do.

L. You could have been a P.E. major— I had white shirts all starched and I wore shark-skin shorts. I think about that— I stayed with white. Not when I started out. I wore pink and blue, and ...

S. Dresses— that was a long time ago.

Pants were legal in 1923— in case you're interested.

I. It was?

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S. It was legal in 1923 that women could wear slacks. The attorney general declared it legal.

L. After the vote.

i had an aunt who believes it's sinful to cut your hair.

She was a methodist.

I. What I've noticed in Kentucky is this wonderful 'kin' system— that people don't want to leave their kin or family and want to stay with them.

L. I think that's true.

S. I think more in the hills.

L. I was thinking of that fellow who called this morning. This morning I got a call from this man from out near— Grand City— and he had some pictures and they had been painted in 18 and 40 and they're supposed to be, he thought, perhaps of my great grandmother and great grandfather or somebody they were his same thing. And wanted to bring them over sometime and I didn't know anything about it. It is the Proctor side of the family and I just know very little about that side of the family. Of course the Tolliver side has been played up a lot.

I. Why do you suppose people make such a to-do about violent confrontations?

L. People don't like anything to run smooth— because it doesn't have excitement. Everybody likes it when something turns upside-down, when people do something mean. The world does, everybody is just tickled to death because it proves... I mean people just love to hear that.

I. Why, do you suppose? Why do they feud?

L. It's the nature of us, I reckon. You have to have the good side and the bad side.

I. Well, it sounds like the bad side is more interesting.

L. Well, it is, for the world.

S. Well, and I think it is true, you can talk about your relatives but nobody else can.

I. I guess that the kin system and your allegiance to your own family is very strong. Is that why you chose to stay in this area?

L. Yes, I think so. But, I think I was afraid to get out of it. I didn't like big cities. I mean, I

liked just the way I lived right here. I like the hills and I liked what I thought would be a good way to live. Right here. And I didn't think you could do that any place else. And I still believe it. I like everything right here and environment is awful important I think.

I. Environment— would that be family and friends— or.....?

L. These hills, everything, just all the things.

S. And your family.

L. Oh, yes, they are really important to me.

I. You used to live on Wilson Avenue?

L. Right there at the top of the hill where the Huffmans live now. Lived there from a kid on.

I. That's the first house you remember?

L. No, we lived in lots of houses but I only remember bits and snatches of other houses. Then, my grandmother and grandfather ran a hotel. It was down on first street, right across from what is now the freight station. It burned down. I don't know when it burned— I'd say early 30's or 20's or somewhere along in there.

I. What did they do? Where did they go?

L. Actually, they lived someplace else, but they lived there too and I had two uncles that helped. Uncle Herb died when he was very young— 27 or 29?

And then we lived down on Main Street for a few years, right next to the Post Office. That's where I sold my lemonade.

I. You sold lemonade on Main Street?

L. Yes.

I. How old were you?

L. Oh, I guess seven or eight, somewhere along in there. And we made mud pies, you could sell those too. You'd put a real cherry in them.

I. Did you have satisfied customers?

L. Oh, we did pretty good.

I. Was it you and your brothers and sisters?

L. Oh, my brother helped some, but mostly me and a friend that lived down the street.

I. Did you make much money?

L. Oh, we had some nickels and pennies and dimes when the day was done.

I. And what would you do with the money?

L. Oh, we made us up a thing to do. We ordered clothes from Sears and Roebuck.

I. Really!

S. I haven't heard this tale.

L. We knew about this girl and her brother— I did tell you about this— well, anyway, they didn't have any money and they lived back way off up there where the school is now (the University area)— up in there— and we thought that they needed some clothes. So, we ordered her a coat and some shoes... but we didn't have enough for her brother.

I. So you and your little girlfriend got clothes for this girl— what was her name?

L. Evans.

I. Is she still around?

L. Nobody's around any more.

Anyway, we took this stuff over there— she was just a little girl around town—

I. Did you ever think of giving her your own clothes?

L. No, we wanted new clothes for her.

Well, we took the things over there and we couldn't find the way back. It was getting dark and we were scared to death. We ended up way up the top of Wilson Avenue trying to get back...

I. Did your mother know what you were up to?

L. Yes, she knew what we were doing, she even helped us a little bit.

I. Did you sell the lemonade to do this?

S. Did you know that then you sold the lemonade, or not till you got the money?

L. Not till we got the money.

I. Why, you could have used that money and gone and bought yourself some candy.

L. We could go to Daddy's office and get stamps and buy candy. We'd go up to the office and his secretary would give us postage stamps and they'd give us candy. Didn't you ever have any fun like that?

I. What kind of little kid were you?

L. Oh, we did everything. We were very interested in knowing what was going on. We even had circuses.

I. In the back yard?

L. Actually, we usually had our circuses up by Daddy's office. In the back— now it would be right where Holbrook's drug store is... back in there. The main reason for doing it there was that the best character in our circus lived behind there. He could play and make snakes do things— live snakes— and he'd go get 'em and he'd have 'em there for the circus.

I. He turned out to be quite an outlaw. His name was Joe(?). I think he went out west and into the hills and nobody could catch him and we never knew what happened to him. But, he was real nice— he gave me a cameo ring. So, I thought he was an awful nice guy.

Well, everybody played with the snakes.

I. They weren't poisonous?

L. I don't know, I think some of them were. I don't know one snake from another snake. Lord, I haven't thought of this stuff in 40 years.

I. What was your specialty in the circus?

L. Oh, we all did tricks. Have someone stand on your shoulders. I was always doing flips and twisting and turning, cartwheels, that was my position.

I. Didn't your mother dress you up in ruffles and bows?

L. We had to dress up. See, I had a sister and she always wore green and blue and I always wore red and pink— yellow— those colors. And Mother would dress us all up in the afternoon and take us to Aunt Dells and sometimes I'd get lost— Or I'd see Roy Day and we'd get into a fight. We'd do all sorts of wrought things like that. We'd be all prissed up....

I. "Prissed up" that's a wonderful word.

S. Hair curled?

I. Did you hate that?

L. No, it was OK. I sort of liked it if you just got dressed up and then that was all, an hour, I liked to look pretty for a little while and then that was enough. I didn't like just staying pretty but my sister liked that.

S. She still does.

L. And then my brother did too. He always wore a coat. He liked coats and ties. Me, I didn't stay very 'prissed.'

I. Was your mother lady-like— in social clubs and things?

L. They didn't social club too much back in those days.

S. Well, she belonged to the Circle at church.

I. Which church was that?

L. Christian.

I. Is that the Disciples church that has music?

L. Yes, they have music.

I. Do you still go to that church?

L. Yes.

I. Did you go to Sunday school?

L. I went to Sunday school. My grandfather knew you would go to hell if you didn't go to that church. (Christian)

I. What did that do to you— You were a little girl.

L. There was the... girl and she went to the Methodist Church so we didn't talk very much.

Well, he was my grandfather— Proctor. He went to Pike's Peak one time. I don't think he climbed it, they had trolleys or something, but he went up there and it was real cold

... it was so cold he thought... well, maybe he was crazy but he was a card. He was quite a character.

I. How long did he live?

L. Granddaddy died about 1930...

I guess you can tell at the cemetery.

S. You haven't been there yet?

I. No. Well, you gotta go to the cemetery.

I. As a matter of fact— when I started writing this— this is how I started out...

You say the changes now (in medicine) are unbelievable— how are things now unbelievable?

L. When I was in school we had just begun to have EKG's— that is electrocardiograms— and they had four leads. Now we have 12. A lead is so you get the impulse from different places. So, originally we had four different ways of doing that and now there are twelve. But we didn't have much of that at all then, it was just sort of a beginning thing and... to me, that's just mind boggling to think that back in those days we didn't use one. We bought an EKG in about '59— along in there. And I took a course...

S. In fact, you took two courses... in how to read it.. at the University of Kentucky. Oh, there was snow then, snow knee deep and you'd get stuck.

L. One night I never will forget— we didn't get there (Lexington) until about time the course was over. Then I took a correspondence course from St. Louis. We did that a lot, didn't we? (to Susie) took courses... a little bit here and...

S. Well, you couldn't be gone that long— gone to Lexington. You had nobody to cover for you back the. (before the hospital)

L. And you had to have that challenge. See, that was the important thing to me... if you were just working by yourself.. to read. Now Susie, she still does. She learned an awful lot of medicine— she can see when I'm making mistakes— and you'd need another doctor too.

S. You sure do, you need somebody to consult.

L. The only things we had to learn really, was from the books in the back of the car— when we'd go out on deliveries.

S. We got a lot of reading done then— a lot.

L. And that's so important— to keep up with what's going on.

I. Some doctors have given me the impression that they are God and they think they know everything.

L. Maybe some do. You've got to treat the whole body and can't know just one little angle. And, you know, it's a sad thing that people (when you're a doctor) don't want you to say, "Well, I'm sick." And that's all they wana tell you and you are supposed to figure it out— that's your job... they won't tell you whether their head hurts or their back hurts. Well, a lot of that is changing now, they've read a lot, all about estrogens and what they'll do to you...

S. And everybody else's PDR (Physician's Desk Reference).

I. What would happen early, early on, when you were having to travel East (into the mountains)? What kind of territory did you cover? How far away?

L. Oh, I guess we'd go 50 miles in every direction.

S. We'd go to every county around Rowan County— Carter County, Bath County.

L. Elliot and Morgan.

S. Fleming County— a lot.

I. Were there no other doctors in those counties?

L. Might be...

S. At Olive Hill they've always had a doctor. But, now, maybe they'd have one or two but they'd be gone.

I. How would they get to you?

L. They'd come— they'd drive over to get you.

S. You're talking about going out and making deliveries.

I. Yes, how did they get to you to get there— I can't imagine that all those cabins had phones in them then.

S. Oh, they'd come to us... somebody, a relative or they would go to the grocery store or a place like that and then somebody, the husband usually, would meet you there and would lead the way in his truck. Sometimes he'd take us in the truck if the road was real bad.

I. So you were walking into some unknown territory there.

S. Oh, often... often.

L. We even went in a sleigh. Yes, a horse and a sleigh.

I. Was that usual?

L. No, that was an experience.

I. These were people you'd met before?

S. Oh, yes, we always (or almost always) saw our prenatals before. We started with prenatal care: I mean, you had to have prenatal care.

I. Had they heard of that before?

L. No.

S. Not much.

L. One that always stands out in my mind was, this fella came in and wanted us to deliver his wife... said she was due right away. We said, well you have to bring her in first. He said, well she deliver soon. We said, if you want us to deliver her you have to bring her in and so the next day he brought her into the office. Now, this was back in the very beginning— back about 1948, and we checked her and she wasn't pregnant. Well, they thought we didn't have very good sense because she could outline the baby and show you its feet and everything. He thought she was too. Anyway, she thought really she was pregnant. Now, we could have, easy enough gone off some night about 3 a.m. on some long journey and find that we were delivering somebody that wasn't pregnant.

I. Maybe I'm thinking of movies where someone rushes in and says, "Doctor, doctor, come quick!" and you didn't know them— wouldn't you do then.

L. Yes, we've done such as that.

S. Lots of times.

L. Got there and found she'd been in labor two or three days with only an arm hanging out.

S. A midwife had been there— an untrained midwife, I want to stress that, but, that's all they had.

I. Would they lose a lot of babies like that?

L. No, most of the time they don't lose babies— occasionally.

I. Did you ever encounter a clash of folk beliefs and modern ideas?

L. Well, a lot of them would be pretty drunk by the time we got there to deliver.

I. The women?

L. Uh huh.

I. From pain or....

L. Alcohol— yes, for the pain.

I. Was there any clash from midwives, or a woman's beliefs... or...

S. I'll answer that— a lot of times, if you delivered by forceps, people really thought this was a terrible thing and it is a lot easier on the woman in some cases, and a lot of people objected to that— oh— bitterly— about forceps.

L. And that would make you uncover...

S. Yes, and a lot of people didn't want you to uncover...

We had a delivery table that we put on the bed— yes, carried it with us. Oh, we were weighted down, we couldn't begin to carry all that now. We took IV fluids; oh, we took everything. Each of us had 2 BIG bags. Oh, you wouldn't believe how proper we were.

L. Or thought we were.

S. Oh, we took sterile drapes, you know, to put under them.

I. Did they think you were pretty peculiar?

S. Oh, they thought we were trained good. We tried to do things right, oh yes.

I. Up to that point they'd been delivered by untrained midwives or 'grannies?'

Were they pretty good?

L. Yeah, they were OK. If you don't do much...

S. Nature does most of it. It's when they start fiddling around that...

I. Well, was it hard to persuade the women to come to town— they could have said, well, my mother didn't do that.

L. They'd just plain come. We said we didn't want them to be caught without someone to take care of you. Come it (?) or we wouldn't go, so they had to pay the price before we did.

S. In other words, they had to bring them in before we went out. But, occasionally, this one would come and you'd have to go anyway. Some people we'd never seen— such as this case she was talking about... with the baby's arm hanging out.

I. Did the baby live?

S. Oh, no, it was probably dead a day or two.

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I. Did you lose many patients?

L. Now, statistics don't tell you anything, because if there was something wrong they'd go someplace else— and actually, in this territory with that kind of condition, you never really get the picture. I believe you can say that's pretty true. Now, if we'd run into a bad problem, Susie would go with them and take them to Lexington, so they'd die in Lexington.

Did anyone ever die that you took to Lexington?

S. No, well, we had one mother to die.

I. Really, in all these years?

L. And— oh, I know you shouldn't say that, but we sent her to Lexington.

S. No, but they sent her back because she wasn't in active labor but by the time she got back she was and we delivered her and she had a tear in her uterus and it ruptured and she died and nobody could help that but it was really a bad situation. The little baby lived and we tried to get the mother back to Lexington but she died.

I. I am amazed, considering conditions, that in all those years you've been delivering babies... since?

S. Since 1948.

I. That's amazing.

L. We sent a lot of them to Lexington.

S. Yes, but none of the mothers ever died that we took.

I. How long did it take— I mean, there wasn't the interstate.

S. There was a road, it's still there, highway 60 and that took two hours. And the funeral homes, had ambulances— but they didn't take us then. If you had to lie down you went in the hearse. That was a regular routine around here— that if you had to have ambulance, the funeral homes would furnish them up until— oh, 1970— that was the case here. From '70 on there was an ambulance service.

I. When did I-64 come through here?

S. Well, maybe '63 they were working on it because we were working on the hospital then. It was '63 or '64 we were working on the hospital.

L. Dick was pretty important on that.

S. Oh, yes, Dick, Dick Carpenter, got the ambulance service. Dick worked hard on getting that ambulance service.

I. What other things might people call you out for? Or, did you just take care of mothers?

L. Well, we got called for a woman who had pneumonia but she really had a great big vuvar access but they said she had pneumonia.

S. But, they may not have know. she had a high fever and back then if you had a high fever you must always have pneumonia and that could have been an honest mistake.

L. Well, we'd go a lot of times for cardiac (decomp)... heart failure. We did that all the time.

I. Were they already dead when you got there?

L. No, no, they just couldn't breath.

I. But, could you get there fast enough?

L. Well, it all depended. Sometimes they'd call early enough. I remember the first one we had where we couldn't do anything— it was cardiac decomp. She was all swollen (anasarca?) which means everything is swollen. She was sitting outside and it was just a little after dark and we had a flashlight, but in order to be able to get the fluid out you had to be able to hit a vein and I guess it was impossible from the word go. You could not see a vein, you could not see an arm.

I. She was sitting outside just waiting for you?

L. She was just waiting to die I guess. Her husband was with her.

S. It's better to sit up— you can breath better, so it made sense, her sitting outside. She felt better.

L. But we couldn't see to do anything. No much could be done. We had one like that— that was real bad off like that— and we got up once at 3 o'clock one Sunday morning and we got there and they wouldn't let us do anything. Said they'd already had a doctor.

S. Heart attack... But we've had a lot of strange experiences like that. We used to see a lot of different things, like kids here in town would get chicken pox— you wouldn't have them come to your office because they're contagious, you'd go to the home to see them and measies.

L. Well, they had sense, most mothers knew when the kid had measles or chicken pox.

S. But, I'm sure many a kid caught measles in our office. We used to see a lot of children— a lot.

I. Were your patients mostly children?

S. There were a lot of children, they weren't mostly children, we saw everything. But, a lot of children, but there are pediatricians here now. I don't know if I could stand that screaming now at our stage. I don't know, we just had a lot of commotion around our office all the time.

L. Oh, I got bitten on the arm one time— that child.

S. Yes, bit her— really bit her!!

I. Drew blood?

S. Oh, awful.

L. Oh, he didn't want me to touch him. Oh, he caught me and I wasn't very fast.

I. When people were dying then they probably stayed at home— was it like the hospice program now?

S. Yes, family comes— church people...

L. Neighbors.

S. You were expected to die at home.

L. Well, you knew you were gonna die. You know, back when we started, people—women were still dying of cancer of the cervix. Now, we've been around for a while and that's long gone. Then they were young and, I mean, they would just be miserable. It really was so long and drawn out and they'd be sick for so long.

I. Did they not know why?

S. Well, when they got so bad off you could plainly see what the problem was and there wasn't much you could do about it.

You couldn't spot it ahead of time. We didn't have pap smears and, well, pap smears mean a whale of a lot.

L. When they say those are not much good these days, why it just burns me up, they don't realize and when you see something like that you just don't realize...

S. The horrible way they die and the pain...

L. And usually it was somebody that was way out in the country and had dirty sheets...

S. Had nobody with them. Never had anything in their lives.

L. Oh, it just cut you. What could we do? Didn't have anybody with 'em.

I. It must have torn you up to see that and know you couldn't...

L. Helpless... and you didn't know when they would bleed to death.

S. And that's what most of them did... just bleed to death.

I. I read in Mildred Haun's book that women in the mountains were just used.

L. Just used, that's all they were.

I. Did you see a life like that or do you think that was fading?

S. No, I think it was fading by that time (1940's)— but I think it was still true to some extent.

I. Do you think the roads getting better changed the isolation here?

S. Oh, definitely.

L. You just try to get there, back in those days.

I. How did you get back there, did you have a jeep?

L. No, we did not have a four wheel drive jeep. Most of the people'd pick us up. We'd drive our car to, say, someplace— like a grocery store or then they would lead us there. Some might have a jeep or might have a truck, might have a wagon, or they might have a horse.

I. Did you ever ride in on horses?

L. Oh, yes, we did that up in Clay County. We didn't know how to ride a horse either.

I. How did you carry all your supplies?

S. We just carried a bag. We had that other stuff when we were going to deliver a baby— then we carried our IV fluids and our table. One time we had a woman way out the only person there was her husband and her little boy and she was going to deliver a premature baby and we were trying to get her out of there and she was bleeding— she had a placenta previa (which means that the afterbirth's coming first) and she was bleeding. And so we tried— well, there wasn't any way to get that woman out of there. We put her between sheets and carried her out, the two of us — and the man carrying the bags.

L. You know just rolling up the blanket.

S. Yes, that's what we did— we carried her out.

I. Down the road, or?

L. A 'fur' piece...

S. Yes, a long way. About a mile or so. Luckily, she was little too.

L. And then we got an ambulance and the ambulance took the patient and me to Lexington to deliver the baby and she got along alright. The baby was premature. But, it lived.

I. Did many people try to name their babies after you?

S. There were an awful lot of Louises and Susies.

L. And a lot of people named them together— Susan Louise.

S. And then there were a few Claires but not many people realized that Louise's first

name is Claire.

I. Is that for any reason?

L. Nope, they just called me that, I didn't have anything to do with it. 'Weezer' or, most of 'em couldn't say my first name and they'd call me 'weez'. Little nieces.