

INTERVIEW WITH DR. LOUISE CAUDILL AND SUSIE HALBLIEB
In their home, Morehead, KY. June 23, 1993

MSU ARCHIVES

LC. Have you read this book? (Small Caucasian Woman)

I. Yes, I did. I loved it. She's a good writer.

LC. Did you? To me she says too many bad things. That's what I'm against. You know, they sort of paint a picture like we're ignorant.

I. I see what you mean.

LC. And everybody that writes about this area does that. That's what I thought that McConkey didn't do. (Rowan's Progress)

I. That was a beautiful book.

LC. Well, you about ready to leave?

I. Yes. Now I have a lot of little bitty things that I need to clear up if you don't mind. First of all, I want to give your book back and make certain you have everything I have. Here are your pictures back and I really appreciate them.

S. Did you know that W. David's (Brown) wife died?

I. Yes, I heard that yesterday. Were you their doctors?

S. Sarah called us yesterday. We took care of the whole family for many years. Visitation is tomorrow after 4.

I. Travis and I were talking about it yesterday remembering your interview when you said, when there is a pair and one dies, the other will die in six months, and Travis thought of that.

S. That whole family is something.

I. He was a real gentleman. Now, these are little things I want to ask and I don't even know if I'll use them or not. Also, since I saw you, I've interviewed Sister Jean Francis, Bob Bishop, and your sister-in-law, Jane— and little things keep coming up. Did you find the letter about how much you needed help?

S. No. But I asked sister if she would look. I'll find out right now.

I. I just thought that would be a great way to explain why you needed help— by reading that letter. (p.s. That letter came to my house a few days later!)

LC. Susie might be able to remember it but I don't remember anything.

I. I don't believe you. That's not true.

LC. Almost.

I. If you can't find it, maybe we could piece together what a day was like, living in your office, delivering babies, people waiting... people who needed to go to Lexington and couldn't make it, et cetera. I imagine it was that kind of thing.

LC. Yes, it was. Yes, I remember a man coming to this (back?... office?) door and half his skull was off— you could see his brain! Oh, it was the x-ray door. You remember that man Suz and his skull all— oh, you could see his brain.

S. Oh, I remember.

LC. We had one, you could see the heart and the lungs working and he was alive!! I mean, it was unbelievable what all you would see— walking, but no, they were usually in a truck or something like that.

I. Was this from guns?

LC. I don't remember what happened to that skull but the heart and lung had been in a wreck.

S. It was a wreck with five people seriously injured and I think three of them died. I mean, because we had no hospital.

LC. One little girl was running around and she didn't know beans from apple butter, she had brain injury. Now, she got alright.

S. Yes, she got alright. It was pitiful. That was on Highway 60 and people were going through town— because this was the main highway.

LC. And you couldn't help them. It was so... I mean, that's the thing that just cuts you all the way through. Helpless.

S. Sister is going to look for that letter.

LC. I sorta remember that letter now.

S. Well, I had forgotten it completely until that fortieth affair and I came across it accidentally and now I've looked every place I know to look. I know we still have it because I made copies of it.

I. That letter seemed crucial to me because it must have been something about that

letter that got Monseigneur Towell to come here.

S. Well, the idea was that he did want to know what we did in a day in the office but his main question was, how many people do we send out of town... And it was amazing how many.

I. Were there a lot who didn't make the trip?

S. Not an awful lot. Oh, they many have died after they got there. We would talk to the doctors in Lexington and tell them they were coming and they would be prepared. We had an awful lot of direct contact with the doctors there. Now we hardly know anybody down there.

I. This is also a very picky point, but when Monseigneur Towell came to the office and saw these babies, well, I've heard that there were four and then five and also six. You said, there were two sets of twins and a singleton— so there were five?

LC. Now Susie says that isn't right, but I think it is.

S. That's alright, we had several babies but I think they were all singletons. But we did have, in one night, two sets of twins and a singleton. Not necessarily that time, but we had several babies. We had them on the couch.

I. and that's what I was going to ask— the couch in your back office now? Now, this is really picky, but would you wrap them in blankets and lay them this way or that way?

S. That way...

I. That way meaning with their heads toward the end, in a row like carrots or something.

S. We had only one baby bed. You know, ordinarily, we just had one but frequently we did have more.

LC. I know we had one in a drawer one time.

S. There wasn't one in a drawer the day he came. I think we kept it in with its mother, in the drawer. That was another time.

I. I know that McConkey has that story and Elie Reser used that story and— so it's been used but it is hard to not use it.

LC. But you'd like it to be right.

I. Yes, I want it to be right, but, to me, the real point of that is 'fate.'

S. Right. It really was and it was amazing, how it happened!

I. Was it in the morning— he came?

LC. Yes, about 10 o'clock.

S. And, oh, that was such a busy time for us. Oh, that office! You know, we had a BIG waiting room and by that time of day it was just full! I mean, people would come and spend the day. I mean, they'd wait a long long time. They don't wait like that now.

LC. Sometimes they had to wait for a baby to be born.

S. Why, I think that little Denise who works in the office now would absolutely die with the way we used to be. You know, we'd have to leave— with an office full of people to go to the hospital or, when we delivered in the office, we'd be out of circulation for a couple of hours.

LC. Do you remember that time we had that fellow who had polio so bad in that one leg and had broken the other leg and we also had that woman in labor and we couldn't get the ambulance to come? Back then we'd call a funeral home and they would take them someplace— but, they wouldn't come and get this man quick enough and we just had to stay and deliver that baby. So, I just picked that man up and carried him out and put him in the car— or whatever he'd come in. See, I had to get him out of there because that woman was yelling bloody murder. I just know I had to go quick. Oh, these stories are interfering with your problems.

I. Oh, no. They are helping. When the women were giving birth in your office, what would the fathers do? Did they come in and pester you or bother you?

LC. Sometimes they'd watch. Sometimes they wanted to get as far away as they could.

S. Most of them stayed away, which we welcomed.

LC. Oh, and then sometimes they'd want to help you. One time I'll never forget, we had this baby— you know you let them drain a little while— and this fellow reached right over my shoulder trying to get that baby. He thought I was going to let it die just hanging there.

I. Now, someone told me this, Louise, and I was quite surprised. They said that you love jewelry and that you have gobs of it.

LC. That's right. Would you like to see it?

I. That's just what she said you would say.

S. She does have beautiful things.

I. What kind? Bracelets? Rings? When do you wear them?

LC. Not very often. Oh, on Sundays sometimes or when we go to a party. Oh, Suz, show her the dress.

S. Here we are working on the garage. This is a dress (white and three tiers of lace) that she wore and I just washed it. Isn't that pretty? And it has a blue cumberbund.

LC. We went to a family practice meeting. It's pretty nice. I believe Susie could wear it.

S. I could get into it but I couldn't wear it.

LC. They had a banquet or something and that's when I got to wear it, for that particular night. Why, I felt just real dressed up and then I got there and some other woman had a dress on just like it!

S. But you could hardly recognize that because you had on a blue belt and your shoes were different. You looked different.

I. Did you ever wear high heels?

LC. Oh, I did then. Now, I've got plenty which I'll never wear. 7 1/2. Most everybody is a 7 1/2.

I. I've been noticing in talking to you that your hands...

LC. They move all the time.

I. Yes. And I was thinking about how to emphasize that and when I heard about the jewelry I thought that the bracelets would do that.

LC. Well, we'll show you the jewelry.

I. Next, Jane told me about when her last child was born and that you and Susie were so tired that you and Susie came over and just got in bed with her and went to sleep. I'd like to use that— to kind of emphasize how fast you were going and how tired you got. She said you both came over and one got in one side and one on the other side and you both went back to sleep.

LC. Yes, that's right.

S. That's right.

LC. And did she tell you that she drank a beer shortly afterwards? And we played bridge that night!

I. She said that having that baby was fun!

LC. I believe it was.

S. There was a lot of stress and strain.

LC. The first baby I've ever seen delivered was Jane's. Dr. Parks in Lexington delivered it. Oh, I was grown up then but it was before I went to med school.

I. You just wanted to watch? Did that have anything to do with your med school decision?

LC. Oh, no, but I thought— oh, if all babies looked like that one it'd be hell on wheels.

I. Now, her husband was the brother whose arm was partially off?

LC. It went to two inches below the elbow.

I. Did he have an artificial arm?

LC. No. He wanted one but I swear I did my best to talk him out of it. I hated the way those things looked then but nowadays you can have one made that's just beautiful.

I. Did that affect his childhood?

LC. He did everything. He played football. He was a tennis player.

I. It was his right arm.

LC. His right arm, yes. If you will notice all the people you see with one arm like that, it's always the right arm.

S. I believe it is.

LC. I don't know why that is but I think it is some hereditary thing that causes that. A lot of people say, it's something the mother ate or things like that but I really believe you see it spasmodically around and it's always the same thing. It had never occurred in our family— not that we know of. I'm a little bit scared every time a baby is born though. I think he was.

I. Next, for fun, what's your opinion of sinus? Nan said— Dr. Louise doesn't believe in sinus, or such a thing as sinus problems and you said something like that to me.

LC. Well, everybody has sinuses but I think it's just a habit people have more, than it being a discussion of disease. You heard that before you said that.

I. This next question is for both of you— and rather silly maybe— but have any of your male patients proposed to you?

LC. (Head in hands) No. No one has ever proposed to me. Sad...

I. Somewhere I read that sometimes men are so— trusting or grateful and so they just fall in love with you. Didn't happen? Maybe you were just too busy.

S. And maybe didn't recognize it.

LC. I find that there are a lot of things I didn't recognize at the time. I had a professor once, and I was a freshman in college, and he said to me, "Do you need a better grade?" He says, "You have a B and you can have an A if you want it." I mean, well, I didn't realize anything. I just said, a B is fine with me. It was a course in anatomy and I think he realized I was trying to keep my grades up for a sorority or something like that, so if I needed a higher average, he was going to help me out. But, you know, I hadn't realized anything until way after I was out of school.

I. Also, I asked you about some music. Did you think about music?

LC. I have a list. I think, you know you were talking about background music and I believe that "Lara's Song" from Dr. Zhivago. We just sort of played some music here one evening and, you know, I don't know the name of anything— and I thought that would be good background music.

I. Yes, that's beautiful.

LC. And as far as a hymn was concerned, I love "How Great Thou Art" and then, "The Lord's Prayer." I can give you a whole lot of those.

I. Oh, here's the list. I also like "Impossible Dream."

S. I like that too.

I. And "Rhapsody in Blue."

LC. Did we put the Bolero in? That's one of my favorites.

I. I also thought of one— do you know "This Little Light of Mine, I'm Gonna Let It Shine?" A children's song.

S. Oh, yes, I like that too.

I. Oh, and then I asked you about any Bible passages.

LC. You know, I don't think it's Bible verses that I really like. I think it's Bible attitudes. You know what I mean?

I. You mean, inspiring or consoling?

LC. It doesn't come out in a verse. It comes out in my interpretation of the verse. And

that's my songs too— they are too verses.

I. I guess that's what I meant— parts, not verses.

LC. But, I believe, "In the beginning..." I believe that I use that in my thinking as much as anything. From Genesis— "In the beginning there was the word." I believe that...

I. You mean, like start at the top and just go where you have to go to next?

LC. No, I just believe "In the beginning..." is an important thing— and then deciding how things go. Seems like the Bible says that— "In the beginning..." I think that's where things ought to be.

I. How do you apply that, to say, working with sick people?

LC. Well, you just begin in the beginning, how were they, what happened, how did this get out of whack and how did that get out of whack. And it just seems to me like that is just sort of a big part of all of life.

I. Like, to get somewhere you have to start somewhere?

LC. And, "In the beginning..." is where everything starts.

I. Now, Sister Jean Francis was talking about Sister Joell and she said that Sister Joell gave this wonderful speech and it was about (Not clear as to where or when she gave it)— but the idea of it sounded wonderful— that Sister Joell was talking about the spirituality of this town. By that she meant, how all the different denominations in this town came together to support them (for the hospital) and worked together— as opposed to, say, the small town Appalachian crazy people stories (as we talked about earlier). I was wondering if you heard that speech? Maybe it was before she went to Rome?

LC. Oh, I thought it might be when she came back.

I. Maybe it was.

LC. No, this was given in Covington.

S. At Thomas Moore.

I. Maybe that's it.

LC. We talked it over (Sister Joell) both about what we were going to say.

S. I remember, and you did talk it over so you both wouldn't say the same thing.

I. I thought it would be wonderful to get hold of that because it would be antithetical to all

the hillbilly stories. Here is a town that is somewhat fictionalized and in comes the Catholic Sisters and instead of everything falling apart— it all came together. For example, the ministers of all denominations came to work in the emergency ward and that was a kind of spirituality of this town.

LC. Yes, it is surprising because almost all of the ministers in this town are a part of the ministerial association in the hospital. That's really something. There was some little strife to begin with but it ended.

I. But when everyone can come together for a purpose— things can work and it did work here. That's not only about you but about where you are. I don't know if that side of Morehead has been brought out. It is always the other side.

LC. Did you read that little thing the Foreman girl wrote? I have it right here. That's a little different... she wrote that to try to get a scholarship for something.

S. Ask Jean Francis for a copy of that speech.

LC. The President of the college up there is Jean Francis' brother. My best guess is— you know, we never did give our speeches that day— not like they were written. I think she gave hers pretty well.

S. Well, the mike was off and you didn't know it.

I. I just thought it would be a very positive thing. Were you the one who brought Dr. Proudfoot here?

S. He was going to leave Pikeville.

LC. I know he came down to the office and it didn't take him long to make up his mind. He came down one day and called the next morning before breakfast saying he'd come. It was just that quick.

I. And he started the Cave Run Clinic?

LC. Well, they all started out as one group. The original idea was that the hospital would hire all the doctors. That was the philosophy of the hospital in the beginning. But, I would say, surgery and medicine had a disagreement. A difference in the attitude of their profession. First they had this little bitty house and it wasn't big enough for all of them so what they decided was that surgery would go one way and medicine would go the other. So, that's what happened. He built the one on the hill and Dr. Carpenter and Dr. Black built the Morehead Clinic. Dr. Proudfoot served a definite purpose here— wouldn't you say that was true?

S. Yes, and he helped get surgery residents here. We had medical residents but we didn't have surgery residents. And part of that was because the head of surgery changed down

there too. But he was the one...

I. I suppose his name ought to come up because he was the first surgeon. Then, a Mrs. Ford who gave the land... who wanted to be the first patient admitted. (This is not true)

S. She was admitted but she wasn't the first patient. Mrs. Gully was the first.

LC. She was my patient. Well, in the beginning most of the people were my patients.

I. I don't know if I should use that or not, that they didn't want the first patient to be admitted to be the first patient to die there.

S. Wait, now, Mrs. Ford did not give that land (for the hospital)— that's a misunderstanding.

LC. She gave the land for the church.

I. Oh, I thought she'd given the land for the hospital. Who did the land come from?

LC. It was Uncle Sam's.

S. Uncle Sam owned it.

LC. He didn't give it....

I. Wait, you mean the United States of America Uncle Sam or your Uncle Sam?

LC. My Uncle Sam. We bought the land, he didn't give it. Well, there just wasn't any houses around there but it wasn't big enough then.

S. There was just one big white house there.

LC. And there was a garden out behind.

I. She also mentioned a copper box for the cornerstone. Did you give something for that?

S. All I remember about that is that there is a picture of Proc and Sally, Jane's two younger children. There was a picture in the paper of them. Some other children who were involved in a carnival to make money for the hospital. That picture is in the cornerstone and that's the only thing I know is in the cornerstone.

I. Now, what kind of driver were you?

LC. I am a good driver! Oh, I'd get caught in mudholes every now and then. One day we were rocking real good, trying to get out of a mudhole and we went off and lost the door to the car!

11

S. Yes, the door got caught in the mud...

I. That far down?

S. I think she wonders if you were a fast driver.

I. Well, I heard how you'd cover up the speedometer.

LC. I had to for Sister Mary Edwin (1st administrator of the hospital). I'd just put my gloves over there so she couldn't see. Why, back in those days you wore gloves, I just remembered that.

S. Other than in winter time that is.

LC. And a purse and all that stuff.

I. Oh, yes, and you dressed up to go on an airplane.

S. Or into a hotel.

I. So, you weren't a wild driver like your mother— or was she really a wild driver?

LC. Well, no, but just sometimes she'd... she'd hit stuff. Maybe she just didn't see too good or something. Mother never did anything bad. She never hurt anyone.

S. That's really exaggerated. But she was such a little lady and here she had this big car. A big Cadillac. She bought it herself. And then she had to sit on pillows. She was really a little lady.

LC. She just didn't see everything. I'm sure she didn't. Most of the time, you know, after you get older and have insurance, they will cancel your insurance if you have too many accidents. (claims)

I. And next— I can't read my own writing.

LC. Neither can I.

I. But it's ok, you're a doctor.

S. Here is a picture of her mother.

I. And she was 90 when she died?

LC. 91.

I. Your whole family is long lived isn't it?

LC. Well, look down there on those tombstones.

I. I have another question— that you can answer or not— or say no to— but it was something I thought to think about as a stage device. I don't remember who said this, but that you have always suffered from insomnia. Or, that you don't require a lot of sleep.

LC. Well, no, I don't sleep too well, but it's no big deal.

I. I was thinking of it as a stage device— like I'm sitting here talking because I can't sleep.

LC. That might be— because, particularly when we were working on this hospital, I didn't sleep a lot. See, my best 'help' was in Lexington and we would talk from 12 o'clock until 3:00. We'd talk like that on the phone every night, or almost every night. That was Dr. Segnitz.

I. It could be like— my best ideas come in the middle of the night.

LC. Yes, I think that's right.

I. Did you just never need much sleep?

LC. I need it now but used to be I could get by pretty easy. I mean, you can sort of get into the habit of not sleeping I think. Like, when we were working all night, you just couldn't sleep. You might curl up in the back end of the car for a while. But we just didn't get the opportunity to go in and go to bed.

I. Get used to— does that mean you don't get tired?

S. You just make yourself go. And we'd go away.

LC. Sometimes we'd just get on a plane and go to... oh, Africa. So, we saw an awful lot of the world at that time. We'd go to New York. We used to see plays. Now, they tell a good one on me. We got into New York one time in time to see Katherine Cornell in *The Barretts of Wimpole Street*. (Can't remember name of play but that's not it.)

S. No, I think it was something else because I never did see that.

LC. Well, it just got so awful comfortable sitting down there that all of a sudden I went to sleep and snored out loud.

S. Yes, with Katherine Cornell walking back and forth and we were right up front!

I. Well, that's my list for today.

LC. Now, she'll bring our jewel box in. But, I still don't see how you are ever going to make anything out of this. I decided that my brother is the one in my family that would have the most interesting life.

S. That's the bracelet-- charms-- her mother wore all the time and jiggled.

I. You know, the other night I was thinking, even after all this interviewing, can we ever really know another person? I mean, you know each other well but do you really know another person?

S. No. I don't think so.

LC. Yes, there's a lot about Susie I don't know.

I. I am realizing that it is an impossible thing and maybe that's the whole theme. That, maybe you don't even really know yourself.

LC. I think that's true too. We are a different person from time to time.

I. And we are often different people with different people.

LC. Yes. The audience makes the difference.