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Interview no. 124

E. W. Rheinheimer

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UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO

INSTITUTE OF ORAL HISTORY

INTERVIEWEE: Dr. E. W. Rheinheimer (1890-1981)
INTERVIEWER: Robert H. Novak
PROJECT: El Paso History
DATE OF INTERVIEW: April 3, 1974
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TRANSCRIBER: Robert H. Novak
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BIOGRAPHICAL SYNOPSIS OF INTERVIEWEE:

El Paso physician.

SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW:

El Paso History; Prohibition; the medical community in El Paso.

1 1/2 hours (1 7/8 tape speed); 31 pages.

N: Dr. Rheinheimer, why don't we start with just a little bit of biographical background about yourself, when and where you were born, something about your parents, information along that line.

R: I was born in El Paso in 1890. And the house /in/ which all my brothers and sisters were born is still standing down there on South Florence Street. I don't know who lives in it now; my father sold it many years ago. My /parents/ were both born in Syracuse, New York. My father came here in 1880 as a building and bridge superintendent for the Santa Fe line building into here. Incidentally, we used to go up the valley and he'd say, "I built that station, I built that house, I built that bridge," and so on, from here to Las Cruces. We never went much above that; the roads were bad /or/ there weren't any roads. Then he left here and I think he came back about 1882 and stayed here ever since then; he lived here. He went back to Syracuse--I don't know when exactly--met my mother and married her back there. I would assume that they came back here about 1888 because I was born in 1890 in the house which he built himself.

N: Would he and your mother have come back here by train, all the way from Syracuse?

R: Yes.

N: Do you have any idea how long it might have taken in those days?

R: Well, naturally, my father having been a foreman for the Santa Fe, any time we went back there it was by the Santa Fe--which meant we left here at night, got to Albuquerque in the morning and had breakfast in that Harvey House up there, which was right in the station. Then we left in the morning--/let's/

say /it/ was Monday morning--we went up through Colorado and stopped in all the Harvey Houses. They'd come through the train and ask how many meals you wanted, and they'd be ready when you got there. The next morning we were in western Kansas, and that night we were in Kansas City, I think; the next morning in Chicago, and the next morning in Syracuse. Now it takes about four hours on the plane.

I was born June 16, 1890, and in July 1891 my mother took me back by that same route so I could be baptized in her church. I have the baptism certificate; I used it when I got my retirement and social security.

N: Could you tell us anything about your early education here in El Paso, such as grammar school or high school?

R: I first went to the old Central School, which was located on Campbell and Myrtle. The new telephone building addition is on that site. When they finished the building, one of the officers down at the telephone company called me and /said/, "We wish you'd come down here." Judge Howe's wife /also went/. We went down there, and she saw a piano there. I guess she must have been all of ninety; she was one of my kindergarten teachers. I went first there to kindergarten. She played "The Eyes of Texas"--banged it out like nobody's business. They gave us a brick wrapped in gold of the old building; I have it down the office.

From there I went to the Alamo School, which was just then built. I remember when G. P. Putnam was superintendent of schools; afterwards when I came back /from medical school/ he was a patient of mine. /Once there/ was an Arbor Day celebration. I don't know whether I was still in kindergarten or the first grade, but we went over to the Chopin Hall, which was on Myrtle diagonally across from the school--at which they had musicals and

concerts and things of that sort--and we carried cottonwood trees down there and planted them on Arbor Day that yeay. I remember that very well. I don't know if the trees grew or not. That was the school I went to as a student.

Then I went for a short time /to/ the Mesa School on Montana Street and then to the El Paso High School, which was where the present Hotel Dieu School of Nursing--the UTEP School of Nursing--/is/ now, and went there the four years and graduated in 1909. That was in the latter part of May. I was scheduled to go to Syracuse the following September. I was hunting down on the river bottom one time, I think in early August of that year, 1909, and drank some water out of the river. There was a lot of typhoid fever then, so I promptly got it, because sewage all the way from here to Albuquerque was discharged into the river. However, I had a mild case, but it kept me from going away to the university that fall. So I worked at the YMCA for a year, which was the old YMCA built in 1907. I used to love athletics and they had a track team there, and we did pretty well around here. There was one man--I don't know where he came from, his name was Shapley--and he could run the hundred yards in 10 seconds. That was with a gun and /breaking/ a tape; I'm sure that if they'd had these timing devices they have now, he'd have gone under 10 seconds. I'm sure, 'cause he won every hundred yard race he was in.

Well, I worked in the YMCA in the office, and in 1910, then, I went off to Syracuse University. People always ask me why I went there. Well, as I just told you, my father and mother were born there and I had uncles and aunts and cousins galore. There was one cousin of mine who was in the medical school, and he talked me into coming up there.

N: So you actually went to Syracuse with the intention of later going into the medical school?

R: Oh, yes, that was my /desire/. When we were in high school here, there was an instructor--I think he was in Physiology, which was a misnomer--his name was Barney Brooks, a young man. I think he had had one year in medical school, and he was teaching to get some funds together to go on--now, that's my theory. Anyway, I used to talk to him a lot, and he is one who influenced me to go to medical school. He didn't suggest Syracuse; he didn't know anything about it. Afterwards he became a big surgeon, and he worked in the Barnes Hospital, I think it was, in St. Louis. As I recall, he was the first one, for an aneurysm of the aorta, to put a graft in--I think he was the first. But afterwards he was professor of surgery /at/ Vanderbilt Medical School. They boys /from/ here /at/ that time remembered him very well before he went to Vanderbilt. Now he's the one who really started me on /the/ medical /field/.

N: Before we talk about the time you spent at Syracuse, do you have any other memories of the city of El Paso, say at the time you were in high school that you'd like to tell us about?

R: Well, the city was small. There was practically nothing beyond where the old El Paso Southwestern, now the S.P., crossed Montana Street--practically nothing beyond that. I would estimate the population /to/ be about 15,000. The city was divided /into/ four wards. I remember very distinctly the fire alarm system--they had some boxes and down on Santa Fe Street was the old electric company power plant. It's still down there; I think they use it as an auxiliary if they have to. They had a whistle, and if an alarm was turned in from a box they'd blast off the box number on the whistle.

Well, curiosity, of course--everybody'd beat it to that area, particularly if it was in our neighborhood. Also they had telephones.

Incidentally, that big flood of 1897, when I was a boy living down there on Florence Street--the canal then took off from the river at Hart's Mill, where that Hacienda Restaurant is. We used to have terrific floods; an immense amount of water would come down. It'd come down, there and they were expecting a bigger crest, and they notified the people--that fire whistle would blow if the head gates on the canal gave way. The water came down into South El Paso--the canal was where it is now. One afternoon about two o'clock that thing blasted, and we were living in the south end of town. Practically all the buildings around were adobe. Well, that water reached our house. The men came, and with plows and shovels they tried to build a dam around that half block, but they didn't quite make it. The water came in, and eventually it reached from Overland Street as far as you could see. All of those adobe buildings washed away. Dr. Eugene Porter had a story about that in one of the historical society magazines--Password. Well, that house that my father built--brick--stood in that water and mud. We had a basement about half the size of this room where my mother would can fruit and store it on shelves. We didn't buy potatoes by ten pounds--it was a hundred pounds. And sugar, flour, vegetables, and all that stuff, they kept it down in that basement. I remember--I can hear it right now--those shelves falling over and the jars of canned fruit falling off. Well, that house stood in that water and mud for two weeks, and it never developed a crack!

N: Did you move out of the house and go stay with friends or relatives at that time, while the flood waters were still there?

- R: Well, yes. My father was a contractor--builder--and he had a shop in the back of the house and he had a truck--not an automobile truck, but a horse truck. And they took all of us kids out of there about midnight. We went downtown and stayed in a hotel that night, and I think the next day or two /we/ went up on North Kansas or North Stanton and stayed in the O'Connor house for the rest of the time. They were away; this was in the summer. Mabel O'Connor; she's now Mrs. Mabel Lipscomb.
- N: Do you remember if the city government did anything to aid flood victims, or did they just have to do what they could?
- R: I guess they had to do what they could. Now, I can't answer that, really, because I was only seven years old and I don't remember much about it except the water.
- N: Was that one of the reasons that they later built the Elephant Butte Dam, or was that more for irrigation?
- R: No, that was to store the water. There was not much danger of floods. That was in 1916, I think. When they stored the water like it is now, they controlled it. But the river used to come down past the smelter, as it does now, and make the turn--well, it's changed now. Down there about where Peyton's Packing Company /is/, it made a turn and then came back and went on down the valley. Where it turned /first/ and where it turned back was less than a mile, so they got the idea that if they cut across that--trying to get rid of water, not to save it--that that would carry the water away and avoid flooding. And that is the Córdova Island that belonged to México. Because this loop in here was México, /and they/ cut across, and that left México on this side /of the river/. It's partly settled now by this Chamizal business. We continued having floods after that, but not to

that extreme. Down below in the valley, where there was nothing--no agriculture, just bosque, that would flood over. One time at Ascarate, it got within 75 yards of the railroad. The river used to change its course every summer until they built the levees, and then of course /that/ confined it.

N: What was the relationship at that time between the city of Juárez and the city of El Paso? Did people pretty much go back and forth?

R: Absolutely! There was not much attention paid to people crossing. In fact, after I got back and started practice, I had almost as many patients in Juárez as I had here. I guess the Juárez doctors had the same over here. Nothing was ever said. We just went over, took care of them, and came back. If a patient had to come over here, to get /his/ eyes examined or something, I just simply called the immigration people /to/ tell them I had so-and-so over there--this was after I was practicing--/that would/ have to be brought over here to have glasses made or something. "All right, just be sure they get back." That's all they said. We never violated it, we always took them back.

I never had one bit of trouble until one evening--this young lady had come from Poland and she and her mother were stranded in Juárez. Her father had a tailor shop here, and some way or other somebody up there in Poland told them to go to Veracruz and then come up here and they'd get in. But the quota applied here just as much as it did in New York or any other /place/, so they were stranded in Juárez for a year. A very brilliant young lady. I brought her over to Dr. Schuster here to get her eyes examined, took her back, and on the way back /I/ had to go back by the Santa Fe bridge. I knew practically all the customs /agents/, but this was a new man. I said, "I have nothing." He saw my bag--didn't try to hide it or

anything--and he wanted to know what there was. I told him; he says, "Do you have any morphine in there?" Well, I never gave morphine a thought. We carried a little bit. I said, "Yes, I think I've got six or eight quarter grain tablets." He said, "How do I know that you didn't go to Juárez and buy it?" I said, "You're sure right, you have no way of knowing." It took me over two hours to get over that bridge. I knew the collector of customs, I knew the narcotics officer here, but they weren't home and they weren't in the office, and I had to just sit there till he could finally get in touch with them.

Incidentally, back when I was a kid, I used to see Pat Garrett walk the streets here--he was then collector of customs. This was after he'd had his Billy the Kid incident. Another character here that I knew pretty well was the fellow who owned the Coney Island Saloon.

N: Tom Powers?

R: Tom Powers. In fact, he sort of took a liking to me for some reason or other. Up in Canutillo, this side of Canutillo, there was always some drainage water standing there and there were ducks there. We'd go up there duck hunting. You'd have to go with a horse and wagon or a horse vehicle of some kind. And to get up there, right out by where the cement plant is now, you'd have to go down the river bed and follow the river bed and come out up there about where the smelter school was; it's still standing there. Then it was just around through the dirt and stuff. We'd go up there to Tom Zimpleman's place--Jim Harper and Will Harper. Jim Harper was in politics, and he finally ended up as Judge of Court of Appeals; but he had all kinds of political officers. They'd make cabrito up there. Yeah, we'd go hunting up there at that lake, but I don't think

they were very enthusiastic about the hunting--it was just getting up there.

N: What kind of a man was Tom Powers as you remember him?

R: Well, he had the name of being a big gunman. Now I don't know who he killed. I know that Manny Clements was killed in the Coney Island Saloon. But Tom Powers was a big guy, and as I recall he had one glass eye. I'm not so sure about that, but it seems to me as I see him now he had one eye out, anyway. But as far as I'm concerned, he was a good guy. I never saw anything wrong. But there were a lot of shenanigans in the Coney Island Saloon. I guess if they wanted to get rid of somebody, they took him in the back there.

N: At that time, was what they called the Tenderloin still flourishing?

R: Oh, yes. Of course we were kids. It was on Utah Street, which is South Mesa now, below Overland Street. I don't know much about it, of course; I know what was there. I know that there were three rather large houses there; I think one of them is still standing. I remember hearing the name Tillie Howard, and May Clark I think was another one. I don't know who the third one was. Then they had a lot of little places. Oh, we as kids wandered down there occasionally, but that was all there was to that.

I remember the gambling houses very well, because we as kids stood at the door. What fascinated me was those big chandeliers. There was one where the Wigwam Theatre is now. There was one, I guess it was back of the Coney Island Saloon, in that alley. The saloon faced the alley and went back to El Paso Street. That was quite an establishment. And I think there was one on South El Paso. We were just curious. They wouldn't let us in, of course; we stood at the door and watched. I don't know what was going on, but I'm sure they were all crooked. Did you know J. B.

Binkley? The fellow that was the conductor on the old mule car?

N: I didn't know him, but we do have an interview with him.

R: Well, Mr. Binkley was an electrician. He was a patient of mine, he and his wife, for four long years. He used to tell me about being called to those gambling houses to wire the roulette wheel.

N: So it would operated in favor of the establishment?

R: Oh, yes. Those slot machines and all those gambling games, the percentage is with the house. Why they'd want to be crooked, I don't know. But he told me, "Yes, definitely, I wired a lot of those tables underneath." Of course, later on, gambling was going on in Juárez. I think it was about 1900 or in that era when gambling was stopped in El Paso.

N: Could you tell us anything about the relationship among the various ethnic groups here in El Paso, such as the Mexicans or the Chinese?

R: Well, there was a Chinese colony here, on South Oregon Street mostly. They kept to themselves. When the GH & SA was building to El Paso--they were coming from San Antonio and the T & P was coming from Dallas, and the first one that got to Sierra Blanca got the line west. Well, the GS & SA got there first, and they had hired an immense number of Chinese coolies as laborers. Then the T & P abandoned it, and when the T & P operated here, they used the line from Sierra Blanca jointly.

But anyway, some of those coolies stayed here; quite a few of them worked in the old GH & SA shops, which was just east of Campbell Street. Some of the located down there in the old Chinese colony and they opened Chinese laundries, which was quite some establishment. I used to like to watch them iron. They'd fill their mouths with water and whoosh /the water/ all over and then iron out clothes. They all had long queues, which was

the style, I guess, at that time. I remember their coming to the house with laundry, these long queues hanging down the back. But it was interesting to watch them do the ironing; they /həd/ to damped the clothes, and that's what they used. We didn't pay much attention to hygiene and public health measures then. There used to be a lot of tamale vendors on the street and I'm sure there was no control over the, what they used for meat, till sometime later a rumor got out that they were using dog meat. Well, that ended that, of course--nobody bought tamales from them anymore.

/I/ remember another incident in my life. When we were just kids--five, six, seven years old--there was a man here in town, I've forgotten his name, that used to take us over to Juárez on Sunday afternoon to go to the bullfight. We took the mule car. He'd take me and my sister and brother, I guess. We didn't care about the bullfight--he always brought us this Mexican candy. They called it macoche, I think it was. That's why we went, that's why we were always anxious to go. I don't remember /even/ one of the bullfights; and if I did see /one/, I'm glad to /have forgotten it. That's something I never did; I haven't been to three bullfights in my life, because I think it's a cowardly act and cruel sport.

Anyway, one day that fellow shot a guy and killed him--/the man that/ was taking us to Juárez, this murderer. He was tried and sentenced, and sent to prison. Of course, I don't remember too much about it, but then I'm sure he was one of very few who were ever sent to prison for killing somebody. But that ended that going to Juárez to the bullfights.

N: Do you happen to remember when they changed from the mule-drawn streetcars

to the electric ones?

R: About 1908 maybe--I just don't remember. But there used to be a mule that pulled one of the cars to Juárez, /that/ was named Mandy. They have a replica of the old mule car up there in the Carnegie Park. When they first opened, when the first car went around, they had a flat car and they put Mandy on it and gave her a ride over the system. There was quite a crowd down there in the Pioneer Plaza. I remember it well 'cause I was in the crowd. I know the Buffalo Bill Wild West Show was here down in the Washington Park area. We went down to that in the electric car. It must have been about 1900, I guess--I just can't remember the exact date. But I remember being down there and seeing Mandy go take a ride /on/ the first electric car that went around the system.

And it was a great stunt to ride the trolley car. We used to go out to Fort Bliss to play basketball and took the electric car out there. We were in high school and I got out of high school in 1909, so they were in operation then. You could take a ride out to Fort Bliss; it went out what's now Fort Boulevard and up /into/ the fort, turned around and came back downtown. Then you could get a transfer /and/ take the Second Ward car and take a bid trip around there. That was a nickel /to/ take that trip, /and/ come back to the plaza where they started. So that was a great stunt. And they'd have parties--they'd hire an electric car, a trolley car, and have parties on the thing, take their food and /everything/. You could spend half a day for twenty cents or a quarter, taking all the lines, 'cause the fare was only a nickel.

N: Tell me how you remember the Taft-Díaz meeting.

R: Well, the year was 1909, the year I was working at the YMCA. I had a big

bunch of boys and we were down at the plaza across from the St. Regis Hotel. All the schoolkids were down there and the buildings were decorated everywhere. I guess none before and none since deserved decorations, 'cause everything was covered with red, white, and blue, and starred bunting and flags. But I had a herd of kids, and we stood across from the St. Regis Hotel when Taft's train pulled in. They got out and went in the St. Regis Hotel and had this breakfast there, and then went to the bridge, where they met Díaz at the center of the bridge. And Díaz had come up here in an elaborate...Díaz was a dictator, you know. And I think the people got along better under him than they have since! (Chuckles) But anyway, he brought the Maximilian silverware with him. Then in the evening they had a banquet in the customs house in Juárez, in which they used this Maximilian silver and chinaware and all that.

That was the first time a president of the United States, while he was in office, left the boundaries of the United States. I was in New York once and went to a quiz show, and one of the questions he asked the contestant /was/, "Who was the first president who left the continental United States while in office?" They said Roosevelt, I think, but anyway they accepted it. I should have taken issue right there, but when I got back here I talked to one of the newspaper editors. I said, "They made a mistake back there. Taft was the first president that left the country." And he had to get permission from Congress to do it. He didn't go far, but he left the continental United States. And you know they corrected that on that program. He wrote to them /and told them/.

Well, that was a gala occasion. Of course, the social events--the elaborate breakfast, the banquets, the meetings, and all that sort of

thing--I don't know much about it. But that was the day that little boy got stabbed. He got into an argument with another boy, and the boy took out a knife and severed the big artery, and he bled to death right there in the street. It was in that crowd down there of school children. A sad affair.

I remember seeing Taft very well--I didn't see Díaz. /It/ was in the middle of the bridge where they met, and then Díaz went back, and /then/ Taft went over there. That's all I can remember of it.

N: What was the course of studies like at Syracuse at the time you were there? What did you study?

R: Liberal arts, pre-med, was about the same as it is now. And the course of study in the medical school was approximately the same as it is now, only not so scientific as it is now; it was more practical. We had physiology, anatomy, surgery, medicine, pathology, bacteriology--all of them, the same as they do now. Except as I say, they're more scientific now and longer, but then we spent long hours. Of course, in Syracuse, New York in the mid-winter it gets dark at 3:00 in the afternoon. I went to classes at 8:00 in the morning in the dark and left classes after 3:00 in the afternoon in the dark again. That was in mid-winter.

For the state board, we were having exams all the time. If a professor couldn't get there /because/ he was a practicing physician, he'd send a list of questions to the school and /we would/ have an exam, just out of the clear sky. Then at the end of the first semester, we'd have all our exams over the whole course; and /at/ the end of the second, the same thing. At the end of the four years of medical school, we had exams on the whole shebang. /We/ had to go back and pick up four years of work. And when you

took the state boards, it was the same thing.

I took the state board in New York; at that time they reciprocated with Texas. So I went on an internship at the hospital, and when I got through with that, I made application for a reciprocity license with Texas. In the meantime, they had broken off. So, there was a major in the medical department of the army--medical corps they called it--who was going around medical schools. This was in 1916. He was trying to enlist medical students in the medical corps as first lieutenants. Well, there were five of us--there were probably a dozen interns there--and we said, "Yeah, we'll sign up." He examined us, and my heart was going a little rapidly because I was a little tense about the whole thing, and he wouldn't take me. He took the other four, and he said, "In a couple of weeks you'll get your commission in the medical reserve." They did, but we didn't have a soldier in Europe. He says, "You will not be called to duty until we're operating in a war over there." But at that time the English forces, including the Canadians, were sending doctors up to the front lines with the attacking infantry, and they lost a lot of doctors. There was a big shortage. So not over ten days later, these four got a notice they were assigned to active duty and loaned to the Canadian army. They were sent overseas immediately, and all four of them were killed. So I missed that.

Anyway, I came back here and I couldn't sit around doing nothing, so I had to go to Dallas to take the Texas board. Then when I started practicing I decided I'd try it again. I went out to Fort Bliss, and a young first lieutenant examined me. My heart was a little fast, and he says, "Do you really want to get in the medical corps?" I says, "Yes, sure I do!" And he said, "Well, you're in." So that was that, and I had to

interrupt the eight or ten month practice I had and go in the army for a little while.

N: Where were you sent when you went into the army?

R: I was sent to Camp McArthur in Waco, from there to a camp in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, then to New Orleans, then to Charleston, South Carolina. I never got out of this country.

N: And after the war was over, you came back to El Paso.

R: Oh, yes--it was still my home, you know. In fact, I never gave up my home. As a medical student, this was my home.

N: Did you ever consider staying in New York to live, or were you sure you wanted to come back to El Paso to practice?

R: Oh, I thought about it--I could've had a good start up there, getting in with some of those prominent doctors, probably helping in the medical school. By that time, my cousin had graduated, and he was in with one of the big internal medicine doctors up there. Then I married a Syracuse University student, and she didn't object to coming down here. But really, I liked New York. It was pretty darn cold in the winter, and pretty hot in the summer sometimes, but I liked it. But I thought I owed it to myself to come back here.

N: Could we talk a little bit about the state of knowledge in the medical field at that time? For instance, how did you treat infections back in those days, in the pre-antibiotic days?

R: We treated them symptomatically, maybe said a prayer or two, and hoped for the best. Pneumonia was a terrible thing. These fellows would have a chill, pain in the chest, start coughing up bloody stuff. On the fourth to the sixth day--high fever--they would have what they called a crisis.

The temperature dropped to normal, the pulse to normal /or/ below normal, the temperature below normal, and they'd be very weak. If they survived that... Some of them died in that, because it was quite a shock. The pneumonia was still there, but the symptoms left. If they survived the crisis one day, then they were all right. We used aspirin, of course; we used mustard poultices on the chest; and kept them in bed, kept them warm. That was the best we could do. There were no sulfa drugs, it was a long time before we got antibiotics. Now we don't pay too much attention--we don't see that type of pneumonia much anymore. You see this influenza type. /Before/ the antibiotics /came/ the sulfa drugs. They were pretty hard on people. They really got sick, but the rule was to keep on giving it to them, even if they vomited it up right away.

N: When did the sulfa drugs come into popular use?

R: Oh, I would say about 1922 or '23 or '24--somewhere along in there.

N: How about surgical techniques in those days? What did you use for anesthetics, for instance?

R: Well, the anesthetic was ether. Sometimes a little chloroform, but chloroform was a hydrocarbon and it affected the liver, just as it does now. So they didn't use much chloroform. Ether was the anesthetic of choice. The margin between seriousness and no danger at all was big and wide. Now with the anesthetics the margin of safety is about like that (spreads fingers apart very slightly). But general practice was about the same.

Thyphoid fever--there was a lot of that. The treatment I had was starvation. They gave us water. When I had typhoid, as I told you, the treatment was far worse than the disease. I was doing a lot of athletics, gymnastic stuff, and I was quite husky--I weighed around 150 to 155 pounds,

but it was muscle. When I could get to a scale after two or three weeks or a little more of that starvation diet treatment, I was less than a hundred pounds. I was skin and bones--I couldn't sit down. But then finally they saw that was a nonsensical sort of a thing, so they started feeding them. They didn't give them lobster salad, of course, but cereals, milk, eggs; and pretty soon scraped beef and things of that sort. There was no need of anybody losing weight unless it was a very severe case.

Smallpox was another thing when I got back here; had quite a lot of that. Those were the three things that we dreaded most: typhoid, pneumonia, and smallpox. Of course, smallpox was being conquered by vaccination; it was dying out then. Nevertheless, we continued seeing cases. They took out the appendix in the same way they do now. They did a gastro-enterostomy the same way they do now.

N: How about delivering babies?

R: Well, they were born the same way they are now! (Laughter) Mostly in homes; I delivered a lot of babies here in homes. Incidentally, we would take care of the mother, pre-natal, and stay in the home. We had to stay there several hours probably, because we had no way of determining when the baby was coming. Lots of times there was no one there. When a baby is born, it's covered with a lot of meconium. Lots of times I bathed the baby, cleaned it all. For that, our big fee was \$25--if you got it.

N: Did most of the doctors in those days have just general practice?

R: Oh, yes. Of course, these TB men were general practitioners--they didn't know surgery. Then there was a urologist here, and that's all he did; in fact, there were a couple of them. They were specialists. But the

surgeons did medical work, the general practitioner did surgery. You had to do everything--set bones. The technique was the same; you had to sterilize the instruments, scrub your hands, put on masks--just the same as they do now. Except now it is advanced--they're doing things that we never thought of back /then/. An old patient would fall back in those days, break a hip, and the treatment was /to/ put them in bed with an extension on the leg to try to pull the bones apart, and these old folks would get pneumonia and die. Now they put a prosthesis in or nail the bone and get them up in two or three days, and they all survive.

There was very little brain surgery then, although we would make a hole in the skull, to a trephine, let a clot out--yes, we did that. But these brain operations, no--like removing brain tumors and all that sort of thing. Heart surgery, of course, was unknown. Pulmonary surgery was--well, they'd take fluid out of a chest. Later, for TB, they started operating, doing a pneumothorax, putting air in to compress the lung, then went to taking out part of the lung. Now it's quite common.

N: So one of your biggest problems was accident victims developing pneumonia later on.

R: Well, there wasn't too much of that. The pneumonia that these old folks developed was hypostatic pneumonia. By that I mean the blood would go to the lower part of the lungs. It was a congestive pneumonia, it wasn't infectious pneumonia; but of course you could get an infection in it. Most of them couldn't survive it.

PAUSE

N: Let's talk about some of your colleagues in the medical profession during the '20s. How about Dr. S.H. Newman? How do you remember Dr. Newman?

R: Well, I remember him very well because he was a class ahead of me at high school. He was interested in medicine there. This Barney Brooks that I spoke about earlier in the game, we would dissect cats, frogs, and things of that sort. Harry Newman--I don't know where he got these cats, but he was a big supplier of cats, for these dissections. This fellow Brooks would dissect them, and we got to know about cats pretty well. Then he went off to the University of Texas--as I say, he was a year ahead of me; I think a year, maybe two--and then I did a lot of work with him when I got back here. I'd give a lot of anesthetics for him, particularly on home deliveries. I forgot what caused his death--he didn't live too long. I remember his father very well; he was a real estate man who lived way down in the Second Ward, and he rode around on a bicycle. He was a newspaperman. Dr. Newman had some sisters. One sister, I remember, died and her grave was in their yard down there. That's about all I know about him. I worked a lot with him.

N: How about Dr. Cathcart? How do you remember him?

R: The first patient I had anything to do with was with Dr. Cathcart. He came here with TB, and he was giving anesthetics, a lot of them. The father of the present Dr. Wayne Lorentzen, Mr. Lorentzen, needed a body cast. I went with Dr. Cathcart out to the Lorentzen home, and in the home put this body cast on the father. Then I did a lot of work with him. In fact, all the X-ray work I had done in El Paso was done by that firm--Catchart, and then Cathcart and Mason. I knew him very well, was with him when he passed away. In those days, X-ray exposure was something to be

avoided, as it is now. They used rubber gloves with lead, and they were terrifically heavy. They had lead aprons on and all that sort of thing. They got a little careless, particularly Dr. Mason. They were doing a fluoroscope, and it was pretty awkward with those heavy gloves, so they threw them on the side, which was bad. Now I don't know if Dr. Cathcart...as I say, he came here with TB and he died out there in his home on Hardaway of aplastic anemia. I don't know if the exposure to X-ray had anything to do with it, but he had pulmonary TB, and he had it in the kidney. Yet he looked pretty well, and he worked hard. He had one daughter, Florence, who is Mrs. Melby now. I wish I could tell you more about Dr. Harry Newman. But I did do a lot of work with him and with Dr. Cathcart.

N: Did you know Dr. Hugh White?

R: I certainly did. Dr. White was another one that came here with TB. He was quite an outdoor man; he spent much time camping. He and his son, Wyndham White, the attorney, would go to Tularosa, to Ruidoso, the Indian reservation, and camp out.

Dr. Hugh White started the Pasteur treatment here, and he made his own Pasteur treatment. You have to inject a rabbit and then in 21 days, I think, remove the rabbit's cord because that's the part that was affected; and make an emulsion of it and titrate it into the proper dosage and inject in into these people who had been bitten by rabid dogs. He had the Pasteur Institute here for a long time. If you want to know more about him, call his son, Wyndham White.

N: I understand that Dr. White was also involved in doing some smallpox work here in El Paso.

- R: /You probably mean Dr. Willis Waite./ He had a laboratory. Incidentally, Dr. Waite was the city bacteriologist in Syracuse, before he came down here, in the Syracuse health department. But he had a laboratory; if he did any work with smallpox, I don't know anything about it. He was here when I came back from /my/ internship and started practicing. In fact, I talked to him about starting. I had intended going up into New Mexico--Las Cruces--and sometimes I still wish I had, because I've always liked Las Cruces. I got a New Mexico license and never used it, because when I took my wife up to look around up there, she said, we'd better go back to El Paso. Waite was here and he had the laboratory--that's all I know about him. If he did any work with smallpox, I don't know what it was.
- N: What was his role in founding the county hospital? Do you know anything about that?
- R: I know the county hospital was here then. He may have founded the laboratory in the county hospital. The first county hospital was that two-story house out there /near/ old Fort Bliss, and Charlie Gaul was the superintendent. He was also a patient of mine later. Then they built the one down the valley, which was obsolete almost from the beginning, but it had to do. I did a lot of heart work with Dr. Worley down there; we had that department. Now, Dr. Waite may have founded the laboratory there. He may have had something to do with the one that preceded the present Thomason General. If he did, it was before I got here. He was the pathologist at the lab down there then.
- N: When were some of the other hospitals here in El Paso founded? Do you remember, for example, the Hotel Dieu?
- R: Hotel Dieu was first built about 1893 or '94. The old building--it was about

half of that. Then they expanded and occupied the whole half block. I think /it was/ 1894. Now, the Providence Hospital belonged to Dr. and Mrs. M. P. Schuster, the father and mother of Dr. Frank Schuster and Dr. Steve Schuster, who passed away. Their father and mother had the old Providence Hospital, which was on Santa Fe and Upson, I guess it was. The present Providence Hospital is the outgrowth of that. The Sun Towers is recent; it was built to take care of overflow from Providence, /particularly/ people who didn't really need hospitalization, just needed some care after an operation or something like that. But it failed as that, so they expanded it into a general hospital.

Now, there was a hospital on Piedras where Sears is, called the Rolston Hospital. That was there when I got back. It was way out in the sticks, even then. It was built by a nurse--I can't think of her name. It was a nice little hospital. She died and the Masons took it over; the Masonic order operated it for a year or two or three. But they found it was too much for them. And the Southwestern General Hospital was originally a tubercular hospital. The tuberculars quit coming here because they found they could be treated at home just as well as anyplace, so the TB sans* were empty. They then turned the Southwestern General into a medical hospital, and the Masonics turned over all their records to the Southwestern. So the Hotel Dieu, the old Providence, and the Rolston were here then. The Newark was here, but that was a maternity hospital, just a small /one/. And the Southwestern was, as I say, a TB san. And now the old Hotel Dieu is gone and they've the new structure and a new addition now.

*sanatorium

N: Your son-in-law told me that during the 1920s you were involved in some sort of a sanitarium. He said up on the mountain, and he didn't know too much about it. What was the story behind that?

R: Well, there's an old tin mine up on the east side of Mount Franklin. There's nothing there now; I think maybe some of the walls are still there. But back /during/ 1920, in those years, the mortality /rate/ among the Mexican babies was high. There was a baby san in Cloudcroft, operated by Dr. Branch Craig, Sr. The people that had money took their babies up there if they got these intestinal diseases, /such as/ enteritis. So somebody got the idea that if they could money enough to rehabilitate the buildings of the old tin mine, they could take the Mexican babies up there for free and treat them. They finally did--they put a roof over the buildings, got some nurses to stay up there, and Dr. Varner and I took care of them. As I recall, we did not have a death.

It was nice and cool up there, even /during/ the hot days /of/ summer. It was about halfway up the slope, about 20 miles up there. It was a terrible time to get there--there were no paved roads, of course. The road just wound around and finally ended up at the old tin mine. /It was/ rough and rocky; we went up in our tin lizzies. We went every day--I'd go one day and Dr. Varner the next. I think on Saturday both of us went. The only milk the babies got down here in South El Paso--they had no refrigeration and it would spoil, and they didn't have the proper food. Well, it was hard to get milk up there, so we used powdered milk. There was a young kid who carried supplies up there. I don't remember about the water, whether it had to be taken up there. I think there was a well still operating there. You know, there are quite a few springs in the

mountains. I think there was a well there--I'm not sure. Our duty was to take care of the babies, and we did.

N: How long did that institution last?

R: Well, it wasn't there the second year. I guess maybe they didn't have enough money or something. I used to tell doctors about that, and they'd say, "Oh, you don't know what you're talking about." Then Ann Carroll took it up in her column in the Herald-Post. She took it up about a year ago and had two or three articles about it. Then in the "Fifty Years Ago" column in the paper there was a little article. I was trying to research it by reading the microfilms. I couldn't remember the year, but on a fifty year old date there was a little article in there about the people gathering money to operated that thing, and it was June 1920. We carried it up into the fall, through June, July, August, September. I think the walls of that old tin mine are still there. Of course, they abandoned the buildings.

N: It was all done through just contributions?

R: Yes, donations to put the roof on so it wouldn't rain on us. But really, it was real pleasant up there. There's some shrubbery in the mountains up there--scrub oak, and things of that sort. But that's what he was talking about, the tin mine baby san.

N: How do you remember the Prohibition period here in El Paso?

R: Well, I'll tell you about my own practice among rum runners. There was a firm of lawyers here in El Paso that had been in school with me that were friends of mine. One of them called me one Sunday morning--I guess it was 3:00--and he said, "A client of ours who is a rum runner was stabbed this morning. One gang tried to beat down the other gang and take their stuff

away from them." He said, "Will you go down and sew him up?" I said, "Gosh, I don't know. How will I get there?" He said, "You take your car and you go down Santa Fe Street, and just beyond the canal there'll be a car there." All this mysterious stuff. "A fellow will get out of the car and he'll sit in your car and watch it. This other fellow will take you down where the rum runner /is/." So I said, "All right, I'll go."

Sure enough, the car was there. He wound around, I'm sure unnecessarily; and to this day I don't know where that house was. I know it was off down towards the river somewhere. Well, this fellow had a few lacerations. I put him on the kitchen table and sutured him up. After I got through, the chief of the gang brought out two bottles of tequila and gave them to me. I was hesitant about it because these prohibition agents were prowling around down there all the time. I thought, "Gosh, if I take those things and get caught, I'm out of luck. /But/ if I don't take them I'm going to offend these people." So I took them, put them in the trunk, and nothing happened. I went back to the car, got my car, and went home. That happened, I'll bet you, fifteen or eighteen times. This chief, he'd ask me how much. I'd say, "Oh, fifteen dollars." And he'd pull out a roll of bills big enough to choke an ox, and pay me. I won't tell you what else he offered me, because you can guess. (Novak laughs) Which I promptly refused!

Finally, gosh, I got one fellow down there, he was horribly cut up. Hijackers were the ones--the rival gangs would hijack /the stuff/, and then they'd get in a fight and get cut up. This fellow was horribly cut. It took me two hours to suture that guy. And I never saw any more of them--they all got well! I got these two bottles of tequila every time, and I

never drank the stuff; and it accumulated there. I never met a prohibition agent. Then I got this fellow sewed up, and he says, "How much?" I said, "That was a big job--\$25." "Okay." He pulled out this money, gave me the two bottles. Finally one morning--this lawyer would always call me /be-cause/ they'd call him--he called me one morning and he said, "Fernando (who was the head of the gang) is in jail, and he's been shot. Would you go down and look at him?" I did--he was down in the county jail. He had been shot through the shoulder, and it was a horrible mess--/they'd/ severed the nerves and the arteries; the arm was blue. I went out and told the jailer, "Gosh, that man's in serious condition. I don't care what he did, whether he murdered somebody, he's a human being and he's entitled to some treatment. Now, you call the sheriff and let me talk to him." Which he did, and they called the United States Marshall. Finally they sent him to the county hospital and he died. That was the end of my rum running practice.

But it was prevalent. As I told you before, this Córdova Island was left down there. All the Mexicans had to do was cross the river and they were still in their own territory. They'd come up and there was nothing to stop them except prohibition agents, and they could just walk across from the Córdova Island onto United States territory. There were a lot of battles down there, particularly at the foot of Eucalyptus Street. Why they picked that out, I don't know. That went on during the entire Prohibition era. But there was no trouble--if you wanted liquor, there was no trouble getting it. People either made it themselves--bathtub gin or they made home brew--or they just had a rum runner. /They'd/ say, "I want four bottles of something," and they'd deliver it to his house.

N: Just place an order and have it delivered..

R: Oh, sure. There was no trouble about it. The prohibition agents, they knew it was going on, but they couldn't catch them. Their main concentration was on bringing it over. During that era I took care of federal prisoners in the county jail. The United States Public Health Service took care of the, but the doctor who was in charge wanted to go on a trip to Europe for a long time--he was going to be gone a year. He asked me if I'd go down there and take care of these prisoners. So I saw all types of them down there--hopheads, goodness knows. Some of them would plead guilty and get a year and a day in Leavenworth or someplace.

They brought up two men one day and I knew the circumstances of this 'cause they had the evidence down in the United States Marshall's office. These two fellows brought over two five-gallon cans of pure alcohol. They hid them along the river bank till it was a good time to bring it over. Some of these hijackers came along and substituted two cans of river water. So these two guys brought over two cans of river water, and they were indicted for importing alcohol. They didn't know it was river water because it was confiscated. I saw them pour the muddy water out of the can. (Chuckles) If they'd only known, there would have been no case, because they didn't bring anything but dirty water. They got a year and a day for bringing muddy water over!

Oh, there were a lot of them. There was one large room in the old federal building where Kress's is now that was was usually knee deep in confiscated bottles of liquor, all kinds. I said to the United States Marshall--he was quite a boozier--"Would you drink any of this stuff?" He said, "I would not!" It was doctored up stuff, made with wood alcohol or

Jamaica ginger or something, and it was toxic. I saw them; they'd take bottles and smash them on the sink, and the bottles of liquor would go down the drain.

Of course, a lot of people objected to Prohibition. Their main objection was that the law could not be enforced. /What they/ caught was probably one-fiftieth of what went by. People objected /to it because/ it was an interference with personal liberty. And morphine prohibition was an interference with personal liberty, and they never said a word about that 'cause they could see the bad effects. I remember one day down in that jail there was a corridor, and then bars, here, and then a corridor where the prisoners were. I just noticed one day--I had to go down there two or three times a week--there was a fellow back there, and I could see he was suffering from withdrawal symptoms. They're terrible--cramps and /a/. About the third or fourth day he came up--I didn't go in unless there was /someone/ very sick. I'd call the jailer and /he'd/ put all the prisoners in /a/ cell, and /he'd/ open the one where this sick prisoner was. There was no danger of being mobbed.

So the third or fourth day this fellow came out and asked me if I had some chlorol hydrate or something. He said, "I think I can whip this." I had some and I gave it to him to help him get over the cramping and to help him sleep. I was suspicious of the guy. Three or four days later, I said, "You're a doctor, aren't you?" He said, "No, I'm not. What makes you think so?" I said, "Don't tell me, I can tell by the way you talk." He finally confessed--he was a prominent surgeon up in Iowa somewhere. I said, "How did you get mixed up with dope?" He said, "Well, I worked hard and I was utterly exhausted at night, but I couldn't sleep. I thought that

maybe a little codeine tablet wouldn't do any harm, and I started taking them. Finally they didn't work, and I got worse and started taking morphine and got addicted to it." I said, "Give me your right name--I'm going to call the narcotics officer." Which he did--and he told me this story. He had disappeared up there, came down here because he couldn't get his morphine up there, and he got caught on his first trip to Juárez. So I called the narcotics officer and he came down and talked to the guy. They telegraphed or called this fellow's home town in Iowa and immediately telegrams from the Elks Lodge, from the mayor, from councilmen, one from the governor of Iowa /came in/. This was a prominent doctor up there, and he had disappeared. They didn't know where he was.

Of course, importation of morphine, of a narcotic, was a serious offense, unless they brought it over for their own use. What they would do was go over to Juárez and get maybe two or three grains of morphine, and come over here and sell half of it for what they had had to pay for the whole thing in Juárez, and that would be their money for the next day. They had all kinds of ways of getting it over. But anyway, the importation of morphine and possession were two separate offenses. This fellow went before the United States federal judge, and he paroled that man to the Elks. It's the only time I ever saw or heard of such a thing. They all got at least a year and a day. Then the doctor went back to Iowa, and I don't know what happened to him. Maybe he stayed cured, but very few of them did.

But they /would suffer/. And the prison inspector would come down here and I'd say, "Look at these fellows. What'll I do with them?" "Cold turkey." Nothing. He came down here once and they had a young lady--I

guess she was eighteen, nineteen, or twenty. She was a prostitute, they had picked her up for narcotic possession. She was suffering, and that prison inspector was there. I said, "I wish you'd come in and look at this girl." "Cold turkey"--and she died. I felt so sorry about that deal because her case was hopeless, true--she was an incurable addict, I know--but it seemed so heartless to let her die there. Well, we got her to the county hospital before she died. I saw she was going to, so I got them to take her down there.