

DATE: May 18, 1998  
TAPE: Tape 13  
INTERVIEWEE: Thomas Scully, M.D.  
INTERVIEWER: Eileen Barker  
PLACE: Dr. Scully's home, 1400 Ferris Lane  
TRANSCRIPTIONIST: Teresa Garrison

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**EB: We are on the second tape, go ahead Dr. Scully.**

TS: So, we were into the fall of 1978, the six chairmen on board, five are in Reno and two co-chairmen in Las Vegas. Students are actually getting in doctors offices and at Washoe and Southern Nevada Memorial. They are actually doing their externships. The chairmen are trying to get residencies started. They are recruiting faculty. My job of course is to try to get these contracts and agreements all signed. There is still a mixture of support along with apathy and some outright hostility and venom in our opposition. As we said earlier I had no idea how many people were involved. We were very vulnerable. Some of the support was very vocal. Many people within the medical community were becoming rather divided. It was not my problem, but they were becoming divided. I always thought it was interesting how frequently attitudes of people changed when one of their children was coming to the medical school. They either remained silent or they disappeared from the public scene or they were cautiously supportive.

**EB: It is human nature and there is such a great deal of that here. I am sure that campaigning on the sidelines and in private you would get all kinds of support.**

TS: Oh sure. I don't know how many times I would be patted on the back coming out of the men's room or coming out of a bar or someplace. You know, you are doing a great job, it is going to be wonderful, but you didn't know what they were really saying. Actually, I have often said, (I am not going to mention some names here because they are not important) I have more respect for physicians who took a stance and stayed with it. That is they were opposed in the beginning and they were always opposed and never changed their tune and they never have changed their tune. They didn't feel a medical school belonged here. I have more respect for them than I have for the ones that went back and forth or would tell me privately that they were supportive and then stab me in the back or stab the school in the back or they were opposed and then all of sudden one of their sons or daughters was accepted in the medical school. You didn't

hear a thing from them. I guess you are right some of that is normal and I am not one to criticize others when we come to these things where people have their own agendas. There was a lot of turmoil. Within the university there were people who were also opposed. It was going to take the food away from them. Physicians were opposed, and hospital administrators and nurses who didn't want to have "dumb" medical students wondering around and wondering what to do with them. It would slow them down. There was no arguing about that. Medical education is slow, if you are going to have medical students around, you have to be prepared to spend time with them. Of course that is the whole justification to find people to spend time with them.

**EB: Lets talk about the strengths that you had when you were dean. Your ability to get people to work for you. A great delegator?**

TS: George was good at that. I always felt that George was a role model, in that sense. Not his personal life, but George would hire people and if he thought that they could do the job he would get out of their way. He never once.....

**EB: He let you go ahead and.....**

TS: Never once did he interfere with the whole conversion. There were other people on the faculty that I guess he felt the need to have more control over.

**EB: He was well liked?**

TS: Yes, George was very well liked.

**EB: From that standpoint, because I knew him and I thought .....**

TS: He was well liked, he was gentle, kind and he wasn't very critical. There were times when you just wanted to shake him and say George tell that person to stop that. He was very tolerant.

**EB: He also always dealt with the problems facing school, almost as if he was not worried about it. I mean that was the feeling that I would get. He must have just had that ability to be sort of laid back.**

TS: Yes, but inside I think that the was tearing up. He smoked all the time. He was a chain smoker. I think that I did learn from him.

**EB: You were a good politician.**

TS: Yes.

**EB: You could get people together.**

TS: Yes, I could get people together. I wasn't terribly threatening.

**EB: You liked the students.**

TS: The first arguments I really had were when these chairmen showing up and some of them were confrontational. We couldn't back out at that point. We were in a different mode. As I said earlier, a two-year school was not very threatening to the medical community. A four-year school was very threatening, especially near the hospitals. George trusted us, he never got in the way. The other problem which many people felt George had was the last person to talk to him before he went to bed at night would have an influence on what he was thinking the next morning. I think that rarely if ever did I make a decision until I slept on it over night and often discussed it with Celia who has been my friend since the third grade. We have known each other for years. I always trusted her judgment and she is in many ways.....

**EB: She has good instinct.**

TS: Very good instincts. She is a very good judge of character. She can spot a phony a mile away. She was very helpful to me although she never told me what to do. I almost always wouldn't commit to something the night before. Someone would come into my office at five o'clock and want me to do something, I would say well I am going to think about it. I know what your arguments are and we will talk about it in the morning. I often said I would sleep on it and what would often happen is I would loose sleep. I would get nowhere. I wouldn't sleep all night long. I would be tossing and turning and Celia would say what is going on.

**EB: What about the financial?**

TS: I think that my other strength at that time was I was a very good organizer. Bud Baldwin use to say that he wasn't sure I was a very good dean, but I was one of the best second in commands that he had ever known. Because I did pretty well with math and I knew a lot about teaching and I knew a lot about students and I was good at dollars and cents. I could get things on paper. George had a wonderful imagination and he could dream up all sorts of things, but he couldn't put things to paper too well. I have always been able to put things on paper and Celia who was always the professional writer has always been helpful about looking at things and saying, what are you saying here, this doesn't make sense. George wrote the original medical school feasibility study.

I think that I would say my weaknesses were I trusted people and took them at their word. I expected that when someone said they were going to do something or when they patted me on the back that they meant it or said they would be supportive they would be, or they would take students and they then they wouldn't. I think that I trusted several other people at Washoe

Medical Center. I trusted Carroll Ogren's word, but it turned out that he couldn't deliver on what he thought was good. He and I have talked about it since. It was up to the board and the board, which had several physicians on it, wanted to be sure that the medical staff was going to be supportive. The last thing a Board of Trustees wants is for its physicians to fly the coop.

**EB: They couldn't \_\_\_\_\_?**

TS: We also have to remember that at that time Washoe and Saint Mary's were fighting back and forth. They had for years before and they have since. So, there was always this fear that if you cross too many of your medical staff and they go across town, all of sudden their patients have gone with them. There was always that anxiety both at Saint Mary's and Washoe.

**EB: The physicians always united in Reno in those days. They reminded me an awful lot of children of divorced parents. The analogy being that if you don't do it for me, I will go to my mother and she'll do it for me. So, you get the father who is frightened of this and the child knows exactly how to play and deceive, because the staffs would do that. When I was in administration at Saint Mary's it was as simple as you get the space and equipment for me, Washoe said they would. Well we were scared to death.**

TS: I would agree and I heard many physicians and administrators in those days use the word blackmail. It is blackmail. They will leave us and take their patients elsewhere. So, that argument took place numerous times.

**EB: Some did leave. Some doctors even put ads in the paper. Do you remember those days.**

TS: I can give you three specific examples; one was the development of the emergency rooms; starting at Washoe, Saint Mary's wanted one the next day, then they fought over the air plane or the helicopter, then they fought over the coronary care units, they fought over OB and then they fought over the neonatal intensive care unit. Who is going to have that. Who is going to have Remsa. Many of those turned out to be compromises. The medical school unwittingly, and I representing the medical school, was in the middle of some of that as well. The Boards and the administrators, wanting at one moment to have medical education with the residents, students and being able to say we are a true medical center and to hold their head up for a medical institution, and in the next moment saying if we get too cozy with the medical school and those new doctors that they bring in, we may lose some of our staff. I am absolutely convinced that was a big part of it. I was too naive. So, another one of my weaknesses I would say was naiveté. I

did not understand, George was gone, and Joe Crowley was new and didn't understand. Ernie Mazzaferri, Burt Dudding and Ira Pauly, they understood some of this, because they had been through some of these battles at the schools from which they came. Merle Haber understood some of this. Merle was fighting with Andy Sohn and his group and fighting with the VA for a while. There was also the issues of power.

**EB: Territory.**

TS: Territory, control, who was going to run these things. So, I would say that my biggest weakness at this stage was naiveté and what I think was part of that, trusting people, when they told me something that they meant it. I don't know that I ever reneged on my word. Maybe I can be accused of that, but I was careful not to say something that I didn't think I could get. By the same token a lot of what I was selling was a dream. There was very little substance. Now, I also felt that was one of my strengths, I always remember getting some good advice. I think it was from Max Milan, who left or (was fired). He said don't be afraid to hire people who are smarter and more talented and more experienced than you. Because if they turn out to be that then you can let them run with the ball and you look good. I also remember, and I have used this many times, John Kennedy's famous quote, actually, he had stolen it, I looked it up once and Count Ciani, who was Mussolini's deputy and foreign minister, had said it sometime during the forties, "victory has a hundred fathers and defeat is an orphan." When something was successful everybody claims credit, if something went wrong, the boss takes the blame. So, I would say that those are some of my strengths and weaknesses, but it is probably very risky to try to evaluate yourself. Looking back at it, I think that it succeeded on that basis. I think the naïveté, I didn't realize that I was involved in icy wars among physicians, between groups of physicians, between hospitals, between north and south. I knew about the north and south, that one was an obvious one. The legislature personified that. Those were some of the problems.

We are now into the spring of 1979, our first class of juniors is finishing up. The residencies are all ready to start. The three chairmen I brought in, medicine, family practice and internal medicine, all got residencies started by the next July (1979) and were prepared to keep some of our students the following year in 1980. Of course we all ready had the one in OB. There was no movement to start surgery or psychiatry. That came later during Bob Daughtery's tenure, we will get to that. Finally, Washoe Medical Center said yes, we can have residents here. But, you are

going to have to pay the salaries; that has since changed. There was a lot of..... The VA said we can have them here. The VA would pay some of their salaries.

I am exhausted, it is now, July of 1979 and I have been going at this for two and one half years. I am very tired. I am not sleeping, my blood pressure was going up, I am depressed. Ernie Mazzaferri had all ready hired a couple of people. He hired a nephrologist and I went to Ernie, (I tell this story in our book.) I went to see Ernie as a physician. I said, "Ernie, there is something more, I am just not feeling good, I can't sleep, I am not eating, I losing weight and my blood pressure is going up." Initially, everyone would say you are just working too hard, you need a little vacation, you have been under a lot of pressure, you have been at this for two and one half years, it is slowly succeeding. Although, for every two steps forward there is a step back. So, Ernie examined me and said, "I don't know, there may be more to this." So, he started doing some tests. I saw him several times. He came over to the house in late June or early July of 1979, sat in that living room out there, and said, "I have a couple of articles for you to read. I think that you have hyperparathyroidism, you have all of the classic symptoms, and here is the lab stuff to prove it." My calcium was elevated, PTH (parathyroid hormone) was elevated. He wanted me to go down and see Claude Arnoy in San Francisco who really at that time was sort of the guru of hyperparathyroidism. He had done all of the original studies in the lab and he also wanted me to see Orlo Clark who is on the faculty of surgery at University of California at San Francisco. One of the premier neck surgeons in the world. He had done hundreds of parathyroidectomies. I said, "Yes, okay."

**EB: What happened to this point?**

TS: Nothing, that I recognized. Looking back over the previous year, there was a combination of working hard, but also all these symptoms happened slowly and I was ignoring them.

**EB: You would think that just being exhausted.**

TS: Yes, I ignored them. Like many people I was in denial. As a physician, who denies even stronger than anybody else, finally Celia said, "You have to go see Ernie." Ernie had been here just about a year now. He said, "I want you to go down and see them. This is what I think you have." I did, they confirmed with several more studies. I wanted to take Celia to Spain, we had gone the summer of 1977, I want to go and just have a vacation and relax and then I will go for surgery when I come back. So, Celia and I went on our own. We just got on a plane, we had been



there in 1977, we went in 1979. We got in a car and we just wondered around, saw friends, slept late, ate whatever we wanted and had a good time. When we came back.....

**EB: Tell me about Spain at that point, I am curious about that. By then the politics had changed.**

TS: Oh yes, Franco was dead. The socialist government was in. The King was Juan Carlos. We now know that Juan Carlos has been very positive for democracy. A recent article in New York which outlines and reviews how he was very supportive of democracy and still supports democracy. When we got there it was still very safe, you still saw the Guardia Civil on the streets. We never worried about walking the streets at night. This was twenty years ago now, 1979.

**EB: Things had improved?**

TS: Yes, but still lots of poverty. Still things were fairly inexpensive. You could still have a marvelous vacation for a lot less than going to London or Paris. Of course, we had relatives and friends all over the place. Celia, of course, speaks the language. It was very good and we had a very nice vacation. I came back went down to UC San Francisco and laid down and Orlo Clark explored my neck and of course the pathology proved what I had. My calcium had of course dropped. I came home.

**EB: What was the diagnosis.**

TS: Hyperparathyroidism. I had a subtotal parathyroidectomy. They didn't take everything out. What they did in those days and they still do was put some silver clips in the neck so if they go back in the second time. He took three and one half of the glands out or three and left one in, I have forgotten the exact details. That was in September 1979.

**EB: Were you feeling any better?**

TS: No. I didn't. It was then that I began to realize that hyperparathyroidism was a chronic disease and it had all ready begun effecting my kidneys. I already had kidney disease. They told me that. They didn't know how long that would take. They controlled my blood pressure, but it was not dramatic like taking out your appendix, or like a lot of other things in medicine where you use the appropriate surgery or medicine and there is a dramatic change. I came back and for about three to four weeks, maybe a month I was still exhausted. I was all ready starting to show the effects of renal disease.

**EB: Doesn't something like that, is there a medication that supplements the body?**

TS: No. I was taking vitamin D and extra calcium, pills for my blood pressure.

**EB: It was just sort of chronic at this point?**

TS: Yes, of course physicians and surgeons don't like to take out all of your parathyroid, because if you have no parathyroid it becomes very hard to maintain enough calcium in your blood stream. Because the parathyroid is very involved in the way your intestines absorb calcium from your diet, how it mobilizes calcium from your bone and how it excretes calcium in your kidneys. It is a very complex mechanism. So, most surgeons try to leave some parathyroid in. Well, he did and that eventually hypertrophied and got hyperplastic again and seven years later I went down again to San Francisco. Orlo Clark went back in 1986, seven years later, and took out the rest of the parathyroid and implanted a small part of it in my arm. So, I have parathyroid right here in my arm. That is the only parathyroid I have. I have nothing in my neck. The reason that he did that after the second surgery. He doesn't want to go back in and end up with a bunch of scar and never be able to get in a third time.

**EB: That is where it is?**

TS: It is right in here in my left arm. So, I have my parathyroid here. I got back from surgery in 1979 and I just simply am not recovering. Ernie and the people from San Francisco felt that I probably had this disease slowly processing over three to four years. It is not like a cancer coming on. It had been going on for a long time. I had just been working day and night which was in its own way exhilarating and also in its own way fatiguing and so I came back. I don't know, it was weeks before I tried to go back to work. I would be there a couple of hours and I couldn't concentrate. I finally sat down one night with Fred Anderson, (I talked to Ernie first) I said, "Fred, I just can't continue to do this job." He called up Ernie and he came over and at that time was my assistant. So, I talked to them and said I am going to see Joe Crowley tomorrow. I met Joe for breakfast down at the Gold and Silver and told him that the school was in a critical point. We now had juniors and seniors, who were going to graduate the next spring. We had a new chairmen and new faculty. Residents had just begun. This school needed leadership and a full-time dean being not a sick man. So, I resigned. He accepted that.

**EB: You resigned as of?**

TS: That would probably have been in early October 1979.

**EB: This was your parathyroid surgery?**

TS: Yes.



**EB: When was your surgery?**

TS: The surgery was in September of 1979, I resigned in October. I just didn't recover.

**EB: Did you not get any symptoms, urinary ?**

TS: Oh sure. I was getting up several times at night.

**EB: You were having some symptoms?**

TS: Oh sure.

**EB: You were ignoring them?**

TS: Yes. Until finally I laid down and maybe part of me was just finally saying I can't do it anymore. I had the surgery. Celia was wonderful. She said, ". Your health is more important than the job." A year earlier I think that I would have kept going, but .....

**EB: You might have had a stroke with your blood pressure going up?**

TS: Yes, well, but the point was, at that point, I knew we had five good chairmen because, at that point, Bob Fulton left and we were recruiting Ralph DePalma. Ralph came actually a little bit later, after I resigned. I actually started recruiting him that summer. I knew we had good people. The juniors had done well. They were now into their senior year, the residents were coming on the scene and news faculty were showing up. Burt was recruiting people, so was Ernie and Ira Pauly. I guess down in my heart I wasn't afraid the school wasn't going to survive. I was comfortable the school would survive. We had been over the worst hump, and we were going to survive. I had been through another legislature in 1979 to fight for all the budget. So, I had done all of that and the school had gotten approval of our budget. I had stuck to my word. The projections I had made in 1977 of what it was going to cost over the next eight years held through at least until 1979 and they actually held true through 1983.

**EB: They treated you well in the legislature?**

TS: That year they treated me well. We got our budget. I didn't know I was going to be gone a few months later. I resigned and that afternoon Joe Crowley called a general faculty meeting, the Manville Auditorium was full. We had a lot of physicians by then. Joe announced my resignation and said that he would meet with all the chairmen within the next week and decide on an acting dean and start a national search. Now, we could have a national search, we couldn't back when I became dean because there wasn't time. Joe asked me what was my recommendation and I said there is only one and that is to appoint Ernie Mazzaferri. He was the only one with the stature among the faculty, accepted by everybody and nationally known. He had been the acting

chairman of the one of the biggest departments at Ohio State. He had been through a battle back there on faculty practice plans and all of the other people accepted him. We would have executive meetings of just the chairmen virtually every week.

**EB: Ernie Mazzaferri was chairman of ?**

TS: Medicine. We were having meetings in the conference room of what is now the office of admissions. We met there almost every week, because so many things were happening. The school did not depend on me. The school was not going to fall or make it on me. It was going to make it on the basis of these six chairmen, their faculty, and their clinical programs. I knew that and I knew I had to give them as much freedom as possible. So, maybe one of my strengths was I didn't sit around and try to manage their departments. I didn't try to do any micromanagement. I said, "Look that is all the money we got, you do it. You need to do it any way you can." Watching that whole thing I knew how they related to one another, which made it clear that Ernie Mazzaferri commanded the respect of all of the other people around the table. So, when Joe asked me who do you recommend, I said "I think you have one choice Ernie Mazzaferri, but you do want to talk to the chairs." I think, I wasn't in those meetings, I excused myself over the next couple of days when Joe met with all of these people. He must have heard the same message. So, he then, shortly after I resigned, appointed Ernie acting dean. Ernie said publicly and told me privately he would take the job, but they must start a national search. It was not his ambition to be dean. He wanted to be chairman of medicine. Besides he did not want to be the dean and have to go to the legislature in another year and one half in January 1981. Joe would have to get a dean by then, because Ernie didn't like that politicking and he didn't want to deal with the legislature. He wanted to teach and do research and be the chairman. Joe apparently made that agreement with him. I wasn't in the room and I didn't see anything in writing, but that is what ultimately happened. Ernie took over and served as the acting dean for the next about fifteen months, from something like October of 1979 through the first graduation (Ernie was the dean at the first graduation hooding).

**EB: That must have been a bittersweet time for you?**

TS: Yes, it was. That was bittersweet. Bittersweet is a good word. It would have been a wonderful thing, ego thing I guess to be the dean, at that point. The more important thing was we had succeeded. That was where the real pleasure came from—the first MDs..

**EB: The first graduation would have been in?**