

DATE: January 21, 1999
TAPE: Tape 19
INTERVIEWEE: Thomas Scully, M.D.
INTERVIEWER: Eileen Barker
PLACE: Dr. Scully's home 1400 Ferris Lane
TRANSCRIPTIONIST: Dianne Fernandez

EB: Today is January 21, 1999, this is Eileen Barker interviewing Dr. Scully. Dr. Scully we have your schematics that you gave me. You said that you were going to give me some additional data in each section.

TS: Do you want data or stories?

EB: Stories would be wonderful. I see an interesting thing here about a rattlesnake.

TS: Why don't we have through it chronically? Do you want to do it that way?

EB: You have the same thing that I have.

TS: Yes, I do. Which tapes to add to I don't know?

EB: It won't matter, we will fit them in, as long as we have dates.

TS: Why don't we just start at the top. If I have told some of these stories I apologize, because I haven't gone back and checked, but starting at the top in the first story, that I think I have told was after Pearl Harbor, when my father (he was a vet from WWI) was so angry with the Japanese bombing Pearl Harbor that when he was putting up the Christmas tree and was going through the light bulbs, he would put something on the tree, if it said "made in Japan", he would throw it on the ground, stamp and break it. So, much of the Christmas tree decorations which were made in Japan, were destroyed. That

Christmas we had a Christmas tree with not very much in the way of decorations. That was my memory of Pearl Harbor, because I was only about nine years old at the time. That was my memory of that Christmas.

EB: Did you have any Japanese living in New Rochelle that you knew of?

TS: There was one family, a friend of my future mother-in-law. Celia's mother had gone to High School, the old New Rochelle High School that you had mentioned before in Massoth.

EB: The one with the two lakes?

TS: She had gone to the old High School, Albert Leonard even before the Twin Lakes location, with a young woman whose father was in the Import – Export business. They were Japanese. They lived very close to where Celia was raised and they were very lovely people. Of course, after the time of Pearl Harbor, there was a lot of hard feelings. But, frankly I don't recall any children of Japanese descent. I do remember several kids who were of German descent, whose father's lived in New Rochelle and worked for one or another German firm in New York, I can remember some very mean kids and probably I contributed to it, teasing one of these young fellas. We use to call him a Nazi and a kraut and there was all this other stuff. The poor kid was our age, eight or nine. He knew nothing about what was going on. There was that kind of reaction, as you recall yourself, we would go to the movies and cheer when the Japanese or Germans were killed in a war movie. There were a lot of anti-Japanese. Nothing like here on the West Coast. There on the East Coast there was mostly anger towards the Germans.

EB: You weren't in a big city.

TS: No we weren't.

EB: In New York City it was probably a lot worse. There would have been German kids in school, because of the catholic.

TS: Oh sure.

EB: Were all the kids in your parochial school all Catholic.

TS: I am sure virtually everyone was. They probably aren't now. But, in those days I think that the only way your kids could go to you parochial school was if your family was parishioners and put their money in the collection plates. Remember we talked about this?

EB: Yes.

TS: We talk a little bit about the dancing class. The war was over now in 1945 and Celia and I were in seventh grade.

EB: Your father had already died?

TS: Yes. He had.

EB: What did he do during the war? Was he still selling?

TS: Yes, but he business went belly-up. He was selling automotive parts, and of course no one had an automobile and very few people had cars and gas. The gas was rationed. So, as I recall, my father's business which was a private business as an agent for an automotive company was built. I remember at the time just before he died, (he always loved to play golf, and as I told you before he had been a golf champion at several country clubs, the Rye Country Club as well as the Dutchess County golf club. He had to give up his membership to the club, I think for the first time in years he played at a public course when it was open. I am sure there are other things we gave up as a family, simply because he didn't have the money. I think that he was proud and I am sure, as well, my

mother. As I recall they protected us (at least the younger ones) from a lot of that. We were never told explicitly that times were bad. Times were bad for everybody during the war. The other thing that I should have mentioned was that my father and all of the neighbor men (about five different neighbors) started a victory garden during the war. There was a big empty lot, I would say no more than a couple of hundred yards from where we lived. Somehow my father and four or five other neighborhood men got a temporary lease, this was probably done by lots of people, on this empty lot and I can recall as a kid (and my brothers recall it), going over with my father and the other men and boys in the neighborhood and digging up several acres of land and planting all sorts of vegetables, beans, carrots, peas and stuff that would grow in a victory garden. Then my mother in the basement of our house, which was a fairly good size home as I recall, she and the neighbor ladies would can this stuff. My mother had been raised on a farm and she apparently knew how to can things. This was during the summer of 1942 and 1943 while the war was at its peak and before my father's death. There were several summers of this victory garden. Every night after dinner we would all pick up our shovels or whatever and go over there and my father (and my mother for that matter) and some of the neighbor men who had also been raised on farms taught us how to go through pulling the weeds and that sort of thing. Frankly, my knowledge of farming is limited to that few years of the victory garden.

Then the war is over and my father dead and the parents and people at the school said that it was about time these rowdy boys and girls learned how to dance. They started dancing class at the Women's Club. The woman, who started it with her husband, later was influential in getting me a scholarship to Colgate, because he had been an all

American football player at Colgate in the 1930's. Anyway, we went to dancing class and that was where you could legitimately hold a girl's hand and put your hand on her waist and she could take your arm and you would go through the line and you would learn how to curtsy and bow and that sort of thing. That was sort of the beginning of my serious interest in Celia Geofhegan, my future wife. Primarily because by the seventh and eighth grade you are beginning to mature a little bit and you begin to look at girls in a different way. So, dancing class at the Women's Club on Lockwood Avenue was important.

EB: And the sisters approved of this?

TS: I don't know that they approved, but they didn't disapprove. I don't know that the priest or anybody else really cared. It was a legitimate activity on Friday and Saturday evenings; it kept kids off the street. You had to dress up. The boys had to have white gloves and a jacket and the girls wore long dresses. We had sign up cards. This was a very fancy sort of thing. I am sure it discriminated against some of the poorer kids in the class who either couldn't afford the tuition \$5.00 or \$2.00 a night, I have no idea what it was, but you did have to get dressed up and you did have to have a shirt and tie on and your shoes shined. There was also teaching the boys and the girls, social etiquette and how to dress.

The next story you see there after that, which was, when I was in about the seventh grade, a friend in the neighborhood who was few years older, had a job at Howard Johnsons in New Rochelle working as a bus boy. He got sick; I have forgotten all of the details. He called me one day and asked if I would go down to substitute for him at Howard Johnsons. I said yes I would. I went down and it was a hard. I worked very hard. Mr. Walker who was the manager was very nice to me and liked my work. After about

two or three days or maybe the second or third weekend I was there, he called me and said, "Tommy I have to let you go because you are not old enough" and the child labor department came by and in those days you had to be I think fourteen to get a work permit. You had to go down to the City Hall to some employment office to prove that you were more than fourteen. Well, I wasn't. So, the poor man felt so badly about it, since we had needed the money, that he invited my mother who now was a widow, to come to a luncheon. She went down there and he explained how sad he was to have to let me go. As it turned out the following year when I turned fourteen, he hired me back and I did end up working there for several years.

EB: Howard Johnsons is a restaurant as opposed to hotel, motel?

TS: Yes. In the east remember the old Howard Johnsons' use to be on the highways and they...

EB: They started as restaurants.

TS: Absolutely, in Boston I think. Anyway, that is where I worked. After I had my fourteenth birthday the next year, I went and worked for him and I must have put on twenty or thirty pounds, before starting high school, because they let you eat three meals a day and ice cream and leftovers.

EB: Remember the fried clams?

TS: The fried clams and the hot dogs that had the very unique hot dog roll. They weren't a typical roll. They were sort of a piece of bread cut down the middle.

EB: So, you weren't hurting any?

TS: As a matter of fact, it turned out to be helpful later when I got to College, because that is where Mr. Walker let me learn to be a short order cook. So, I went very quickly

from being a bus boy to being a soda jerk and then he said why don't you learn how to scramble eggs, cook hot dogs and make hamburgers. In those days a young kid learning how to be a cook, that was important to me. That was the story about my first job at Howard Johnsons, where I obviously got paid. I had been a paperboy for several years before that. As I told you earlier I sold Christmas wreaths and done a number of other things. That was all cash and carry. This was actual paycheck. As a matter of fact I was thinking of that the other day because the first withholding for "Social Security" which showed up on my report when I retired was Howard Johnsons.

EB: Oh my.

TS: Actually, the federal government has a record of me working there because it was my first withholding and an actual check with income tax. That was the busboy story at Howard Johnsons.

The next story I did tell you a part of it. When I was in Iona Prep with the Christian Brothers, when one of the older brothers who actually was born in Ireland so he was a true Irish Christian Brother as many of the others were not Irish. He had this leather strap that he used to, remember he used to frighten us with. I didn't know if I told this story about a couple of my classmates who somehow got a hold of the strap and

EB: Cut it up.....

TS: Cut it up into pieces. He was the guy who used to say and I think that he must have told everybody when we were acting up. I don't think that this is a story unique to me. Because I know that my older brothers tell the same story. He used to say with an Irish accent, "you are a wart on the arm of society. You are dead wood on the branches of progress". The next little story I tell there is how...

EB: You like him then?

TS: Oh yes. He didn't bother me and he was never mean to me. He taught Latin. I think I took Latin from him and I think I took one of the math courses, Geometry. He use to go to the board with chalk and draw these circles and angles and things.

EB: Did you have any other language in Prep school?

TS: Yes. I showed that over here in 1947, 1948, Brother Lopez was our Spanish teacher. He was a young fellow from New York.

EB: You did take Spanish?

TS: Yes. I took Spanish. That was the language I took. As I told you earlier, a lot of this was Prep stuff. In the Glee Club, (I hadn't told you before), I was the soloist in the Glee Club for two years and in several of the concerts I have a record of that if you want to see it. I had done a lot of singing and the Glee Club and a lot of solo work which held me in good stead later when I got to Colgate and was involved with the "Colgate Thirteen".

EB: So, you weren't working during High School were you?

TS: I would work on the weekends as a bus boy at Howard Johnsons.

EB: Still at Howard Johnsons?

TS: At Christmas and summer and then finally, I think when I was just a junior I started working at the Badger Day Camp which I then did for a number of summers.

EB: That was in the summer? After school you were pretty much on your own?

TS: Yes. Most of these S's mean summer. Occasionally I would do weekend work and mostly during the holidays, Christmas or Easter, that sort of thing. I participated in Football and baseball, and I was able to be very active in those things. I was active in Debate and the Glee Club.

Anyway in the summer of 1949 between my junior and senior year in high school the American Legion, which they have all over the country had what they called New York Boys State. It happened that year to be held at Colgate. It would be held around the state at various universities. This was held at Colgate. I had never heard of Colgate at the time, I went to the interview process with a bunch of other kids from town. All of the different high schools would send kids over to the American Legion and they gave us a dinner and interviewed us about our future and what we wanted to do when we grew up and that sort of thing. I was selected to represent the New Rochelle American Legion post at Colgate. So, that summer of my junior year (the summer of 1949), I went to Colgate and spent a couple of weeks there, participated in this Boys State which was suppose to teach us about politics, government, and all of that. That was really what triggered my interest in going there to that university. Only subsequently or maybe simultaneously, I heard from Celia that her uncle had graduated from Colgate. It was he who later helped me get a scholarship. I did tell you the story of the transcript. The principal of Iona didn't want to send my transcript to a nonsectarian college. So that is what that refers to. So, anyway I get to the University and I get out of Iona and get to Colgate and there are a number of things I have already told you. I went there on scholarships. I told you the story of failing the German exam before going to Alaska.

EB: That dreaded German class. Who is Dr. Kovack?

TS: No, Dr. Kovack, I wrote his name down because he was one of my early mentors. He was my professor of Chemistry as a freshman. Later Dr. Charlie Foster was my professor of biology and premed advisor. But, Kovack I think was one of the first professors I had ever met in the University who was very encouraging. I was not a good

chemistry student. I was good enough to get into medical school. He was very very nice. We to this day Celia and I still hear from him and his wife every Christmas, because the first year I was at Colgate, Celia and I were dating, we dated all through high school, She came up for the first Winter Carnival as freshmen and stayed at his house. He and his wife, they had a little kid at the time, they have several now, they really liked Celia very much and so since that time without fail every Christmas we correspond. They have seen us grow up for forty years we have watched their children grow.

EB: Where do they live?

TS: They live in Chevy-Chase Maryland. I would have to say he was one of my mentors early in college. He was very encouraging.

EB: By doctor he was a

TS: He was a Ph.D. in chemistry. Then that summer, the summer school, as I told you we had to go to summer school the first year because the Korean War had started, and I and other members of my class, joined the Air Force R.O.T.C. In order to do that we had to go to summer school to make up the classes and the time which had been given over to R.O.T.C., because we had to march and take military courses like that.

EB: You wouldn't have been drafted would you?

TS: I don't know, probably. Although, I think that that was the anxiety. I was old enough. I think that was the anxiety that everyone had. I remember lots of people joining. I don't know that I would say that we were draft dodgers, but when the Korean War broke out, the dean and the president of the University got everybody together in the Colgate chapel and said we are going to start a R.O.T.C. chapter and anyone who wants to join make a decision in the next thirty days and you will have to come to summer school to make up

the difference. I think my intention was clear, I didn't want to have to drop out of school, and it was hard enough to get to college in the first place. I didn't want to lose my scholarships. I don't think it had anything to do with loyalty or the idea of going in the service.

EB: What was the mental set among people your age who might have to go fight this war? It wasn't the same as during what occurred during the Vietnam War was it?

TS: No, it was

EB: It wasn't as patriotic as the.....

TS: The Second World War, with my older brothers, no. I would say that it was somewhere in-between. It wasn't the patriotism of fighting the Japanese or the Germans of the WWII where everyone went to volunteer. If you didn't volunteer or at least make an attempt to get in somehow you were considered unpatriotic as opposed to the severe objection to the Vietnam War. It was in-between. It was sort of is this a police action, it is not our war, why should I ruin my life to go?

EB: Not the massive protests?

TS: No, and there were enough volunteers. Is

EB: Flag burning and all of that ?

TS: There was a kid from New Rochelle, (he actually went to New Rochelle High School), but he was my age that I knew who went over there and was killed. It was the first time I personally ever knew of anyone my age who was killed in war.

EB: You didn't want to drop out of school?

TS: I don't know; my cowardly instinct must have been I don't want to drop out of school, but I also didn't want to go and fight in a war and get killed. I don't think that

I've thought of those things, in forty years. Certainly we took R.O.T.C. seriously, we were told that when college was over, if the war was still on, or even if the war wasn't on we would have a military obligation, so it wasn't avoiding the military per say, but it was more, "I don't want to drop out of school as a freshman in college. I may never get back here again". I think that it was sort of a mixed sort of thing. The following year

EB: Dr. Muntz?

TS: He was the German professor who taught me in German class.

EB: What was his first name? The same with Kovack, what is his first name?

TS: George Kovack, I don't remember Dr. Muntz. I am not even sure I spelled his name right. He was a nice fellow and I am sure he was doing his best to teach us German. I do remember I learned a lot of German history, culture and sociology. I just didn't learn the language and I hated it. As I told you earlier I flunked the exam.

EB: That was your one F?

TS: Yes, one and only F. It put all of my scholarships in jeopardy and because of that I busted by tail when I got back from Alaska and ended up getting all A's, as junior, that probably got me into medical school.

I did point out that I did not drive a car in high school. We didn't own a car. My mother didn't own a car. When we would go out on dates, we would usually double date with someone else, or Celia would drive, because she had her father's car. So, when my roommate and I got this job in Alaska after getting out of school in the summer of our second year. We took off from New Rochelle and got down to Pennsylvania with him driving his car, (or his father's car). We got on the Pennsylvania turnpike and went through the first toll booth when he pulled over to the side of the road and said, "change

places, I am going to teach you how to drive”. So, I learned how to drive going down the Pennsylvania turnpike at 50, 60 and 70 mph. The first toll booth I got to, I got up to the tollbooth and paid the money and stalled going out of the booth. In those days cars weren’t automatic. It was all stick shift. I stalled and bumped and I am sure the guy in the toll booth must of looked and said what is going on. I literally, never drove a car before, I got my license. Celia helped me get my license before I took off. Wally Weissinger was his name, he later became one of the vice presidents in New York Life Insurance.

EB: His name was Wally?

TS: Wally Weissinger. I’ll look it up. He taught me how to drive on the Pennsylvania turnpike and we drove five thousand four hundred miles in six days. We got to Valdez where they had that terrible oil spill later. Anyway, then coming back, we did not drive the car back down the Alcan Highway. No one thought his car could make it. So, we put it on a barge and sent his car from Valdez to Seattle and we flew from Anchorage to Seattle, picked up the car and drove back to New York. That was the first time I had ever been on an airplane. That was my first air plane ride flying from Anchorage to Seattle on our way back from Alaska (summer of ’52)

EB: You didn’t want to drive on the Alcan Highway.

TS: It was all dirt, gravel. It was a couple thousand miles of gravel, from Edmonton all the way to where we were working. As a matter of fact, much of what we did that summer (and several summers before and several summers later), hundreds of college kids living in barracks driving gravel trucks, because they were paving the Alcan Highway from the Alaskan-Canadian border to Fairbanks, to Anchorage and to Valdez. They were just beginning, it was only a couple of years after the war. They were

beginning to pave what had been a dirt road. Much of the road from Edmonton all the way to Hope Junction was gravel so you would drive for miles and miles and all you heard was rocks and gravel kicking up. We actually put a hole in the gas tank of his car. We had to stop in some little roadside place and this guy showed us how to fill up the hole in the gas tank with brown naphtha soap, which wouldn't dissolve in gas. We went all the rest of the way on our trip with a plug of soap in the hole of the gas tank. Anyway, those are some of the interesting little experiences I had.

Probably the most significant experience, other than school and getting into medical school, that I had Colgate, was being in the Colgate Thirteen, which I mentioned to you. A singing group.

EB: That is when you went out to California?

TS: Right, we went to the Bahamas and all over the country. In my senior year I was the leader. I think that I did tell you about the medical school interview when the guy asked me about the German, did I tell you that story?

EB: Why you.....

TS: I thought for sure, that I was not going to get into medical school over that one.

EB: He acknowledged that it was probably bad advice.

TS: Yes, and they somehow saw the rest of my record and so he and the committee or whoever in those days (they didn't tell you anything, you just walked out of the room).

But, I got my letter a few weeks later saying I was accepted. So, obviously, the explanation that I gave them made sense or he felt that it was a meaningless event because they generally didn't like to let people into medical school with an F on their record.

EB: You must have learned a little German? Have you ever used it?

TS: No. I can say “Guten morgen”. I remember when Kennedy said, “Ich bein ein Berliner”. I knew what that meant, but I don’t think I knew much else.

EB: It sounds as if you boycotted it after that?

TS: Yes.

EB: You didn’t need it in Spain?

TS: No. I did graduate from the R.O.T.C. as a distinguished medical graduate, which I had forgotten and that I think.....

EB: You didn’t tell me that.

TS: That is what the DMG means. I think that helped me later in my junior year in medical school getting accepted into the Air Force Medical student Program. I worked my way up in those four years, because I stayed in R.O.T.C. for four years in college. I did my Saturday afternoon marching and I marched in some parades and they sent us one summer to an Air Force base so we could actually see what an airplane looked like. So, I had done a good job there. There were several of us, I wasn’t the only one. I think graduating with a certificate as a distinguished medical graduate helped several years later when I wanted to get married and I applied for the medical student program.

Anyway, the last story about Colgate, which I think that we mentioned before is: I had worked my way through, I had gotten tuition scholarships, but I got my room and board by working in the Fraternity house. I did everything from making breakfast, making beds, to washing dishes and that sort of stuff. What I didn’t tell you was that the room and board that we got, the food was identical to what everybody else had, but the room was down in the basement of the Fraternity house and it use to be called “the mole hole”.