

DATE: January 21, 1999
TAPE: Tape 20
INTERVIEWEE: Thomas Scully, M.D.
INTERVIEWER: Eileen Barker
PLACE: DR. Scully's home, 1400 Ferris Lane
TRANSCRIPTIONIST: Dianne Fernandez

EB: This is side three well actually side one of the second tapes. Continuing with Dr. Scully on January 21, 1999.

TS: I was saying that the Cuban missile crisis was on as Celia was about to deliver Marty our fourth child and they told us to be ready to evacuate. Well, as I said, that was silly. Where are we going to go? Get in a car or bus and leave. Well, Celia said, "I'm not going anywhere." Because Gary had been delivered premature and quickly as I told you before in Philadelphia, in the parking lot of the Philadelphia Naval Yard and even Chris was delivered quickly. We anticipated that Marty would be delivered quickly. So I brought home a "percip-pack" and OB pack with all the material in it and had it at home because where we lived in government housing several miles from the base hospital. So, one night Celia woke me up as said, "I think this baby is coming." I got up and opened up the "percip-pak" and she was already crowning so I knew that I was going to deliver this little guy. I had helped to deliver two of the others. I knew that she was going to deliver but it was probably midnight, so I called the maid. We had a live-in maid. We were living in Spain and in those days almost everyone had a live-in maid. So I called to Nellie, and I said "Nellie come here I need your help." So, she came and of course she was a young girl from the Pueblo and I'm not sure if she had ever seen a baby born but she is standing at the door of the

bedroom crying, “por dios and mama mia”. Peter and Chris, two little guys who are now probably five and four, are standing at the door watching their little baby brother being born which is fine and she is helpless. So I turned to the maid and instinctively said “Go boil some water.” Not knowing why I did it but they did it in the movies and it got her out of the way. So, she went into the kitchen and started boiling the water and came back and of course I delivered the baby. Oh, Celia delivered the baby, there was no problem. Uneventful, I cut the cord, but I was having trouble delivering the afterbirth, so I said to Nellie, “Go up the street and get Dr. Allen.” Nellie had been a friend of their maid. All the maids in the neighborhood knew everybody. She knew who Dr. Allen was. Celia in Spanish said, “Go get Dr. Allen.” (Dr. Van Allen is a friend of ours has been for many years. We still talk to him and see him in Modesto). He came down but as an Internist he was no better at OB than I was but he helped me get Celia in the car and we took her to the hospital. I called one of the obstetricians who came out and the rest went fine and Marty was fine. The instinctive response to get that maid out of here, “go boil some water” and as a matter of fact as we were going out the door I said to her, “Turn off the water and put the kids to bed and go back to bed.” I will be back later.

I told you the story of the Thalidamide baby. I told you the story of the shigella dysentery and I told you the story of the pediatric board exams when I was in Washington. The doctor said to me, when in the differential diagnosis of this child was bleeding I mentioned scurvy, “well doctor now just when was the last time you saw scurvy. I don’t think that it had been in the United States in years. I said, “I have a child in the hospital with scurvy right now.” He said, “You do. Where do you practice?” (Because they weren’t suppose to ask anything about you or personal stuff) I said, “Well I am in Spain and I see patients from all over North Africa as well as Spain.” I think that was the end of the exam because we talked about what it was like seeing

different diseases, including some of the tropical diseases and I also had a patient with an echinococcus-cyst of the lung and number of things that were fascinating.

EB: Things that you would never see again.

TS: No, so, that was that. We had a marvelous time in Spain.

EB: That was a total of what?

TS: Three years. We went in August of 1961 and we came back in June of 1964. We ended up in San Antonio for two years where Leslie was born. She was our fifth child. She was born in San Antonio. Dr. Tom Holcomb was my chairman there. We still keep in touch with him. Dr. Ralph Tierney and Dr. Ledbetter were two other physicians. I keep in touch with all of them. Actually Dr. Ledbetter is now as one of the big shots at the American Academy of Pediatrics in Chicago, but at that time, he was in the military like me. They were really very good to me and that sort of thing. I think I told you the story when we leaving.

EB: Excuse me, you have something here about child abuse.

TS: Child abuse in the military, that was the first time I had been conscious of it. I wasn't conscious of it very much, we didn't really talk about it during my residency. Dr. Kemp hadn't written his paper, or least it hadn't gotten much publicity.

EB: Not talked about in medical school?

TS: No, it wasn't. Well, you know there were things like murder but not a lot of consciousness, as I recall, in medical school, during my internship or even in my residency about child abuse, the way there is now. As a matter of fact, I think that most of the medical profession along with other professionals essentially denied its existence. I can recall as a resident seeing children who had bruises and broken limbs and that sort of thing. There was always some excuse and people were willing to accept the excuse. I probably missed it in Spain. We now know that child abuse

and spousal abuse in the military is the same as it any place else. It is common. It never was in my consciousness that I can recall. I never remember reporting it until the reporting laws got put in 1964-1965-1966, in that era. Most physicians didn't want to report it for fear that they would get sued or who knows what.

EB: There was I think probably back as far as the fifties there was still that the attitude that a parent had the right to discipline their child in any way that was common to that family.

TS: Corporal punishment was not condemned, even in school.

EB: I remember the sisters and this brother who had the strap, even though you never saw him use it.

TS: No, he never hit anybody with it, but there was always the fear. Child abuse, I am sure it went on. I never experienced it in my own family, but I don't recall ever having a lecture about it or ever putting in the differential diagnosis. They did talk about failure to thrive, which usually meant the kid was being starved or wasn't being feed adequately. It was Dr. Kemp, a professor at Colorado, who brought it to everyone's attention. Although, a radiologist by the name of Caffey had written an article back in the late forties or early fifties talking about multiple skeletal injuries in children, it wasn't until Dr. Henry Kemp, I think in 1962, wrote a paper and gave many talks about it. Then all of the sudden there was this "big epidemic" of child abuse. There wasn't an epidemic at all. People were beginning to first, recognize it, and secondly, with reporting laws, that not only required physicians to report, but also give physicians civil immunity for reporting it honestly, that it became what it is today a well recognized problem.

EB: Did you see much of that in the military?

TS: I began to see some it in the military and I can recall several instances in which I was asked

to examine a child with other members of our department. I did a study, which I never got published, but I did report it to the annual meeting of the military pediatricians that they use to have in Washington every year. All of the military pediatricians would get together and I was asked to give this report and I did. I went back and looked at a number of children who had multiple injuries including subdural hematomas, (that is brain hemorrhages) in the military. The records were available at Lackland A.F.B. where I was stationed at Willford Hall. I reviewed them. I may still have that paper some place. That was my first conscious awareness, as a physician, of child abuse and at the same time of course it was now appearing in literature. State legislatures were taking it up. As a matter of fact, I think that Nevada was one of the first states to put in Child abuse reporting laws. (I would have to check and I will between now and when this is ready).

EB: Of course those things, when you start reading about them, would probably trigger things that you had seen along the way. Gee, maybe that child did not just fall out of the crib.

TS: Absolutely. We weren't taught initially to deny what parents were telling us. We accepted what they told us was true. We took a history and if it sort of fit our biases or our ignorance. You say well okay the kid fell off of the couch. Well, we now know that many of those injuries were inflicted.

EB: So, it wasn't that there was an epidemic of child abuse so much as just more awareness?

TS: Of course. Of course now that people have gone back, children have been abused throughout centuries. It is written about in the Bible, everything from sexual abuse to physical abuse. In some cultures infants were murdered. Dickens wrote about it in 19th century England. Maim kids

and put them on the street as beggars. Sure, child abuse has been around for a long period of time.

EB: We saw that in France. When they would beg. We were in Northern France where my daughter did her internship when she was an attorney and we would see the starving children on the street. I would absolutely come unglued. I had never seen a starving child. Bloated stomachs the whole thing.

TS: Yes. I never saw it until I got to Spain.

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TS: Back to El Paso. This woman had a urinary tract infection and was given Sulfonamide for the urinary tract infection. She started getting confusion and various abnormal behavioral symptoms, which go along with it. So, she was given Phenobarbital for her behavioral problems and Phenobarbital is another one of the drugs. So she had double whammy both of which triggered her porphyria. When she came in to the hospital that night, she was in coma and she had some convulsions. All of that is part of the syndrome.

EB: That is a common combination. To give someone sulfa drugs.

TS: It was in those days. If you don't have the basic genetic disease, it won't cause any trouble. This is a genetic problem. It is a problem in the defect of the way the liver metabolizes heme products.

I went back to Henry Kemp and child abuse. I looked up in his paper, the first paper that he wrote, was in JAMA in 1962. Then he gave a talk at the academy of pediatrics, I think in 1963 and I heard that talk. Then his book wasn't published until 1980. So really

EB: 1980?

TS: That was the book that he wrote.....

EB: This was a whole life.....

TS: Fifteen or twenty years working on “the battered child syndrome”. He was the one that coined the phrase “battered child syndrome”. What I am saying is that when I in my residency and subsequently in Spain, this was not even recognized. But, when I got to San Antonio in 1964, it had been recognized. That is when I wrote this paper on subdural hematomas.

EB: JAMA had all ready come out with it.

TS: Yes, so it wasn’t unique. Now more and more people were studying it. That was one of the first papers that I wrote on child abuse, which actually dealt with a lot of kids with subdural hematomas.

EB: Dr. Caffey, you were going to tell me his name?

TS: I don’t know his name, but he was a radiologist.

What I don’t remember is in San Antonio when Leslie was born. Did I tell you this story about taking two weeks off to take care of the other four kids? Our oldest Peter was only about seven when Leslie was born. So, I had these four kids with only two in school, two at home and Celia in the hospital. I planned to take two weeks off to baby sit. We had no baby sitter. We were back in the United States. We didn’t have the luxury of baby sitters. As a matter of fact we were lucky to be able to get a lady in to do some cleaning once a week. So, we had come back from Spain rather spoiled with lots of help, relatively cheap, to now Celia doing all the work of motherhood. I took off. For the first couple of days I was very efficient. I had the dishes done by nine in the morning and the beds made and the laundry done.....

EB: Thinking that this a piece of cake.

TS: Then the next day it went to 10 o’clock and the next day it was around noon. Then I would

take them out to the mall and we would walk in the mall.

EB: I only had two children, but this is all getting very familiar.

TS: Remember Leslie is born at Christmas. Peter and Chris are not in school. She was born on the 30th of December so they are on vacation. Not only do I have four boys but they are all home. I took them to every place that I could think of. It was San Antonio, the weather wasn't too bad, so I took them to the zoo, and the mall, anything to get them out of the house and out of the way. Celia was home from the hospital after a few days and Leslie was doing fine. Celia was beginning to get some rest. We did get a lady to come in and help us for a few weeks. I finally said to Celia, "if you died I couldn't raise these kids, I would have to quite work". So, I went across the street to Jack Saylor who was a friend of ours and neighbor, who sold insurance for Prudential, I think, and said to him, "Jack I have to get a life insurance policy on Celia's life. If she died, I couldn't afford to take care of these five kids" Well, that is unusual, most people don't take out life insurance policies on their wife. I said, "Get me the biggest policy I can afford." Because if I died Celia would have my retirement from the Air Force. So, a month goes by and we didn't hear anything. Two months go by and didn't hear anything. We are going about our business, finally, I call Jack one day and I said, "Jack where is the life insurance policy I asked you to get for me?" He said, "Well, they are still investigating you." I said, "What?" He said, "Oh, yes, the underwriters are looking in to it because it is unusual for a young husband to ask for a big life insurance policy on a young woman. So, then it turns out that Celia started asking around the neighborhood and all of the ladies of the neighborhood had been called by an investigator, "have you every heard them fighting, do they seem like a happy couple, etc?" Finally, we got the life insurance policy, which I dropped several years later. I don't know what it cost, but it was worth it because I said to myself, there is no way I could be a househusband

with these kids.

EB: You're a pediatrician.

TS: As a pediatrician I am telling everyone how to raise their kids, but I realized that the hardest work in the world is motherhood. Raising children is the hardest job in the world. It never ends, seven days a week. Anyway that is what the insurance policy is about.

Then I told you a story about coming out on the cheap night flight, the gambler flight to go to Las Vegas.

EB: When you went out to check it out?

TS: No, when we actually went to move here. I had the three older kids with me.

EB: Oh yes. Did you actually go to Las Vegas first?

TS: Yes. We went twice. We went once, checked it out. We knew everybody there and we made the decision. All of the rest of the negotiations with Tony Carter were by mail and phone. So, the next time we went was when I got discharged in the summer of 1966. I got discharged and we actually went to Las Vegas. But, that was when Peter was asked on the plane, (by one of these night high roller gambling people), why are you going there? He said, "I am going there to live." The man said, "You mean people live there?" So, then we end up in Las Vegas. I think I told you the story of the tick paralysis.

EB: You did.

TS: I think I told you.

EB: That was one of the times you actually thought you saved a life.

TS: I think I actually saved a life. I think I told you the story of the parabiotic twins that are connected by the blood vessels, where one bleeds into the other.

EB: No, I don't think so. I don't remember.

TS: That was the only time I had ever seen it. I had read about it. I was called to the delivery room one day. The nurse said we have these twins and one is in a lot of distress and a lot of respiratory distress and is very pale and a little tiny thing. The other one is big and robust and pink. I went and saw them and indeed they weren't identical twins, although the obstetrician said that they had one placenta. Only later did we realize what had happened. There is a syndrome that is not that common, where in utero twins' blood vessels are connected together, so one twin's 'blood goes into the other. One is nourished off of the other, parasitic. This was another example where I probably did save somebody's life. Realizing what happened and getting some quick tests from the lab, I called my partner who was home, Tony Carter, he came in. What we did was take blood out of the big one who was overloaded with blood and who was actually rather sick too, because he had too much blood. We transfused directly into his twin, as you would with an exchange transfusion. (In those we did a lot of exchange transfusions for Rh incompatibility. We don't do it any longer. It is pretty much prevented by immunization). In those days we had all of the set-ups so, it wasn't that big of a deal. Both children survived and for a number of years I got a Christmas card from the mother showing me that they were growing and normal.

EB: What did you other than the exchange transfusion?

TS: That is all you would do is give back blood to the one who was severally anemic. The fastest way to do that is to get it from his twin who was overloaded.

EB: Then each body slowly.....

TS: Slowly accommodate. As a matter of fact, the one that was overloaded ultimately had to get another exchange transfusion because he got jaundice. I think they were boys. I am not sure if they were boys or girls.

EB: What hospital was this at?

TS: That was at Southern Nevada Memorial Hospital.

EB: So, you were affiliated with them, you were on staff?

TS: Yes, I was on the staff there that is when I was in private practice with Tony Carter.

EB: That was the hospital you mainly use. Did you go to other hospitals?

TS: I did go to Sunrise, but I didn't do very much work there. They also had "women's hospital" "that has subsequently been closed. This was a women's hospital where most of the OB was done.

EB: That is the one that Dr. Fortier was.....

TS: That right. That is now closed. The other thing.....

EB: Did you go out to Boulder City? Excuse me.

TS: No, I don't think that I ever went there. I might have gone there once for some type of emergency, because I was covering somebody.

EB: They would just extend curtesy privileges?

TS: They probably would if they needed you in a hurry. I think I might have gone out there once or twice.

EB: But, not on the staff?

TS: No basically, I was on the staff of Sunrise, Southern Nevada and Women's. But most of the work I did was at Southern Nevada Memorial (Now U.M.C.)

EB: Did you work with Dr. Fortier at all?

TS: Not directly, he probably delivered women of babies that I ultimately took care of. I know that he use to refer babies to Tony Carter. When I went to Las Vegas in 1966, there were only a handful of pediatricians. Dr. Carter and I, and Drs. Ryan, Sysich, Baker and Merkin Capp. There

were probably seven or eight of us. That was before Vegas began to boom. Remember Las Vegas in 1966, probably only had a couple hundred thousand people in it.

EB: That many?

TS: Yes. A lot of general practitioners and not a lot of specialists. The specialists began to come to Las Vegas in early to mid 1960's.

EB: The GP's took care of the babies?

TS: They did a lot of delivery, sure.

EB: So, Dr. Fortier, and you didn't have any real interaction?

TS: I met him and could recognize him. I don't recall any interaction. Of course it is different today, in those days often the pediatrician had very little contact with the obstetrician. They would call you and say I just delivered a baby for Mrs. Smith. I would go to the nurse and take over. Then you go back to Mrs. Smith and say her baby is fine or the baby has a problem. The obstetrician may have long since gone home or gone on to deliver somebody else. If there was a problem, you would always do them the courtesy of calling them on the phone and say, the baby you delivered has got a problem.

The only time I ever remember going on house call to a casino was in Las Vegas, I was having dinner at Ted and Parvin's house. Ted and Parvin had a few entertainers as patients of theirs. Ted got a call from one of the entertainers that she was having some problems and she was suppose to go on stage at the Sahara Hotel within an hour or so, would he come over. So, he said come on. We got in the car and drove over and went backstage. I don't know what her problem was. Whatever it was he took care of it. The only time I ever remember making a house call in a casino, backstage. I'm sure Ted made many such calls!

EB: What specialty was Ted Jacobs?

TS: He was an internist.

EB: And Parvin?

TS: Both internists.

I told you the story of leaving practice with Dr. Carter. I worked for a short period of time as a Health Officer. That is how I got to meet and know Otto Ravenholt. Then I left and we went back to Newark to Saint Michael's Center and the New Jersey College of Medicine where an old classmate of mine, Dr. Jim Hogan put me in touch with Dr. Leon Smith. The two of them were the ones who encouraged me to go back east and become the director of pediatrics at Saint Michael's. They had a residency and they didn't a director.

EB: That is in Newark, NJ?

TS: Yes, in Newark. As you remember I did tell you the story when we arrive the day of the Newark riots. In early July of 1967.

EB: Yes. That was quite an introduction to the area.

TS: It was, and the kids saw all the Army trucks going down the Garden State Parkway and said, oh it is going to be a parade Dad, let's follow the parade. We were there at the time of the death of Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King. Celia and I actually went and marched on a Sunday after Martin Luther King died. They had a big inter-religious interfaith. Interracial march down Broadway or Central Ave., (some big street in Newark). Thousands of blacks and whites from Newark and the suburb, (in those days much of Newark was black) marched.

EB: It was all peaceful though.

TS: It was all peaceful.

EB: I would have been frightening to think that it followed on the heels of the riots?

TS: Well, there was an attempt by different churches and the catholic priests and bishop to try to get some reconciliation between the blacks and the whites and to carry on the message of Martin Luther King. The world had been shocked of course by Bobby Kennedy's death. It didn't happened immediately after Martin Luther King was killed. As I recall, he was killed in January. It seems to me the march was sometime in the early spring after that.

EB: Newark riots refresh my memory that wasn't...

TS: The same time as the Watt riots, the same time as the Detroit riots. There were riots in black communities all over the country which were really an outgrowth of frustration, poverty, civil rights, who knows all the reasons, I don't know all of the reasons.

EB: But no major happening such as the Rodney King thing. That was just an accumulation of frustration and violence built up?

TS: I can't tell you all of the reasons, you would have to go back in the history and look at why there were riots. That summer there were riots in Detroit, Watts, and Newark were the main ones. In which lots of people lost their lives, mostly black and much of the destruction was centered upon themselves and within their own communities. But, out of that, Monsignor Carey, with whom we have become very friendly, a white Monsignor, probably then in his late forties or early fifties, the pastor of Queens of Angeles Catholic Church right in the center of the central ward. One hundred percent of his parishioners were black, started with the help of Jim Hogan Leon Smith, others, and myself a free clinic in the basement of his church.

EB: Oh yes that is when you went out there to that part of town?

TS: Right, and started helping one or two nights a week, and Leon would go one night and Jim Hogan another and I another. We would try to provide some health care for a big segment of the

population, which was getting nothing. That was more or less what was going on there.

Then I came to Reno and the rest of my story is in Nevada. I came here basically because of Ernie Mack, Fred Anderson and George Smith, they were the ones.....

EB: You came to Reno from

TS: Directly from Newark. I responded to an ad.

EB: They knew you?

TS: I had been in Las Vegas.

EB: So, you had some contacts here?

TS: Carroll Ogren, George Smith and others knew people in Vegas and when I applied for the job they checked with them down there. I applied from an advertisement for the director of medical education at Washoe Medical Center. That is when I came.

EB: Because you were interested in teaching at that time?

TS: Also at that time, the medical school was just about to be approved and ultimately was approved by the legislature later that spring. So, once it was clear that there was going to be a medical school, Dr. Ernie Mack and Carroll Ogren hired me to come and take this job. The idea was, among others, that I would help develop the medical school's programs at Washoe Medical Center. I probably would not have come if there were no prospect of a medical school. I wanted to be involved with the medical school. Probably if the medical school would have been put in Las Vegas, I would have gone back there to practice. I wasn't interested in just being the director of medical education at a hospital and I wasn't interested in going back into private pediatric practice. Although when I got here several physicians wanted me to go into practice with them. I said, "No, I have made a decision with my wife's support to stay in medical education. I want to get involved in the medical school".