

DATE: January 26, 1999
TAPE: Tape 21
INTERVIEWEE: Thomas Scully, M.D.
INTERVIEWER: Eileen Barker
PLACE: Dr. Scully's home 1400 Ferris Lane
TRANSCRIPTIONIST: Dianne Fernandez

EB: Let's get through these little side notes that we had. I think that we left off at Reno.

TS: We did everything up to 1969. So we stopped when I came to Reno in the summer of 1969 to work at Washoe Medical Center.

EB: Today is January 26, 1999. This is Eileen Barker and we are interviewing Dr. Scully in his home. We are going to start now with your move to Reno.

TS: I couldn't come up with many stories about that although, I do remember the day we arrived. As I told you earlier and I won't repeat it, I got hired by Dr. Ernie Mack and Carroll Ogren in the Spring of 1969 when it was clear that the legislature was going to pass the medical school and I came out, I guess twice, and finally was hired. Celia and I picked up; we lived in Summit New Jersey. I had been working in Newark at St. Michaels Medical Center. So, we picked up and moved the kids out sometime in August to take this job as director of medical education and I had several other jobs. My salary was split with Washoe and I got some money from the Regional Medical Program and then later some money from the Medical School. So, I really had several jobs that I was juggling. Mostly, though initially as director of medical education. Anyway, we arrived

on a plane and had to wait three or four days for our car and our furniture to show up and I had on a previous visit agreed to rent the house that we are sitting in right now. I rented it from Dr. Bob Myles. He had owned it and he had rented it to a psychiatrist in town. Then it was sitting empty for a while. Bob and Jean had built their new home around the corner. We had the house, but there was nothing in it. So, we went to the Holiday Inn which is down on South Virginia across from what is now Meadowwood. Of course it is a populated area now, but then it was way out in the middle of nowhere. South Virginia was the only way out of town south and we got two rooms adjoining at the Holiday Inn. Of course the kids were happy; they got to go swimming. I think that Celia cried herself to sleep the first couple of nights at the Holiday Inn, not so much because we had five kids living in the place, but she said that I had brought her to “a small hayseed town in the desert” and did we do the right thing. At least in Las Vegas, when we lived there a few years earlier, it was a fairly booming metropolis but Reno was pretty small at the time. The smallest town I guess we had lived in till then, was probably Las Vegas, because El Paso and San Antonio were pretty big cities. We lived in Philadelphia and New York. So, she cried those first nights. The neighborhood was absolutely wonderful. After our furniture arrived a few days later we moved in. We met our neighbors, the Savages and then the McAuliffes, and the Formans, Melchers and the Hugs across the street. At that time, Cliff Young and his family lived down the street. The Myles were wonderful to us. So, it was very very nice. Shortly after we arrived I think the Myles had a neighborhood party and the first time I ever got caught in this trick. We went over to the party and what they did was put everyone’s name on his or her back. Before they would give Celia or me a drink, we had to go around and memorize all of the people

names in the neighborhood and address them by name. It was a very effective way to force us to learn the names of everybody in the neighborhood in about ten or fifteen minutes. I am not a heavy drinker, but in the middle of the hot summer, (afternoon or evening whatever it was) it would have been nice to have a gin and tonic or a beer.

Anyway those are a couple of memories of coming to this house and settling in Reno. Of course I went to work right away.

EB: Did you pick up when you came to the interview with the intention of being director of medical education at Washoe knowing that this was also going to be split with the University. Did you start picking up on those who were opposed to?

TS: Oh yes.

EB: Did that give you pause to come here?

TS: Well, it did, but I had interviewed carefully with a lot of people before I came and I knew that. I had interviewed with George Smith and Fred Anderson who were behind the movement at the Medical School and were very supportive and at that time were getting along well with Ernie Mack and Carroll Ogren. So, the four of them

EB: It was quite a powerhouse?

TS: Yes, it was. MacLean was also supportive at the time. So, the important physicians, Fred was a regent and Ernie Mack was chairman of the hospital board, they said there will be those who are opposed. I understood that, I wasn't naive about that. (Recall that I went to Albany Medical College and Albany started around 1850 and even to this day 150 years later, they and every other school around the world writes in their alumni journals about the town and gown situation). Town and gown arguments have gone on in American Medicine certainly for 150 years by those who and feel that somehow they are

either ignored or discriminated against or get unfair competition from those who work for a medical school. So, I was aware of that. I choose I think conscientiously, I would listen around the table at lunch or coffee, physicians who were opposed to the medical school, would sort of ventilate about that. I sort of just let it go in one ear and out the other. I intentionally spent time with those who I knew supported education. At the time of the job interview, Drs. Bob Barnett, Bob Myles, Dave Roberts, Bill Tappan, Jack Sergent, Bill O'Brien, (I could probably name some more), were all very supportive of the medical school and they made up the search committee in the beginning for the director of medical education. Many of them were also on the State Medical Association Education Committee. Bill O'Brien was the chair of that. They were all very supportive of the school. Also, remember when I came, what was developing was a two year school and two year schools were traditionally not as threatening as to the practicing physician because first of all, the students would transfer after two years elsewhere, you didn't have to have a large M.D. faculty, what you had to have was a Ph.D. basic science faculty. So, there wasn't that level of competition and also.....

EB: The student wouldn't be out in the community.

TS: Very little, just in people's offices and there were no residencies involved. Physicians knew that where you had a four-year school giving degrees and residents that there you had to have full-time M.D. faculty and then the competition thing got started. Those who were probably down deep opposed to the school, they weren't that upset about the two year school. They simply said stay out of my way; I don't want students near my patients or me.

EB: They had to have known that the two-year school was going to be short lived.

TS: Eventually yes. Of course, if they were very busy in their own practice and not paying any attention what was going on in the literature, they could have been ignorant of that. You are right within a few years, as you know the conversion process started because clearly it was an issue of convert to a four-year school or get out of the business. At the time in 1969, that was not such a big issue; not an issue at all.

EB: It could be downplayed with those were sort of not paying attention.

TS: Yes. I made a conscious effort with the support of my boss and the physicians who supported medical education. I didn't ignore anyone. I wrote letters to practically every doctor in town. (At that time we weren't too involved in Las Vegas. We became involved with Las Vegas a couple of years later). I wrote to everyone in town saying we would be happy to have you help teach physical diagnosis. Would you like to have students come into your office to observe, etc. because the very first summer as you see in 1972, we put students out in preceptor programs and I took advantage of my friendships and knowledge of Las Vegas to go down there. That first summer of 1972 we put freshman medical students, for a month preceptorship, in offices in Reno, Las Vegas, Elko, Ely and Carson City. I got a lot of my friends in Las Vegas to take students in with them. Ted Jacobs did and Tommy Armor did, Bill Harris, a number of people did. As they did here in Reno. That preceptorship program became very very popular. The students liked it. It was their first taste after one year of anatomy and physiology. It was their first taste of seeing patients and seeing what doctors do and putting on a white coat. We had given them a little introduction into physical diagnosis. That is histories and physicals so that when they went into a doctors office they wouldn't feel like they were all thumbs, they could at least stick the stethoscope in their ears in the right direction and put it on the

patients chest. So the preceptorship program that first summer capitalized on those physicians who wanted to be involved in medical education and who cared about it. It turned out to be very successful.

Back to your original question, I simply invited everybody and anyone who wanted to participate and be involved and those who didn't we simply ignored from that point on and made no more effort to cajole because we had enough help. We had more than enough physicians in Reno and Las Vegas those first couple of summers and the first couple of years, not only to take students into their office for summer preceptorship program but also to teach physical diagnosis on Tuesday or Wednesday afternoon. We would take them over to Washoe and the V.A. and teach them how to examine patients and that sort of thing. With only thirty-two students it really was not as big a task as we didn't need a large volume of people.

EB: The medical community had to be impressed with those first students.

TS: yes. I think they were.

EB: There had to be a lot of effort put in on a one to one basis because it was such a small school. I think everybody was working overtime to make it work.

TS: I think some were. Some of the opponents said that these students would never amount to anything. They will never get transferred. They will never pass National Boards. As you know one physician did make a bet with George, I wasn't there in the room, so I can't tell you exactly what was said, but hearing it from George, the bet was that none of these students would ever get transferred and none of them ever end up with a degree. Well that long since is history and I don't think George ever collected on the bet. All our students got transferred and we transferred several hundred those first five

years and then of course we converted to a four-year school in 1978 – 1979. Since then 95% of our students or more have graduated and gone on. There was some of that kind of opposition. When we went through the conversion planning in 1976 – 1977, there was a lot of opposition from physicians and it became expressed. They opposed it in the legislature of 1977. We were far enough along with our success as a two-year school that we had already transferred five classes and we had already proven our critics wrong that the students would do well and they would pass national boards and would transfer out. Even a few had finished and gotten their M.D. degrees and come back to Nevada. It was clear that the legislature and the Board of Regents saw the school as viable, despite physician's objections then, although they were difficult and I had to answer them. I frequently got into verbal arguments with physicians, but by then, the conversion was far enough along that they couldn't really reverse it. Although, as you know in 1979 when I was the dean and we had a fateful meeting at Washoe Medical Center talking about starting residents there; there were a number of physicians including the chief of staff who were opposed and sent around to doctors in the state a questionnaire about whether the school should be closed and whether the whole thing should be reversed. The legislature and Governor O'Callahan had already spoken. The legislature didn't change its mind, but it was a very difficult period of time for me personally and emotionally as well as professionally as the dean. Andy Sohn writes about this somewhat in his book on Carroll Ogren, because that was the big conflict of physicians now fearing that full-time faculty that had been hired would be in the hospital telling them how to practice medicine. That is a longer story we can talk about later.

The two-year school went well and I got very involved with it as chairman of the curriculum committee and later as associated dean and that sort of thing. That was a long answer to that question in 1978 – 1979. It is sequential here.

EB: Sorry, but the purpose of this tape.....I had stopped the tape to ask a question.

We will be getting back, as a reminder to the discussion on the Washoe Medical Center fight. We will just go on with what we are discussing now and make a note to come back to that. I had one question: getting back in to this list that we made this chronological list which is a great help; at one point you became involved with the American Cancer Society. I don't remember if we talked about that early on. What did you do there?

TS: I was just a member of their board. I think I got into that when Dave Roberts asked me to do it.

EB: They were keeping statistics for a long time. I remember when I was in medical records at Saint Mary's back in the sixties. We were keeping all kinds of records on the cancer occurrences here.

TS: Remember the regional medical programs; a lot of them had to do with heart, cancer and stroke. Those were the so called "three killers". My involvement was just as a member of one of the committees and the Board of Directors. I put that down as one of my first involvements in the community and public service.

EB: Did you join any community groups?

TS: Even as a dean I never did any of that. Bob Daugherty has and has been very involved in other areas. I guess I never really had an interest, first of all. Secondly, I was busy enough. I wasn't looking for luncheons to go to. I felt that my community service

would best be done through medical groups of one kind or another so I was active in the American Academy of Pediatrics. I helped out with fundraisers for the cancer society. I did do a study for Washoe County School Board on School Health, which wasn't accepted, because I think from the viewpoint of the rather conservative Board of Education. The recommendation of the committee that I chaired and I wrote the report with Jerry Mathieson who was a professor of Public Health at the Medical School, I think it was probably just too liberal for them. We were calling for much more involvement of school nurses and more involvement in the immunization programs and a variety of things. At that time, we hardly ever talked about pregnancy prevention although obviously they had a program for pregnant teenagers. There was a lot of things that we suggested that now are being done but in 1975. Those ideas were a number of years ahead of the times. I did get involved in a number of public service kinds of things which were encouraged by Carroll Ogren and George Smith when I went to work full-time at the medical school and it was encouraged by the Board of Regents. As you know with your experience in the medical school and the university, when you are full-time, you not only have the duty to teach and to do research, but you also have the duty to do public service and your promotion and tenure of course is dependent upon research, teaching as well as patient care.

EB: CME too?

TS: Yes.

EB: I think this is probably why I see this, my husband is involved in a lot of service organizations and always has been, in Reno. I see the list of members, I see very few doctors in these things and I can understand why now because of the CME and the

other medical groups that you belong to that is quite enough. Not to mention all of the meetings that you have to go to be members of the staff and stay on the staff of the various hospitals.

TS: I think that there are physicians that belong to Rotary and some of these other things, but I think there are only a few. I think these public service organizations do provide the business man and other professionals in the community an opportunity to serve, but physicians don't need to look for that kind of thing. I mean if they get involved in their own medical societies and various cancer, heart associations etc., there are plenty of opportunity for community service there. I found much of it there and of course I had plenty of opportunity to do community service and public service later on. Now, once I got on the board of medical examiners in 1977, that essentially was my major community service for the next twenty years. That was a very time consuming job and also there was always the inherent possible conflict of interest between being on the board of medical examiners which licenses and disciplines physicians and then being too involved in medical groups working with physicians who you might have to discipline in another setting. Members of the board, including MacLean and Ted Jacobs and others generally didn't get too involved with medical groups. They were members of medical societies and that sort of thing but tended to stay a little bit at arms length. I must say many physicians kept me at arms length, which was all right. I wasn't offended by it. They kept me at arms length particularly when I became secretary of the board because they knew that I was in a position to know a great deal about all physicians and also the ones about whom we would receive complaints. I just always felt it was better to stay a little at arms length from your colleagues if you are ever going to be in a position to have to

discipline them or investigate them. That then changed a lot of my public service to internal university service. I got out of many of the medical kinds of programs. Although I maintained membership until I retired.

EB: Let's get on with some of these other comments that you have under your miscellaneous stories. Should we talk about Washoe Medical Center? Are we at that point now?

TS: I think just to set the stage the conversion had already taken place. The legislature approved that in the spring of 1977. One part of that, at the time that it was being discussed in the legislature, Don Mello was the chair of the Ways and Means Committee and it was essential that the Ways and Means Committee in the assembly and the Senate Finance Committee which was at that time controlled by Floyd Lamb in Las Vegas, they had to approve everything that went through them before it ever got to the general legislature and they had to review the money. Because of the complexities of conversion and the money involved and cost involved and the objections I talked about early from many physicians; Don Mello decided to call a "committee of the whole". One of the few times that I am even aware that it has even happened. It is a provision whereby the chairman of an important committee in the legislature can ask the entire assembly or the senate to convene as a committee. I recall it very well, because we went down, and had about an hour and a half set-aside late in the morning about 10 to 12 to testify. Since, I had written the conversion proposal, George got up and made a few general comments and then said Dr. Scully will now present the conversion proposal. The entire assembly was there. We handed them a copy of the "blue book", which had the proposal in it. We handed them pages of financial stuff and I had to present the proposal before the entire

assembly and then answer questions about it. There were some fairly hostile questions about the cost, etc. That was probably the most difficult public presentation that I ever made. I wasn't the dean at the time, I was the associate dean, and George was still here. It was the most difficult and most challenging. It went through rather well. Afterwards, Mike O'Callahan and others told George that had been an important presentation. It apparently influenced enough votes so that the subsequent conversion proposal was approved. That summer (shortly after), George called me in, we had already started our recruitment, sent out our job descriptions, we were going to recruit a chairman of medicine, surgery, pediatrics, etc. George told me he was going to resign. The rest of that story I have told you. I was eventually appointed the dean, that fall of 1977. I had already begun to recruit Ernie Mazzaferri and over the next six months Burt Dudding, Ira Pauly and Bob Martyn, Bob Fulten. They recruited others to come and get started so that we could begin the first juniors in the summer of 1978. Well, we did that. Within the next six months, there was a meeting at Washoe Medical Center called by the Board of Trustees to which I was invited to come based upon my proposal that the medical school become involved in the running of the clinic and that we put full-time faculty and residents in medicine in the clinic to take care of the indigent patients. I worked a lot with Carroll Ogren who I thought was supportive. I now realize he was forgetful and didn't remember what he committed himself to. When challenged by the Board of Directors of Washoe, he backed down. The proposal was well thought out and essentially said that the monies that the county then gave to pay physicians to run the county clinic would be given to the medical school. The medical school would hire the clinic physicians instead of Washoe Medical Center and in addition we would put students and residents there. The indigent

patients who were eligible for county care in the Washoe Medical Centers public clinic would be handled by the medical school. As you remember there was enormous physician uproar, just as we said. "The Medical School was trying to take over Washoe Medical Center," references to letting the camel put his nose under the tent then pretty soon he will be in the tent.

EB: The tail wagging the dog.

TS: Yes. All of that, every one of those. It turned out to be a rather raucous evening event in the Mack auditorium at Washoe Medical Center. Ernie was not longer on the Board of Trustees. I forgot who the chairman was, at the time. Many of the members of the Board of Trustees were opposed to the medical school and several of the physicians representing the medical staff were opposed. They spoke vehemently against the school. I recall one of the physicians saying, (something to the effect of) "Dr. Scully, if this proposal, were to go through and it could be shown that it cost the county and the hospital more money than they have to spend, would the medical school and the university reimburse the hospital and the county for the deficit?" I didn't answer the question directly. I said, "I can't speak for the university, but I would ask if after a trial period it can be shown that the medical school saved the county money, would the county and the hospital give that difference to the medical school?" Of course as you can imagine there were those who clapped and supported my statement and others who clapped and supported the question from the member of the board. It was mute. I thought that we had presented enough evidence that we could actually save the county money and do a better job. At any rate, the board went into a closed session and they voted to table the whole thing and formed another committee. So, I went to a number of committee meetings after