

UFHC 58

Interviewee: Susan Petrina

Interviewer: Nina Stoyan-Rosenzweig

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S: This is Nina Stoyan-Rosenzweig and I am interviewing Susan Petrina at the Hershey Medical School. The date is August 1, 2002. I'd like to start off by asking you questions about yourself, where you're from, when you were born, and as much as you'd like to tell me.

P: No problem. I'm Susan Petrina. I was born January 29, 1948. I've lived in Hummlestown [Pennsylvania] which is approximately two miles west of Hershey that makes it for an easy commute to work. I began working here September 1, 1967. I immediately started working in the dean's office for Dr. Harrell.

S: Had you done work in medical schools before?

P: No. I came right out of Central Penn Business College and I had taken a two year certificate course in medical secretary [work]. So no, I did not. This was my first job.

S: Where were you born?

P: I was born in Harrisburg, but [have] lived in Hummlestown all my life.

S: That has the Harrisburg Hospital.

P: Yeah, that's where it was.

S: You started when Dr. Harrell came to Hershey?

P: That was two years after he came, one to two years, yes.

S: So, 1967 was really when the medical school itself got started. He had done a lot of planning before.

P: Exactly, and the building was not here. When I started, I started in the farmhouse which is located behind the medical center. The farmhouse was known as Long Rain and it housed Milton Hershey's schoolboys until we took it over. That's where I started.

S: That was also the year when the first medical class started.

P: 1967, yeah.

S: What were the facilities like for the medical students?

P: For the medical students? The building had been started. We had three floors I believe. It started and concluded with the third floor which housed neuroscience and anatomy, which is what the students started with so they were ready to start.

S: So, they figured out what had to be done first.

P: Right.

S: You started working then directly in the dean's office for Dr. Harrell.

P: I did, yes.

S: Did he interview you?

P: Yes, he did.

S: What were your first impressions of him?

P: Quite a stately gentleman he was. [He was] very tall. He even had white hair then. I've known him all my working career with him as having white hair, and he did. A very gentle man. Very quiet and very gentle.

S: At Florida, he did things such as choose the first class of students and based a lot of that on their interviews. Did he have anything that he ever revealed to you about what he was looking for?

P: No, because his class had been chosen, so that was in place when I arrived. I do know that in choosing faculty what I found very interesting, and I still remember to this day, he used to make notes on his interview with chairs and he always noted their handshake. If they had a nice, firm, correct [handshake] that was a good sign. We still talk about that today and I try to remember that in a handshake, that's always stuck with me.

S: In your own handshake?

P: In my own handshake and handshakes that I receive from people. Rose, in my office, has been here as long as I've been here and she and I always talk about that. We always made note of that.

S: What about his own interview with you. Did you have a sense of what he was looking for or how he chose you?

P: Actually, I'm sorry to say this, but I happened to know his administrative assistant. I had done work for her when I was doing my internship at the **Power** Clinic Hospital, and she had called me and said that they were looking for staff assistants in the dean's office and would I please apply. Of course, I jumped at the chance. My mother jumped at the chance just so that I would have a job. I knew her so therefore, I got a good recommendation from Mrs. **Sours**, which was quite helpful. That's what I remember, it was so long ago. I remember thinking too, the gal that came before me for an interview had on white gloves. She wore white gloves to this interview and I remember that scared [me]. I thought, oh dear, if this is what he's looking for, this isn't me. They called me that afternoon and [asked if] I wanted to start working, and I said, of course I did, and that was it.

S: What were your duties at first?

P: Transcription mainly, answering the phones. We had the switchboard located right outside – there was a reception area and there was a switchboard for all the offices, so we had to take turns answering that. I did a lot of dictation. He dictated a lot. He loved to use that machine and he did it very well. I did that, [wrote] letters to prospective chairs that we interviewed, that's what I mainly did. Answer the phones. Just did general office work.

S: How many faculty were here when you started?

P: Not many. I bet I could count them on my hand; six perhaps.

S: I guess Dr. Lang...

P: Dr. Lang was here, there was Dr. Davidson in biochemistry, I believe he was here. Dr. **Brycemunger** in anatomy because that's what the students needed, they needed the basic science courses, so that's what we had filled. Six to twelve tops.

S: You're saying that he was interviewing department chairs, how did he go about selecting and deciding which department to shape next? Did you have any sense of his process?

P: Obviously, he did the basic sciences first because his students didn't need to go out to their clinical work until they were in their third year, and they obviously weren't going to be doing it here because we had no hospital.

S: When was the hospital built?

- P: The hospital opened in 1971. The students before that had to go to the neighboring hospitals to do their rotations, Harrisburg Hospital in particular.
- S: That's actually very much the situation at Florida where the first class came in and the hospital really wasn't built for about three years later.
- P: I'm sure Dr. Lang told you about the first class, how unique they were. They were all older students mostly. Most of them already had a profession. That was really interesting. I think he did that on purpose.
- S: Again, that's something he did at Florida. He must have felt that it worked there so...
- P: So he carried it over. I think a lot of things he did at Florida he carried over here and they seemed to work.
- S: From talking to people at Florida, I get the sense of how much he planned things in advance and really thought through it.
- P: Oh my goodness yes, absolutely. He started the Department of Family Medicine. We didn't house them on campus, they were community physicians, but they were faculty members of Penn State University. The students would go into the office setting when they were ready, actually from day one, and follow a family. That program kind of drifted away from us. This year it [has] come back. It's just going around and around, so that's really neat.
- S: And that was one of his visions. He really focused on family, community, and that stuff.
- P: Yes, he did.
- S: In some ways it seems like he was ahead of his time.
- P: Oh, most definitely.
- S: You say that vision is now coming back, and that people are recognizing that that's important. You've mentioned that he chose the class carefully and a lot of them were older. I guess that sort of choice didn't necessarily continue though.
- P: No, it didn't. After the first year, we got into the routine of [selecting] the traditional student.

S: I know that he didn't really, or at least the first class at Florida, he didn't really look at their scores and things like that. He chose them more on the basis of the interview.

P: Exactly.

S: Obviously, he couldn't do everything and so, after that first class there's an admissions committee set up?

P: Yes, [a] very small admissions committee. I don't remember...

S: Who was on it?

P: That was a long time ago. Somehow my memory's getting worse. You understand I was just very young when I started here, twelve-years-old, that's what I'd like to think. That was a long time ago. I've been in the dean's office the entire time. I'll be starting my thirty-sixth year in a month.

S: Obviously it's been a positive experience.

P: Yes, it has been.

S: What things about Harrell distinguished him from other deans or the deans who have come since? Anything in particular other than you mentioned that he was sort of a stately person.

P: Right, he was. He was very quiet, but you knew when he meant business. He was just a very fair person I thought, and just really had great vision. Like you said, he really was ahead of his time.

S: What other programs or ideas [did he introduce]? We've mentioned the community, family medicine...

P: Family and community medicine. Humanities, which was an innovative department for us.

S: Certainly, that's something where I think Dr. Lang discussed this when I talked to him that there were some things that he did at Florida that he did here as well, but there are some things that he couldn't do at Florida that he was able to institute here. So, it was sort of an evolving vision, but I know he really wanted to emphasize the humanities at Florida and that didn't work as well as it did here.

P: Behavioral science was innovative here.

S: Could you describe that? [Was] that human behavior?

P: Yes.

S: Was that then more psychology, or just thinking about humans and what they needed?

P: I don't know how to say that. I'll have to think about that.

S: Let me talk a little bit about the medical humanities. What did he do as far as that? Were there classes that students took in the humanities?

P: Yes, it was a department. We had a department chair [and] several faculty there. In fact, the chair of humanities was an ordained minister, Mr. **Al Bastian**. Yes, the students did have classes that they attended in humanities. Now they've brought the law into it. We have some lawyers that teach classes.

S: Bioethics and things like that?

P: [Yes].

S: What were some of the earlier humanities classes?

P: I don't remember.

S: Was the chair of humanities someone he hired early on?

P: Yes.

S: Would that have been a class that students took in the first year?

P: Yes, they did. I'm trying to think where Mr. **Bastian** came from. I just don't remember, but he continues to live in this area. He holds what we call a clinical appointment, which would be [a position with] no compensation. He still appears on their roster. If he comes back to teach, I don't know that. I've not seen him.

S: But obviously the humanities program is still here.

P: It's still here, and they involved the arts with humanities. [He] developed that.

S: Is that like a patient program or students?

P: Students and the faculty.

S: How does that work then? Do the students take courses or is there a chance for them to work on arts projects?

P: For example music, they bring music into their teaching, etc, but no.

S: Literature?

P: Yes, thank you. Literature, oh yes. We have, for example, a writing contest every year that's sponsored by the Kienle Center in Humanities. That involves the students, faculty, patients can participate. It [includes] poetry, literary writings, and they put them all together. It's a contest actually, and then everything is published in a publication called *Wild Onions*. Beautiful writings, beautiful poetry. Photography, for example, and drawings by our pediatric patients.

S: That's really exciting.

P: It is.

S: Is it related specifically to healing or experiences with health and health care?

P: Mainly, yes. The Kienle Center will sponsor noon-time concerts. Students will participate, faculty participate, and it's sponsored by this Kienle Center in Humanities.

S: That is really an exciting program and I'm sort of curious, and you may not have been involved in this, but why did it take off here? Why was there support for it?

P: I don't know that. That's a good question to find the answer to, but I don't know.

S: I guess again, I think back because it was not as successful at Florida, just what made the difference.

P: It wasn't?

S: Not really. He started out and that was important to him to have the humanities, to Dr. Harrell, to have a humanities program, but it didn't really take hold. There have been attempts and efforts to – I know that there's a bioethics course and there's also an arts in medicine program – but it didn't really start at the beginning and have the same profile that it does here. I guess it wasn't really put into a department with a chair and so it didn't develop under one [department].

P: This has always been a department and still is.

S: What sort of contact was there with the Penn State campus? Between Hershey and the regular campus?

P: University Park?

S: Yes.

P: Dr. Harrell reported directly to the president and then he, in turn, reported to the board of trustees. We had to have that contact. Dr. Harrell did not have a university title. Today, the deans have a senior vice-president title, which is a university title. Dr. Harrell just had the title of dean of the College of Medicine. He did not attend meetings. The president today, for the last many years, has staff meetings every Monday morning, and Dr. Kirch, [the] current dean, goes every Monday to attend those meetings and sits on that council. Dr. Harrell did not do that.

S: Was that a good thing or a bad thing?

P: Probably a bad thing. At that time, I wouldn't have known that then, but now seeing a good thing. In fact, all of the colleges that are separated from the main campus, that dean is a part of that core group and attends those meetings, and I don't know if they did that in the early years.

S: It sounds like it's good now in just maintaining contact and making them feel like they're a part of the whole university.

P: Exactly.

S: Let me just ask you if you have other memories of Dr. Harrell, his planning or if you wanted to talk more about what things were like in the early years.

P: Did Dr. Lang tell you about his blocks?

S: He didn't, but I've heard about them from Florida.

P: He had these wooden blocks that our maintenance carpenters made up for him with all the phases of buildings, and he would just love to get those out and put them together and explain everything [to] anybody who would listen to him. He truly loved this place, and just anything he could talk about he would, and those blocks were right by his side.

S: Would he show what things are like now and how [they would be]?

P: How they would be, yes. Start out with just the College of Medicine, then he added the hospital, then the teaching wing back here. Those blocks traveled with him everywhere.

S: I know his granddaughter, did you know [her]?

P: I never met her, no.

S: I think she still has his blocks. I don't know if he has a separate set for Florida as well as Hershey.

P: I don't know that. I just know he had his own set here. She has his Florida blocks or does she have his Hershey blocks?

S: I'm not sure what she said. I'll have to find out from her which blocks she has, whether she has both. I know, for instance, she told me that there was one time where he was, I forget who was interviewing him on television, but they ran out of time and they wanted to stop the recording and he was trying to put together his blocks to show what was going to happen, and he was scrambling to get the blocks into shape and they were trying to cut him off.

P: I know, those blocks were quite... have blocks will travel. He had them in a black leather case, I remember that. [He] just poured them out and just would talk to anybody who would listen. He was housed here in this office. He'd sit there, he'd watch the trees out here grow. Everyday he would give us a progress report on the trees. He just noticed so many things, he really did. Up on the different floors, we had these interchanges that are in front of the crescent where the patients could walk from the hospital. You could walk from the college and you could get out on the balcony. I know the day that they locked those balconies he was really distressed because they were afraid that somebody might jump from them.

S: Or even drop things.

P: Exactly. That bothered him. He had study carrels for the students, and the day we got rid of those he was devastated. [We removed them] because we needed the space.

S: That happened at Florida as well. I know the students that I've talked to who were in his first classes revealed that is one of their fondest memories, their little study carrels. But they were lost to space.

P: As I recall, he published a several page article on these study carrels. He was something else, he truly was.

S: You said when you first got here in 1967 you were in the farmhouse?

P: Farmhouse Long Rain, yes.

S: And that originally had been part of the school?

P: The Milton Hershey school, yes. It housed the students.

S: How long were you there?

P: Not long. I came in September and, I'm trying to think when we came down here, [it may] have been a year later.

S: Where did they house the medical students at first?

P: Medical students were housed... There was another red farmhouse when you entered on here to University Five, there was another red farmhouse there called **Eastmoore**. A lot of the students lived there in rooms. There was a little house right next to it that they tore down. We had a married couple with children [who] lived there. Across the street from the medical center where the Hershey Motor Lodge is, we had another Milton Hershey school, and they lived there. The others just lived off campus wherever they could.

S: Is there a student dormitory now?

P: Yes, we have student housing apartments. Two and three bedroom apartments on either side of the medical center, east and west. But then, of course a lot of students live off campus too because we can't house everyone. We're running out of space there too.

S: The limiting factor seems to be space. When you started out, you were doing transcribing. Was that pretty much your position during the time that Dr. Harrell was here?

P: General office work, yes. Setting up interviews for the prospective chairs and that kind of thing.

S: How many years did it take before, I mean honestly you're always hiring new faculty and people are retiring, but certainly at the beginning there was a big push to get all the departments filled and things. How long did that take?

P: I just don't remember. It seems like we're always looking for somebody. We're still looking for people today. I just don't remember.

S: Do you remember when, for instance, he brought Dr. Prystowsky from Florida to Hershey?

P: He didn't bring Dr. Prystowsky. Dr. Prystowsky was recruited as the new dean. After Dr. Harrell stepped down and retired, then Dr. Prystowsky came, I believe it was 1973 if my memory serves me. Because there was a period in there where we have an interim dean, Dr. **Rodhausen**, who was also our chair of surgery. He stepped in and took over. Dr. Harrell was still housed here at the medical center and his office was moved to the library. He was the senior dean for clinical affairs, I'd have to look it up. I just can't remember. But there was a time when we had the interim dean and that was Dr. **Rodhausen**. Then Dr. Prystowsky came.

S: Was Dr. Harrell at all involved in that?

P: No, not at all. The university handles the searches for the deans.

S: Let me just step back in thinking about the early years and what Dr. Harrell was planning, or planned, or did, just his ideas for the medical school. Were there other ways in which his ideas struck you, or maybe even in retrospect strike you as being ahead of the times?

P: All his ideas did, yes. He just was very ahead of his time. Even the flow of building, how he thought that out.

S: In what way?

P: How can I say this? Just the laboratories in relationship, the closeness to the classrooms, that kind of thing. Just how everything flowed easily for the students and moved from one place to another.

S: He thought through what the students were going to be like?

P: Exactly.

S: Where they would be going at a particular time.

P: [Yes].

S: Was he thinking then also about research and the faculty member who would be doing research, how to set up their facilities as well?

P: I'm sure he was, yes. We had what were called lots of discipline laboratories that the students used for research.

S: Did the students have to do a research project?

P: They had to do a research project, yes. They still have to do that today.

S: Really?

P: Yes.

S: Do they have to write up their research?

P: Yes. They have the entire four years in which to complete it. We haven't had too much trouble with it, but we have some that didn't quite fulfill that requirement and their graduation status was a little shaky. I believe it worked out in the end, I don't believe we ever had anybody who did not graduate because of it as I recall, but yes, they had to do a research project. There's a committee to approve that project.

S: That's interesting because again that's something that he started at Florida, and so for the first maybe ten years or so, fifteen years, that was a requirement, but it's not the case anymore.

P: It is here. That's very interesting.

S: Do you do any sort of research or does anybody where they're just asking the students about their experiences here and what was important? I'm just curious to know how the students feel about the research project and what it contributed to their education.

P: Probably, Dr. Thomas Lloyd in our department of obstetrics, well he's not [here] anymore. Actually, he was in obstetrics and gynecology. He's really gotten into the research with the students and what we used to call the problem solving project. He's very active with the students in that and I'm sure he could tell you anything you wanted to know about that experience.

S: So, they really see it then not just for research, but a way to get students to think independently.

P: Exactly.

S: And ask questions and figure out how to answer them.

P: Exactly.

S: I think that's great.

P: I do too.

S: I think obviously for a lot of undergraduates, that's the one part of their education I think that's lacking. They get fed a lot of information, but they're not necessarily forced to then ask questions about it and figure out to think even creatively, it does take some creative thinking.

P: Certainly does.

S: What was the social atmosphere like at Hershey in the early years? Clearly there weren't that many people, but was it formal or informal?

P: For the students or for all of us?

S: For all of you.

P: It was probably, I'd say, informal. Dr. Harrell, he himself, he and his wife, they did no entertaining at home. Everything was done at a restaurant if he was recruiting. I don't think he ever entertained the students. He had an open door policy, but that wasn't socializing. The students certainly felt that they could come in any time and talk to them, but as far as a formal setting, no I don't remember ever there being anything for students. Today, we have welcoming picnics and end of year this and that, but we did not have those in the early years. I don't know why that was, I really don't. If the students wanted to socialize, they went to the East End Restaurant in Hummlestown and the people there took care of them like a big family.

S: I know at Florida, because the first class was fairly small, there were forty students and the faculty themselves were fairly young, there was a lot of interaction between students and faculty and maybe that was enough.

P: Exactly. And if the faculty wanted to have the students over to their home... I remember they had a lot of parties, the students, and it involved the faculty as I recall because I remember being at some of those parties and there were [always] faculty members there, which was good. At that time, the faculty members were probably the same age as the students, especially the first class.

S: Because the students were older.

P: Older, yeah. I do keep in contact with several of what we call the pioneer class members. They really have fond memories of Dr. Harrell. Have you talked to any of them?

S: No.

P: You need to do that.

S: If you could get me some names.

P: I will. In fact, I just got an e-mail this morning from Dr. Terry – well, she was Terry Learn – she's now Dr. Terry English. She married Jack English, a classmate of hers. She sits on our alumni board and she would love to talk to you, I know she would. In fact, she's coming here in September. Her son David is going to look at our school as one of his choices for medical school, and we've had several former [students] who[se] children [also attended here]. But you really should talk to some of those former students.

S: Where is she?

P: She's in California.

S: Okay.

P: I have her e-mail address. I'll give it to you before you leave. She would be the perfect person to talk to. In fact, she took her son David to meet Dr. Harrell when he moved. They were traveling looking at undergraduate schools, and Dr. Harrell and his wife lived it too, which I'm sure you know, and Terry and her son went there for David just to meet Dr. Harrell. I'll get back to you before you leave because you really do need to talk to her. She could really help you there.

S: Just to talk about her impressions.

P: Exactly. That would be wonderful.

S: I'd like to do that. So that's English?

P: She was Terry **Learn**, now she's Terry English. Both she and her husband Jack, they're retired at a young age, and they live in California. Like I said, she sits on our alumni board so she does come east for the meetings and I do get to see her.

S: And you said her son is considering coming here.

P: That would be a coup if indeed we accept him and he accepts us. That would be so unique, that would be great.

S: That would be a sense of history.

P: Exactly.

- S: Did Dr. Harrell try to hire younger faculty? Was that part of his plan?
- P: He did actually because all of our department chairs that he hired were very young because we still have some, not many, we just lost some of our chairs that he hired. Yes, they were young.
- S: Some thirty years ago.
- P: Yes.
- S: This is something he did at Florida where he was looking for rising stars rather than established...
- P: Exactly. That's what he did here too. They were all very young.
- S: You mentioned at one point the physicians who were in the community, were these doctors who were already established?
- P: Doctors who were already established in the community, yes. They actually only started out that there were three of them in a practice, and that was the nucleus for this Family Community Medicine Project. After the building progressed and we had room for them over here, an office space for them to see their patients, they closed their office in town and moved over to the medical center.
- S: Did they end up then with a formal academic practice here?
- P: Yes, they did.
- S: Was there then, knowing that he did that, makes you think that perhaps he's trying to figure out how to lessen tensions with local physicians anyway. I know in Gainesville, for instance, and that may have been a larger town, there was a fair amount of conflict or at least tension in the early years between the local physicians and the hospital. They were afraid they'd lose patients to the hospital physicians. Did that seem to be a problem here at all?
- P: No, I don't think so. Not that I recall. First of all, they closed the hospital in Hershey so they didn't have that. No, I don't think that was a problem.
- S: Just from what you say about those local physicians who were incorporated into the medical school, it sounds like that may have been a way of avoiding tension.
- P: Exactly. Because the three of them had been in this community forever, so I'm sure the community felt this must be a good thing if these three are joining the staff at the medical center. Here we are still today, Family Community Medicine

with a nice-size patient population. Maybe the other physicians in the back of their head might have thought that.

S: But it was never really open.

P: Exactly.

S: So, Dr. Harrell was here from about 1965...

P: 1965, [yes]. Maybe even 1964. He completed his tenure as dean, I believe it was 1971, and then he may have stayed two years, 1973. Then he moved to Baltimore, he and his wife.

S: I know that he, at one point, was working on a book about planning medical schools. Was he doing that while he was dean or was that a project?

P: That was a project after he completed his tenure as dean. It was on facilities and planning. I have a copy of it actually, of course. He had his own staff of one that moved with him to the library, and I know that she did all that for him.

S: What led him to step down as dean?

P: I believe he was pressured to do that.

S: So it wasn't necessarily voluntary?

P: No, it was not.

S: I know that he was a visionary and a gentleman, but he also was sort of a strong personality.

P: He was very strong, yes indeed. He truly was, even to the very end. I was fortunate enough to see him at the home at Duke. I got to see him shortly before he died, and gosh he... For example, I took my niece who at that time was fourteen or fifteen and I'm thinking, oh dear, what are we going to do here, talking to this man? What is she going to do? He told stories, we talked about his research with Rocky Mountain Spotted fever, he talked about his sons. We were there for the whole afternoon I believe and he was as sharp as a tack still, and after we left she said, I really had a wonderful afternoon. He was very interesting and I just truly enjoyed listening to him. That says a lot. I knew then that that was probably the last time I would see him. We talked on the phone a lot. He and I would call each other, not constantly, but we had contact after he left here.

S: You kept up contact regularly and throughout the period.
P: Oh, yes.

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S: He was here for two years and then he went to Baltimore, to Maryland?

P: Timonium, Maryland, right.

S: What was he working on there?

P: Actually, I believe people would invite him to come and talk about the design of medical schools. I'm trying to think what else he did. Oh, **Osler**. He was into **Osler**, the history of **Osler** and Lady **Osler**. He did that, that was a high priority. I believe Dr. Lang's assistant here helped him prepare his works on that. She took care of him because I just couldn't do that here. I had too many responsibilities and just couldn't help him out, but we certainly never abandoned him. Whatever he needed, between Dr. Lang and the dean's office we would take care of him.

S: You were working full time for the dean?

P: The new dean, right.

S: Let me ask a couple of questions about Dr. Prystowsky since he came from Florida. There was an interim dean for how long a period?

P: A year.

S: Dr. Prystowsky came in, how would you describe him and his style and all the rest of it?

P: He was much more formal than Dr. Harrell ever was.

S: Really?

P: Yes. He too was a southern gentleman, but Dr. Harrell was stately, Dr. Prystowsky was not. He was kind of gruff, but really he wasn't, but he gave you that appearance that he was. He was more formal, like I said, than Dr. Harrell. [He] called most of the people in this office Misses, Miss, and for some reason I was the only one that he called Susan, by my first name. Everybody else was Misses or Miss. I don't know how that happened. Maybe because he had a son who was in high school when they came here and I don't know if they didn't feel comfortable leaving him at home. I don't know what that deal was, but I

would go out to the house and stay with the son and just tend the house. They rented an old farmhouse from the Hershey Trust Company, which controls the Milton Hershey School. So, they had that farmhouse and I guess maybe they wanted to make sure it looked lived in, so I would go out and stay there. He just was quite, quite different than Dr. Harrell. And that's fine, you need that.

S: Certainly it probably takes a particular personality to start a school, to conceptualize everything and sign it, but then when it comes to the day-to-day running of something like that, it's a different sort of job.

P: Right. He was a character.

S: Who's that?

P: Dr. Prystowsky.

S: Really?

P: Oh, yeah.

S: In what way?

P: Just a hoot. People respected him, but they were also afraid of him and a lot of people didn't like him because of his manner, I believe. They might have found him rude, but I had no trouble with him. Fortunately he liked me, he liked all of us so we were okay there. Like I said, I had no problem with him.

S: Certainly people in his office, he treated well.

P: Yes, he did, yes, he truly did.

S: Did Dr. Harrell have a sense of humor?

P: He did, but it was a quiet sense of humor. I'll never forget one day when we were giving dancing lessons next door and Dr. Harrell walked in on us. In fact, I still have the radio today that Dr. Harrell bought me, bought the office. I still use that radio. We had it on everyday and a song came on and this one gal said, I know a dance to that and I said, oh great, show me how to do that. We were in there, she was showing me how to do this dance and Dr. Harrell walked in, never missed a beat just said, oh, you're dancing today? Yes. Turned around and walked right out again. Never missed a beat about it. It was funny, but he was quiet with his sense of humor. He'd rather talk to you about the building and about his blocks. Those kinds of things.

S: He was always planning.

P: He was.

S: Do you think that Dr. Prystowsky had more of a sense of humor under his exterior?

P: Yeah, I think so.

S: How long was he dean?

P: Ten years.

S: Did you pretty much fill the same position the entire time that he was dean?

P: That Dr. Prystowsky was dean?

S: Yes. General secretarial office work. Transcription, telephones, just whatever he needed. I also bought his cigarettes, he was a smoker and he'd send me off to buy his cigarettes which is something I'm sure somebody in this chair today would not do. But yes, we used to buy his cigarettes and put them in the refrigerator.

S: The chair wouldn't send you out to get his cigarettes or wouldn't smoke? Or both?

P: Both. I don't think a woman sitting here would go out and buy cigarettes either, but heck I was young, what did I know? The boss said, go buy cigarettes. I went and bought his cigarettes. Today that would not happen I'm sure. [It] didn't bother me, didn't bother any of us. We did it and we laugh about it today, it's a good story. He was a hoot, he was a hoot.

S: Since you did keep in contact with Dr. Harrell, we'll just continue to talk about what he was doing afterwards. He worked on the **Osler** project in Maryland and his book. How long was he in Maryland after he left here, do you know?

P: No, I don't remember. Several years. He put his name in for the retirement home at Duke. It had been in for a long time and finally they were accepted, but the bad thing about that was Mrs. Harrell needed hip replacement and you had to be able to walk into that home and she did it. She had her hip replacement and she walked into that home.

S: How long after the hip replacement?

P: Not long as I recall, not long at all.

S: She had them both done at the same time?

P: She did, she had bilateral hips done. She had them done here. I didn't get to see her when I was there, I just visited with Dr. Harrell and then shortly after my visit with him she died, and then shortly after that he died.

S: He died in 1999?

P: Yeah.

S: I guess both of his sons live in Gainesville.

P: They do.

S: Did they come up [and] spend much time here? Or they were pretty well established...

P: No, they did not. Both stayed in Florida. In fact, I may have only met them once. After Dr. Harrell died we had a memorial service here and unfortunately, I was on vacation and I couldn't attend. Dr. Lang hosted a luncheon and included George and his other son Bob and I couldn't attend that. I was very, very distressed, but the boys planned it and that's what they chose so I didn't get to see them. But no, I don't ever remember them, like I said maybe one time did they come up here in the whole time he was here.

S: And the other thing, they would have been adults by the time you came on.

P: Exactly.

S: So their lives were already established.

P: Dr. Harrell would go to Florida. He and Mrs. Harrell would drive to Florida, he had a beach home, and that's where he would see them. I think George even lived abroad when I first started. He married a girl from England. I can't remember if he lived abroad for some of those years or not, and then they came to the United States. I don't remember how that was, but that would be Heather's father, Dr. Harrell's granddaughter, the doctor.

S: Another Dr. Harrell.

P: Yeah. Did anybody tell you, did he get to hood her at her medical school graduation? I can't remember if that happened or not. I thought Dr. Lang said they were going to work on having him do that. That would have been so nice.

- S: Actually, I don't know. I could find that out because I'm in touch with her, but that would be nice to know. One thing that people have said about him, I guess first of all that he was really a good diagnostician although he wasn't practicing while he was here, but I guess he was very observant.
- P: Oh, very. I told you how he watched the trees, my goodness. He knew everything about each tree that was planted out his window. I read that in his research on Rocky Mountain spotted fever and you could tell there how good he was with that in diagnosing. That's true, I would agree with that.
- S: I talked to someone who wasn't his patient, but had been having problems and he'd just basically say, look at her and tell her what her problem was.
- P: Yeah, very observant.
- S: You read his Rocky Mountain spotted fever work.
- P: Just one article and only because my mother's beautician's son-in-law was diagnosed with Rocky Mountain spotted fever and my mother was telling me about it, and I said wow, Dr. Harrell did that research and we still had some of his papers here in our files. I picked some out that I thought she, that the lay person could read. That's all that I did with that.
- S: He wasn't necessarily sending manuscripts to you?
- P: No.
- S: Your contact with him was more telephone conversation?
- P: Yes, more personal, just to see how he was or if he needed something that we might have in the files, some correspondence from the yeas past. He would call here for that. But basically I would just call just to see how he was, that's all.
- S: You said that they didn't do a lot of entertaining in the home. Was his wife active in the medical school.
- P: No, she was not.
- S: What was she doing? Did she have a profession?
- P: No, she did not. She was a dancer at one time. She was very musically inclined, but when she was here, we didn't really see her. She stayed at home. That was that.

S: She had a traditional sort of role.

P: I guess. She really didn't have any role when I think about it, not like today. Even Mrs. Prystowsky and the dean's that followed, their wives really participated. But no, she didn't have that kind of a role, and I don't know why that was.

S: That's interesting, not even as an entertainer.

P: No, [they] never had any functions at their home. I'm not even sure that she went along on those recruitment dinners with him. I don't even remember that she went on business trips either. I just don't think she did that.

S: So you didn't know her at all.

P: Yes, I knew her. We spoke on the phone, I would see her. I bet you I could count on two hands how many times I saw her the entire time he was dean. It was not very many. It was just Dr. Harrell.

S: That's interesting.

P: Very interesting, yeah.

S: I just am thinking now that I've talked to a lot of people about him, you really don't hear anything about her.

P: No.

S: Do you have any sense of what she was doing or what she was like?

P: Mrs. Lang was a very dear friend to her. She communicated with Mrs. Lang a lot. I'm sure there was no interaction with other faculty wives.

S: Did you have any thoughts about Dr. Harrell or the medical school? Things that you would say as sort of a wrap up or a general sense of the direction of medicine

P: Obviously, he got us off to a good start. It was just a pleasure to work with him, and a privilege really, it really was. He was just a man ahead of his time and just did good things to get us started, and I think he put us on strong foundation. It was a privilege to work for him, and to know him.

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S: I guess that concludes the interview with Susan Petrina. This is Nina Stoyan-Rosenzweig signing off.

[End of interview]