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Interview No. 1628

Ariel Rodriguez

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THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO INSTITUTE OF ORAL HISTORY

Interviewee: Ariel Rodriguez

Interviewer: Barbara Dent

Project: El Paso Medical History

Location: El Paso, TX

Date of Interview: March 10, 2008

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Transcript No.: 1628

Transcriber / Summary: Patrick Driscoll

Ariel Rodriguez is a former Associate Dean of the Texas Tech University School of Medicine in El Paso, TX; he was born in Jayaua, Puerto Rico, his father grew coffee; he attended the University of Dayton in Ohio, he graduated medical school at St. Louis University in Missouri and interned with the U.S. Army for residency; he made the military a career and retired at William Beaumont Army Hospital as the Chief of Surgery in 1974; he was the first associate dean of the Texas Tech Medical School in El Paso; he had a private practice as a pediatric surgeon before returning to the military, retiring again in 1993; he then worked at the Tampa Bay, FL Veterans Affairs Hospital. Dr. Rodriguez recalls time while in the Army, went to Vietnam to work in a field hospital for a year, also worked in civilian ones; he describes later duties at Ft. Bragg, NC, then Puerto Rico; he mentions service during the invasion of the Dominican Republic; he recalls coming to El Paso in 1969, describes the conditions at William Beaumont Army Hospital during its building. He recounts how he became the Associate Dean at Texas Tech Medical; he goes over the interview process and his office; he describes the programs he developed, setting up clinicals for students; he states that officials were impressed by the program but put it on probation due to low enrollment; he recalls arrangements to accommodate new students and describes not having enough students becoming family practitioners as intended; he goes over residency program with local hospitals; he reveals he quit due to a pay discrepancy. Dr. Rodriguez recalls his time in private practice with his partners as the best in his career; he explains he left after the rise of health maintenance organizations, pressured doctors to join in order to collect insurance payments; he returned to the military to accept a Chief of Surgery position in Hawaii despite pay cut; he details his son's battle with cystic fibrosis. He discusses time at Tampa Bay VA Hospital before retiring for good; next he describes being a patient at Providence Hospital for aortic valve surgery, stayed in El Paso for good. He now enjoys cooking and plans to visit children, mentions where they all live across the

country; he reveals that he kept his Florida medical license but let his Texas one expire, wants it reinstated to do volunteer work and get actively involved in El Paso's medical community again.

Length of interview 51 minutes

Length of Transcript n/a