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Interview no. 823

Frances Hatfield

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UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO

INSTITUTE OF ORAL HISTORY

INTERVIEWEE: Frances Hatfield

INTERVIEWER: Barbara K. Dent

PROJECT: El Paso Medical Community

DATE OF INTERVIEW: April 21, 1988

TERMS OF USE: Unrestricted

TAPE NO: 823

TRANSCRIPT NO: 823

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BIOGRAPHICAL SYNOPSIS OF INTERVIEWEE:

Former president of El Paso County Medical Auxiliary and Texas Medical Auxiliary; author; wife of Haskell Hatfield, M.D., longtime El Paso ear, nose, and throat specialist; born in Monroe, Louisiana, 1910; attended Texas College of Mines and Metallurgy; married, 1934; taught at Dreyfus School.

SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW:

Recollects family's move to El Paso after mother contacted tuberculosis; husband's internship at El Paso City-County Hospital; opening up of husband's private practice in Ysleta; economic conditions during the Depression; husband's military stint during World War II; move to St. Louis after husband's decision to take refresher medical courses at Washington University Medical School; Dr. Hatfield's residency in Houston; return to El Paso, 1948; husband's role as pioneer in construction of El Paso Medical Center; polio epidemic; activities of Woman's Auxiliary of El Paso County Medical Society during World War II; discusses history of Woman's Auxiliary of the Texas Medical Association; acquisition of S.T. Turner home by El Paso County Medical Society.

Length of Interview: 45 minutes Length of Transcript 22 pages

WITH: FRANCIS HATFIELD
PLACE: EL PASO, TEXAS
DATE: APRIL 21, 1988
INTERVIEWER: BARBARA DENT

I am here today to interview Francis Hatfield about her life here in El Paso and part of the Medical Society Auxiliary.

Q Francis, can you tell me a little bit about yourself before you came to El Paso? Where were you born?

A I was born in Monroe, Louisiana.

Q In what year?

A In 1910.

Q Thank you. And when did you meet Dr. Hatfield?

A In 1931.

Q Whereabouts?

A I was going to school out at the College of Mines, it was then, because I didn't have my Texas history or government. So, I had to go out to the college to make up the subjects that I didn't have. You can't teach in Texas if you don't know Texas history and Texas government. So, I was out there going to school and I met him out there on the campus. He was home from medical school.

Q Where did he go to medical school?

A In the University of Texas at Galveston.

Q Then when did you get married?

A In 1934.

Q Did you go back to Galveston with him or had he already graduated?

A No. We waited until he finished college. He had to intern at the City/ County Hospital, and we married when he finished medical school.

Q Was the City/ County Hospital Thomason General then, or was it --

A Yes. It was the hospital that became Thomason General.

Q And where was it located?

A Where the hospital is now.

Q Oh, really? Down there on --

A Uh-huh.

Q And where did you live when you first came here?

A When I first came here?

Q I mean, when you first, well -- when you first came here after you were married?

A After we were married, well -- we had a small apartment on Nevada Street and it was called -- it was what was called a one-room that the bed came out --

Q A Murphy Bed?

A Yes. And I think it was \$18 a month.

Q With utilities?

A I don't remember that part, but at least we could afford that. I went on teaching at Dreyfus School, and I think you got

\$50 a month at the City/ County Hospital and I got \$50 a month. And when we went together, why, I stayed at the school. He stayed at the hospital. So, it was a strange arrangement, but it was all right.

Q And then after he finished his internship, did he open up his practice?

A Yes. He opened an office in Ysletta. He took Dr. Brooks, who had been a general practitioner down there for a number of years and he died, and Hatfield took over his office.

Q Did you still live in your same little apartment or did you-

A No. Now, by that time I was pregnant, of course, and this was a bad time. But anyway, I was --

Q That was during the Depression?

A Yeah. But during the worst part of it, I think. But, anyway, it was nice and the people were always so nice to us, and that is when I first met a number of the doctors. I already knew Dr. and Mrs. Homan and a few others; doctors such as the ones down there, Dr. and Mrs. Love. They were just lovely people.

Q Did your husband ever receive payment for his practice during the Depression?

A No. Not very much. Sometimes \$.50 or \$ 1.00, but mostly it was vegetables and chickens and something that would take the place of money. I don't think many people had much money those days.

Q How many children did you have by the end of the Depression?
How many children do you have, period?

A I have two sons.

Q And they were both born during this time?

A Yes. Uh-huh.

Q Then what happened during the war?

A Well Haskell had accepted a commission in the reserves when we finished medical school, so that he already was a lieutenant. And whenever they were called to come to for training, he always went. So that, by the time the War started, I mean, it was in 1941 -- in January, 1941 -- he was called into service. That, when they called the reserves and the State, I can't think of the name.

Q The National Guard?

A National Guard, uh-huh. And he was sent to Fort Sill in January, 1941.

Q Did you go with him?

A Uh-huh. Yes, we did. The two boys and I went. We stayed with him at a time we could, and he was on orders to go overseas several times, but something always happened and he didn't go. He'd be sent somewhere else and so -- but we moved fourteen times. So, that's a lot of moving in five years.

Q Yes. That sure is.

A Then he said that he had not practiced medicine in all that time and he wanted to go back and refresh his medical education because so many different things had happened to medical practice

during the War with all of the miracle drugs and procedures in surgery. So, he went back to Saint Louis and he spent a year in Washington University Medical School, there, then took an internship or a residency in ear, nose, and throat in Houston

Q And you said you all went with him?

A Yes. Uh-huh. We sure did.

Q Then when did you come back to El Paso to live?

A It was in the summer of 1948.

Q And where did you live then?

A Well, we had a house. We owned a house on Montana Street.

Q Uh-huh.

A And of course we didn't -- we didn't let it go. We rented so we had to get that all cleaned up and that's where we lived until we moved to that house on Government Hill Terrace.

Q Is Dr. Hatfield from El Paso?

A No. He was born in Indiana, but they brought Mr. Hatfield to settle here in 1910, dying of T.B. and he was two years old and he thought he was a native Texan. That's all he knew.

Q Uh-huh.

A And he just thought that if you weren't a Texan and you didn't go to the University of Texas, that was too bad for you. That was part of his philosophy.

Q And then, when Dr. Hatfield was an E.N.T. specialist, where did he practice at? Where was his office.

Q Well, it was down in the old First National Building downtown. I think about on the tenth floor. And a number of

them, when we retired from the service, went into that building and he stayed there until they built the office down at Medical Center, where he was one of the ones who pioneered that.

Q When did you get interested or busy with the auxiliary.

A Well, I have sort of inherited it because my mother was sent out here with T.B. in 1918, and she spent two years in Dr. Homan's sanitarium. And -- I think it was 1920 -- Dr. Homan told her she could leave the hospital but she had to stay in El Paso. So, my three Sisters and I came out here and stayed with Mother for two years and I took music from Mrs. Homan, Mrs. R.B. Homan, Sr. from her Sister, who had the studio in their home, there, next to Homan's sanitarium. Mrs. Homan always thought that I belonged to her. So, as soon as I married Haskell, she put a finger on me. And so, I never was really unconscious of not being part of the Medical Auxiliary. She made it very -- she made you feel as if you married a doctor, you also married the Auxiliary. That was her way of looking at things because she really lived Auxiliary. And you remember Nina Turner. I'm sure you remember her. She was like that, too.

Q And then you became very active after you returned?

A Yes because somehow or the other, since the children were older, and I had a little more time and Mrs. Turner realized that I had some experience in writing and she came to me that. I had hardly gotten my hat off before she came to call and get me to help her with the program for the State. It was called School of Instruction, then. It's that meeting they have in the fall. And

then, so, we worked in the program together and that was the first.

Q Is that when she was State President?

A No. This was in between. She was on the national board. I've forgotten who suggested it. She had this school of instruction. I'm sure it must have been the State President or she, was at that time.

Q Uh-huh.

A And that's how I got started. And one thing led to another, you know, when you're writing a history; pretty soon something else, and then Mrs. Laws, Dr. Laws' wife wrote a very good history of the Auxiliary and it disappeared and I don't know what ever happened to it.

Q Did it get sent to Austin or --

A No. They didn't have the research and romance then. Now we have it for our own-self and there's --

Q There's not anyone down at the Turner Home you know?

A No, and we went through it all. Then I think one of the presidents --

Q -- cleaned out all the files?

A Just cleaned out all the files and didn't recognize what it was and threw it out by accident. That's what happened, you know, to all our secretaries -- secretaries looked -- that's why we have no history.

Q What was the polio epidemic like here in town?

A Well, it -- it wasn't bad every year, but there'd be years

when it would peak and it was a dreadful thing. Harris had a light case of -- my oldest son had a light case of it and fortunately, we were in New Orleans. That's when we were sent back to the airbase in New Orleans, where that famous Dr. Oschner --

Q Uh-huh.

A And I think without him -- no telling.

Q Did the Auxiliary do anything about that time?

A No. You know they did not have very many activities during the War. I think it almost killed Auxiliary members to have to make all those dressings for the American Red Cross, but they did. And I think Mrs. Homan always had us saving magazines and cleaning linens for the T.B. patients down at the City/ County Hospital. They had a kind of an outpatient department. It was an isolation ward and a T.B. ward. And so, we saved it to give and that was the most charitable thing that we did.

Q But, the Auxiliary mainly was social at that time.

A Yes, and we tried to keep up with anything of interest in the community. They -- I'm trying remember how long the battle went on for it to be made. It wasn't done. I guess it had been settled before the Second World War, but it took forever for the State to make it mandatory that you had the vital statistics known.

Q Oh, yeah.

A So, that was one of the things the Auxiliary was doing. I helped on.

Q After Dr. Salk's vaccine came out, did you all have a big polio drive?

A Yes, we did. Larry Nicky, who is now head of our public health field and Mary Von Breason, who is past president or was past president of the Medical Society -- she organized all the woman in the league after this Salk decision until we vaccinated everybody in it.

Q You know what we found one day down at the Turner Home when we were cleaning out the butler's pantry? We found over two cases of sugar cubes that they must have used for the polio vaccine.

A Uh-huh.

Q But, when did you start working your way up the ladder toward the president of the El Paso County Medical Auxiliary?

A I don't know. I guess Virginia Green was the first one that had me working on her board and I don't know what year that was, but '49 or 50 -- but my job was -- I was the vice and then my job was to collect money to buy the dishes and the silver for the Turner Home and that was a real hard job.

Q I bet it was.

A Uh-huh. And I stayed on the board until (unintelligible) was elected president.

Q Uh-huh. And then, when you were elected president? Do you remember?

A No. It was sometime in the 1950s. It was when Mrs. Turner was national president.

Q Oh.

A It's right here. She was the president of the national and I was the president of the local and Ralph was president of the high school. There was that president in 1955.

Q And then, when were you president of the State?

A 1959 and 1960.

Q What was life here like in El Paso in the early 1950s? How big was El Paso?

A I don't remember. It hadn't taken the turn for growth that we have now.

Q Uh-huh.

A And I think things went along about the same speed.

Q Where did the kids go to school?

A Well, they went to El Paso High School and they both went to the University of Texas. Harris went to A&M for one year.

Q How does that get to your husband, if he went to Texas A&M? That was --

A Well, I don't know how they settled it. But, anyway, that is where he went. Well, he was very active and I was teaching, too. So, Ralph went to the University of Austin and he started out to be an Episcopal minister and then switched in the middle of one year and went into biochemistry and he has been going strong ever since.

Q Yes. You've done a lot of work in the history of medicine here in El Paso. Can you tell us something about that?

A Well, the important thing about working on that is the

records of the Medical Society are lost, too, so that we are constantly filling blank spaces and every time you can get another source of information, like in our library is the Turner Home --

Q Uh-huh.

A Some of Dr. Turner's books about the State records would give us information on what was going on in El Paso, which is another check. For instance, Dr. -- it was Dr. W. Wright that was the second president, who reported to the State that El Paso organized on the first day of October, 1989.

Q That, we know.

A Uh-huh. Because that is on the record. You see, you happen on these things -- and there's really no way -- sometimes you don't even know where to look.

Q That's right.

A And you can't always rely on newspaper reports because sometimes they give you the wrong information, and I know. That is one thing that has amused me in writing about these area doctors. Dr. Alward White was the father of Owen P. White, who wrote so many stories.

Q Uh-huh.

A And in checking on his writing about his father, he wrote three different versions of how they happened to come to El Paso. So, I decided that he would rather tell a good story than to tell the truth. You know good and well that Dr. White did not dump his wife off and leave her with her folks when she was fixing to

have a baby and come tearing off to El Paso. No, that doesn't make sense. He had to accept a job as deputy collector of customs because he couldn't make a living practicing medicine. There weren't enough people here.

Q When did -- were you able to get any information out of the old Hotel Dieu.

Q Yes. We have some of the records that have the -- I've forgotten the Sister Mary -- Sister Mary -- I don't think that she is there anymore, but she let us copy Dr. Gallagher's letter to his wife, when he described the first operation there at the Hotel Dieu.

Q Uh-huh. Why was he a writing to his wife? She wasn't here?

A Well, he had come down here for his health, but they brought him on a stretcher. They didn't think he'd live to get here from New York. But, after four years, he was able to do some practice, but he couldn't -- he could not fulfill -- for instance, he had to show Dr. Villas how to operate -- how to perform an appendectomy -- because he wasn't well enough to do it himself and Dr. Villas had never done one, so he had to. He stood there and showed Dr. Villas. This woman would have died if they hadn't been there.

Q Uh-huh. How many hospitals were around at that time?

A Well, there were a number of small ones -- hospitals that were -- that had been around for -- so, what they would do -- course the Hotel Dieu, the first large hospital -- and then Dr. Haskett came here for himself from Richmond, Virginia and he

opened Saint Luke's Hospital, which was build across the street from where the public library is now -- about where the motel is there, Holiday Inn, about there. He was there. He stayed there about four years and he was well enough to go home and -- nearly everybody would come down here with T.B. to get well and always did go back home and -- but he got Dr. Schuster. He helped Dr. Schuster get started and Dr. Schuster, of course, built Providence Hospital, up the street -- just a couple of blocks from where Saint Luke's was. And then, Ralston Hospital was near where Sears is now. That later became the Masonic Hospital.

Q Is that why everybody says they were born in the old Sears?

A Yes. Both my sons were born there and everybody. But Baldwin -- Dr. Baldwin opened a hospital for T.B. and that's the one that Dr. Homan bought. It was a beautiful gray stone building up on the hill above the Medical Center and, of course, it has been torn down. You might remember it was Saint Joseph's for a while.

Q Oh, yeah. The steps are still there. The concrete steps are still there.

A Uh-huh. That's where many mother was for two years -- in that hospital, Homan Sanatorium.

Q Southwestern, was that an old hospital? Is that the furniture in there?

A No. No. They built that to get more space and this turned out just to be a hospital for T.B. patients -- that the people were getting well at that hospital and so they turned it into a

general hospital. But it was for a long time. It was just a -- and it was run by Dr. Homan and Dr. George Turner was one of the owners and I'm sure it's all changed now, but some corporation owns that.

Q Yes. Two or three times down the road. When was the new Providence Hospital built and when did it become so involved with Sam Young and that group?

A Oh my. Let's see. That hasn't been too many years ago. Mrs. Scuster was still alive when they started working on that -- on that new hospital. I declare. I can't remember. I'd have to get my notes out to recall when they built that thing. There is a wonderful article in one of the collections of articles put out by the Password, you know, the --

Q Oh yeah.

A -- in which Dr. Van Norman wrote up the history of the hospital in El Paso

Q Good. How many books or articles have you written concerning the history of medicine in El Paso and of the State?

A Oh, I imagine it would be round 25. You go back, it was 1978 when Julia Breck -- to help her with his book -- a story about Dr. Rhinheimer, that was the year he was selected to be in the Hall of Fame, then -- El Paso Historical Society Hall of Fame. And so, we did an article together on him. It was called the Research and Romance of Medicine, then. Of course, it has been changed to Medical Heritage -- is the name of that committee, now. And so, every year from that time on, it was

either a doctor or something going on -- that I wrote articles about. And one year the state chairman needed an extra article, so I wrote four or five extra for her to take down to the South western meeting and I know that one of them was an article about Dwight Dieter as a medical assistant. See, that's a whole new field in medical practice and so, that won some kind of award.

Q This is Russel's son?

A Yes. Dr. Russel Dieter and Virginia's son. And then, of course, Ysletta. It told some of the stories about when he practiced medicine in New Mexico in the winter-time, he'd have to ride on horseback through the snow to get to his patients and I thought that was interesting. His Sister became ill in some small town in Texas and so they called Dr. Lain to go and when he got there. Why, he knew that they had not been treating her for what was wrong with her. She had some kind of thing that was Malaria fever and they had given her all the wrong medicine. So, there was nothing we could do. But, he met a pretty little girl named Olive and so, they fell in love. And so, he asked her to marry him. Well, she said she'd marry him but she wasn't going to live out of Texas. So, the closest he could get to New Mexico and still keep her in Texas, but to come to El Paso. It's a real cute story.

Q This is the book that you wrote, I guess, in 1968 for the Women's Auxiliary of the Texas Medical Association. This is the history of the State Auxiliary?

A Yes.

Q Is it still in print anywhere or --

A Yes. Of course it is. I'm sure there are no more copies available, but we have a copy in the Turner Home library, and I'm sure there are copies in the State Library.

Q And right, now. You are writing a cookbook. Can you tell us something about that?

A Well, it started out to be just a cookbook and we conceived the idea of using it to mark the celebration of Texas Sesquicentennial. So, it became a collection of recipes about the history of Texas -- that the cooks and the land where they lived -- that they cooked. And so, it became a varied history of cookery in El Paso County and all our friends and family has helped us with the recipes. We have some real neat recipes, we think, and it started with the maize which is Indian corn and goes to Mousse, which is about the fanciest dessert that you can make. And then, we end with Mrs. Homan, R.B. and Mrs. Homan. But, her recipe for Maple Mousse. You know, she organized our auxiliary. Also, she was the first president and it seemed fitting that we include and end with this.

Q And so, this with be printed this year?

A Yes. We hoped to have it available by August.

Q Yes. A couple of years ago, you did a history of pioneers of the doctors here in El Paso.

A Yes. That was an effort. I had been trying so hard for about ten years to restore as much as I can of the background of the Medical Society because, during the War years, all the

records of the society were moved down to Liberty Hall and stored in a vacant room down there and it was while everybody was away during their tours of duty that -- the records were placed there and they remained --

(End of side one)

A Mrs. Gallagher, who was the wife of the first president of the Medical Society, volunteered to go down and nurse because there was no one to nurse the people in El Paso.

Q What did Dr. Gallagher say?

A Dr. Gallagher say? For Pete's sake. Well, the one that is his grandson knows about that, Colonel Gallagher.

Q I don't know.

A Grandson, all right. Colonel Francis Gallagher. This is his grandson. And anyway, she went to work one morning. Of course there was no transportation, so that you walked from their home, which was across the street from the Hotel Dieu, clear down to south El Paso and, evidently, she did not feel very good, so she came back home and laid down and she died that afternoon.

Q Wow. That was terrible.

A She was a beloved person. She was so good to everybody. She was the one I told you about. He came on a stretcher and was dying with T.B. and he couldn't operate when he was about to die

or something to perform an appendectomy. And in this letter that I read that he wrote to his wife, he said that not very many would come to the hospital because they thought it was a place you went to die, and so, he wrote that. And pretty soon people got over their attitude about hospitals.

Q Do you think they said that because they used to call them pest hole hospitals?

A Well, I don't think the hospitals everywhere were mixed up with the places where they sent the poor, you know, people with infectious diseases. I don't think they ever mixed those up and the -- on of these early doctors, Dr. Knowblood was tired of being in the army and decided when he got out, he wanted to go somewhere. He was travelling from Fort Concho coming west and he got to El Paso and decided he liked it and thought he would stay here. And he was the first person to be in charge of a hospital for the people who had infectious diseases and he stayed in charge until he began to get terrible arthritis because he had been in the Civil War and slept in wet clothes and, like the soldiers did -- they would not -- the foot soldiers had to retire. He was, I think, in the list of early-comers to El Paso. He would be the third one. Dr. Alward White would be the first and then Dr. Alexander, who came to Fort Bliss and stayed here and Dr. Knowblood in order of time in which they came to El Paso.

Q When did Dr. Turner come to El Paso?

A Dr. S.T. Turner?

Q Yes.

A The one we were talking about. He got here in 1889. The railroad sent him. He had been over in Marfa and they needed a division of surgeons here, so they sent him.

Q Now, when he came here, was he married?

A Oh, yes. He and Miss Annie Laurie Camp came from there. They had married in 1882, so they had been married seven or eight years by the time they came here. They had lost two infant sons in the smallpox epidemic.

Q And then, who built the house there on Montana?

A In 1910, he bought the property in 1905 and then they built the house in 1910.

Q And was this the center of the social era?

A Well, it really was Montana Street. Along that way was sparsely built -- the Drive of the City and the family that lived across from what is now an art museum. The Turneys -- he was the State Senator and then Dr. Turner -- and then Dr. Rainer lived across on the other side of the street, not as early as they were there, though. And that picture we have of the Brumflo from his mother and father had one of the first cars in their family in 1910. You can see that Montana Street is not paved.

Q Did -- were there lots of parties at Turner Home?

A Well, they entertained a lot but, you know, she was very intolerant about alcohol and levity and she didn't go in for any chitchat, I guess is what you would call it. And she was a warm and lovingly person. There's no question about that. But, she just -- they never served anything alcoholic.

Q Did you tell me they belonged to the Baptist Church?

A Yes. And she was a very ardent Baptist and she would give all her money to the Baptist Church. And so, Dr. Turner just took her allowance away from her. And so, she started renting out her room, so she could have a little money to give to the Baptist Church. She said he could never get ahead of her.

Q When did she die?

A She died in 1938.

Q And then he remarried?

A In 1943.

Q And who was his second wife?

A Lucy Roberts, who was the schoolteacher here in El Paso and came here from Clarksville, Texas and taught at Burleson Grade School until 1941 when she retired. And I'm not sure how she and Dr. Turner met. He was ten years older than she was, but normally they met one time in the spring of 1943. They went to Las Cruces with some friends and were married; and one of their favorite pastimes was for her to read to him from the latest novels and out of his medical journals and, when his eyesight began to fail, of course, it was very important that she had already learned to read these things for him. He died in the spring of 1946 and she stayed in the Turner Home for about a year and turned it over to the Medical Society in 1947 because Dr. Turner had left it to them to be used as a library or a club. And so in, I guess, about the summer of 1947, they started their offices down there. I remember the Auxiliary worked real hard to

try to clean up the house. It was the kitchen that was the biggest mess I ever saw in my life. The terrible wood stove -- and you couldn't possibly use the thing in your life. And it took us a long, long time before they had anything in that kitchen. It was the greatest filth.

Q Then, the stove that is in there now is not the original one of the house?

A No.

Q The furniture in the dining room, that's original?

A That belongs there. That is some of the furniture that they ordered from New York.

Q And what about the furniture in the living room?

A Well, part and pieces. That little green love seat and the two chairs -- Dr. and Mrs. Jordan gave that to the Medical Society and I don't believe anymore furniture. I don't know what happened to the rest of the furniture and whether or not Dr. Turner gave it to them. I don't know.

Q What about the dishes that are in the china cabinet, there in the dining room?

A Well, some of them were there and some were given by different members of the Auxiliary who wanted to show them and put them in the china cabinet.

Q When did you start using that as your luncheon place?

A Well, we did right away, except that you have to almost bring the food in cups because it's real hard to get anything done in that kitchen, not only cook-wise, but to wash up the

dishes is a big chore.

Q When you remodeled the kitchen and you got the great big stove in there, did you put -- you must have put a new sink in there?

A Oh, we had to, yes. Those two sinks in there are new.

Q What was in the little sink that was in the butler's pantry? That's also new, as are the dishes.

A Yes.

This concludes today's interview. Perhaps we can come back again. Thank you.

Postnote -- Dr. S.T. Turner died from of diabetes after he had one of legs amputated.

Mrs. Lucy Turner had a garage sail just before she moved and sold off a lot of the furnishings.

Mrs. George (Nika) Turner got the Tiffany chandelier from the dining room. The crystal one there now was bought by the Auxiliary.