

## **Eugene (McHugh) Taylor**

Interviewed by: Lori McDonald and Jack Christensen 06/26/1996

Transcribed by: Jennie Hakes

Cassette tape label: *Eugene McHugh Taylor June 26, 1996*

*Interviewed by Lori McDonald, Jack Christensen*

### **Side 1**

#### ***Introduction***

Lori: OK.

Jack: I'll make this introduction. Today's date is June 26, 1996. We're doing an interview today – conducting a tape interview – with Eugene Taylor, stepson of Doctor Roderick McHugh, who practiced in Aitkin 1919 to July 8, 1935. Conducting the interview is Lori McDonald and myself, Jack Christensen, members of Aitkin County Historical Society.

The interview is being conducted in the Aitkin County Historical Society Museum building. We hope to accomplish, in this interview, is all the information that Mr. Taylor would have of his stepfather, his practice in Aitkin, his family, and all the information that would be pertinent and kept on file, via this tape, at the Society.

I'll turn the interview over to Lori McDonald and Eugene Taylor.

Lori: We're really glad that you're here with us this morning, and we're hoping that you can... you're kind of our missing link, as applies to the medical community in Aitkin, and we're surely hoping that you can share your own recollections and some of the anecdotes or other statistical information, whatever you might have, with us, as it applies to both your life here in Aitkin and your father's medical practice. So we'll start out first with just the vital statistics.

#### ***How his mother met Dr. McHugh***

Your name is...

Eugene: Gene – Eugene – middle initial E. Taylor, T – A – Y – L – O – R. I was born 31 July 1914 in Elveston, Illinois. My own father died when I was three years old, in 1917. My brother Raymond was two weeks old at the time. Subsequently, my mother moved up here to a farm in Rossburg, and met Dr. McHugh as the result of my jumping onto a spike and getting a bad infection in my left foot. I was treated at Mrs. Lorenz' (?) boarding house. Dad made an incision to drain the foot, and till this day, if I look at a white enamel bucket, I can assure you, I get cold sweats!

L: (Laughs)

E: Dr. Ben Kelley was in practice at the time, and prior to the treatment, he and my father argued about whether or not to amputate a portion of the leg. Fortunately, Dad decided that it could be saved, and it was.

Dad's office was in the second story of a bank building – I don't recall which bank it was – but, Mr. C. P. DeLait (?) was the owner of the building, and had been president of the bank that was then insolvent.

L: Gene, if I can just interject here, I think the bank building was located... the present location would be Minnesota Avenue and First Street Northwest. OK? Excuse me.

E: The building, er, the second floor, was a series of three suites. Tim Mahaney – Timothy Mahaney – was the attorney facing Main Street. Dennis Murphy was the dentist on the corner facing both ways, and Dad was on the side facing the side street.

My first recollection of going up to the office at that time, was Dad taking some x-rays in the room that was adjacent to his office, and I know now, in retrospect, that the x-ray was an old Coolidge tube and that in order to get the proper voltages for the x-rays that he had to take, he actually moved the wires – or the clips – from wire to wire up overhead! How it worked, I don't know! (Laughs)

L: (Laughs)

G: Thank God I don't know! But that was how primitive the x-ray was at the time. His practice covered a very, very wide area. Sandy Lake was well within the area. South of Cedar Lake was well within the area. On occasion, he would be up on the south shore of Mille Lac Lake - Malmo, Lawler, Sawyer. There was hardly an area in Aitkin County that he did not cover. He was both a physician and a surgeon.

### ***Dr. McHugh's early years and education***

His name originally was – according to the birth records – was Roger McHugh. And that was after a great, great grandfather who'd been a sergeant in the British regiment at the Battle of Waterloo. And as the result of his activities there he was awarded a land grant in Canada, where the McHugh's migrated to, and from Canada into the United States.

Dad was born in Langdon, North Dakota. I don't have the exact date, I can give that to you later. You can fill that in. He attended St. Thomas for a portion of his school... schooling, and graduated from Marquette with a degree in medicine. Did his internship at St. Joseph's Hospital in St. Paul, and then after he went into practice, he worked for the King Mine in (*unintelligible*) area. It was then the world's largest open pit mine.

### ***Serving in World War I***

At the start of World War I, or just prior to World War I, he was commissioned in the Medical Corps of the Army, and was sent down to the Mexican border because of the problems that we were having then with Pancho Villa. In 1918, the unit was ordered overseas, and after a long train trip across the United States, they embarked from New York. He landed at La Havre in France. No – they landed first in Liverpool, went cross-country, and then across the channel to La Havre.

He was assigned to a large hospital in La Mans, and did most of his work there, at the hospital in La Mans with detail to other hospitals as needed.

In 1919, he returned to the United States, after a short stint in the Army of Occupation, and came back here to Minnesota. I have no knowledge of why he selected Aitkin. He

did say on many occasions, that he wanted to live in an area that had four real seasons a year, and that was his choice.

He also liked to hunt. He wasn't much of a fisherman; he really didn't care much for it. But he did like hunting, and I guess at that time it was good hunting here.

### ***Dr. McHugh's father and grandfather***

I do have a (*unintelligible*). (Reading from a document) "Dr. McHugh was born in Langdon, North Dakota, in - the date to be supplied later - and went to school there. His father had been a saloon keeper in Deadwood at the time that Lead and Deadwood were gold rush areas. And Calamity Jane was one of the Pharaoh (?? Card game?) dealer in the saloon, on occasion when she wasn't pushing ox teams between Lead and Deadwood."

We have pictures of her in the family album someplace. Dad's father made enough money to start in the land business in Langdon in conjunction with a land grant from Jim Hill of the railway. The city of Langdon was founded by Granddad McHugh, who established a string of granaries all the way across the northern tier of North Dakota to over in Montana. The crash in 1913 kinda wiped that out, but at that time, there was sufficient money to send Dad to college.

### ***Settling in Aitkin***

When he came to Aitkin, he was still not too well-fixed. He was living in Mrs. Morinne's (?) boarding house. And building up his bank account. He met Mother as a result of that accident where I jumped on the spike. They were married in 1921. And moved into the house - I don't know what street that's on -

L: By the river?

G: Yeah, by the river.

L: That's on Minnesota Avenue South and 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue Southeast... 1<sup>st</sup> Street Southeast.

G: The old home is still standing today. And my mother decided that the interior of that house did not suit her at all. There was a stairway coming down the center with a butler's pantry underneath, which chewed up a lot of room. She had that removed, and a stairway put on at the side. Later on, I... a dining room was added, above a coal bin down in the basement. The house was fired, or heated, by two furnaces - a hot air furnace and a hot water furnace. For part of the year, the hot air furnace would go on the line, and take the chill off the place. Then later on, when it got a little colder, he'd switch over to the hot water furnace, which heated the radiators in the house. And then when it really got nasty cold, why, both would be fired. I was the principal fireman!

L: (Laughs)

E: (*unintelligible*) ...ash all over and what have you.

L: What kind of fuel, Gene?

E: Wood!

L: Uh huh, no coal.

E: No. To being with, wood. Dad patients paid him in kind.

L: Ok, I was going to ask about that.

### ***Paying the doctor by barter***

E: And cordwood was one of the commodities of the day. He would have wood hauled in in length, and then one of the local people who did the sawing usually owed him a bill, so he would come over. (Laughs)

Well, a lot of that was done by bartering in those days.

L: Sure.

E: I digress here, but he was paid in eggs, and butter, and a side of beef, or a quarter of beef, half of a pig...

L: You didn't digress at all, because we had "method of payment" as one of our questions to ask you.

E: The Indians on occasion would bring in these - they looked like big cupcakes, of maple sugar. Sometimes there was a little sand in the maple sugar. (Laughs) But the other thing, of course, was we never were lacking for beaded moccasins and Mother put her foot down on a jacket, because it smelled to high heaven.

L: (Laughs)

(They take a little break here)

E: The little hall over in that area where they would have church meetings. The Holy Rollers would hold a meeting there. And the lady downstairs had a parrot. Boy, she was a damn parrot - Jack has heard the story! The Holy Rollers were raising particular hell upstairs. All of the sudden everything stopped. And a delegation came downstairs to ask this lady to please do something about her parrot. It was disturbing the meeting! (Lots of laughter) That was the joke in town for a week!

L: Sure it was, I bet it was!

E: You heard that one before.

### ***Remodeling and decorating the house***

L: Well, let's see. We have your parents now living up on the south side of the Mississippi River at Minnesota Avenue South.

E: Ripple River.

L: Excuse me, Ripple River.

E: Right on the bank of Ripple River.

L: Absolutely. South bank. So we have them there. Your mom has moved the stairway from the center of the house over to the north wall of the living room.

E: Oh, yeah.

L: And subsequently, she...

E: Every wall in that house had this miserable calcimine<sup>1</sup> on it. Have you ever taken calcimine off?

L: No, but I understand it's a real problem.

E: You know what calcimine is? It's colored clay.

L: Yeah.

E: No kiddin'. One room in that house, the one at the head of the stairs on the left-hand side, the small bedroom, and your truly with the aid of a ladder and a steel brush, took thirteen coats of calcimine off the wall. You put the water on, and it would ball up underneath, and we had newspapers spread out down below. Remember the old galvanized washtubs like this? We carried those out, tub after tub after tub. Got down to the wall, and then Mother started decorating.

L: She was an accomplished artist.

E: Yes, she was good.

L: I remember the hand-painted walls in the house. I also remember there was a very thick stucco that was on the stairway.

E: Gesso. All right, what you did there, you had your mixture, which was plaster, glue, and what have you. You dip the brush in that and put it up against the wall, and then rotated the brush and pulled up.

L: You could take the hide off you, if you bumped up against it.

E: It did!

L: Yeah! I remember Grandfather's office had the same thing.

E: And then, the wall was paneled with a flat space in between these panels. And raised panels in between. And then, in order to color those things, remember the old clip guns that you used to...

L: Oh, sure!

E: All right. This one had a pale blue in it. This one had the pink in it. This one had another color. And then the highlight was a gold, it was gilded. And it just had to be done, you know...

L: With the various colors...

E: Like that (gesturing). And then, after it was all finished (another gesture) bidip, bidip, bidip there. Mother, of course, did the supervising, did much of the work herself. I could tell you, that I did a heck of a lot of it myself. The dining room was the one that had the walls painted with scenes.

L: The hollyhocks?

E: Hollyhocks and...

---

<sup>1</sup> "A white or tinted liquid of whiting or zinc white, glue, and water, used as a wash chiefly for plastered surfaces." – Webster's New World Dictionary

L: I think there was an upstairs bedroom and I remember the bathroom having hand-painted scenes.

E: The bathroom, the first one that...

L: ...like a seascape.

E: ...Dad said it made him seasick (Laughs). He left it there, but the bedroom there had the, kind of a tropical scene on the walls. The most beautiful thing that she did, and I don't know where that screen went, but she had taken pictures from the National Geographic Magazine, and had this three-paneled screen and had painted all the birds on it. Beautifully done! And then laid the thing flat, and I put a coat of varnish over it. This was done on silk. And I put a coat of varnish on it, and then while the varnish was still wet, she got these little, tiny glass beads, and it – for some reason or other – gave it a three-dimensional effect. When you looked at that, it looked like the birds were flying around.

L: My word! It must have been beautiful.

### ***Family***

L: Tell us about your brothers and sisters, two of each, right? In addition to Raymond.

E: Yeah, there's, let's see. Raymond you've got; he was born on the 12<sup>th</sup> of July, 1917. And dad died, he probably died the 27<sup>th</sup>. Mick was born 1922 in June...

L: That's Michael?

E: Yeah, Michael. In the middle of the damndest thunderstorm you ever heard!

L: (Laughs)

E: Patty was born in 1924.

L: We can insert that.

E: Truman (?) was born in '25. And that's probably about as of them as I can remember at that time. Robert, the eldest, (youngest?) was very, very ill when he was born.

L: Oh, is that right?

E: He... the first six months of his life, he was so sick. I remember these little 2 ½ ounce bottles, baby bottles. If I got a fourth of those down him at one time, it was a good deal. What I'd do... she had a bassinette made of a clothes basket, lined in the inside with a pillow and (*unintelligible*) and then that little frame underneath (*unintelligible*). I'd sit in the rocking chair with my book that I was studyin' – did my studies that way – put my feet through that and rock back and forth, rocked him. His dad said if he'd cry too long, he'd die!

L: Did your dad have a diagnosis for what...

E: They fumbled around and fumbled around, until finally they found out what he was allergic to was none other than mother's milk, which was not - she didn't nurse him for any length of time at all - but cow's milk as well. And that was when he bought a bunch of goats. And had that guy supply the goat's milk. After that, he went straight up.

L: Oh, for goodness sakes. When your mother had the four children after she and your dad were married, were they born at home, or did they go to one of the local hospitals or...?

E: Mickey and Patty were born at home. I think Truman was born over at Niekraus (?) and Bob was born in Brainerd.

L: Probably anticipating some problems then?

E: Well, mother'd been ill.

L: Ok.

E: You know, until after Dad died, she was not well at all in latter years, she had a hysterectomy, and from then on she was as healthy as could be. But she'd had one of these – the diagnosis was (*unintelligible*) uterus. And hers was severely fibroid to a point where she couldn't even get out of bed hardly.

L: But the surgery corrected that, and she made a good recovery.

E: Yes. Thank God.

L: Isn't that something?

### ***The hospitals***

L: What can you tell us about the hospitals back then? We were trying to think of the ones... Draper's, Stearns, Gray's, Deming's, and Beecroft.

Jack: Which ones would you know that were active during that time when your dad...

E: Deming's and Beecroft's.

L: And what did your dad think of either one of them?

E: Well, Mrs. Deming, he thought was very adequate for what was there, but it was very limited.

L: Uh huh.

E: He helped Mrs. Beecroft set up her laying-in<sup>2</sup>.

L: Is that right?

E: Annie had been trained in Scotland.

L: Annie Beecroft?

E: Annie Beecroft. And was a darn fine nurse. The laying-in hospital kind of evolved from two beds for deliveries, plus the delivery room. And then later on, there was four beds for the (*unintelligible*) and kind of a delivery room, minor surgery, you know – one shoe fits all?

L: Um hm.

---

<sup>2</sup> maternity home

## **Surgery stories**

E: At that time, it was... you got to have something (*unintelligible*). For some reason or other, there seemed to be an epidemic of damn-fool accidents with shotguns and what-have-you. Like the one... I don't know if you remember this idiot that threw the double-barrel shotgun across a ditch, and it hit butt first? I don't know that a number 7 shot, there was so damn many in one (*unintelligible*). Hit the guy right here in the thigh. Fortunately, it didn't inward! But clink, clink, clink. We spent hours picking shot.

L: You helped your dad with a lot of the procedures?

E: Oh, sure! First one, I'm not sure I should tell this, because it was strictly illegal...

L: Well, then let's hear! (Laughs)

J: By all means!

L: The statute of limitations has run out.

E: This idiot – another idiot – had pulled a shotgun through a barbed-wire fence by the muzzle, and it blew about this much of his thumb off, and about that much of his fingers (demonstrating). Split this one wide open. So, and this was way up by Sandy Lake! And we weren't going to pack that guy all the way down to Brainerd! So I suspect that Dad had had a few anyhow, so he gets the guy up on the table, and he starts the anesthetic (*unintelligible*) a mask, and he said, "Now when I nod my head, you shake that sleeve, and when I shake my head, you stop."

L: (Laughs)

E: So... he trims the guy's thumb up, laid the flap over, and trimmed this up. Like any another surgery there. And he'd move right along. Well, of course, the problem with that is, that my nose is about that far from the mask!

L: (Laughs)

E: An anesthetic is actually an intoxication. And I was madder'n hell, because this was in November, and it was cold out, and he made me walk 'round and 'round to sober up! (Laughs)

L and J: (Lots of laughter)

L: How old were you then, Gene?

E: Seven.

L: Seven! Oh my gosh! (Laughs)

E: I'm not kidding when I say I was in the medical field all my life.

L: You really were. You really were.

E: You know, back in those days, if you were available...

L: Jack was telling about assisting your dad at a birth.

E: I was gonna say...

J: My dad, not me! It was my dad...

E: If the individual was available, Dad would collar him, and say, hey, you're gonna be this or that.

J: Yeah, that was, the one he assisted in was Nell Larson. She was the wife of Elmer Larson. They had (*unintelligible*). Yeah, Dad assisted.

E: He got commandeered, is what you mean.

J: Well, they were pretty good buddies, I think, during those days. The (*unintelligible*) is like you said, if your dad had had a few, you know. There was some moonshine during those days and everything else. But let's see... what else...

### ***Fellow doctors***

L: Oh! How about other doctors? We talked briefly about the ones in town and how about the ones from Brainerd? I remember Doctor Fabres (?) and Doctor Bedault (?). Were there others?

E: Doctor John Fabres, Sr., and Doctor John Fabres, Jr.; Doctor Bedault; Doctor Burger, who was a pediatrician; Doctor Birch, who was the ophthalmologist...

L: Ok. Did they come to Aitkin on consult, or were patients referred? I can remember a lot of talk at our house about Doctor Fabres and Doctor Bedault.

E: Patients were referred to Brainerd. They went there.

L: So no consultants came this way.

E: Not very often. I think Doctor Bedault came up here on a couple of occasions, but the occasion pretty much come to them.

### ***The tuberculosis sanitarium***

L: What do you remember... I remember talking about in the '20s and '30s, what an important part your tuberculosis sanitarium played.

E: Oh, God. That drew from all over the state.

L: And your dad must have been active in patient care over there.

E: Very much so. In fact, Lorena Small was one of his patients.

L: Is that right?

E: And in fact, she recovered from tuberculosis while she was a patient.

L: Well, we were just saying that almost every family was affected. I know Molly Call's two sisters, Belinda and Eva Newstrom, were long-term patients.

E: They were there. There were perhaps twenty-five to thirty people that I knew, if I could pull that page out of my memory, I would think of from there. In fact, I don't think that there was a family in town that in one way or another didn't have friends and relatives or whatever, that were in this facility. And it was a darned good one!

L: I remember my grandfather was on the board, and it took a lot of time. I think it was a good facility.

E: And as hard as times were then, every time that somebody suggested well, maybe we'll cut corners here, people defended that like a tiger.

L: Do you remember, Gene, that was in a period preceding any medication for tuberculosis. What was the method of treatment, other than fresh air and sunshine and rest?

E: Fresh air, good diet, lots of rest. Absolutely no cigarettes, pipes or anything else. There were some aspirins, for headaches. One of the things I remember was the enforced hand washing. Everything had to be washed if the food was eaten and if it wasn't eaten, it was discarded. It was never used again. The utensils were not (*unintelligible*), they were sterile. But primarily bed rest, good diet, and lots and lots of fresh air.

### ***Opinions of other local doctors***

L: What was your dad's opinion of some of the other local doctors?

E: He thought Ben Keller was a darn good doctor, but rough on the cob.

L: Is that right?

E: Yeah. Ben was. I mean, if it was a spade, he'd call it a spade. Diplomacy (*unintelligible*) John Radcliff (?) he thought should have been a professor at the University. He was (*unintelligible*).

***(End of Side 1)***

## **Side 2**

J: I'm gonna have to leave, but I'll be back, or if you wanted to continue on through that tape and maybe arrange to get...

L: We're rolling now. Well. Let's... when do you have to leave – right now?

J: In about five minutes.

L: Ok, well, let's start out. We'll just let Gene reminisce on..

J: Yeah, yeah.

L: ...Ok, and Doctor Radcliff.

G: Doctor Kerlin (not sure of spelling), Sam Kerlin, came in later to practice with Dad, and while he was a good doctor, he was very, very nervous. And eventually, Sam and his wife, Rita, decided that they wanted to be in California. Rita didn't tolerate cold weather at all. And neither one was particularly happy here in Aitkin. So they moved out to California. And Sam eventually left the practice of medicine and became a real estate man. Did very well at it. His son, Rob Kerlin, became one of the finest orthopedic surgeons on the west coast, and is still a consultant to the doctors and several others.

L: He calls John. They were classmates. And he calls John occasionally if he's... if he travels with the team, which he doesn't do as frequently as he used to.

G: He's not in good health.

L: No. When he'd get into the Cities, he used to give John or one of the other classmates a call.

### ***Drugstores***

L: What do you remember about drugstores?

G: All right. The Casey, Cheryl (not sure of spelling) Casey, ran the drugstore there in the Casey Building. But he wasn't called Cheryl, everybody called him Pat.

L: Pat.

G: Herb Sweetman ran a drugstore down on the corner opposite the First National Bank. And (*unintelligible*) Chatelle had the drugstore...

J: That was Clint Chatelle.

G: ...next to the theatre.

L: Middle of the block.

G: That was the three drugstores in town at that time.

L: I think Hanlon's came in at some point in the '30s, I think.

J: After, I think. Yeah, Hanlon's came in in the late '30s.

L: Yeah.

G: We'd have been gone.

L: Probably so.

G: And the dentists in town, there was Denny Murphy, Doctor Olson – I don't remember his first name - , and then Doctor Peterson came in and practiced dentistry for awhile, but he was... his interest was really medicine, and as I told you earlier, he eventually...

J: (As he is leaving) I'll be back.

G: ...he went from Aitkin back to medical school, got his degree in medicine, and got a... his graduate in maximal facial surgery. He did very well at it. I don't remember any of the other dentists.

L: Doctor Engers.

G: Oh, Engers, yeah.

L: And he would have been a neighbor of yours, as well. At least, eventually, he built across the street from you, directly across from MacGregor's house.

G: That would be that old place at...

L: Next door to Potter's. The Potter home place.

G: Oh, the one that Matilda's (?) in.

L: Could be. And how about J. D. Erickson? He practiced in the Washington block.

G: Yeah.

L: Upstairs.

G: Yeah.

L: There was really a good-sized medical/dental community for the size of the population in town.

G: Oh, yeah.

L: They had a huge range of geographic area to cover.

G: Oh, yeah. Those days, you see... Aitkin is a county seat. It was the business center of the county.

L: Sure.

G: Not only for legal business, but it was also groceries, hardware, clothing, and we had several blacksmith shops – Toppey (?), Anderson, I can't remember the others. I remember – I'm digressing here –

L: That's fine.

G: One of the things that used to happen in the spring of the year, and also in the fall of the year – we would have these mustangs brought in from the Dakotas and from Montana. Wild! I mean, they were wild! And the old stockyards was right behind Toppey's Barber, er...

L: Blacksmiths?

G: Blacksmith shop. Those horses sold for, oh, usually about \$25 or \$30 apiece, but sometimes as low as seven-and-a-half. They got what they paid for. Toppey hated those animals with a purple passion. Shoeing them, they would kick the daylights out of him. He had a squeeze chute, where they put them in, and them anchored them down, so one at a time, he could shoe them. That was the only way it could be done.

### ***Doctor McHugh's transportation***

L: How did your dad... I know he had a car, he had a Model A, at the start...

G: The first car we had was a Model T sedan.

L: Oh, Ok.

G: Although I understand that for awhile he actually had a buggy before he got the Model T. But that was before we came. He had a Model T sedan, and then later he got the Model A, and worked it over they way I told you. And then after that, he got...

L: Excuse me, now how did he work it over? I don't know if we got that on tape. How did he...

G: The front seat of the Model A, the back tipped down, and then the seat tipped forward, so it pivoted on the front two what we call legs. So what he did was, in order to make himself a little ambulance, he unbolted that seat, took it out, and then took the cushion, which was a bench-type cushion, from the back, turned it sideways, parallel with the wall, reached up in back where the cushion came in, you know, and he had a little ambulance that he could run a patient in.

L: Very resourceful.

G: And that was his pride and joy for awhile. And then because of the hard usage at that time, he would buy a new car every year, but Mother would... The cars had to be broken in then, you didn't take the car off the floor and drive it. And Mother would break the car in for a year, in other words, get all the kinks worked out of it, and then he'd take it over, and then she'd get the new car the next year. And that was their theory anyhow... But after the Model A was in usage for awhile, I think Mr. Seavey finally got an ambulance going, so that they could get patients down there. I remember one thing about Dad's Model A, it had a heater in there called a (*unintelligible*) heater. And that darned thing had two speeds: off or wide open.

L: (Laughs)

G: Absolutely in about ten minutes, it had the interior of that car up to about 110 degrees. So it was off, on, off, on, off, on, all the way.

L: We had that same problem with air conditioning, I think. And I know your dad had drivers that helped.

G: Everybody from Harry Beecroft to Elmer Larson...

L: Joe Christianson.

G: Joe Christianson.

L: Bill, Jack's father, drove for him. Did he rest then, or did he...

G: He had the unique facility of being able to just put himself to sleep and sleep for fifteen minutes and wake up absolutely refreshed.

L: A gift.

G: He said he taught himself to do that during the war. But he would - going down to Brainerd, when they drove him there, usually he drove himself, but once in awhile when he was tired, one of the drivers would drive him there - he wasn't the best driver in the world, he was too rigid - but he would curl up in the back seat and snooze and get down there and go about his business from the back.

He also liked to have companionship on his trips. Sometimes...

L: Some of those were very long treks, going up the Sandy Lake, and (*unintelligible*) on some of those roads...

G: On the north shore of Sandy. He drove as far as Onamia, Milaca...

L: Well, that's forty and... between forty-five and sixty miles. That was a huge territory that he was covering.

G: Oh, unbelievable.

### ***Sawmill injuries***

L: You mentioned the epidemic of gunshot injuries. I can remember two - the fear there always was with sawmills, or saw rig, injuries.

G: That's another chapter in itself. At that time, the sawmills were all steam-powered. And you cut the slabs or whatever from... mostly the slabs and the scrap from the boards.

And of course, those steam engines were enormously powerful. The saws were not what they should have been. And the people that were workin' in there, were not as trained as they should have been. And OSHA was a figment of somebody's imagination. But there was a guy by the name of Jide (spelled phonetically) who worked at the barrel-heading mill. And he got his fingers caught in there. And he said, "Take the son-of-a-bitch!" and he put his whole arm in! We had one guy brought up to the office, and evidently it must have been one of the old circular saws that hit a knot, or... the Indians would put stones up in the fork of the tree of something like that. Maybe that was... Nobody knows what happened.

L: Why did they do that?

G: Marker.

L: Oh, Ok.

G: But anyway, the thing just blew up and a sliver of steel, almost like a sword, went through this man's shoulder, and they brought him up to the office with towels front and back. And we had to haul that guy down to Brainerd, because there was no way that they could remove that thing up there.

L: Did he survive?

G: Yeah.

L: He did.

G: Tough.

L: It's testimony what they were able to do in less than ideal conditions and...

G: I went up there one time and here's this guy waiting... remember the waiting room outside...

L: Yes, and lots of beautiful woodwork.

G: Well, paneling up to about here. But this guy was walking in. It looked like he had a turban on. What he had been doing, was chopping wood with a double-bitted axe, he hit a branch over his head, and that thing came down and just laid him open from here to here. And Dad saw the guy come in, and he was about as white as anything, going into shock. Dad said, "You dumb son-of-a-bitch! What the hell is the matter with you?" And the guy says, "Jesus, I came up here to get my head fixed, I didn't come up here to get my ass chewed!"

L: (Laughs)

G: What he had done, he saw that the guy was going into shock, and he got him so enraged that the adrenaline went and counteracted it.

L: So he was a psychiatrist as well.

G: Well, he said that he had learned that from a French doctor in World War I, and that was a trick that they used.

L: And it works.

G: Oh, it worked.

L: But really, it's remarkable, when you figure what they were able to do with the... compared to today, the limited surgical facilities they had, the medicines that they had.

G: Can you imagine treating blood poisoning with Epsom salts? That's what it was. I still have the leg. (referring to when Doctor Hughes treated Gene's foot injury).

L: Yeah. You can't argue with success.

G: God, no. He... let's see... from Sandy Lake down to, almost to Deerwood. He had some patients that came up here from Crosby-Ironton, because they...

L: Because of his reputation?

G: I don't know whether it was his reputation, or they might have been in World War I with him, or what. The veterans, to a man, Doc McHugh was available.

L: Well, that's quite an endorsement, isn't it? I know that you said that Annie Beulah was his receptionist, and she was shared among the other tenants in the building.

G: Tim Mahaney and Denny Berkley and lemme tell you, that led to some real discussions!

L: As to what proportion of time she spent for each?

G: Well, they would allocate so much time, and of course, each one paid her wages...

L: Sure.

G: And each one was determined that he was gonna get his dollar's worth. And it generally was between Dad and Tim. Annie and... Denny Murphy was a very methodic man. You know, the dentist. Everything was just so. So she had no problems with doing his books at all. But Tim was something else. Tim wrote to (*unintelligible*). She came up there one time, and Tim's desk faced away from the window, for some reason, but anyhow, Dad was over behind the desk there, and Tim was leaning out the window and saying "Doc, Doc, don't!" (Laughs) He was – I don't think he would have dropped him, but he was putting the fear of the Lord in him!

L: Say, tell me - I thought it was such a funny story – tell me for the tape now, about the attempted theft in the safe. That was funny!

G: That dummy! We were comin' back from the show, and this is when they had only a little power plant, and of course the electric rates were very high then. And Dad looked up and saw the light on in his office, and thought, somebody left the light on. And grumble, grumble, grumble all the way up the stairs. And this stupid idiot was trying to pry the safe in Dad's open with a screwdriver! He had about as much chance of prying the pyramid over! And he made another mistake. He took the screwdriver by the shaft, and tried to hit Dad with the handle of it. Well, Dad had been a damned good boxer, heavyweight champ, and of course (*unintelligible*) and he's out! And clump, clump, clump, down the steps. He gets down to the bottom and Charley Glad was night marshal then, and night marshal for years. And he bellows for Charley. Finally old Charley came up, and this guys still out, and Charley says "Holy Yesus, Doc, you needn't hit him so hard! You know he could have walked!"

L: (Laughs) I like that! I can remember Mr. Glad very well. So what else can you think of?

### ***Medicines***

L: Tell me about the medicines. What did they have, pretty much?

G: Well, for treating open wounds and cuts, iodine was the antiseptic, and it varied in percentage from 1 ½ to 3 and 6 percent. 1 ½ was the kind that was ordinarily used. Three percent was used for dirty wounds. But it had the concomitant of burns. Iodine would burn. And then later on, methiolate and Mercurochrome came in, and they were about as effective as red ink.

The irrigating solution that they used was one that raised a mild solution of chlorine, it was called a Dayton's solution, and they would irrigate a wound with that. Saline solutions were used, but primarily for the mechanical washing of the area.

L: What if you had a post-operative incision infection? How did they deal with that?

G: Drainage and irrigation.

### ***Types of surgeries he performed***

L: Ok. And did your dad... what type of surgeries did he do? Did he do tonsillectomies, I suppose?

G: Tonsillectomies, appendectomies, some gunshot wounds. One of 'em he had – this is when he was an intern – a woman had gotten mad at her husband, and took an ice pick, and stabbed herself in the abdomen, and had multiple incisions. And he said that the only thing that they could do was open her up and irrigate the area.

L: I suppose separated intestines?

G: Oh, multiple perforations of the intestines. But would you believe, the woman recovered?

L: They must have done a good job of cleaning her up and cleaning her out then.

G: They did. The generally surgery – he was beautiful in his surgery! Very meticulous. He would practice ahead of time for... he had what is called Nelson's Research Encyclopedia, which was an encyclopedia that had editions to it published practically every month.

L: So they stayed current on technique.

G: Oh, yeah. He... not only that, he made his own annotations, he did his own drawings in there, and again, very meticulous. His handwriting was lousy, but his drawings were beautiful. And he went step-by-step for everything you do, he was thoroughly prepared whenever he did a surgery.

### ***Captain McHugh of the National Guard***

L: (*unintelligible*) officer in Company B of the National Guard.

G: That's right. He took over the Guard unit shortly after he came here.<sup>3</sup>

L: At what rank?

G: Captain. And he remained Captain of the Guard until it became evident that his practice was interfering with that, and Jerry Peterborg took over from him then.<sup>4</sup>

L: I know we're still looking for this down at the Age, but he led the group when they fought fire up on the...

G: Do you know how I found out about that?

L: No.

G: I called... I have the number there at the end... but I called the Forest Service, and they said that there was so many of those major fires at that time, that the National Guard was called out so often, that you could name your year, and they would have been there. She said that she felt that the fire I was talking about was up in the Baudette area.

L: Ok. And that would have been in the early '20s.

G: Yeah, it was '23.

L: Ok. I know, when people have written or called the Age about the fires of 1918, there were fires... the Hinckley fire extended into East Lake, Bain to the north of us burned, Crosby had major fires, so it just seemed like...

G: Then across the line over in Wisconsin.

L: So again it was just, apparently it was an extremely dry time, and the place was like a tinderbox.

G: Yeah.

L: What else can you think of, Gene, that we should, that you can tell us that we should know? I know that you've just... you've helped up so much with all of your information. How about nursing staff around?

G: There were mostly, mostly they were practical nurses.

L: They weren't necessarily trained?

G: No, they were on-the-job trainees. Frankly, I don't remember too much about it. As I said, Mrs. Becroft was...

L: ... had been trained in Scotland.

G: ...in Scotland, and she was very good. Others had had some training. I know that Mrs. Halland, Louie Halland's wife, was a graduate nurse, but she never practiced. And Mrs. Deming had nursing experience.

L: But most of the hospitals other than Becroft's were essentially maternity homes, were they not?

G: Maternity homes, or homes for the aged.

---

<sup>3</sup> This was late in 1921, after Captain Frank Erickson resigned.

<sup>4</sup> This was in 1923.

L: Ok.

G: As an example, the County Poor Farm not only took care of indigent people, but there were some people there that were simply unable to care for themselves. So Mrs. DeGander (?) was kind of a practicing nurse, too.

L: Uh, uh. And did what was necessary then.

Ok. Let's see. What else can you think of that we should... I'm running out of questions, but my knowledge of the area, the period, is limited.

G: One of the things that Dad was very proud of was the fact that he was able, and you'll find that in your files someplace, a big celebration that they had when the road was completed...

L: Oh, in 1931, from between Aitkin and Duluth?

G: Well, in '28 was the first one, and '31 was the second one.

L: Ok.

G: The story behind that was that at that time, the American Legion, politically, was very, very powerful in this state, as it was in many others. And Dad used his connections in the Legion to get something done about those roads. Because up until the concrete went through, in the wintertime, we were just about dependent on the railway for transportation.

L: Well, I can remember in just getting up to his patients, on house calls up in Sandy Lake area, was a real trek. Because without that road, you had to travel through Kimberly to MacGregor and up and around. There was no direct shot...

G: There was no way. Clark (*unintelligible*) had a resort up there on Sandy Lake, and he and Clark were very good friends. And he used to go up there, and it was all the way around.

L: Yeah. It was the scenic route, for sure.

G: In fact, he and Denny Murphy and two others owned the duck pass between Big Sandy and Little Sandy, and his army friends would (*unintelligible*) that duck pass. They come up from Fort Snelling free-loading, and then go "Hey, Doc, can we borrow your duck pass?"

L: And they did. Did he deer hunt as well, or mostly ducks?

G: Deer, usually, if he got time.

L: Yeah, that must have been in short commodity.

G: Very. He, as you know, made country calls out in the country there, to take care of patients. His day began... he left the house about 9:00 and he'd go out and make his calls in the country. And then come into the office. And then he'd have the patients lined up. And then he'd see the patients there. And grab a quick bite at noon, or maybe 1:00. And then go down to Mrs. Beecroft's and see the patients there, and see the other patients that he had in town, and then come back to the office and finish out his day around 5:00 or 6:00.

L: And then how many days a week was he (*unintelligible*)?

G: Six days a week. All day on Monday through Friday, and then until noon on Saturday. But that didn't mean a damn thing.

L: Probably not.

G: That telephone rang 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Many times he would schedule his trips down to Brainerd, or up to St. Luke's in Duluth, in the evening, and drive up there and then come back about two in the morning.

L: No wonder he needed a driver.

G: Oh, yeah.

L: And the ability to sleep at will. It must have been a necessary skill.

G: It was horribly demanding.

L: I am sure it was. It must have been... it must have thrown a lot of responsibility onto your mom, with the six kids then.

G: I should say it did! And in turn, on me, being the oldest.

L: It sounded like you were...

G: I was eight years older than Mike, so I learned baby-tending might quick.

L: Sure. Well, it was nice you were available to do that.

G: (Laughs) Yeah.

L: Well, what can you think of? Is there anything else that we should touch on that you think is...

G: What I ought to do is, do a little thinking about it.

L: Ok, well we can... We can pick this up any other time. But this has been wonderful.

G: Right now, if I don't find a restroom, we're going to be in trouble!

L: Ok! Well, we'll say so long for the moment.

*(end of side 2)*