

## INTERVIEW OF DOCTOR DEBORAH BLACKWELL, 1994

BLAKE HAILEY: Today's date is March 31st, 1994. I'm Blake Hailey. We have with us Deborah Blackwell, D.O., who is the Assistant Dean for Clinical Affairs at the University of North Texas Health Science Center at Fort Worth. We're making this video in the Biomed Communications Department of the Gibson D. Lewis Library. And Dr. Blackwell, thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule to -- to meet with us today.

DOCTOR DEBORAH BLACKWELL: Thanks for asking me, Blake.

BLAKE HAILEY: Well, you are the first person we had to interview that's a graduate, so this is a great thing, I think. I'd like to go back, if we could, and perhaps you could recap a little bit of your time here when it was TCOM. We haven't gotten that perspective before.

DOCTOR DEBORAH BLACKWELL: Well, let me recap. Before it actually became the building that I initially went to school in -- because I actually interviewed in the bowling alley, and I'm sure that some other students have talked about that. I think the -- the best recollection I had is that when the taxi driver pulled up to the bowling alley, and I said, "Oh, no, no, no. I need the Texas College of Osteopathic Medicine." And he goes, "This is it, lady." And I said, "Oh, no. This can't be it." And he says, "Oh, yes. Out you go." And -- but what happened the moment I walked in the door is I realized it was going to be a very special place because -- and I can't remember who it was at the front, but as soon as I walked in she said, "You must be Ms. Blackwell." And I thought, "How does this person know who I am?" Because I had just been to a different school where I was number 258, so I guess from that moment I knew it was a special place.

BLAKE HAILEY: And what year was that, that you started.

DOCTOR DEBORAH BLACKWELL: That would be the year I got married, 1977, but I started in 1978.

BLAKE HAILEY: What were some of the #NAME? the early days of your medical education you'd like to relate?

DOCTOR DEBORAH BLACKWELL: Probably not so much interesting, but I think extremely pleasurable, because of the fact that the institution was so small, that we got to attend different classes in different buildings. And probably our favorite building was to go to River Plaza, which is currently on University and that was special because we could sit and listen to anatomy and listen to psych lectures, but at the same time be able to go outside and see the river and see the spring as it came forth, see the choo choo train from the zoo and those types of things. So those are actually my memories -- so my memories are good.

BLAKE HAILEY: Definitely. After you graduated, there was a time, I think from what? About '82 to '89 when you came here. What were you doing -- what were you involved in at that point.

DOCTOR DEBORAH BLACKWELL: Well, when I graduated we chose to go to Columbus, Ohio for my training. And I started out my first year not really knowing exactly what I wanted to do. I couldn't decide if I wanted to do internal medicine, family practice or pediatrics. It actually wasn't until April of my internship year that I decided to do pediatrics, so I stayed in Columbus for two years following that. After those two years that I completed, I joined the Public Health Service, and was stationed in Laredo, which is in South Texas, for four years. And that itself was quite an adventure.

BLAKE HAILEY: What were some of the things that you learned while you were in Laredo? And interesting adventurous you had to you could relate to us?

DOCTOR DEBORAH BLACKWELL: Well, probably the most exciting thing for me is that I learned to speak Spanish, because none of my patients spoke English. None of the nurses I worked with spoke English. I would go to staff meetings at the hospital and they would be speaking in Spanish, and then they would realize that I was probably the only non-Spanish-speaking person in the room, so they were actually very polite and would go, "Oh, by the way, we just said this, this, and this." So that was interesting. BLAKE HAILEY: So you learned Spanish by -- by fire, I guess kind of --

DOCTOR DEBORAH BLACKWELL: Spanish by fire, absolutely.

BLAKE HAILEY: What got you interested in coming back to TCOM? How did you get hooked up back here again.

DOCTOR DEBORAH BLACKWELL: Well, I actually -- surprisingly, as soon as I finished my residency, I had been in contact with the school hoping that they would have another position open in the department of pediatrics. I was at actually at the end of my -- I had a two-year commitment to the public health service and then opted for an additional two years, and I was trying to decide if that's really what I wanted to do. And I called the school and -- to see if there were any positions, and low and behold, there was. So I applied and was accepted.

BLAKE HAILEY: That was back in '89, right?

DOCTOR DEBORAH BLACKWELL: Right.

BLAKE HAILEY: And then, what are some of the other activities you've been involved in here? I know you have a connection with the Osteopathic Medical Center of Texas. Could you go into a little bit of that?

DOCTOR DEBORAH BLACKWELL: Well, as of January of this year, I was appointed one Assistant Dean for Clinical Affairs, and my major duties of that is the Director of Medical Education at the Osteopathic Facility, which is, at this point in time, still our base institution for our students and our other teaching services.

BLAKE HAILEY: What were -- how -- how is the relationship going with that? The programs, I know that you're working to do a lot in that area.

DOCTOR DEBORAH BLACKWELL: One of the things that has happened is that in December of '93, we signed an affiliation agreement with the Osteopathic Hospital. And although the two institutions have been closely linked in terms of educational activities, that was the first official agreement that they would become our base institution, and that was really the reason that I was placed there as director of medical education.

BLAKE HAILEY: You plan to continue that role for a while, it sounds like.

DOCTOR DEBORAH BLACKWELL: I hope so.

BLAKE HAILEY: What were some of the areas you were involved in before you took that responsibility? Did you just instruct?

DOCTOR DEBORAH BLACKWELL: Blake, that's probably my -- my weakest area. Let's see. I have a full clinical practice.

BLAKE HAILEY: Oh.

DOCTOR DEBORAH BLACKWELL: And, at that time, a hospital practice. I have students every day, so I have a full teaching load. Also was course director for our pediatric didactic course. I was on Student Performance and also was the chairman of that committee. I was involved with curriculum, including with course directors one through five, and then served on the curriculum committee. Those are the things I -- I did on campus. And then off campus, which are the things that truly -- truly enjoy, I currently serve as chairman of the Tracks Organization, I serve on the --

BLAKE HAILEY: What is that organization.

DOCTOR DEBORAH BLACKWELL: The Tracks Organization is they -- Texas Department of Health organization that follows extreme premature babies as they go through their first three years of life, looking for, and hoping to avert problems with developmental assessment and those types of issues.

BLAKE HAILEY: How very fascinating. And then you said -- I interrupted you. Sorry about that. You said another committee you were involved in, organization.

DOCTOR DEBORAH BLACKWELL: Another fun area that I am on the advisory committee for CIDC, which stands for Chronically Ill and Disabled Children. And what we do is we are somewhat a consumers group that helps CIDC make policy guidelines, and that's the real exciting part. I was also involved with TCYC, which is Tarrant County Youth Collaboration. It's a wonderful agency in town that really looks at all the different agencies helping children go through different problems and different assessments. BLAKE HAILEY: You do have a full load, it sounds like, along with your teaching and -- and administrative duties, it sounds like.

DOCTOR DEBORAH BLACKWELL: I -- yes. A full load.

BLAKE HAILEY: Do you do much research, or do you plan to do any in the near future?

DOCTOR DEBORAH BLACKWELL: It's probably one of the areas that I've not been involved in, and I suspect because I've been so involved with the community in terms of looking at those areas. We are currently hoping to try to start some type of programs with children and then looking at other assessments. Some other children's issues.

BLAKE HAILEY: Do you have any plans for the connection with the hospital and the school? Do you have some areas you'd like to see grow in that respect?

DOCTOR DEBORAH BLACKWELL: Well, I -- currently what's occurring is that we're starting a new neurosurgical residency, which will probably start in 1995. And I think that's one of the basics as we recruited a -- an excellent neurosurgeon, that he has been now with a vision to try to develop neurosurgical programs for our profession. So I -- I perceive that programs like that would continue to be developed in the future.

BLAKE HAILEY: I'd like to move, if we could, into some questions -- I guess, opinions, you might say. And you were here back in '89 and you've seen the transformation of TCOM becomes the UNT Health

Science Center. Why do you feel it was necessary for TCOM to make this transformation into a Health Science Center?

DOCTOR DEBORAH BLACKWELL: As we transformed into a Health Science Center, I think that, that name in itself really truly reflects what we're doing as an institution. I think a lot of people realize that the medical school is here but they didn't realize we have such a significant program in graduate medical education and other research activities. Probably to me, the most important aspect of changing our name, for me, and I've always seen that is that this is an institution that changes. I often tell people that if they -- if they don't want things to change, don't come here. Because I think that we have a lot of people that work here that have visions of -- of change in the future and always looking to improve the education for our students and our graduates. And for me, as we became named the "Health Science Center", it really gave us a greater opportunity to do that.

BLAKE HAILEY: Do you see this Health Science Center having some different, you know, different from others in the State of Texas or in the nation, perhaps, that you looked at?

DOCTOR DEBORAH BLACKWELL: Absolutely. I think that this Health Science Center will be known as the Health Science Center for primary care. As an osteopathic profession, I think that we're very much can relate to the need for primary care and preventive care. And as we progress, I think that you'll see that the majority of the focus is going to be based on primary care and preventive therapies.

BLAKE HAILEY: Do you think the new health proposal is going -- are we in a good position to whether changes in the health care system changes?

DOCTOR DEBORAH BLACKWELL: I think if you can be in a good position, then we're probably in a good position. One of the things that will effect certainly my training program, is there probably will not be any significant new moneys available for subspecialty training for us as we train the majority of our positions are primary care physicians. Certainly Mr. Clinton and Hillary feel that those are important issues, and I think we hold the forefront in that.

BLAKE HAILEY: Do you see some major challenges that lie ahead for the Health Science Center and yourself as well? Your role?

DOCTOR DEBORAH BLACKWELL: Well, I think in terms of looking at duplication of services, we're going to have to show that we have a primary care focus and a difference, and that's the State of Texas looks to try to see who gets money for what. The Health Science Center that hopefully will shine and that we do have such a strong interest in primary care.

BLAKE HAILEY: How do you see your role changing? I know you wear several different hats. So how do you see things changing for you in the future in the next few years?

DOCTOR DEBORAH BLACKWELL: One of the things that's probably going to happen for our residents is that we're probably going to be involved in probably more allopathic, which are the traditional M.D. programs. Wanting to help expand the services for residents, but then as we expand down into the community that they will need those services to help strengthen their programs. As we were named Health Science Center, and certainly with our current leadership, we are starting to become a leader in the community and -- and then we will be the forefront of those training programs.

BLAKE HAILEY: Do you see some need for more community -- community support? I know you're involved in a lot of community-related activities. Does the -- do you see more community support needed for the school?

DOCTOR DEBORAH BLACKWELL: I think the school needs to provide more community support, only because most community boards and those types of agencies are always looking for people with health-care-related issues and certainly the leadership qualities to help bring those committees to their best fruition. When we look in terms of the community at large, that I think they will find that the Health Science Center will then become a proponent for them as they look at changes that they need to make in the -- in the 90s as we go on to the 21st century.

BLAKE HAILEY: I'm curious, how do you think, how are all the other graduates you know reacting to this name change? Is everybody pretty positive about the way things are moving?

DOCTOR DEBORAH BLACKWELL: I think there was probably some initial confusion as -- in terms of where is TCOM? You know, it's always been TCOM, why are we changing? And a lot of people are just not realizing the fact that TCOM is still housed under the larger name of the Health Science Center. I perceive it as they've become more aware of -- of the changes that they anticipate are really not going to occur and that we're really going to stay in the osteopathic facility, and we are going to stay a primary-care facility that then they will appreciate the name changes as we're all learn to go do.

BLAKE HAILEY: We've covered quite a bit of ground in a short amount of time. Are there some areas that you would like to go into that we haven't mentioned? Are there some other interests that you have, or programs you're going to be working on?

DOCTOR DEBORAH BLACKWELL: I don't think so, Blake. I just hope that as we continue to recruit more physicians, that they become more involved in the community, because I think that's a huge need, and certainly as that develops, then the community becomes more aware of where our focus is and the quality physicians that we are producing.

BLAKE HAILEY: Well, I know that you're, sounds like, an excellent physician and definitely a credit to the school and will continue to be. I know we were talking in the interview, it would -- it would be interesting to know how many other graduates have come back to work here and so forth. And it has been indeed a pleasure to have you as -- as one of our guests. I do thank you for taking the time out to do this. And I hope that I get to run into you again. And, again, the school owes you a lot for coming here and continuing on. Thank you very much.

DOCTOR DEBORAH BLACKWELL: Thank you, Blake.

BLAKE HAILEY: And with that we'll bring to a close this interview. Thank you.