**UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON ORAL HISTORY OF HOUSTON PROJECT**
**AND**
**THE AFRICAN AMERICAN PHYSICIANS OF THE 20TH CENTURY HOUSTON PROJECT**

**Interview with: Dr. Edith Irby Jones**
**Interviewed by: Kathleen Brosnan, Ramona Hopkins**
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**Transcribed by: Suzanne Mascola**

KB: This is an interview with Dr. Edith Irby Jones taken at her office in Houston, Texas, on September 18, 2007. Kathleen Brosnan is doing the questions and Ramona Hopkins and Lauran Kerr are also present. Good morning, Dr. Jones.

EIJ: Good morning.

KB: Thank you for making time for us. I just wanted to ask you some questions that will be really great information for our students to get for the web site we created. Where were you born and raised?

EIJ: I was born in Conway, Arkansas. I was raised in Hot Springs, Arkansas.

KB: O.K., you spent your whole life there until you went to college?

EIJ: Until I went away to college. High school, graduated in 1944 and went to college at Knoxville College in 1944.

KB: O.K., and when you grew up in Hot Springs, was that still part of the Jim Crow south.

EIJ: Yes, having grown up in an area which there was Jim Crow, it was not so prevalent as to be recognized except when one's attention was called maybe to the school system. The school system was segregated but I did not realize that because I lived next door to a white family, they had girls that were my age - they went to Catholic school and it was my opinion then that the reason they were going to the Catholic school which was predominantly white was because their families had money and I was going to the other school, the black school, because that was the school that did not cost money.

KB: What kind of work did your mom and dad do?

EIJ: My father was a tenant farmer, died when I was about 6 years old secondary to an accident - was kicked by a horse while riding with my mother on the Sunday. That was my first registering of what artificial resuscitation was about because he was brought home and attempting to resuscitate him, it was fatal, of course. I grew up on the farm until that time and my mother moved from Mayflower which is where they were at that time, to Conway and that was where I was reared until I was about 8 years old. And then, she moved with my brothers to Hot Springs, Arkansas.

KB: And did your mom work outside the house, too?

EIJ: Yes, she did. She was, I would say, a maid, but she worked days. She did not work for one family - whoever hired her for that day. She was maid day labor.

KB: And what other facilities or institutions would have been segregated in Hot Springs when you were growing up? Transportation, restaurants, things like that?

EIJ: Well, I did not need to ride the transportation. We walked where we needed to go. I know now that they were segregated but I never had any occasion to ride the public transportation. Someone was always carrying me to the distances that I could not walk. The schools were segregated. The movie theaters were segregated but I never went. That was not one of the things that my mother permitted me to do but I know that they had the colored upstairs and the white were downstairs, and that was only because my friends told me.

KB: When did you start thinking about becoming a doctor?

EIJ: When I was about 7 years old. My sister, older - 12 years old at that time - died from typhoid fever and it was my feeling as I watched the children . . . there was a typhoid epidemic . . . as I watched the children who lived, the children who became very sick, that those who had money, who had the availability of medical attention seemed to

have lived, and my sister was one of the few that died. And I felt it was the lack of medical care. The doctor came only one time and though she was very, very sick, we were not able to pay for it, so I decided at that time that I was going to be a doctor and I was going to see all children. I was going to see them regardless of whether they had money, regardless of who they were, or where they lived - I was going to see all children.

KB: Were there any black physicians in Hot Springs that you knew?

EIJ: In Hot Springs, at the time that I grew up, there was one black physician, but he was old. But he was, at that time, attempting to see all of the population. And I knew him. He had operated on a cousin, a tonsillectomy, and I had the opportunity of meeting him. Dr. Eve. And he was a very gentle person. I wanted to be like him.

KB: What is typhoid fever and is it a disease that is more likely to affect poor people than wealthy people?

EIJ: Typhoid fever is a disease caused by a bacterial infection -- water that is not clean, areas in which there are others with typhoid fever that might come in contact with others are some of the causes that may cause typhoid fever, but it is an infection which is spread from one person to another - either by direct contact or by body elements, disposed, especially water.

KB: You went to high school in Hot Springs?

EIJ: I went to high school in Hot Springs.

KB: And you went to a public high school?

EIJ: I went to a public high school.

KB: For the students who will see this, what types of classes did you take in high school as you were beginning to think about your career in medicine?

EIJ: I took all the classes they offered. We did not have choices. We were told what to take. So, I took everything that the school offered for that class. Of course, reading was required, literature. I took French, Latin, math, science, chemistry - all of the courses that were available and they were available because we were required to take them. We did not choose what we took.

KB: And you said you went to Knoxville College?

EIJ: To Knoxville College in Knoxville, Tennessee.

KB: I used to live in Knoxville.

EIJ: Really?

KB: I used to teach at the University of Tennessee.

EIJ: Oh, wonderful! I had a lovely relationship with them as a member of the board of Knoxville College and as a student. We were permitted to use their library. Some of the students had exchanged classes there. They were our big sister/brother relationship for Knoxville College.

KB: Knoxville College, is that a historically black college?

EIJ: It is a historical black college. At the time that I enrolled, there were 300 students. It has never been more than 1,200 students. It is a college that was founded for slaves, blacks, by the Presbyterian Missionary Society and it has remained affiliated with the Presbyterian Church.

KB: Why did you choose Knoxville College?

EIJ: Because my homeroom teacher had gone to Knoxville College and wanted me to leave Arkansas to have what she had -- the private, personal concern for development, because it was a small school and because she felt that I would get that kind of education that she got, and I thought that she was the most educated woman in the world. I still do think she is wonderful.

KB: She is not still alive?

EIJ: Oh, yes, she is. She is more than 90 years old. I am her sponsor in the nursing home. She is able to understand what I am doing and each time I see her, it encourages me to put my best foot forward.

KB: Well, we should record her name for posterity. What is her name?

EIJ: Margaret Long Martin. And, of course, whole Arkansas will know that name. As I said, she is more than 90 but even now when you go to see her in the nursing home, she perks up and she tells you how you ought to be doing things.

KB: That is great. Did you consider any other schools besides Knoxville College?

EIJ: I really didn't. At that time, it was supposedly a backup school for me if I could not go to Knoxville - we had what we called AM&N in Pine Bluff which was integrated. It was a state school. But Mrs. Martin did not think that I should go to a state school. She thought that I should go where they taught more than reading, writing and arithmetic; that they taught integrity, how to be a lady, and all the other graces that she felt that I would miss if I would go to a state school.

KB: And in Knoxville College, what types of courses did you take in preparation for medical school?

EIJ: Well, I took the required basic courses but in addition to that, I majored enough hours in physics, chemistry, and biology to have a triple major.

KB: And obviously, as you were finishing college, you began to think about where you would go to medical school, correct?

EIJ: I thought about not so much where I would go but that I was going.

KB: O.K., and where did you apply to medical school?

EIJ: I applied to 12 medical schools. I had $60 that I could spend for applications, so I used up my full $60 to apply, hoping that one of the medical schools would take me, that I would be competitive enough that someone would take me. So, I used all I had.

KB: O.K., and did you get accepted to some of those medical schools?

EIJ: Yes, I did. University of Chicago, Northwestern, Howard University, Meharry University - those are the ones I can remember. I understand that I was 28th in the nation in the aptitude tests, medical aptitude tests. And so, I did have some choices.

KB: Were there any schools you applied to where you were not accepted because of your race?

EIJ: No, because the only one that probably would have not accepted me based on race would have been the University of Arkansas. All of the other schools had had black students.

KB: Were the predominantly, well, obviously Howard and Meharry are predominantly African American schools.

EIJ: Predominantly, yes.

KB: But places like Northwestern, University of Chicago and others . . .

EIJ: Were predominantly white.

KB: Predominantly white? The schools in the northern states?

EIJ: Yes.

KB: Which had been accepting African American students?

EIJ: Yes. After I graduated from Knoxville College to make myself more likely to be accepted, I enrolled in Northwestern in clinical psychology. I would not have been greatly surprised - disappointed but not surprised - if I had not gotten into medical school

that year. This was the year that World War II veterans, the war was over and they were coming home and many of them were applying for medical school. And so, I felt that I had to be super. And so, I said, well, if I don't get accepted this year, I will be in clinical psychology and I will be more competitive for medical school next year. So, I enrolled that summer in clinical psychology at Northwestern University in Chicago.

KB: So, you enrolled at Northwestern but did you ever wind up taking classes there?

EIJ: Yes, I did. I took classes the entire summer.

KB: A beautiful place to be in the summer time.

EIJ: Oh, beautiful. On the lake, just beautiful!

KB: It is absolutely beautiful. So, you obviously had a lot of choices about where to go to medical school.

EIJ: I didn't have a lot of choices. There were a lot of medical schools that accepted me. I based my choice on the fact of tuition cost. University of Arkansas tuition was $500. The tuition for Northwestern, Chicago, even Meharry and Howard were $10,000 and up. And I did not have the $500. But, you know, if someone tells you that candy is a nickel, over here it costs 50 cents, you think that you can get the nickel better than you

can get the 50 cents. So, I made my choice on the basis that I could probably get $500 to get into medical school. So, that was basically why I chose the University of Arkansas.

KB: And how many African American students been enrolled at the University of Arkansas medical school before you?

EIJ: None. I was their first black, at that time, Negro, medical student.

KB: Do you know if before you applied, there was a specific policy prohibiting African American students? Had the policy changed?

EIJ: No, because I do not think anyone thought about it. There was almost an understood thing - this is for white students. The university was for white students. The place for black students, Negro students, then was in Pine Bluff - AM&M. And it was an understood situation that this is where you belong.

KB: But there was no medical school at Pine Bluff?

EIJ: No. That was the only medical school in Arkansas. It was a state-supported medical school.

KB: So, in many ways, the assumption in the community was that African Americans should not be doctors?

EIJ: I don't know whether they even thought about it. I don't think anyone in particular cared. I am not even sure whether the state subsidized. In fact, that was one of their policies at that time, to subsidize black students to go to other schools for their particular training that they did not offer them in the state.

KB: O.K. There is a famous photograph of you, I think it appeared in Life Magazine on your first day of medical school.

EIJ: Yes.

KB: You are in a beautiful white suit.

EIJ: Oh, I thought I was dressed up!

KB: Can you tell me a little bit about the feelings you were experiencing that day when that photograph was taken, that first day of medical school?

EIJ: I was so proud. I was so proud that I was in medical school that absolutely nothing else mattered. I had actually reached what, for me at that time, was the epitome of what I had done for all my life - was to get in medical school to be a doctor.

KB: How did the other students treat you in medical school? Were they welcoming? Were some hostile?

EIJ: No. I faced absolutely no hostility. No hostility. There were 3 other women in the class with me and we became very, very close. And with one of the students, women students, I actually am closer to her than I am to a sister or anyone else. We were so together with the purpose for why we were there - to surviving not anything else but the rigors of passing the courses, meeting our obligations, that nothing else mattered. We did socialize among ourselves and the fellows were very kind. We studied together. The fellows came to my apartment. I did not go to the fellows' apartment, and they did not go to the fellows' apartment. At that time, that was not the thing you would do. But we did study together. The first year I was there, one of the students, a female, lived in the same general area that I lived and so, we caught the same bus going to school, but at that time, buses were segregated. You could not sit as a black up anteriorly, or superiorly, in front of the bus of the sign that said "white" and "colored." That is what we were then. We were colored. They did not call us Negroes. Colored - back. And we knew that if we would sit together, that this was the law, that if we would sit together that we would be delayed probably going to class because they would probably call the police and we would probably be arrested and it was not a good thing. So, we did not even think about it. We just stood up and held and we talked and we laughed, together. Well, neither one of us made any explanation to the other why we were standing. Her father was a state veterinarian . . . heard that the girl, a black and a white, were riding together and suggested that he should stop that, so he did. He bought her a car.

And from then on, we were probably one of, I would say 5 students who had a car. So, we had the car and the other male students rode with us to autopsies, examinations and our pathology course. Those who did not have cars, she picked them up to come to study with us. So now, we had a car at our disposal. And we went shopping together. The clerks, I don't know what they thought because we were giddy just like teenage girls would be. "Oh, you like that?" "Oh, how do you like that?" And, of course, there were some stores at that time that did not allow Negroes to try on clothes. You could not try on clothes. You could buy. So, if we found something we liked, she would hold it up to me and if we found something she liked, I would hold it up to her. We were just teenage girls.

KB: What is your friend's name?

EIJ: Mary. Mary Arthur. And I just left her a week ago. We had our 55th class reunion – there were 17 of us who were present. There are 33 of us out of 91 who are still living and 17 of them were able to come. There was another girl in my class, Betty. Betty and I were very friendly also but Betty and I did not have the time together so much as Mary and I did. But Betty and Mary and I studied together and we also did playful things together like went out to play tennis and we ate lunch together in the park. We did things together that were fun for us.

KB: At your first day at University of Arkansas Medical School, why did that garner national attention?

EIJ: I do not know, because I did nothing spectacular. I got out of the car, I walked up the step and the picture that they took was the photographer, as I walked in the hall, he snapped the picture. There was nothing spectacular about it. It was like walking into any other situation. If it had been a black setting, it could not have been any different than what I had done that day.

KB: Did you work with any Civil Rights groups? Were you involved in any Civil Rights . . . at that time?

EIJ: No. No Civil Rights group. No NAACP, not at that time. Later on, I became active with NAACP for the desegregation of the public schools in Arkansas but the NAACP had no relationships with my going into the medical school.

KB: What city is the medical school in?

EIJ: Little Rock, Arkansas. It is in Little Rock. The major university is in Fairfield.

KB: O.K., now later in the 1950s, there is a great deal of controversy at Little Rock's central high school when they were going to have in integrated. Why do you think or do you know, why was there such hostility integrating that high school but you did not face it when you integrated the medical school?

EIJ: Maybe it was the level of education. There were not parents involved. You can hardly conceive a parent protecting her mature sons from being in a class with me. The students, the male students that were with me were mature students. They were more mature even than I was because many of them had been in World War II and were veterans and had returned to finish their education. They had already had a relationship with blacks in the service. They were mature enough not to let that be an important . . . they wanted to go to medical school, too. I just imagined that every one of them that was enrolled in medical school had wanted to go to medical school as much as I did and the emphasis was not on integration/segregation; that was on getting a medical degree. And I do not think they cared.

KB: What was the biggest challenge in medical? What was the hardest part about medical school?

EIJ: Oh, passing those courses! Getting Jeff Banks' anatomy classes and making an adequate grade. In fact, I believe that is where I made my lowest grade was in anatomy. I think I had a C out of there. God, a C is not acceptable! My greatest challenge was being able to meet the requirements.

KB: So, the same challenge that everybody . . .

EIJ: The same challenge that all the other students were having.

KB: And if you do not mind me asking, how did you come up with the $500?

EIJ: I want to tell you. My hometown, Hot Springs, Arkansas, found that I was admitted because it was big publicity - they knew I did not have any money. And the churches after church took up money collection, the mayor contributed his amount and so, when I went to medical school, I had this bag full of dollar bills, half dollars, quarters, nickels, dimes, and that was where my $500 came from. And once the publicity of my being in medical school and the fact that I was the daughter of a widow, and that I did not have money - people sent me money. Dollar bills in just an envelope saying "We encourage you." Sometimes, it was no more than a quarter but that was how I got the predominant amount of my first year.

KB: That is great.

RH: Did the people send the money from all over the country?

EIJ: From all over the country. The University now has letters where people have written -- they have letters where people have written they have objected and they have many letters where . . . unfortunately, I did not keep all my letters, you know, I did not think it was anything special. So, when I moved about and then we had the storm, I lost a lot of the letters. But I think people just wanted to see me go to college, to medical school, knew that I was poor and did not have the finances, so they supplied me. When I went over to register, I had my $500. I had it in nickels. I was not very astute then. I did

not know you could go down to the bank and change your money. I took it just as I had received it. And I counted out my $500 for my tuition. And then I found out I needed $50 . . . I was just in Fayetteville and one of the professors there was laughing about when I found out I needed $50 more than I had, what I was going to do but I remember that one of my school mates from Moorehouse riding the same segregated train that I rode going into Knoxville in the holidays, had told me if there was anything I needed, to go to Daisy Bates and Elsie Bates in Little Rock and tell them. So, finding out that I needed $50, I went to the, at that time, Daisy Bates who had a newspaper there. I walked in, she said, "How do you do? Can I help you?" And I said, "I need $50." Of course, she never knew about me, so I said, "I am Edith May Irby and I need $50 more to get into medical school." She did not ask me any more questions. She went and looked behind some books, pulled out $50. I later found out that was her last $50.

KB: Daisy Bates, was that a black newspaper?

EIJ: Yes, it was. I am blocking on the name. Yes, it was a black newspaper in Little Rock. The State Press was the name of the newspaper.

KB: The State Press?

EIJ: Yes.

KB: Did your mom attend your medical school graduation?

EIJ: My mother died my sophomore year of medical school but she was very proud.

KB: Oh, I'll bet.

EIJ: Very, very proud.

KB: And did your brothers come?

EIJ: No. They didn't. It was not so special. My younger brother was in Hot Springs but he did not come. My older brother was in Ohio and he had come to my college graduation but he did not consider that such a big deal. It was a big deal for me to graduate from college for him but he was also very proud of that.

KB: Did your brothers go to college?

EIJ: Yes, my younger brother went for maybe long enough to get his name on the roll, an semester and dropped out. My older brother went to business school and finished there.

KB: I know, with the exception of a rotation you did at the Freedman's Hospital, you did your residency at Baylor Hospital, University Hospital in Houston, is that right?

EIJ: At Veteran's Hospital primarily. We were still segregated when I came to do my residency. They had had one black resident from Baylor before me, Dr. John Madison, who was eloquent, quiet, unassuming, very smart physician. He had been a success there and when I applied, my husband was coming to Texas Southern to be on the faculty and they accepted me to be a resident there.

KB: Dr. John Madison, did he remain in Houston after his residency?

EIJ: He remained in Houston. He died just a few years ago. But during his lifetime, he was my mentor. He allowed me to practice in his office on the weekends and all the money that I made, I was able to keep using his staff, his supplies, and that was how I was able to supplement the income for my residence at that time. Residents were paid very, very little, almost non-survival amount. You almost have to have another income.

KB: Do you remember where Dr. Madison went to medical school?

EIJ: Meharry.

KB: He went to Meharry?

EIJ: Yes.

KB: And he was also a specialist in internal medicine?

EIJ: Internal medicine.

KB: So, when you arrived in Houston then, you were the second African American physician in the residency program in Internal Medicine, correct?

EIJ: Yes.

KB: And because your husband was coming to Houston, you were really hoping to get the residency here in town?

EIJ: Yes.

KB: What did your husband teach?

EIJ: Psychology.

KB: Is your husband still alive?

EIJ: No. My husband died in 1989.

KB: And what was your husband's full name?

EIJ: James Beauregard Jones.

KB: Did you and your husband have children?

EIJ: Yes, we did.

KB: How many kids did you have?

EIJ: We had a whole 3!

KB: Whole three. What are your children's' names?

EIJ: Gary Ivan Jones. Myra Vonceil Jones. Keith Irby Jones.

KB: And I am assuming they went on to college all of them?

EIJ: Yes.

KB: O.K., and where did they go to college?

EIJ: Myra went to Brown University. She later went to law school at Georgetown. Gary went to University of Houston. Keith went to Texas Southern.

KB: And did any of your children become physicians?

EIJ: No.

KB: They did not follow you?

EIJ: My daughter . . . interesting . . . practiced law for 20 years, decided that she wanted to do alternative medicine and now, in fact, plans to come with me and we are planning to start a wellness center instead of my doing . . . I am not retiring but changing my impetus. Instead of seeing sick people in terms of having them get well, I intend to see well people and sick people to improve their wellness.

KB: You mentioned when you came to Houston that obviously it was still a segregated health care system in this city and therefore, you practiced at the Veteran's Hospital or you did your residency at the Veteran's Hospital.

EIJ: Yes.

KB: And the Veteran's Hospital, as a federal facility, had been integrated following Harry Truman's Executive Order in 1948, correct?

EIJ: Correct.

KB: When he integrated the military of the United States.

EIJ: Yes.

KB: When you were in your residency at the Veteran's Hospital, I am assuming you treated patients of all races.

EIJ: Correct.

KB: Did you encounter any hostility or any resistance from the patients there?

EIJ: No, absolutely none.

KB: Not even because you were a woman?

EIJ: Not even because I was a woman.

KB: And how about from the faculty members, the other physicians?

EIJ: None at all.

KB: Any resistance or difficulties working with nurses or other people on the ward?

EIJ: None at all. In fact, I would say that because I was a woman, I had special privileges. We had, at that time, 36 hours on, 12 hours off, and that is a little strenuous. The nurses would do many of the chores that, as residents, we were supposed to do, to allow me to sleep the night through. We slept at the hospital during the time we were on. So, I was very fresh the next morning when I appeared for rounds, and many of the fellows wondered how could I be so cheerful and so fresh? And it was because the nurses had done such things as draw blood and do certain sticks that residents at that time were required to do, that now, they do not require them to do.

KB: Do you think, particularly in the late 1950s, early 1960s, were there particular challenges that women faced in medicine?

EIJ: Yes.

KB: What were those challenges?

EIJ: The challenge, number one, was their opinion. They felt that women were taking the place of a male that was going to practice medicine and the woman was going to stay at home and rear children and be a part of the social settings and things, a particular environment she was in and not take her education as a physician seriously enough to be dedicated to practicing the kind of medicine that the males would practice.

KB: And were there other African American women who were physicians in Houston when you came in?

EIJ: Yes. There were three: Dr. Royce, Dr. Edna Brooks and, would you believe, I am blocking on the other lady that was here?

RH: Was it Dr. Thelma Patton Law?

EIJ: It was Thelma Patton Law. Thank you.

KB: Did you join the Houston Medical Forum when you came to Houston?

EIJ: Yes, I did.

KB: Why did you join the Houston Medical Forum?

EIJ: Because I knew it was present and I wanted to get to know the black physicians here so that I could become a part of all of Houston.

KB: O.K. and I do not necessarily need an exact number but do you have an estimate of how many black physicians there were in Houston?

EIJ: I would think that there were about 25 at that time, and that is a high estimate.

KB: You opened your office in 1962, I think?

EIJ: Yes.

KB: Were most of the African American physicians specialists or were they in general practice?

EIJ: Most of them were in general practice.

KB: And why is that?

EIJ: Because they did not have the opportunity to pursue a residency. They were not accepted when they applied and this is to the northern schools, the northern hospitals. And when they were, even in the North, there was still a sort of underlying feeling that they were not allowed to do many of the things - they did not have the opportunities to really express themselves and to perform and to be able to progress to their great potential.

KB: Obviously, you were accepted for a residency and others began to be accepted for residencies, so did those barriers to the residencies begin to break down in the late 1950s and early 1960s?

EIJ: After my time, there were other black residents. I do not remember who they were but yes, there have been black residents since that time.

KB: How did Jim Crow segregation in Houston in the early 1960s affect medical care that African American patients received?

EIJ: It is almost shameful to say that black patients were not accepted for medical care on the same level that whites were. Number one, they were degraded by - no matter what status in life - they were by, first, name calling; many of the physicians had separate waiting rooms, they came through separate doors, and were not admitted to hospitals when there were reasons why they could get better care in the hospital and in the hospitals, they were segregated. In fact, after I finished my residency and had practiced for at least 10 to 15 years, there were still segregations in hospital. Only one hospital refused me the privilege of being on the hospital staff that I applied to in Houston at the time that I applied and they refused on the basis that they did not have enough colored beds. And so, consequently, they had not accepted any blacks or colored physicians. I left them alone and I went to Methodist who accepted me immediately. Of course, I do not know how they could have since they were part of my residency but they did, and I went to Hermann Hospital that had in its charter that it was for white male physicians only. And Dr. Crozier at that time said, "Edith, we would like to take you but it is against our charter but if you will bring a court case, applying, saying that at the time Hermann did this was at a different time and that the times have changed, that we will support you as a board." And, of course, trying to set up a practice and not wanting to have any

alienation from anybody, I said, "I am sorry, Dr. Crozier, I do not want that kind of publicity." So, the board went to court and had it changed and I was their first black to be on the staff, and first woman. They did not take women and they did not take blacks on the staff.

KB: A two-fold challenge!

EIJ: Yes. And they tell me I am all of it! Both female and being black.

KB: For students who will look at the exhibits, what is the relationship between belonging to a medical society and gaining privileges at a particular hospital?

EIJ: It is necessary for one to belong to the American Medical Association or its constituent societies that are part of the medical organizations. That brings me to the point of why blacks were not practicing medicine in hospitals prior to maybe my having gone in as a member of the staff. In my own Hot Springs, they had never had a black on the hospital staff and the reason they said blacks could not get on was they needed two people to recommend them to the staff. They needed to be a part of the American Medical Association. American Medical Association was not accepting blacks because the local society had to accept blacks, so blacks could not get in the local society, they could not get two people to recommend them because they did not know each other, but when I came along, I had gone to class with these fellows. We had eaten together, we had played together. When I came along to apply for hospital staff, I knew all the

players. I went to practice in my home town, Hot Springs. The dean of the medical college that admitted me was now retired and practicing in Hot Springs, Arkansas. He was part of a clinic that we called Wade Clinic which saw the majority of people in Hot Springs. So, when I made the announcement that I was going to set up in Hot Springs, I had 30 people the first day of my practice because Wade Clinic referred the patients so that I would have a practice, and while in Hot Springs, Dr. Chenault, the dean of the medical school, was there in retirement but still doing some practice, kept me supplied with patients and Wade Clinic was multispecialty - taught me all the things that I did not learn as an intern, as a first year resident. They taught me how to do gallbladders, appendix, breech deliveries - all the things I did not learn - and consequently, I saw many of the women in Hot Springs because I was a woman. And I saw many of the blacks in Hot Springs because I was black. And I felt that I was overworked. I was working 12 and 14 hours a day. I come to Houston and sometimes I worked 23 hours a day. Recently, I have had to slow my pace - age and body wearing out. But I never had a work day which I really considered a work day less than 12 hours in Houston.

KB: In Houston, the constituent group for the American Medical Association is the Harris County Medical Society?

EIJ: Correct.

KB: And did you apply to the Harris County Medical Society when you arrived?

EIJ: Yes, I did.

KB: Were you accepted?

EIJ: Yes.

KB: Were you the first African American accepted? Among the first?

EIJ: Among the first. Dr. John Madison may have applied before me but I know I was among the first because I was always the only woman present.

KB: In 1968, Houston hosted the meeting of the National Medical Association. Did you attend that meeting?

EIJ: Yes, I did.

KB: And most people remember that meeting in part because President Lyndon Johnson came and spoke.

EIJ: Yes. I was on the board at that time.

KB: Of the Houston Medical Forum or the . . .

EIJ: Of the National Medical Association.

KB: Did you have an opportunity to meet President Johnson?

EIJ: Yes, I did. In fact, we pictured together.

KB: I'll bet that was exciting.

EIJ: It was exciting. He was so charming, warm. In fact, he said, "Where is my little Texas young lady over there? Let's make a picture together." And, of course, I was all flattered, you know?

KB: Why was it important for President Johnson to address the National Medical Association?

EIJ: It showed respect. It said to others, this is an important organization, important enough for me to take off to address it. And so, it brought much good to the National Medical Association.

KB: And one of the reasons, as I understand it, that President Johnson was eager to support the NMA was because the National Medical Association had been supporters of his Medicare legislation.

EIJ: That is true. In fact, he signed into with the National Medical Association the Medicare law.

KB: Why did the National Medical Association support Medicare?

EIJ: Because it was needed. It was probably needed for blacks more than any other because of the lack of insurance coverage because of the people who could not pay the large amount of premium that was necessary for insurance, medical insurance.

KB: O.K., and didn't the law also contain provisions that prevented hospitals from receiving Medicare funds if they did not integrate?

EIJ: It did indeed.

KB: O.K., so the Medicare legislation proved to be very important to physicians in terms of expanding the hospitals . . .

EIJ: Physicians, to patients, to the hospitals themselves. It allowed many of the people to do the things they wanted to do but could not do because of the climate of attitude.

KB: I think it is one of the more quiet ways in which the country integrated that people do not realize.

EIJ: Yes, and that you could not segregate them even in the hospital.

KB: You were later president of the National Medical Association? Is that correct?

EIJ: Yes.

KB: Do you remember what year that was generally?

EIJ: 1984.

KB: What goals did you set as president of the Association?

EIJ: At that time, it was very important that we would set goals of competency; that physicians would be enrolled in courses of continuing education, that we would be a part of the activities of our local societies. At that time, many were being accepted or would be accepted by applying. That we would increase the educational attitude that blacks had certain disorders, that had not been addressed adequately because of many things. That we increased our membership that year almost triple that I was president. We increased our medical education such that not just once a year at our regular meetings but we had regional meetings in which we took the education to these various regions. That is all I can think of that I may have done.

KB: That is pretty good. I would say tripling the membership is . . .

EIJ: Yes, we were very, very excited. Many of the women who had not become a part enrolled and, of course, I stayed out of my office and traveling and consequently encouraged membership. It was one of the things that I was particularly proud of. Some of the black physicians had never heard of the National Medical and so we were able to take them the message that it did exist and that they could become members and that they could continue their medical education and they could have the relationship with other physicians to discuss their cases and concerns.

KB: Obviously with the Harris County Medical Society at the local level, the American Medical Association nationally, African American physicians can join those organizations now.

EIJ: Yes, without any barriers.

KB: Given that, why do you think the Houston Medical Forum, on a local level, and the National Medical Association on a national level, why do those organizations remain important?

EIJ: Because there are issues that are not adequately addressed by the white majority organizations.

KB: Such as? Just a few examples?

EIJ: Such as, on a lesser scale, many of the same problems still exist that have been present all the time. They are less fragrant. They are less, probably publicized. It is not yet equal even though it is not separate, even though there is opportunity for blacks to belong, for them to use hospital facilities if they can pay for it. They are still, in some situations, treated as second class citizens. They are still, by some physicians, given less attention and there are still some physicians who tend to make the appointment so that the two classes, blacks and whites, don't come. And there are some even who herd them to different areas in their offices. It is not yet equal. By some, yes. It is an attitudinal thing and I frequently find patients who tell me when I refer them to certain physicians that, "I don't want to go there anymore. When I walked in, he wanted to call me by my first name. He doesn't know me that well." And they take this as . . . some physicians, I do not know whether they intend to do it but they feel that it is a closeness but it is not a closeness with black patients. If they are to call him Dr. Smith, they want to be called Mrs. Smith and not Joanne or Mary or what have you. It is not a social occasion for them and they take it as an insult. There are still miles and miles to go.

KB: And obviously while healthcare has improved substantially for the African American community over the course of the 20th century, it still remains an underserved community.

EIJ: It is still underserved. I have stayed in this particular area because it is accessible. Patients can walk in. They feel this is their office. They feel a part of it. They do not feel that they need to be in any certain kind of dress code. They wear the best they have. Some of them walk from long distances to get here. I stay here, I have stayed here until after midnight to see all that come. They know that and they wait patiently. Usually, they sit out in the summertime and may wait 3, 4+ hours to be seen. Sometimes I see them with less money, sometimes no money and they know they can still come - with or without money.

KB: You were anticipating exactly where I was going with my questions. What ward is your office in?

EIJ: Third Ward.

KB: I have two questions, to give our students a sense of change over time, so the first question is about Houston. You have lived in Houston for about 45 years, well, more than that because of your residency. How has Houston as a city changed over the last 50 years?

EIJ: Significant. Number one, it has grown so big with all of its freeways, annexes, the population growth that it is almost impossible for me to get to know intimately how I thought I knew Houston, say, 30 years ago. It has changed because there does not seem to be the tension of the racial kind of combativeness that seemed to have been present

without any cause. I will just give you this little illustration. When we came here to live, we lived next door to a University of Houston teacher and my children were very young then. My daughter was about 6, 7 years old and at that time, they could not use fountains at Walgreens. And my daughter wanted ice cream but she wanted to sit at the counter. And my husband had her and he tried to explain to her why she could not sit at the counter. And he was telling her because the whites would object, that these were people who did not understand. And she said, "They are mean people." He tried to make her understand, "They are people who just have not had enough contact to know that you are a nice person and that some white people are just mean like that but all people are not like that." He said, "Do you know Ms. Slade who lives next door to us?" She would be our babysitter sometimes and so forth. He said, "She is white and she is not mean." And Myra looked at him and said, "Oh daddy, is Ms. Slade white?" And that was the way that things have gone since then. It has gone now such that when you hear something, you don't say they were black and did it or they were white and did it. It is like you are just another citizen. And things have changed. I don't get credit now for what I do because I am black. I get credit now for what I do because I do it because I have gotten in a part of the city in which I wanted to be and which all are welcome and they can come and I give good care. I teach at University of Texas and Baylor College of Medicine, and I just got the professorship chair from Cornell University about Fall 2007.

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