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Dr. Rubin M. Lewis

FROM BUTTE TO BERKELEY: THE MAKING OF A THORACIC SURGEON

An Interview Conducted by
Eleanor K. Glaser
in 1976

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FOREWORD

Rubin Lewis died of pneumonia in October, 1976. Toward the end of his life he was handicapped by partial blindness, the loss of one leg, and several degenerative diseases. By the time this oral history was begun, the recent episodes of his life, the ones about which I know from personal experience, were not the most vivid in his memory. The interviews gave him the most pleasure when he was recapturing the scenes and adventures of his years in Butte and Seattle, long before I met him. I am grateful to Eleanor Glaser for piecing together a continuity from many disjointed fragments, for giving Rubin the opportunity to relive some of his youth, and to provide us with a record of that period of his life about which his children and I knew very little.

Rubin had a reputation as a witty and enthusiastic reconteur in social gatherings. Unfortunately, he never got around to telling Eleanor some of the stories that I remember most vividly. If he had, this oral history might have been a much thicker one. Still, I feel that the essence of Rubin's life has been captured; he comes across as just as iconoclastic, if somewhat less radical, and more philosophical than I ever found him to be in his active life. One thing that always puzzled me about my husband was his apparent lack of doubt that he was right. He never seemed to question any decision he had made in matters large or small. But I have since come to understand that this outward confidence in his own judgment was an essential ingredient of his surgical skill. He worked all his life to be able to have confidence in his own judgment. He regarded his extraordinary skill with his hands as a tool more than an achievement. Surgery, he often said, requires far less precision than mechanical engineering. He was fond of telling the story of a surgeon whose patient complained about his bill. "What? Four hundred dollars for making that little incision!" "No," replied the surgeon, "I charged you only ten dollars for making the incision--the rest was for knowing where to make it."

Emily V. Lewis

Santa Cruz, California
July 1979

INTERVIEW HISTORY

Dr. Rubin M. Lewis was first brought to the attention of the Regional Oral History Office by Erika Hublitz, who described him as a gifted physician and a talented artist. Miss Hublitz met Dr. Lewis in Germany in 1950 when he was the chief surgeon and medical director of an International Relief Organization sanatorium, whose patients were mostly survivors of Nazi concentration camps. Although Dr. Lewis did not fit into any series then being conducted, a gift to The Bancroft Library made it possible to undertake the memoirs of this unique man. A founding member of the American Board of Thoracic Surgery and inventor of medical instruments and appliances, Dr. Lewis was also a superb water colorist, a photography bug, and a cellist who first took up that instrument when in his sixties.

The breadth of Dr. Lewis's interests and abilities was also indicated by architect Carl Kolbeck, designer of the Lewis home in the Berkeley hills. "Dr. Lewis was an unusual man and a remarkable craftsman. He laid the mahogany floors of the house himself, finishing them by scraping with a tempered steel plate that he used as a plane, giving the wood a burnished finish. This was no mean task--it was a major effort. And I still use the drawing table that Rabs (Dr. Lewis) designed and built; it's another example of his skill. He used sophisticated joinery to dovetail the legs into the horizontal members, and the heavy, tall table is supported by light members only five-eighths thick."

While still in grade school, Dr. Lewis demonstrated his aptitude for solving mechanical problems by devising a snowplow to clear a path from the family home to the trolley line that took the three Lewis boys to school. He also invented an electric barn door opener. But in his half-modest, half-argumentative manner, Dr. Lewis declined, during an interview, to accept praise for this early resourcefulness. He said, "Why, I assembled it. Nobody invents any more. I looked at it and said it would be good if we had a this or a that, and I'd go make it. I think that's probably the best experience I had--making things I dreamed about."

Rubin M. Lewis was born in 1899 in Butte, Montana, a mining town where copper was king. He saw mountainsides denuded of trees because of pollution from smelting chimneys, went to school on a trolley that passed the tailings of worked-over mines (before going off to college he worked in a mine himself), and was very much aware of the block-long whorehouse. Butte was a man's town, a rough frontier where union rivalry resulted in violence. Day after day in the summer of 1914, the New York Times carried front page articles on the battles between the International Workers of the World (Wobblies) and the Western Federation of Miners, as Wobblies attempted to oust the federation local. At

one point, Wobblies threw the acting mayor out of the second-story window of the union hall, later dynamiting the building.

These events, plus growing up a Jew in a frontier community that prized self-sufficiency, proved to be life-long influences on Dr. Lewis. Perhaps it is easy to overestimate Butte's affect on him, but for the remainder of his life, Dr. Lewis was an iconoclastic, intractable figure in a convention-bound field.

Prior to becoming a thoracic surgeon, Dr. Lewis was a graduate engineer, and he put that experience to good use in later years when he devised medical instruments and appliances. As an intern at Philadelphia General Hospital, he built equipment and instruments for doing research into spinal fluid pressures. This research won him a first prize for undergraduate research and a silver medal at the AMA convention in 1930. From Germany he wrote to colleagues: "I designed an adjustable hammock on a frame for applying plaster of Paris jackets in the treatment of TB spondylitis." "A new operating table for the prone position was designed and built by me with the assistance of our shop." "I designed and built a walker." Wherever he practiced medicine, Dr. Lewis applied his inventiveness and engineering know-how to improving surgical appliances. After moving to Berkeley in 1951, he set up a commercial workshop where he made instruments, tables, etc.

While outwardly not a humble man, Dr. Lewis made light of his accomplishments and abilities. During one interview session this provided the basis for an extended debate concerning credit for inventions. Dr. Lewis said, in part, "I think all designs are luck. If you invent something and it hits, that's great. But for every one thing that's invented, that solves a problem, that becomes a great invention, probably five hundred do not....I have a philosophy that if you have luck and ability, you can put them together."

Another facet of this complex man was his reluctance to discuss medical matters with a layman, except in the most cursory manner. This led to another lengthy discussion when I asked about the treatment of tuberculosis. Dr. Lewis indicated his disinclination to go into specifics by stating, "If you spend thirty or forty years in medicine you get to the point where, if you're going to be honest about it, you can't talk about treatment, because treatment--there ain't such a thing....Our approach to surgical problems was if you solve the problem, that's fine. But how do you know you are correct? For every answer I give you, I've argued against and fought with and for."

Although Dr. Lewis was a blustery man, he had a deep concern for others. At a time when relations between the races left much to be desired, Dr. Lewis arranged to have a black colleague serve as the first black chief of services for Philadelphia General Hospital. And he served on the staff of several black hospitals in Philadelphia. His daughter, Pat Jaffe, states, "In those days black people were not invited to your home for dinner, but they were invited to ours."

According to Mrs. Jaffe, Dr. Lewis was, "...kind of a Westerner, really, in the Butte tradition. He was considered by many people in Philadelphia to be a different kind of person from those that traveled in the circle he normally did. For example, he made a speech at the AMA in the thirties in favor of socialized medicine, or a form of it. It caused quite a stir." Mrs. Jaffe also recalls Dr. Lewis's adeptness as well as his strong personality. "He was opinionated and pushed me to do a lot of daring things. He was a man who had a sense of himself, who had very definite ideas, and who tried many things. He always did magical things with his hands. To watch him cook was like a work of art, because of the way he handled the materials and the knife. Everything he did, he did well."

Despite his achievements, Dr. Lewis most valued and liked to recall his early years in Butte. He felt keenly the uniqueness of his boyhood in a frontier mining town. In the summer of 1974, he made a series of tape recordings with his brother, Dr. Leon Lewis, which he intended to incorporate into short stories. These, together with a travelogue he wrote of his first trip to Ecuador, are in The Bancroft Library as a supplement to this oral history.

Dr. Lewis's taped remarks tell a good deal about his view of his life and himself: "I'm going to start this by dictating a series of actual chapters or paragraphs which, when combined, will be a sort of autobiography, but in the beginning will be just a series of sketches of happenings in my life. They are not of great moment, but they have been interesting to reflect upon, and a few test strips that I have made suggested that they are also interesting to people listening to them. And it may be that this is a means of passing on some of the things that I have lived through which may be of historic interest in the development of those things and people, and may also be interesting from the standpoint of a record for those who have known me.

"I have been somewhat of a romanticist most of my life, and perhaps a great many of the things that I have done have been based on romanticism in one way or another. I have always believed that I could do things well because I had a certain amount of intellect, a certain amount of ingenuity, a little bit of ability to use my hands and head. And with these things I have attempted many things, albeit none was of great proficiency, none was of great moment, but all were terribly important to me. Being an egoist, this is the basis for my life, I am sure, and I am equally sure that it's the same thing for all of us. We're all of the same glue, and we all do exactly the same things."

In a taping made with Dr. Leon Lewis on July 19, 1974, Rubin Lewis spoke of the heavy burden of making correct medical decisions. "No matter how you start, the surgical approach to a problem is filled with uncertainty as to what makes sense. I've always been troubled with this before almost every operation I do. Not that I don't know how to do it or haven't done it before, but that I may do something not right, to the detriment of the patient. These things, I'm sure, are in the mind of any capable surgeon who has the feeling of humankind in his veins. But it is a great problem, and it has a great control over your efforts."

This "feeling of humankind" is attested to by Miss Hublitz, who relates that half of Dr. Lewis's patients were treated without charge.

Dr. Lewis enjoyed his role as a family man. Elsie Finn, his first wife, whom he married in Philadelphia in 1935, had a daughter from an earlier marriage. This is Pat Jaffe, adopted by Dr. Lewis. He said, "I was adopted by her, really. She asked me if I would; I said yes. I never could say no to a girl." After Elsie Finn Lewis died of cancer in 1946, Dr. Lewis went to Ecuador at the invitation of a colleague. He returned later that year to work and teach under the auspices of the Anti-Tuberculosis League of Ecuador. Emily Vernon, who had been an army nurse during World World II, was in Guayaquil visiting her brother. She became Dr. Lewis's surgical nurse, and they were married a short time later. Although Dr. Lewis was in his fifties when his son and daughter, Stephen Lazarus and Vera Marie [Mrs. Rod Algoett] were born, he took great delight in these children, who are almost the same age as his grandchildren.

Dr. Lewis had been in failing health for several years before his oral history was begun. Due to diabetic complications, one leg had been amputated and he was almost totally blind, making it impossible for him to continue with his engrossing hobbies. Aside from human contact, stimulation was largely derived from listening to the radio, making tapes of radio programs, and recording his remembrances.

Before the interviews actually began, Dr. Lewis and I met for two planning sessions on February 2 and 16, 1976, to determine the topics we would cover and the approximate number of interviews. These turned out to be seven all together, the last one completed on May 24, 1976.

Mrs. Lewis (her warmth and friendliness made it easy to call her Emily) provided a large box of correspondence folders, documents, and some photographs. This was an invaluable aid in learning about various aspects of Dr. Lewis's life and indicating areas for fruitful questioning. Dr. Lewis had routinely made a carbon copy of his typed letters onto the back of the letter he was answering, which was extremely helpful--a habit archivists and interviewers might wish was widespread.

The interviews were held in Dr. Lewis's bed-sitting room from about ten o'clock A.M. until noon, every second or third week. After parking my car on the street, I entered an unlocked door in the car port, calling out my arrival to Dr. Lewis. Preferring an informal atmosphere, Dr. Lewis was usually seated in his wheelchair without his artificial leg and wearing a short kimono. I would set up my tape recorder on a table in the window alcove, from which one had a magnificent view of the San Francisco Bay Area, and Dr. Lewis would wheel himself up to the table. He never failed to offer me coffee and seemed quite self-sufficient--able to make breakfast for himself using the electric coffee pot and toaster on the ledge next to the table. A small, office-sized refrigerator also perched on this ledge.

Becky Sawyer, Emily's niece, lived in the house (as did several other young people that I never had the occasion to meet), and she was at home during several taping sessions. When one interview took place on a very warm day, she brought me iced tea after I had declined to stay for the cold chicken lunch she prepared for Dr. Lewis.

Because of her work, Emily Lewis lived in Santa Cruz, coming home weekends and occasionally on weekdays. She had earned a master's degree in public health in 1953 after the Lewises moved to Berkeley following their stay in Germany. Emily is currently employed by Aid to International Development, teaching family planning to foreign students, mainly African, attending UC Santa Cruz.

During the next to last interview, Emily was working in the next room and from time to time would comment on Dr. Lewis's remarks. This gave me the idea to ask her to be part of the final session. Because of Dr. Lewis's reluctance to discuss general medical matters with me, and because he seemed unwilling to criticize Ecuador's medical standards although his correspondence indicated otherwise, I thought it would be well to have Emily's reactions. She didn't contradict any of Dr. Lewis's statements, but it was helpful to have her impressions of the time spent in Ecuador and Germany.

To further round out Dr. Lewis's memoirs, I visited the late Jay Gittelsohn and his wife, Sadie, in their charming North Berkeley home. Mr. Gittelsohn had met Dr. Lewis in Seattle in 1918 when both were attending the University of Washington. Over the years, he was much closer to Rubin Lewis's younger brother, Dr. Leon Lewis, but they had renewed their acquaintance when Rubin Lewis moved to Berkeley.

Mr. Gittelsohn remembered Dr. Lewis, whom he called Rabs, as a rakish fellow who ran for cheerleader and was active in Jewish social clubs at the university. According to Mr. Gittelsohn, Leon was the scholar and intellectual, while Rabs didn't distinguish himself as a student. But Mr. Gittelsohn spoke with great admiration of Dr. Lewis's outstanding ability to do things with his hands, and he recalled a sign over Rab's desk in Seattle: "A place for everything and everything in its place."

During our interviews Dr. Lewis frequently played the devil's advocate, and it was my impression that this was a life-long habit. He seemed to delight in taking a deliberately irreverent point of view--to stimulate as well as to shock. He also enjoyed verbal sparring and often digressed from the subject under discussion, which got in the way of a straightforward account of his life. This, together with the fact that his early years in Butte were a recurring topic, necessitated substantial editing and rearrangement of material so that all recollections of Butte were in one chapter.

Due to throat damage suffered during an operation, Dr. Lewis spoke in a raspy voice that was sometimes difficult to understand. Because his voice tired easily, or perhaps he needed time to make up his mind, there were frequent pauses in his narrative. Another speech trait was to respond to

questions in an indirect, round-about manner. Shortly after the interviews got underway, Dr. Lewis's brother Leon suffered a stroke, and this may have affected Rubin Lewis's outlook, causing him to become less communicative.

Dr. Lewis was taken to the hospital on October 7, 1976, just one day before he was to receive the edited manuscript for his approval; he died two days later. Emily Lewis read through the edited copy together with her niece, Betty Kunkel, the daughter of Rubin Lewis's older brother Harry. Their emendations are noted wherever they occur.

He was indeed a unique man, and I treasure the hours Dr. Lewis and I worked together.

Eleanor Glaser
Interviewer-Editor
February, 1977

I FAMILY BACKGROUND

Mother's Family, From Russia to Omaha

Glaser: I'd like you to tell me about your parents; their background in Russia and their coming to America.

Lewis: The exodus from Russia, in regard to the Jewish people in the 90's, probably stemmed not so much from anti-Semitism as a force but anti-Semitism as an effect.

Military was compulsory. Jews who got into the military were convicted before they arrived. Their work was the most menial, generally, and the chance for advancement was likewise in the lower rung.

My mother's three brothers had been in the army for a period of a year or more; I don't remember how long. When they got out they didn't want anymore of it, and the younger brother was getting ready to leave Kremenchug to go to America. It happened that he died before this occured. In the meantime, my mother and the rest of her mobile family had gone to Hamburg or Bremen to take off for the United States.

Glaser: Do you remember what year that was?

Lewis: Well, my mother came to America in 1893, so it had to be 1892 or '93 at least. They didn't separate by much, but I think my mother came after my grandmother and her other daughters and son came to America. That takes care of the Rosenberg family.

Glaser: Why did they go on to Omaha instead of staying on the East Coast?

Lewis: I think probably one of the sons had a job or was in the furniture business in Omaha. I don't know how that came about.

Glaser: How much of your mother's family was in Omaha?

Lewis: A brother and a wife and several of their children settled in Omaha.

Glaser: But you had said that your mother had had three brothers, one of whom had died before the family left.

Lewis: Yes.

Glaser: And that meant that two brothers and--

Lewis: Three brothers.

Glaser: Three brothers had gone on--

Lewis: They had come over to America.

Glaser: And had they all settled in Omaha?

Lewis: No, one of them--just one settled there and is still there, if he's alive; I think he's dead. My mother's family started--let's say that their base was Omaha. One brother went to Canyon City, Colorado and started a jewelry shop there. Another brother started a furniture shop in Kansas City, Kansas. Another in Omaha. That makes three, doesn't it? And one died in Europe.

Glaser: What business did the one in Omaha have?

Lewis: He had a furniture shop, and then I think he went into life insurance, and his son then did some life insurance. They were kind of a mixed up family. The mother--his wife--in that family was a hypothyroid, and she had a bunch of kids, none of which ever amounted to anything; they were mentally deficient in thyroid. Not that they were all crazy. They got a high school education, some of her kids did, but some of them weren't even nice looking, you know. The oldest daughter seemed to be pretty, and the oldest son was good looking. The other kids were kind of horse-faced, as I recall.

Glaser: Can you remember the name of that uncle?

Lewis: Yes. His name was Sol Rosenberg.

Glaser: Now what about the one that went on to Colorado?

Lewis: To Canyon City, Colorado? Ruby Rosenberg. The third brother was Senya, which I think is Joe; I'm not sure. It's a Russian name, and he was Senya. Or Senja, I guess.

Glaser: And where did he end up?

Lewis: He was in Kansas City. He had two daughters who made fairly big time in vaudeville; they played the Orpheum and things like that. They had a little act; Morna played the violin and the other one did the talk show, you know.

Glaser: What were their names?

Lewis: I don't know what they ended up with, but they were Rosenbergs; I don't remember what name they played under. I think one was called Rose or Rosa*, and the other I don't recall. They were nice looking; they still live in Los Angeles.

Glaser: Do you remember the names of the wives of your uncles?

Lewis: No, I don't think so. Let's see. Sol's wife I don't remember; she was the hypothyroid. And Senya's wife--I don't recall her name either, but I know that she smoked cigarettes, and that was tantamount to being a whore, which she wasn't. But that was a bad thing to do when I was a kid. The whores all smoked, and we had loads of them in Butte.

Glaser: How did your mother's father support the family in Kremenchug?

Lewis: My mother's father probably sat at a table and prayed, and his wife probably had a few chickens or something. I don't know what they lived on; I never did know.

Glaser: Was this a rural area; did they have a little farm?

Lewis: Kremenchug at that time was around twenty thousand people, if that many, and it was rural. I suppose it was one of those ghetto sort of things. I don't know what the folks lived on.

Glaser: When your mother and her two sisters and mother came to this country, what did they live on? How did they support themselves?

Lewis: I think they lived on Uncle Sol, who had the furniture store by then. I think he supported them. I think they all lived together.

Glaser: Didn't the girls have to work?

Lewis: I guess they did. But they were young; they were under fifteen or sixteen--around that time.

Glaser: How old was your mother when she married your father?

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*Rosa Roma

Lewis: I guess she was up in her twenties.

Glaser: And she hadn't worked?

Lewis: I don't know. I think she was the housekeeper and the cook.

Father Arrives in America

Glaser: You've already told me that your father came from Luna. What year did he come over?

Lewis: Well, he apparently came a few years before my mother did. He came to New York and wandered up through western New York State, Syracuse, Buffalo. Then he went on down to--I don't know if he went to Iowa or not, but somewhere I have in my mind that he went to Council Bluffs or some other place. But he ended up on this trip in Omaha.

He apparently was a moderately social guy. I mean without being a climber. The people he would sell to became his friends. He sang in some singing groups and played the bass fiddle. But he was never a musician as far as we were concerned. So we're not sure if that isn't just a bunch of bunk or a dream that he had. But he wasn't a dishonest guy. He did a few Baron Munchausen types of things. But he was a pretty straight guy. He didn't lie more than the average good ones. But this is how I remembered the stories.

Mother's side, of course, was tied into time because I heard her say, "Oh yes, that was the year I came to America. That was the year that President Garfield or McKinley was assassinated."*

My father, however, came to America and Omaha having lived apparently in a moderately well to-do family. He and three brothers came to the United States; I don't know if they came together or not. I have no way of telling.

His story started in this little farm where they raised cattle and wheat. I know they raised wheat because he talked about loading the barge and going up to the port on the Baltic, perhaps near Gdynia.

Glaser: Is Lewis the original name or was it Americanized?

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*President Garfield died in 1881, so maybe that is when she came. E.V.L.

Lewis: No, that's the name my father took. He thought Lewis was a very easy name and could be pronounced easily, so he took that. He did that at the immigration office when he came in.

The three brothers came to America first, and they adopted the name Nechin. But this name was, I think, the family name of my grandmother, just to fool those damn Russians. When my father came, he said, "Why should I take a name like that? I'm going to America, why don't I take an American name?" So he took Lewis.

Glaser: Do you know what the name had been?

Lewis: Yes, the name had been Zatz. I operated on a man named Zatz, who was from Hungary, who was a member of the family that made the best liqueurs in Budapest. We weren't related, though; he was Catholic, we were Jews.

The other thing about my father's family is that--I think there was a sister, I'm not sure what her name was. But he had one brother, who was younger; I think his name was Pesach, which means "spring," of course. He was kind of a studious guy. Then he had another brother--God, I don't know what his name was--and the guy in New Jersey. There were the three brothers and my father. I don't know what they did or what for. Pesach, I think, was kind of a mechanic--no, I mean the guy whose name I can't remember; it might have been Sam, for all I know. But he had two sons, I think. One of them became an engineer, went to the Armour Institute of Technology in Chicago; and the other one became a steel worker who put up high iron.

I remember one cousin who, I think, was Sol's child.

II CHILDHOOD IN BUTTE, MONTANA, 1899-1917

Glaser: How would you characterize your father's personality?

Lewis: Well, I would say he was not terribly aggressive and not particularly lazy. He'd been crippled. I think I'd characterize him as a straight-going, nice person. And he was always that.

Glaser: Did he have an easy-going kind of personality or was he easily riled?

Lewis: He didn't get riled very easily. I never saw him really mad; maybe once or twice in my life. He was a very nice person. A sort of trustworthy person. He had a great many friends. None who would give up their lives for you, you know. But he was a pretty good joe.

Glaser: What about your mother's personality?

Lewis: My mother, if she had had an education, would have been the leading light in whatever community she lived. She was very bright, very logical, very capable. She could cook and sew and paint the house. She would never drive a horse. But she would milk the cows.

Judaism

Glaser: How active was she in the synagogue?

Lewis: Not active at all. She observed the major holidays. We were out of town so it was difficult to go to the Friday night activities. But I don't think she did much more than that. She had three sons and a husband. She washed all the clothes by hand. She had a truck garden over which we had to pump the water. She milked the cows. She made a great deal of our clothing. She painted the house inside

Lewis: and out. She raised about a thousand chickens all the time and even fed my pigeons and rabbits.

Glaser: Then she didn't have any time for social life?

Lewis: Well, not too much. She never had help.

Glaser: You've said that your mother kept a kosher house. Was it hard to get kosher meat or Passover foods?

Lewis: No. It was all pre-arranged. The rabbi had a meat market just one or two doors from my father's last store in Butte, and he brought in the matzos. I think one year we didn't have a rabbi. But as far as poultry went, the *shochet** came to our store every Thursday and killed the chickens. We picked them and delivered them and they were cooked the next day because they didn't keep things long. We had ice for an ice box. Meat was bought from the butcher shop, which was also next door. So we didn't have very much trouble.

The bacterial count in our milk was never made, but I'm sure our cows were tested for tuberculosis. I remember when a great many of the herds were decimated in the town because the cows had positive tuberculosis tests.

Glaser: The rabbi also had a butcher shop? As a means of livelihood?

Lewis: Oh yes.

Glaser: You've said that there were three congregations.

Lewis: Well, one was Reform, and the other guy had a meat market, too.

Glaser: There were two Orthodox rabbis and two kosher butcher shops?

Lewis: Yes.

Glaser: That's a lot for a little town. How many Jewish families were there?

Lewis: We had about 100 families.

Glaser: Did they have a fairly good relationship with the rest of the town, or was it a matter of ghettoizing themselves?

Lewis: Well, they didn't ghettoize, but they didn't socialize. I mean the

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*The authorized (by rabbis) slaughterer of animals according to kosher requirements.

Lewis: people who were Reform Jews ran the big stores and were lawyers and things like that. The people in our congregation had furniture stores, shoe stores, and things of that kind. And the other kind were junk peddlers and something of the kind, you know.

Glaser: You said that you had gone to *cheder*, Hebrew school, until you were in high school. Were the three of you bar mitzvah?

Lewis: My older brother was bar mitzvahed, I was not, and Leon was not. We had educated our family pretty well by then.

Glaser: Your mother must have been distressed.

Lewis: She wasn't. She couldn't care less, really. By that time she was sure that being Jewish didn't matter much.* We were always told that, "Oh, yes. You'll grow up and marry a *shiksah* [Gentile girl]. It's nothing more than to be expected of you. I'd come home after a date with a non-Jewish girl, and my father would say, "Well, how's Bridget this evening?" Of course, her name wouldn't be Bridget or anything like it. But I got it.

But when I married the first time, I married a Jewish girl. When mother came to visit us in Philadelphia, they got along like this--

Glaser: You're pointing your fingers at each other.

Lewis: Yes. Fighting each other all the time. So then my first wife died, and I went to Ecuador and came back with Emily. We were here in Berkeley in my brother's house and I said, "Well, Mother, how do you like a *shiksah* for a daughter-in-law? She drew herself up to her full five feet, put her arm around Emily, and said, "She is <u>not</u> a *shiksah*."

Glaser: But for a woman who, in virtually a frontier town, was keeping a kosher house, it must have been difficult for her to make the--

Lewis: It was because she was raised that way. And she wouldn't think of eating anything but kosher. If she went to a restaurant, do you know what she'd order? A hard roll and butter. And not be very happy about it because the butter was not in a kosher pot.

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*"Other members of the family disagree with this interpretation of Rabs' mother--they feel that being Jewish and observing Jewish traditions was very important to her." Emily V. Lewis.

Glaser: Wasn't it quite an adjustment for her to see her sons drifting away from Judaism?

Lewsi: I don't think so. Each of us married a Jewish girl sometime or other. My older brother married four of them, my younger brother married two of them, and I married one of them.

Glaser: Tell me about the time your father had a pig farm with a Swedish partner.

Lewis: He was working then as a custodian of the city dump and diverted some of the swill to the pig ranch.

Glaser: How old were you at that time?

Lewis: Seven, eight.

Glaser: Were you helping your father?

Lewis: I hadn't gotten into that, yet. I was busy trying to learn to ride horseback and skate with racer hockeys. I had to learn how to ride the wagon with my father. I hadn't gotten a bike, yet. I didn't get a bike until I was about ten.

Glaser: Your father had the farm for two years?

Lewis: Yes, they had the farm for about two years. And my father sold out to Dahlberg, who kept it for some time.

Glaser: Did he sell out at the time when he had to leave the dump and move to the outskirts of town?

Lewis: No, some time later.

Glaser: How long was it that you lived on the farm outside of town?

Lewis: It was not a farm. It was a couple of acres. We lived there from 1908 to 1917, when I went to college. The the folks moved into town the next year or two. When I went back in '41, the house had burned down. So that wasn't even available.

But we didn't move to the outskirts of town, really. We moved onto what was called "the flats" at that time. And the flats consisted of a homeless area with an occasional house. Maybe three or four houses in a block, or maybe one house in a block, depending on where it was.

There was also a dammed-up puddle of water that was called the

Lewis: Bell Creek or the Bell Creek Dam, which our house skirted on the southern border. Wagons could drive across this dam. Sheep and cows were herded past from the railroad to the slaughter houses, and the bums went from one railroad to the other on their travel through the town. So that there were always things going on, you know.

Railroads

Glaser: Were there two railroads?

Lewis: Oh, we had four railroads. One was the first completely electrified railroad, I guess, in the world. It was called the "Butte, Anaconda, and Pacific." It was owned by Anaconda. This railroad went between Butte and Anaconda, and it carried ore and passengers back and forth.

Glaser: What was the distance?

Lewis: Twenty-six miles from Butte to Anaconda. And there was a hot springs halfway, called Gregson's, where people went for week-ends. There were a lot of little towns around.

Glaser: What were the other railroads?

Lewis: The Great Northern Pacific mainline went through Butte. We were on a spur from Great Falls and Helena. And then the Milwaukee came on through from Chicago to Seattle. That was called the Chicago, Milwaukee, and St. Paul. They changed it to Chicago, Milwaukee, and Puget Sound, and then it went back to Chicago, Milwaukee, and St. Paul again.

Glaser: It sounds like a lot of railroads for a small town.

Lewis: Sweetheart, the town was big. It had 26,000 people, which is nothing. But they pulled millions of dollars worth of copper, zinc, silver, and rock. It had a smelter of its own in Anaconda. Pressures for air pollution reduction finally shifted it from Butte to Anaconda. They had a smoke stack to raise the smoke into higher areas because the air pollution had killed off all the trees.

Glaser: Was it while you were still there that they switched it to Anaconda?

Lewis: Oh yes. They built a stack more than 500 feet high. It was inaugurated by having a couple get married on top of the stack.

Glaser: So you didn't feel that Butte was on the frontier. To you this was

Glaser: a big town with a lot going on; with trains coming through.

Lewis: Yes, it was. And I worked on the railroad. One of the guys that handled the cargo, you know.

We had one store there that specialized in nice clothing. A great deal of which was imported from Paris. And rich people who lived in Butte traded in those stores. The things they handled were good quality.

The miners wore very high-priced men's suits and shoes that were worth a great deal more than average shoes. But when they got dressed up, they wore the lower part--pants part--of dungarees and their good coats, scarfs, gloves, and various things when they went to a dance or something.

It was a crazy place. The guys on the street were well-dressed in overalls if the overalls were clean. And this was the background of growing up.

Glaser: Were there plays or concerts in Butte? Was there a cultural life?

Lewis: I saw Charlie Chaplin for the first time in the show house. It was called the "Orion," for the god, not "Orion" for the hill. We had two vaudeville shows. We had the Orpheum and the Family Theater. The big movie was built just at the time they discovered the Hawaiian Islands, when "Aloha Oe" was a popular song. At the Family Theater they played, "My Pretty Rainbow," which was a popular song. The Stephen Foster things were kind of obstructed because they weren't new enough. We kept up on new songs and new dances and new haberdashery.

Glaser: Was it a wild town with a lot of saloons, or did these miners have their families with them, making it more peaceful?

Lewis: No, their piece was obtained in another part of the town. [Laughter] Across Main Street and down was a red light district which contained at least a hundred whores and all in little cabinets [pronounced "cabeenets"]. Single rooms--oh I'd say they were 10x12 feet--which contained one bed, one dresser with pitcher and basin, and the front door. Curtains or blinds on them. And the girls stood in their doorways or room (depending on the temperature) in their underwear or in their playsuits to show how well off they were. This was their method of sales promotion.

Glaser: Then you're suggesting that a lot of the miners were not married or didn't have families with them.

Lewis: Well, even some who were married and had families with them went to visit the girls on the line. And some were single. The kids or the young guys who worked at my father's place would say, "Oh well, Friday night, eh. God, I don't think I can wait until tomorrow night."

"Why?"

"Getting kind of antsy."

"Well, you don't have to worry about that."

"Oh yes. I can't let it go for a week." [Chuckling]

The line contained many people. This was an unsegregated place. They had American girls, black and white. They had an occasional Oriental girl or girls. They had--oh, groups of people. No ethnic restrictions. There were Jewish whores, Swedish whores and French whores. All kinds. Whatever you wanted, and of all ages. And some very beautiful girls. Some of them were very nicely groomed, and some of them were well educated. Most of them weren't, of course. There was one girl who drove a team of beautiful horses and a lovely buggy. I think she was the daughter of one of the guys who ran for Congress, either in the United States or in the state.

The bars were places where mostly men came. They had family entrances, but women were seldom in the bars. The restaurants served as bars for the better class of people.

Glaser: What was the ethnic make-up of the town?

Lewis: Well, the quality people were Irish. They were in the police force and politics. The miners were mostly Irish, English, Finlanders, some Bohemians, some Austrians--people looking for a job. At that time wages were the big thing. The first mine job I had I made $4.85 a day.

Glaser: What were you doing?

Lewis: Mining.

Glaser: Actual digging?

Lewis: Well, I didn't do much digging. Did more shoveling than digging. We did most of our digging by blasting from above and then the rock would come down and we would shovel it into cars. Our quota was about 12 cars a day. A car was about 40 inches by 20 inches by 30 inches on four wheels that you could shoulder to the loading dock and bring back.

School

Glaser: I'd like to hear about your school and teachers.

Lewis: The business of getting to and from the trolley and school was a big problem, of course. We lived about a mile from the end of the trolley line. It was right across the street from a Catholic cemetery, which was a big cemetery. Butte was more Catholic than anything, I guess. But we would go to the trolley by way of our wagon, which meant hitching a horse, and taking the trolley up to primary school and then later on to high school.

The high school ride was about three miles, I guess--two and a half to three miles. There was always a kind of a koffee klatch atmosphere when you got on in the morning because you'd take a roll call of your classmates, and you always had funny stories to tell, and it was this sort of gathering. We'd have boys and girls in the class, you know. Someone would have a funny gag that he'd tell and then it would go along.

Sonny Sunberg was one of the guys. I'm trying to remember names of the guys I went to school with, and the gals. I don't remember many of them; it's only seventy years ago.

Glaser: Are you thinking now about high school or grade school days?

Lewis: Grade school.

Glaser: You lived in an area where there weren't many houses. Were you one of the first to get on the trolley, and then as you got closer to your school more kids came on?

Lewis: It's kind of the way it worked. The first big jump in our population on the trolley was a block beyond where we got on. That's all. Then we went across Silver Bow Creek, and then up past the diggings, and about two more blocks we would be at the grammar school.

The diggings were places where prospectors had begun their mining. It was pretty well down from the hill, where there was a great deal of mining going on, where the good big established mines were. So, this was kind of an entrance to Butte on one side; there were two or three other entrances.

The distance from our house to the trolley was perhaps three hundred meters--three or four hundred yards. Coming back, usually we walked home or went up to my dad's store and came home with him.

Lewis: The distance from our house to the school was about two miles. The distance from our house to the high school was about three miles.

The first day I registered my father took me to school, and we were told that I would be in Miss Brome's class. I went in and was introduced to Miss Brome, and she said, "Will you write your name on that piece of papers." So I took the pencil in my left hand--or the pen--and I wrote Rubin Lewis with my left hand. She took the pen out of my hand and she said, "Oh no you don't! Not here!"

"Why not?"

"You don't write with your left hand. You write with your right hand. Now do that, and don't let me catch you writing with your left hand any more!"

So I didn't. I could do almost as well as my left hand then--not quite, but no great trouble. So I wrote with my right hand, and we had no more trouble on that point.

She was rather a nice woman. She was rather buxom and had light brown hair--not chestnut but kind of dirty blond. She was my First-A teacher.

Glaser: When you were in the First-A, what class was Harry in?

Lewis: I think he was in the fourth grade.

Glaser: Did you have good teachers?

Lewis: It may be that I have a crazy memory. But I think I had very few teachers that didn't know at least as much as I knew. So they were educated.

I had some teachers in high school and in grammar school that could hold their own with most people I've ever known as teachers. There was a guy named Corey who taught geology. I can still hear him saying, "If you raise the velocity of water to the sixth power you can move practically anything on earth."

Glaser: You remembered that a long time.

Lewis: Yes. Well, it's the sort of treatment we got. Our geology was almost collegiate standard. The physics teacher was much smarter than we were. I got a moderate amount of physics in that. My mathematics teacher was a little woman whose name was Spafford, and I think she was probably one of the best teachers I ever had. The things we learned--poetry and literature and stuff--I still remember

Lewis: a great deal that I learned in elementary school. This elementary school must have been built about 1906, I guess, or maybe 1904. It was two stories and a basement. It was a brick school. We had all eight grades in it.

Glaser: Did you have any trouble because of having to switch to being right-handed?

Lewis: That's why I stammer so much.

Glaser: You don't stammer.

Lewis: No. I never had any trouble at all. I didn't know you were supposed to have trouble. I think a great many things we have are because we're educated to have them. It's not true, I know, because it's been pretty much proven that left-handed people who switch to right-handed do have some troubles. But I didn't have any, and I was lucky. One time I did have an injury to my right shoulder, and I readily converted to left-handism for a few months. I never had any trouble after that.

The only trouble being left-handed has caused in my life was in the operating room. The nurses who were my scrub nurses--in my training and in my private practice--always were at a difficulty because they didn't know which hand to give the instruments or the threaded needle to. I'd put out the hand I was going to use and some times they had to change over.

Glaser: You mean you were ambidextrous?

Lewis: That's what I was just going to tell you. As a result of that, I was greatly aided in the handling of my instruments. When I designed instruments, which I did later on, these instruments were always for both hands. So it really worked out very well. I think I was lucky to have been left-handed and later ambidextrous.

Glaser: To get back to your school, how big were the classes?

Lewis: Oh, I think we ran about twenty-five. I don't think much more than that. Not much less. We had fair sized classes.

In the neighborhood our school was in, we had three schools. One later on, down on the flats near where we lived, but I was already finished there. And one on the other side of the lake. That and two or three parochial schools were pretty much what we had for schools.

Glaser: Was there competition between the parochial schools and the public schools?

Lewis: No, we had no troubles. Catholic kids presumed they were going to go to the parochial school and others wouldn't. And we called them *goys* [gentiles]. [Chuckles]

Glaser: Not all did that.

Lewis: [Laughing] No.

Glaser: Was there competitiveness, football games between--

Lewis: Well, the public school was much larger, and we'd never consider playing with the Catholic kids; although they were good players most of the time. But our games were between public schools. We never had any real trouble.

Glaser: Were you a good student?

Lewis: Maybe average. Maybe a little better.

Glaser: Well motivated to learn?

Lewis: It all depended. My big difficulty was that all my teachers said, "Well, now, you can do much better work than that. You would be an 'A' student if you'd only put a little effort in."

And I'd say, "Yes, I know."

Glaser: What gave them that impression?

Lewis: Well, they thought I was smart and I wasn't. I don't know. I was smart enough, I guess. The competition is the thing that makes it. The competition wasn't too bad. There were two or three kids that led the class all the time.

Glaser: What do you mean the competition made it?

Lewis: The kids that were in school with you. Some of us who were lazy would object to being slapped into a group of people who were supposed to be--what do you call people--

Glaser: High achievers?

Lewis: Yes. You never knew that word in those days. High achievers always got the grades. If you weren't a high achiever and you could have been, you were always in the fire. And I liked the fire all right. It was warmer.

Glaser: You felt that your teachers expected more from you than you were

Glaser: willing to put out?

Lewis: Generally not. They gave it lip service. If they had said, "Turn over and I'll kick your butt or you do better." I'd probably would have done better. It never meant anything to me.

Glaser: You did just enough to get by?

Lewis: Generally.

Glaser: But when you talked about how good the teachers were, it sounded as if you had been really turned on by your science teachers.

Lewis: Well, by some of the things, but it gets monotonous, you know. If you don't get hell occasionally, the school is no good.

Glaser: Did you get hell at home? Did your parents--

Lewis: My family seldom ever infringed on our education, either to push or pull. They were really--if I had to pick a better one I wouldn't know where to pick them. They were good.

My cousins, whose father ran a jewelry store and they got all the advantages, didn't do more than we did. In our family, my younger brother and I have about 20 years of education apiece. My cousin, the one who went to Harvard, graduated pretty well up in his class. He worked for the patent bureau, or for one of the chemical outfits, all his life. He also played the violin. So he achieved quite a little. He died a few years ago.

His sister is a widow of a guy who lived in Washington, D.C. who ran one of the social organizations, and she's the head of Hadassah. She graduated from the University of Washington, I think. A brother who died of tuberculosis had been a musician, but I don't think he finished college. The other brother did and became a doctor and is now a psychiatrist in Washington, D.C., or Baltimore.

Glaser: Was this family from Omaha?

Lewis: This family had gone on to Canyon City, Colorado, and then to Butte and then Seattle.

Glaser: Was this on your mother's side or your father's side?

Lewis: My mother's sister.

Glaser: Then you look back upon your school years as a more-than-adequate preparation for what you did later.

Glaser: Were you aware of what was going on in the world outside of Butte?

Lewis: Oh yes.

Glaser: When you were in school, to what extent were you expected to do chores after school; did you have time for play?

Lewis: Well, we did a certain amount of chores. I never milked cows. I brought in coal and some wood. Made a snow plow to make us a pathway to the trolley, which I could hitch the horse to. And I did a certain amount of repairs. When we had a car I took care of that. My older brother was working in the store, and Leon mostly spent his time hiking or being a boy scout.

Glaser: Wasn't he expected to do chores?

Lewis: Well, he was younger.

Glaser: You mentioned that you had a lot of work delivering chickens.

Lewis: Yes, I got paid for that.

Glaser: Didn't your mother need help? You said she was so busy with--

Lewis: She wasn't <u>that</u> busy. She was occupied.

Glaser: What kind of social activities did you have as a family?

Lewis: We'd go to visit different people and have parties at their house. When we were little kids we had parties that included kissing games and post office and things of that kind. We were introduced to life rather gradually. It was very pleasant.

Mining Town Politics and Economics

Glaser: What did Butte look like? Was it made ugly by the mines and the piles of tailings, or could you see the beauty of the mountains?

Lewis: The whole eastern vista was the Continental Divide, which went up to 10,000 feet from 6,000 at Butte. To the south was Timber Butte, to the west was Bald Butte, to the north was Big Butte and the area called The Hill where the mines were. The mines contained twenty or more good-sized mines, and they were where the money came from.

The town itself was not pretty. The houses in the better area were just plain little houses like they are in Switzerland or

Lewis: Berkeley. Most Butte houses were either wood or brick. The different parts of town had better or worse housing. There were a few five-story apartment houses. It was a plain little place, you know.

Glaser: Was this a company town in terms of tight control over stores and housing?

Lewis: No, I don't think so. It was a town of normal growth, and practically no miners lived in company houses. The only ones who did were those where the mine furnished the superintendents or the bosses special housing on the grounds. Only about half a dozen of those.

Glaser: Did you ever feel that the mine companies were controlling the politics of Butte?

Lewis: Well, we always presumed they were. Some of the bad things that happened were due to company efforts: having people beaten up by goons and by strikebreakers were mine company efforts. There was the time they hung the guy on the trestle on the Milwaukee Railroad.

All I know is that every once in a while there would be a strike. And occasionally when there was a strike the militia would be called in to patrol the streets. That I remember happened once or twice. The miner's union, which I think was AFL, was combatting the Anaconda Company, who had goons working in Butte. But in general these people caused little trouble. I don't think much.

Glaser: Do you remember the union battles in 1914? According to the New York Times, in June of that year IWW members (Wobblies) tried to disrupt the Butte local of the Western Federation of Miners because it was little more than a company union. The Wobblies tossed the acting mayor out of the second story of the union hall and then dynamited the hall.

Lewis: The Wobblies weren't anything in 1914. They were busy working out on the coast in the lumber camps. The copper miner's union came along about '20, '21, but they didn't kick up much fuss then. They had some strikes, but not much more than that.

Of course there's so much you miss just living there, you know. When you see it in the paper--"Oh my! This is terrible"--but when you live there, you don't see it or hear about it. To know there was a strike on wasn't anything. Everybody knew there would be something. Do you know what I'm saying?

Glaser: Wouldn't all the shopkeepers be aware if men didn't have any income because of striking?

Lewis: Well, it didn't seem to be much. The guys who were steady on the books, if the stores weren't hit hard, they wouldn't be hit hard. And the town was built more on a cash basis. We gave credit, but most of the people who bought, bought on a cash basis. Buying on charge accounts wasn't a part of the picture then compared to how it is now.

That never bothered my life because the only people we were concerned with were those who couldn't eat, and we had to help them if we could. But we usually had more on the books than in our pockets, anyhow. I was not much in on that.

I remember some of the other things that had to do--but the wages of the mines were pegged to the price of copper. That was the important thing in our economy.

Glaser: Was there much poverty in Butte, or was there work for everyone except in time of strikes?

Lewis: The poor people that I knew were one Negro family who had a hell of a lot of kids, and some Italians. But generally they were middle or lower class laboring groups. See, a town that size had shops and furniture repairers. Bed painters and what not, you know? That kept up their income--doing things that had to be done.

Glaser: Did you say bed painters?

Lewis: Bed painters.

Glaser: That sounds very specialized.

Lewis: It is. You've got have an iron bed, you see. So you paint it. I did that for a while. For some of them it's white enamel. Depends on what people wanted. You see, there was no spray painting then. Very few specialists who built beds. When I got East I saw they cast their own beds and put them together and then painted them. But they never did that in Butte. Nobody made beds in Butte.

Glaser: Where did these beds come from?

Lewis: Some of them were carried out in covered wagons, some were on freight cars any way you could get them out and across the mountains and across the plains. They were taken apart, set in the wagons, and brought out.

Glaser: You turned your hand to a lot of different activities, didn't you?

Lewis: Well, you had to. You got a new job every week if you got fired

Lewis: every week or if you quit because you didn't want to work there any more. But it was no problem. Everybody said, "Oh, you're not working there?"

"Oh, I got fired," or "I got laid off."

Recreation and Work

Glaser: During the school year you had to help your father, didn't you? Did he have three different stores in Butte?

Lewis: He had four, really. He had a meat market to start with, out on East Park Street. He had seen some guy make off with a turkey or a chicken or something, and he started after the guy. The guy jumped the fence, and he jumped after him. The guy kept going, but my father dislocated his hip and was a cripple from then on.

Some afternoons I'd work for someone else, sometimes with my father. I think I spent more time working with my father than anything else. Until vacation time. See, there's always three months in the summer when you don't go to school. So I did other things during the summers.

I'll tell you something about the other fun we had. We did a certain amount of horseback riding, either to get the cows or to go for a ride. We also did a lot of ice skating. The ice rink was about an acre and a half. A big oval. It had a kind of blind to shut out the sun because the sun would melt the ice, and we had to have the ice frozen. So we went to the rink on weekends or during the week and skated for an hour and a half, two hours. We learned to be moderately good ice skaters.

And we did a certain amount of hiking. We walked into the mountains and around the mountains and back home. We had some old prospector's cabins that we rejuvenated and slept in over weekends.

The interesting thing about that was the western side of the mountain didn't have a tree on it because of the smelter smoke. But the eastern side of the mountain was so tightly forested unless you made a trail you'd get lost. It was a matter of blazing a trail as you went in so you would not wander around the mountains all day and not know where you were. Of course, you were pretty well oriented because the mountains ran north and south and you could see the sun and knew the direction. You could find your way around.

Lewis: We had a cabin up there that we used to go to. It was rather pleasant to see, and we could be cowboys. I remember having a 41 caliber Colt revolver, and I saw a little rabbit up by a lone tree. I fired eleven shots and missed him eleven times. I didn't think I was a great outdoorsman then.

There was an old guy there named Maxwell who had a cabin near ours. I say ours--it was a group of kids who took this cabin over and fixed it up. Maxwell used to walk down to town, maybe once a month or once in three weeks, to get dry groceries, bacon, and things. Then he'd come up. He'd have an occasional deer to shoot, you know. He did all of this illegally, but who cares. Nobody dared come up and accost him. But he was quite a nice guy. He was friendly and hospitable. We enjoyed him.

Glaser: Was he a hermit?

Lewis: No. He was a prospector at one time. He got sick and tired of having to do things according to the civilized program. So he saved himself a little money, or inherited it, and lived on it. He had a very nice cabin and nice stove. Plenty of wood. He did very well.

Glaser: How far away from Butte were the mountains?

Lewis: Well, you'd come from Butte and go up to the Columbia Gardens, which was the end of Butte. Then you'd walk up a trail to the top, to 10,000 feet. From the center of Butte to the beginning of the rise, I'd say it was two and a half, three miles; two and a half, I guess.

Glaser: This must have provided you with both beauty and a lot of activity.

Lewis: Oh, we were never at a loss. We had plenty of activity.

Glaser: You were busy doing things with your hands around the house when you made the snowplow and extended electricity to the barn.

Lewis: Yes, it sounds great. But when you get right down to it we don't live our lives like in the movies and television, with all these things connected together Actually, if you took your daily life and put those things in there'd be so much gap between events it would be very dull. So the movies and television have obfuscated this by making these things actually come together rather than be stretched out. But we weren't so busy.

Someone would say, "Whatcha been doing lately?"

"Oh, nothing."

Well, maybe that day I'd strung the wires out to the barn. It

Lewis: seems like a lot being done when you're telling it as a story, but actually nothing being done as a modus operandi.

Glaser: When you had this room out in the barn for your various projects, what were you doing? When you were ten until you graduated from high school.

Lewis: Well, I didn't work on those jobs that much. See, our house had no space to the barn for about forty feet. The barn had one room that we referred to as the hayloft--only because haylofts were where they kept hay, and we kept our hay there. This room had a barrel for bran and oats, and hay was stacked up in bales. You walked into space that at one time had been a cow barn.

At the other end we had a cow and a horse, and eventually a little barn was built beyond that for the horse so that he wouldn't be contaminated by the cow, or the cow by the horse. We had also a cold room and space where we kept junk; you know--storage. And then a yard came off where you went into the haystack. There was an outhouse and beyond that a little room that I called my shop.

Down the other end of the yard was the chicken house in which we kept 700 or 800 chickens. My shop was electrified, and I had things in it; an electric clock that would open the door automatically. You know, all kinds of junk.

Glaser: Did you invent that door opener?

Lewis: Why, I assembled it. No one invents anymore. I looked at it and said it would be good if we had a this or a that, and I'd go make it. I think that's probably the best experience I had--making things that I dreamed about.

Glaser: Were these all useful things?

Lewis: Well, I didn't make them unless I needed them.

Glaser: What were some of the other things you made?

Lewis: Starting when?

Glaser: Starting from the time when you made the electric clock for opening the door, and the time you made the snowplow.

Lewis: Well, they came as the necessities occured. I made an electric welder which never got off the ground because I didn't know enough about measuring current. I was trying to fix my bicycle to weld the pedal on because it kept coming off. And the snowplow had to be made

Lewis: so we could get to school without getting snow down our shoes. Although we wore high shoes, usually.

The shop went along, and eventually I was in high school and eventually I was in college. But I was making things for the horse and wagon, the harness and the barn, and in the way of disposing of the offal from the horses and cows.

Glaser: Didn't you use the offal in your truck garden?

Lewis: Hell no. That was dirty! We had old cow dung. It was rotten, had been there for twenty years. So we only used the good quality stuff.

Glaser: What did you do with the fresh dung?

Lewis: Threw it over the hill, right near the house. Of course, in time it didn't smell; it rotted and was pretty good.

Glaser: That was one of your projects, to figure out how to dispose of the offal?

Lewis: No, it wasn't awful. [Laughs] It wasn't bad. No. You know we didn't know the word "project." These were what we called jobs. The language has changed to the point you don't know what the hell you're talking about half the time. Anyway--

Glaser: Anyway, the shop was a place where you could use your inventiveness.

Lewis: I suppose so. I became a machinist and a mechanical engineer, and I've been doing it ever since.

Glaser: On the transcribed tape I read*, you talked about having to bundle up when you were delivering chickens for your father.

Lewis: I told you that this morning, too. We were on a wagon, and it was cold as hell.

Glaser: You had newspapers and hay for your feet.

Lewis: And big, high boots, up to my calves, and some form of weather control. Once we got an automobile, it was altogether different.

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*A series of tapings Dr. Lewis made in 1974 together with his brother, Dr. Leon Lewis, with the idea of writing his autobiography or doing a series of sketches. The transcripts of these tapes are deposited in The Bancroft Library.

Automobiles

Glaser: Did you have any trouble starting the car in the winter?

Lewis: Well, sometimes. You soon get used to that. We had an EMF, called "Every Morning Fixing." EMF became Studebaker. It was a little square car. The difference between that and a Ford was that the EMF had a pump on its water-cooling mechanism. My doctor had one when it was new. He came around on his visits. The Flanders, or the EMF, was built before 1920.

Glaser: And the doctor had that kind of a car?

Lewis: Yes.

Glser: But your family had a Ford, I believe.

Lewis: We had an EMF to start with, a used one. Then we bought a new Ford in 1917.

Glaser: Did your father teach you how to drive it?

Lewis: No, he learned eventually but badly. He was never a good driver.

Glaser: Did you learn before he did?

Lewis: I learned to drive in 1910.

Glser: Who taught you?

Lewis: A guy who ran a truck business--an express wagon. He used to park out in front of our house. One day I said, "Let me drive that."

"You don't know how."

I said, "Sure I know how." So I drove it.

Glaser: Were there many cars in Butte?

Lewis: Yes. The year President Taft came to Butte, which must have been in 1912, he was in a Stevens Duryea; it had a starter on it. There were Whites. There were EMFs and Fords. Quite a lot of cars--Cadillacs.

Glaser: What about the streets and roads for driving? They must have been pretty rough.

Lewis: Some of them were rough and some of them were pretty good. We had

Lewis: brick pavement on some streets, cobble pavement on others. Cobble was a little rough. Not bad, you know. You've got to take what you got.

Glaser: What brought President Taft to Butte?

Lewis: He was trying to get elected, I guess. I recall standing out in front of the Silver Bow Club while he was in having a few drinks or luncheon. And he came out and hopped into the car. It had a hydraulic starter. And they picked up and drove away. Let's see, what was the car--Stevens Duryea.

Glaser: Did President Taft stay in Butte long?

Lewis: Probably overnight, if that long. I guess he didn't. More than likely he came on a special train; had his own car.

Glaser: Was there a good hotel in town if he wanted to stay over?

Lewis: Yes, there were three or four good hotels. The Butte, the Finlen--I forget the name of the other two good hotels. There were nice apartments.

Glaser: It sounds as if there was a lot of money in Butte.

Lewis: There was a lot. Butte was much more cosmopolitan than most small Western towns. We had trolley lines and taxi cabs; we had livery stables where you could rent a horse and buggy. These were all available. If a man came to town, he would look for company and rent a horse.

Glaser: Was it cosmopolitan because there was so much money in town?

Lewis: Well, the miners were making $4-$5 a day, and you could buy a good dinner for a dollar. So if they saved up ten bucks and had a date, they were being lavish.

Glaser: Was the cost of living such that a man could save money?

Lewis: Oh yes, unless he spent it in a bar. We lived moderately well on $100 a month down on the dump. And people making $5 a day did pretty well. You could have an apartment for $45 a month, or a flat for $40 a month. There were a lot of nice apartments.

Glaser: Was it a stratified society with the top level mine owners, then the shopkeepers and professional people, and then miners or manual laborers?

Lewis: Kind of, but they didn't bother about separating everybody. Of

Lewis: course, if one of the senators from the state came to Butte, he didn't go to the lower class saloon. He went to the good class saloons and the hotels and the clubs. The place where Taft was visiting that time was in the Silver Bow Club, and that is still going on, still a good pub.

Glaser: In school was there prejudice between kids of the various social and economic classes?

Lewis: No, none at all that I can recall except the Jewish kids weren't always added into the group. But we didn't do badly. Until I went to college I didn't feel there was such a thing as anti-Jewish beliefs. Except when the kids would fight they would always call you "Christ Killer" or "Sheeney" or something. But that wasn't too bad. You knew it didn't have too much venom in it. I think that's probably the best part of it.

Glaser: Then you view Butte as a more or less open society?

Lewis: Yes, it was pretty much. The place where I first noticed exclusion was in college. There it was quite common--with fraternities segregated against the Jews. We had to form our own. Which we did, of course. You can't be a hater of all things. Especially if you thought they were good for the kids in them.

Glaser: Was there any financial difficulty when you made plans to go to school?

Lewis: When I went off to medical school or college?

Glaser: College.

Lewis: Oh, I had saved a great deal of money--$225. Then I worked over the weekends. I did all right. It cost me around $300 to go to school for a year. That was board, room, carfare, and everything.

Glaser: Was that when you joined the carpenter's union, when you graduated from high school?

Lewis: Yes, in 1917. When I first joined the union I was an apprentice.

Glaser: Did you join the carpenter's union after you had been in the mines?

Lewis: No, before I went to the mines. You had to belong to a union before you could get a job. My first job was in the carpenter's union because I was serving there, getting my time as a metal worker. The reason I got the job was that I could turn on a lathe. So I made balustrades and later cabinets and kitchen equipment. Later on I

Lewis: worked in the mines, and that was a different game.

Glaser: Were you doing cabinet making during the summer vacation?

Lewis: I finished school in mid-year. So I worked right across. Later I worked in the mines, and then I went to the University of Washington.

Glaser: When did you decide that you wanted to become an engineer?

Lewis: My eighth grade in school, I guess. I was going to be an engineer, and a kid I played with, a guy named Bobby Kerr, was going to bridge on [copy] me. His big difficulty was having to drive the family Cadillac, which was a four-cylinder, slow-speed machine.

Bobby's father ran Montana Power Company's operation in Butte and surrounding areas. He finally went to Michigan and studied law. I saw him a couple of times after that. We were very good friends and we visited. I rode with him and sometimes he rode with my horse and wagon.

We had a very high percentage of collegiate entrants in Butte.

Glaser: On your tape you said that people really didn't appreciate fine art, that oil painting was spoken of as a "real oil painting."

Lewis: A "geniune oil painting." Well, it's true. As a matter of fact, to me an oil painting was something rare somewhere in Europe. Later on I learned they're frequent as hell and there were some painters in Butte. I could hardly believe it. Also, we had some very nice saloons, and some of our best art work was in them. It was lousy art.

But we had one saloon, it was supposedly the longest bar in the world. It ran from Park Street to Galina Street. The goddam thing must have been 250 feet long.

Glaser: Was that a full city block?

Lewis: Yes. And they gave free lunches: hot dogs, soup, all kinds of things. You could stop and have a beer. You could have all that for nothing.

Glaser: You couldn't go in there, could you? Weren't you too young?

Lewis: I was too young, but the bartenders knew me because I used to deliver orders to them. "What'll you have today, Sonny?"

"Guess I'll have a little beer." Then they'd hand me a beer in a glass about that [about three inches tall] high. They were a good bunch of guys.

Ethnic Groups: Indians, Chinese, and Blacks

Glaser: Were there Indians in and around Butte when you were living there?

Lewis: We lived right next door to an Indian camp when we lived on the dump. It was about half a block from where we lived. Maybe a little more. There were kids that we played with, father and mother, and relatives in the group. The father was known as Pete. I never knew what Pete's last name was. His wife's name was "Adalee," A-d-e-l-e, Adele.

The whole thing was pretty much as would be expected. They used to come and skin the healthy-looking cattle that were killed and had to be burned. My father had to have the hides, which he sold, and that was how they lived and partly how we lived.

Glaser: What do you mean, "The whole thing was as to be expected," in talking about the Indian family?

Lewis: They were poor, and poor people have to make do. So we'd kill the cattle and they had to be skinned. If the meat was okay, the Indians would take it home. Some of these animals were dispatched because they had a broken leg or something, and they weren't bad meat. Except the emotional thing that we would have to say, "Poor people, having to eat these things."

Glaser: Was this the only Indian family in all of Butte?

Lewis: Oh, I couldn't say that; the only Indian family that lived near us. There were Indians all over. There were Indians that worked on the cattle ranches. There were Indians that worked in the town. Usually the Indians weren't much of an importance because we weren't in town enough. Indians now-a-days are high-steel workers. But there weren't any then.

Glaser: What do you mean by high-steel workers?

Lewis: Skyscrapers are usually put up by Indians because they can stand the height. They are very capable construction workers. It's one of the great specializations in America.

Glaser: Were there many Chinese in Butte? You mentioned that there was the Chinese herbalist next to your father's meat shop.

Lewis: Chicken shop. Yes, his name was Dr. Lamb. I don't know why he put the "b" on it. That's what he was known as.

Glaser: How many families were there in Chinatown?

Lewis: In Butte, there must have been as many as there were Jews--not quite as many.

Glaser: A hundred families?

Lewis: Probably. They weren't all families. There were more single men.

Glaser: Were they miners?

Lewis: No, Chinamen wouldn't dare go down the mines. The white man would kill him.

Glaser: Do you mean that, or is that how the Chinese viewed it?

Lewis: The Chinese wouldn't get on, they wouldn't apply.

Glaser: It was really true that the white men would kill the Chinese?

Lewis: Well, of course.

Glaser: What did they do, then, in Butte?

Lewis: They ran laundries and restaurants, maybe a little market. They did some truck gardening and would bring things around on poles with two baskets and a scale.

Glaser: Did they have their own temple, their Joss House?

Lewis: I think they did. You wouldn't see much, anyhow. Did most of their praying in their own community. Little stores. [Interrupted by phone]

Glaser: We talked about the Chinese before the phone rang, about how badly treated they were.

Lewis: Well, the Chinese have been badly treated all the time. When they had this big celebration for the railroads last year, they didn't even invite the Chinese to the Golden Spike ceremony. Yet if it wasn't for the Chinese the railroads would never have been built.

Glaser: Were the Chinese in Butte the ones who had worked on the transcontinental railroad, afterward settling in Butte?

Lewis: I don't think so. I don't think they were the same. Those people were brought here, and their descendents make up the California Chinese population.

Glaser: Do you have any idea how the Chinese got to Butte and why, those who were there in the early 1900's?

Lewis: They got there because there was a population that needed laundries and restaurants; and they furnished both.

Glaser: Do you suppose they slowly worked their way East from the gold mines?

Lewis: They came to California first; then they worked their way all over.

Glaser: How about the blacks that were in Butte?

Lewis: Not many.

Glaser: What were they doing; were they miners?

Lewis: No, I don't think so. They worked as laborers. Maybe two or three families. That's about all that was there. We had one guy who was in high school when I was. He was a great athlete. He ran the 100 in ten seconds, and he was a good football player. A wonderful guy. He had two sisters who were stenographers in Butte. His name was Buddy Phelps.

Glaser: What did his father do?

Lewis: I don't know if he had a father. He was probably a porter in one of the hotels, or something.

Glaser: How did your nickname of "Rabs" come about? Was that when you were in Butte?

Lewis: Yes, about the second grade in grammar school. I was Jewish, and rabbi is what you get called. I think that's how it came, as I recall it. I know it was about the second grade in grammar school.

Family Relationships

Glaser: You haven't told me very much about your oldest brother, Harry.

Lewis: Harry came along and finished high school in Seattle. He had a tuberculosis of the spine. He went to Seattle and some guy there put him in a plaster jacket--what do they call it in Germany? What is plaster of Paris? A gipsoperat. A gipsoperat is a corset or a cast. He wore one of those for a couple of years.

Glaser: How old was he when he went to Seattle for treatment?

Lewis: He was about sixteen or seventeen.

Glaser: What year was that?

Lewis: Three years earlier than his age--about '14, '15, '16. He then came home. He did the bookkeeping in my father's store, and he started traveling for something to do with food and ended up selling potatoes off the land. You know: "I'll take twelve carloads of those, and the first car goes to Cleveland, the second car goes to Wichita, Kansas," and so on.

In the meantime, I was becoming a great engineer, and my kid brother was in high school in Seattle by then. We moved to Seattle in 1919, our family. I was in college.

Glaser: They followed you to Seattle two years after you went there?

Lewis: Two or three years, yes.

Glaser: Why did you go to Seattle?

Lewis: University of Washington.

Glaser: Why did you go there rather than the University of Montana?

Lewis: In the first place, Montana was pretty much a liberal arts school. It was a small place, and I didn't think it was up to my quality, you know. I shouldn't have been that stupid--should have gone to Harvard. But we didn't have Harvard money.

My cousin did, though, and he went to Harvard. He was first violinist in the Harvard orchestra his first year there. Then he went to the patent office, and he got a patent office law degree as a patent expert, and he went to work for Aniline Chemical--Aniline Dyes. He went to work for them, and he died working for them--he didn't retire. Lived out in Sunnyvale or Sunnyside in Long Island, and he left a wife and several kids.

Glaser: Whose son was he?

Lewis: He was Ruby's, the jeweler in Canyon City, Colorado.

Glaser: Didn't you tell me that the family that had gone to Canyon City eventually went on to Seattle?

Lewis: No, to Butte. The Rosenbergs--in fact, all of them went to Butte.

Glaser: They did? At what period of time was that?

Lewis: Well, my father and mother were there. I was born, I think. The sisters--one of them had a husband who was in the jewelry business, and my mother's brother was in the jewelry business, so they went to work. They went to Butte and they worked together for a while. One of the sisters married a guy named Neer; he was a kind of a nincompoop and didn't do very much. He was in Butte too. Then they moved to Seattle, and the Elroffs moved to Seattle, and then the Lewises moved to Seattle.

Glaser: Where was your grandmother when this was going on? Was she--

Lewis: She was living with us most of the time.

Glaser: Oh--when you were growing up, your grandmother was with you?

Lewis: Yes, and then when my family moved to Seattle, she moved with them. She died--was it before I went East or after I went East? [Pause] I think she died after I came back.

I went East in '22 and stayed a little over a year. I had hot pants for a girl from Portland, so I had to go East to go to a fraternity convention and do all the great things, you know, that romantic young people do. Later on, I lived with her brother in our apartment in Philadelphia. She married this guy she started going with then; that's a whole other family. She's recently died.

Her brother called me just the other day; we talked together. We had a nice friendship. His name was Weinstein. He married a babe in Philadelphia, and they're still married. They live in Seattle.

Glaser: How close was the family when you were still in Butte? Was there much visiting back and forth with your relatives?

Lewis: Oh yes. Whenever there was some reason to have dinner or a party or something, they were usually invited.

I can remember when the brothers came--usually individually--from the Midwest. I can remember my Uncle Sol after dinner brushing off his clothes with his napkin and saying in Russian, "Oh, what a wonderful dinner!"

It was just usual as far as we were concerned, but he thought my mother was a great cook, and many people who ate at our table thought so too. So, Sol pointed this up by saying, "*Oy obyed.*" If someone said, "*byed*" to me now, I wouldn't know what it was; but

Lewis: if he said, "*Oy obyed*," there'd be no problem.

Glaser: With so many relatives nearby, did that mean that you did more things with family members than with friends in Butte?

Lewis: No, I practically had very little in the way of friendships with the relatives.

[Tape turned over]

Glaser: We were talking about your relationships with the relatives, as opposed to doing things with friends.

Lewis: Yes. Well, as I say, in the family, Harry Rosenberg and his sister were fairly good friends, but we didn't do very much together. The people I played with were, oh, the Willoughbys, the Mooneys, and the Kerrs.

Glaser: I have to ask you something here. You said "Harry Rosenberg." I didn't think that you had Rosenbergs; I thought that these were the Neers and the Elroffs.

Lewis: But my mother's brother was a Rosenberg. My mother was a Rosenberg.

Glaser: I know, but did her brother live in Butte?

Lewis: He moved up to Butte from Canyon City, Colorado. I don't think he went to Denver; he might have, but I don't think so. They had four children: a son who died of bone tuberculosis; a son who was a psychiatrist in Washington who was an army colonel; and a sister who was married to a guy named Bisgeyer who was the head of B'nai B'rith I think, in Washington, D.C.; and then my cousin Harry Rosenberg. So that takes care of the sisters' families. The mother of Harry Rosenberg--Ruby's wife--was a kind of a fancy pants (she thought she was) who spent all of her time socializing with people who had names. Yehudi Menuhin lived at their house when he visited in Butte, and Jascha Heifetz lived in their house when they lived in Butte.

Glaser: Did they come for concertizing?

Lewis: You mean the professionals? Yes. The kid who was a big chess player--Sammy something-or-other who came from Russia when he was eleven--he lived in their house. This is all just to be nice; they didn't do it for money.

Glaser: You've mentioned that your brother had bone T.B. and a cousin had

Glaser: it--is there anything genetic in that?

Lewis: Not only not genetic--I don't think they're related. I had T.B. I have a big area in this lung [gestures] about that big, I guess, that's T.B. But I didn't find that, even with negative X-rays before, until the year after I had my pathology when I was floating around in an area of T.B. and going to the clinics, and--

Glaser: Let me interrupt you. What do you mean, not until after you had your pathology? You mean after you had studied it?

Lewis: Yes. We used to go to these autopsies and usually every second or third or fourth case would be T.B. But I had follow-up films ever since then, and this thing as been inactive since 1931.

Glaser: Well, as far as your brother getting--

Lewis: He had bone tuberculosis, which is a different form and usually comes from milk. So they're not related. The kid developed some T.B. of his foot. We didn't find out until later on that his mother had tuberculosis. She died in the last several years.

Glaser: When you say "the kid" you mean your cousin?

Lewis: Yes.

Glaser: Was there any indication of how your brother had gotten this?

Lewis: No. But we did have cows and we did have milk and he might very well have picked it up from them.

My lesion was a rather unusual one. It wasn't the typical clinical kind of tuberculosis that we know. And I'm not talking uninformedly because I did chest surgery and did tuberculosis for a long time. But this was after I learned about it, after I had my X-ray.

Glaser: How was your brother's case discovered?

Lewis: Somebody found it on examination. He had backaches, I think, and he went to somebody who referred him to a guy named Forsythe in Seattle. I don't know him; I never did know him. He was a pretty old guy when I got into the racket. But it was rather interesting that there was that much tuberculosis in a non-tuberculosis family.

Glaser: Yes. Your brother was in Seattle all alone?

Lewis: He lived with my Aunt Neer.

Glaser: She had gone there already?

Lewis: Yes, they went there rather early.

Glaser: How long was he in Seattle for treatment?

Lewis: He was in a cast for over a year, and he graduated from high school. So he was there a year and a half, I guess. But he was ambulant, you know.

Glaser: Then he went back to Butte to help in your father's store?

Lewis: Yes, for a little while. Then he started traveling for one of the spice houses in Seattle.

Glaser: And he settled in California, I think you told me.

Lewis: Later on, yes. My brother's daughter Betty was born in North Dakota in 1922, and then they went to Fresno. Then they went to Los Angeles, where she finished most of her college. Then she came up here and completed the rest of it. She's living out in Walnut Creek, married to a doctor out there. I think he practices in Pittsburg. His first name is Peter--Peter Kunkel.

Glaser: What year did your brother die?

Lewis: Sixty-seven. [1967]

Glaser: And he was living in Los Angeles?

Lewis: No, I think he was living in Fresno; he went back there a few months before he died.

Glaser: You told me last week what your brother died from.

Lewis: He died from a stroke which was associated with his diabetes. Diabetic endarteritis. He had one daughter.

Glaser: Had he been married more than one time?

Lewis: Four times.

Glaser: What were the names of his wives?

Lewis: I can remember his first wife, Betty's mother. The other three I can't remember.

Glaser: And your brother Leon had several wives?

Lewis: He only had two, and I've only had two.

Glaser: And how many children?

Lewis: They have one, who didn't talk to him for the last several years. When he was really sick, before he went to get operated on, she came in and they amended and repaired all fragmented areas.

Glaser: What is that child's name?

Lewis: Her name is Nancy. She lives in Burlingame, I think, She is a professional skater. Her name is Lewis; she's not married. She graduated from the school in Colorado where the air force place is. She skated with one of the big skating shows, and now she teaches skating professionally.

Glaser: When you were in school, did Harry take you under his wing as the older brother?

Lewis: No, we never did any of it; we didn't know that was the thing to do. So any time we called on my brother--if the brother was big and husky, you might call him into a fight against somebody you were afraid of. But usually no problems like that.

Glaser: Were you close as brothers?

Lewis: Not terribly; he went his way and I went mine. We were not unfriendly, but you know, we were young punks and he was an old guy.

Glaser: Later on in your teens and in your twenties were the three of you close?

Lewis: Leon and I have been much closer in recent years. But even Leon and I were not close friends. Harry went with a certain group of guys, I went with a certain group of guys, and Leon went with a certain group of guys. There was no walking over the fence to the brother's lair. In general I'd say that we weren't very close. But we were friends.

My older brother and I had a fight one day and he landed one on my eye (I think that was 1916), and I got a hell of a shiner for it. But it was good he could run because I chased him all over the flats with an axe, and I would have killed him if I caught him. But he was faster than I was.

My younger brother and I had very few fights. I think the only really good shiner I ever had in my life was the one my brother gave

Lewis: me. That eye was black! I was going to visit my father in Idaho Falls, where he had a buying station, and everybody in Idaho Falls teased the hell out of me for having a black eye.

Glaser: Does that mean that your father was away from home for periods of time?

Lewis: At that time, he was in Idaho buying poultry and butter and stuff. He lived down there, we lived in Butte. He'd come home occasionally and we'd go down and visit him.

Glaser: How long was he gone?

Lewis: When he was in Idaho, he was gone for about a year, I guess.

Glaser: How many times did this happen?

Lewis: It only happened that once. I went down and spent three months with him, and it was very nice--great fun.

I don't know whether my father and mother had a highly passionate love affair; but they got three boys out of it, so I don't know.

Glaser: You're commenting on their relationship--how do you view that?

Lewis: I thought it was very nice. They didn't fight; they didn't raise their voices; my father never hit my mother. But there was always grumbling, you know: if somebody did something, he might have used better judgment; if my mother wanted the house painted, and my father didn't want to paint it at that moment.

But the family worked pretty good, I think. We all grew up liking each other intensely; we were all very good friends. But it wasn't the sort of thing you see in the movies; it was just a nice, compatible relationship.

Glaser: Was this separation for the year for economic purposes?

Lewis: Oh, that's the only reason, sure. My father was in Idaho as a buyer. My older brother ran the store in Butte, and my father went to Idaho to buy. That was before we moved into our second house in town. Then we moved down on South Main Street where we had a store and my brother ran that while my father was buying.

Lewis: He would go for a few months and come back for a little bit, but generally it took about a year to make the round trip. He knew a great many people there and he bought from them. Farmers brought their stuff in to him, and he shipped it off to the store. My brother would

Lewis: communicate and handle the books.

Glaser: How old was your brother at that time?

Lewis: Sixteen.

Glaser: That was quite a responsibility.

Lewis: He was in high school. He was doing all right.

Summer in Idaho Falls, 1916

Lewis: I was about sixteen when I went to Idaho Falls to visit one summer with my father. It was a nice little town. I could never get used to the smell of the soap from his hotel. It had some kind of scent to it which bugged me, but there wasn't anything I could do about it.

Glaser: Do you remember the name of it?

Lewis: It was kind of a carnation soap.

laser: Tell me a little bit more about Idaho Falls. What kind of town was it and what did you do for recreation?

Lewis: Eight or twelve thousand population, I guess. It was a town that lived on weekends when the farmers came in to buy and sell. The town wasn't very big. It had about two or three blocks of small businesses, a movie or two, and down street from us was a dairy where they made ice cream. I guess that's most of it.

I learned to drink milk that had been pasteurized. It was terrible.

Glaser: Was that your first taste?

Lewis: We had milk, but we didn't use pasteurized milk. This milk was pasteurized by passing live steam through the milk and bringing it up to temperature and leaving it. That was pasteurization, which of course, isn't anymore. There was no control of the temperature. We looked at it and when it looked like it was boiling we stopped.

Glaser: You weren't used to the cooked flavor.

Lewis: Milk doesn't taste any more like it used to anyhow.

We got some in Switzerland a few years ago and it was a

Lewis: pleasure. Of course, I'm sure it had tuberculosis because one of the dairies had just been closed down. The test found that fifty of the cows were positive for tuberculosis, and they were killed.

Glaser: Didn't that scare you since that's your medical specialty, knowing the seriousness?

Lewis: No, because I came up through that, and I figured that I must have an immunity to it by now. I had some of the bovine infection, but I never had any of the lung miliary infection. But you're never quite as scared when it's you and not your patients.

Glaser: What was your social life, and that of your father, in Idaho Falls?

Lewis: I don't know what he did, but he was never much of a run-around.

Glaser: You told me he was a very social kind of a person.

Lewis: Yes. [Pause] But he held on pretty close to me. I don't think he thought I was checking on him or anything.

Glaser: Were there other Jewish families around town?

Lewis: Oh, yes. There were probably twelve or more families who were Jewish. I don't recall their names.

III SEATTLE, 1917-1925

Summer Visits, 1906 and 1912 (Great Potlatch)

Glaser: When did you first visit Seattle?

Lewis: We were there in 1906. My Uncle Elroff had a store there in 1906, and my Uncle Neer had something there in that same time.

Glaser: I thought they were in Butte.

Lewis: They were, but they moved. The Rosenbergs and the Lewises were still there, still in Butte. Then we stayed there several weeks, I guess.

We went back in 1912, and that was the time of the Golden Potlatch. The Potlatch is a celebration by the northern Indians where they have big feasts and they invite people to eat with them; it's a kind of a friendship thing that they had. The Alaskan, Canadian, and North Pacific Indians had that as a big festival where they demonstrated their totem poles and their carvings and their canoe building and canoe races.

It was like a great big carnival. There were little booths where they sold sugar candy, popcorn, hatbands, pennants, and things.

It was almost like the Oktoberfest except they didn't sell chickens whose heads were not taken off. They do that in Munich, the reason being that if you don't leave the head on you don't know whether it's a chicken or a turkey buzzard. That was a requirement in Germany.

Glaser: Was the entire Potlatch organized and run by Indian tribes?

Lewis: Yes. The Indians just came down the coast with their long canoes. They set up the booths and had this show. The show included

Lewis: practically all of Second Avenue with a little overflow to Third Avenue and First, Pike, Pine, and Madison streets, all got a little spillover.

Glaser: It sounds as if a tribal celebration became a commercial venture.

Lewis: I don't think I'd go that far. I think it became commercial, but it was still, to a great extent, tribal. There were a few so-called Christian Americans, or Wasps, among the Indians, but not many. Practically all who were running the shops were Indians; Siwash and Chinook. They were a nice bunch of people.

We stayed the summer and went back to Butte in September so we could go to school. Leon went to the school down on the flats where we lived and Harry and I were both in high school.

Glaser: Had you spent the entire summer in Seattle?

Lewis: We got there in June and came back the beginning of September.

Glaser: What happened on your earlier trip in 1906?

Lewis: We went to visit my aunt. Her husband at this time had a little store down in the center of the city. My other aunt had a store downstairs from their flat out on Broadway, about three or four blocks up from the high school. We would go to their house and eat some cookies that she had just baked, and have some tea. Then we'd go out and play with kids around the block, and that was that.

The husband on my aunt's side who had the two children had a little jewelry store, or pawn shop, I guess it must have been. He was in partnership with my uncle on my mother's side in Butte. When he went to Seattle he started a pawn shop of his own.

The other brother ran a grocery store. He had teamed up with a guy named Trower, who was a younger man, quite an active guy. They had a grocery store out on the corner of Eighty-fifth and Greenwood Streets. They lived upstairs first, and then they moved to a house around the corner and a block over. He had a rather successful store.

The other guy had a moderately successful loan shop. But when things got a little bit tight and business fell off, just at the turn of World War I, he set up a little shop where he bought clothes from the draftees arriving at Camp Lewis down there at Tacoma. He bought the clothes that the draftees wanted to get rid of without sending them home.

Glaser: Did he relocate down at Tacoma?

Lewis: No, he commuted. Eventually he had a nice business going there, low costs, high resale. The grocery store, meanwhile, was doing very well.

University of Washington, 1917-1921

Part-Time Employment and U.S. Navy

Glaser: Did you go to Seattle, to start college, the summer following your trip to Idaho?

Lewis: No. The following summer was '16. I went to school until '17. I worked in the mines until the end of '17, went to college in Washington at the end of '17. In '18 I joined the navy.

In '19 I went back to the navy yard to get a job and they wouldn't take me because I had a hernia. But I had a hernia in 1917, and in order to get into the navy I had to get it operated on, which I did. So I worked that summer as a machinist in the navy yard in Bremerton.

I did pretty well, went back to school after joining the navy. The following year they [navy yard] wouldn't take me, so eventually I got back to the Veterans Hospital , and was operated on.

Glaser: If you had had the operation and your hernia was repaired, why wouldn't they hire you?

Lewis: Because it recurred.

Glaser: Did you have it repaired again?

Lewis: Not right then. I didn't that year because they wouldn't hire me and I figured it was their fault. I went back and when I got out they said, "Would you like vocational training?" I said, "God, yes." I figured I would make money enough to go to school.

So they gave me vocational training and I got eighty dollars a month while I was going to school, tuition, books, and everything. The next year it went to one hundred a month, and I gave my kid brother half of that so he too could go to school.

Glaser: They paid while you were going to the university, and they considered that vocational training?

Lewis: Yes.

Glaser: That's pretty good.

Lewis: They did that in World War I. I think in World War II also. Kids got up to four years in the university. It was a nice deal.

Glaser: But while you were in the navy you weren't on active duty, were you?

Lewis: I was really going to college.

Glaser: That's what I mean.

Lewis: That's all right. If you're going to have a war you might as well have it do people some good instead of killing them. I think it was a good shake for kids. If you went to school, you got books, tuition, plus a living wage. You can't kick at that.

Glaser: Is that how you supported yourself in college?

Lewis: Part of it. I worked first in a poultry store, then I worked selling shoes, and then I worked in a machine shop. My first year I worked in the poultry store and the shoe store. The other things I did after I got along in engineering school.

Glaser: Did your father have a poultry shop in Seattle?

Lewis: He did for a while, yes. He bought out a store that a guy had and was trying to get out of, and so he took it over. I knew the shop because I worked Saturday afternoons as a poultry killer and picker in that shop. Later on I worked there for my father.

Glaser: Who did you live with when you first went to Seattle before your family arrived? Was this with your Aunt Neer?

Lewis: I lived with my Aunt Neer for a month or so and didn't like it very much. I moved out to the university where I had a room and breakfast (which cost me five dollars a week, I think) in a very nice little house with some Scottish people named McFarland. Later on, the next year, I lived in a house--just a room--with a roommate, and the next year my folks had moved to Seattle.

Glaser: And you had enough money, you were earning enough, so that you could afford $5 a week for your room and breakfast?

Lewis: Yes--that's only $20 a month.

Glaser: What were you earning then?

Lewis: Five dollars.

Engineering Courses and Social Life

Glaser: What were your courses the first year?

Lewis: The first year I had courses in elementary mechanics, inorganic chemistry, algebra, trigonometry, shop. That's pretty near it, I guess.

Glaser: Did you like your professors?

Lewis: Some of them were very good; some of them I didn't like; mostly they were pretty good guys.

Glaser: Do you remember the names of any of them?

Lewis: Oh, mostly. The guys in chemistry were Beyers and Langdon. The guys in mechanics--there were three or four of them--there was a guy named Wornicke, and a guy in math named Kishke with a big scar right across there [gesture], right across his cheek. He had been to Heidelberg.

Glaser: That was considered a sign of something or other, wasn't it?

Lewis: Oh, in the German universities that was heroism [the scar]. It was great, you know.

Glaser: Tell me what Seattle was like when you were first there as a student.

Lewis: It was kind of a big town. World War I was under way or was getting ready to go under way. The school was much smaller than it is now. The lawns and gardens were so beautiful.

Glaser: The lawns?

Lewis: Yes, on the campus.

Glaser: You weren't used to grass?

Lewis: There was no grass in Butte. There were patches like that, [gesturing] maybe.

Glaser: You were a fraternity member there, weren't you?

Lewis: Yes. I don't know why, but I was. They didn't take Jews, you know; you had to make do with your own. We organized and made a fraternity--Zeta Beta Tau.

Glaser: What was the Menorah Society?

Lewis: It was a kind of a Jewish social group, and we went to that occasionally.

Glaser: How active were you in these two groups?

Lewis: I was active in the fraternity because I was one of the organizers of it, and I was moderately active in Menorah, but not an officer nor did I want to be. Jay Gittlesohn was in Menorah; I think he was more active than I.

Glaser: He told me that you ran for cheerleader.

Lewis: [Laughter] God, I remember that. Yes, and I jumped around and hollered a lot.

Glaser: Somehow that doesn't mesh with the image of a man who was a member of a carpenter's union, and a member of the IWW.

Lewis: Or a ZBT. Well, I had too much hand on my time, I guess, or vice versa.

Glser: You couldn't have had too much time if you were supporting yourself.

Lewis: Supporting was only half a day; I went to school eight hours a day, and I had to do a certain amount of homework. But for a while, in 1919, I worked one or two nights a week on the longshore twelve hours a night and went to school from seven to five the next day.

Glaser: Were you loading the ships?

Lewis: Either loading or unloading. Our cargo was mostly sugar, some coffee, some rubber, not much iron. But it was a pretty good way to earn a living--you got $1.10 an hour.

Glaser: That was a lot of money.

Lewis: It <u>was</u>. Not any more.

Glaser: You had to join the union for that, I suppose.

Lewis: No, I didn't. They had a strike and I was a strikebreaker. Well, prostitution is a matter of economy, you know. If you don't have money and all, your carrying on is your idea of what's important. It's all right to talk about the Jews in Germany being for Hitler, but I was just as bad. It didn't surprise me that I was doing what I was going; I had to go to school--nothing else was important.

Glaser: What year was this? You were a sophomore?

Lewis: Nineteen-nineteen, yes. I'd already been in the navy.

Glaser: Was this when they had the General Strike in Seattle?*

Lewis: No, that came later. The General Strike was I think in the twenties sometime.

When I was back East, I crossed a picket line, too. I never had an idealistic point of view. I had something I had to do--I had to get a degree in engineering. Then later on I had to get a degree in medicine. And nothing else was important except what I was doing. I was never terribly disturbed by it because the guys that were the great guys in the unions did the same sort of thing. They all faltered too, not all of them, but most of them.

Glaser: It wasn't a matter of principle with you to be a union member? It was just a matter of expediency?

Lewis: My being a union member--first the carpenters union--was I had to belong to the union to get a job. So I belonged to the union, and I got a job. Later, to get the IWW card--I was beating my way east and I had an AFL card from the machinists union, and I was told by the bums that if I had an IWW card and didn't get arrested with it--but the thing to do was join the IWW. I learned how to join them and what you used for a name and all the rest. That I did.

Glaser: I don't quite understand. You mean you were hoboing your way back East? When was this?

Lewis: Nineteen twenty-two.

Glaser: You had graduated by then?

Lewis: Yes. I had worked in engineering for a while, and I went back East to a fraternity convention. This Weinstein girl, she lived in New York with her family. I went to go to the franternity convention and to visit with the girl that I thought was my girl. The only way you did that was to bum it.

Glaser: Weren't you asking to have your head cracked open by the police for carrying an IWW card?

Lewis: I was more interested in not being in jail for ninety days if I got caught with it; so I just had to be sure I didn't get caught with it.

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*The first general strike in this country's history took place in Seattle. It began on February 6, 1919, but petered out after six days.

Glaser: Why would you need it in order to bum your way?

Lewis: Because the guys who drove the railroads were all members, and you could ride on them--the fact that you were a good guy and belonged to them. So you joined them.

Glaser: I didn't realize that the railroading men were IWW; I thought IWWs were mostly in the mines and in the lumber mills.

Lewis: They were, but they were also in any kind of work. They were a good bunch; they're probably the best people in the unions in America. They set up the whole Pacific Northwest, and the mines in Butte ran all through the Depression, mostly because of the miners unions, the IWW.

If you come up through the trades, either you're a straight guy or you're a crook, and I was a crook. I did it for my own expediency. But I never had any bad feeling about it; this was what I wanted to do and how I wanted to do it. I wasn't dishonest with anybody except myself. I didn't hurt the union; I didn't hurt the rank and file; but I did do what I wanted to do.

Glaser: I'm impressed that while taking engineering, which is a difficult course, you had time for so much social activity as well as working so many hours to support yourself.

More on Part-time Employment and U.S. Navy

Lewis: Well, I only worked eight hours a week. I worked from about one o'clock in the afternoon till about ten or eleven at night, and that was it. Once a week.

Glaser: This was not when you were working as a longshoreman?

Lewis: No, that only happened when there was work available. I'd go down about seven o'clock in the morning and go to school. Usually I felt pretty good by then because I'd get off and steal about two hours of sleep out on the deck or somewhere and go to school.

Glaser: Who were some of your friends when you went to school?

Lewis: Oh, a whole bunch of guys I've not seen since. The names don't mean much. We had about thirty, I guess, in our class (except chemistry--we had a bigger group than that), but the school wasn't too large. I didn't kill myself; I wasn't an honor student, but I'm sure I could

Lewis: have been.

Once I got to Seattle, I went to the university, which is just like going to any other university anywhere. They had a choice of things to do, various hours to do them in. But we ate on the campus, and we walked between classes. They don't do that anymore; they have their own automobiles now.

Glaser: Or bicycles.

Lewis: Nobody rode bikes in those days, at least we didn't. Bikes had a dead period shortly after the First War and before I went to medical school. There may have been six or eight bikes on the campus. When I went to Holland the first time, I was inundated with bicycles--little ladies with fancy opera dresses and all riding their bicycles.

When I first went to college, I had a class in inorganic chemistry, and this fellow Beyers, who was my professor, said: "Some day, when we learn how to extract all of the energy in a little lump of coal we'll go across the Atlantic and back with the energy in that lump of coal." That almost came true.

As I recall, the nicest thing about Washington at the time, was the campus was large--it wasn't built all over like it is now--and it was a delight to go from the entrance of the campus down to the engineering building. And those buildings at the time were old 1915 World Fair buildings. It was kind of a pleasure to be able to walk down and get in line with these mountains and see Mt. Rainier on a clear day; see the mountain pushing its nose up over the beautiful green areas.

It was almost as exciting as when I was in Ecuador, coming up the Guayas River at sunset and seeing the water and the sky, and in the foreground Mt. Chimborazo, which is seven thousand meters high.

Glaser: Seattle must have been a joy after the harsh winters in Butte.

Lewis: Yes, it was lovely. The only thing, coming down from the mile high in the sky, I was sleepy all the time! At ROTC drills, two or three times the company marched away from me.

Glaser: [Laughter] You fell asleep on your feet?

Lewis: Yes, I was standing there.

Glaser: Did you join ROTC when you were a freshman?

Lewis: I had to. And then, the end of the year, I became a drummer in the

Lewis: band and that was the end of my drill.

Glaser: How did you become a drummer?

Lewis: A drummer had a head and a pair of sticks to hit with, so I learned how to drum a little bit--just snare drum. Being a drummer is nothing; to be a good drummer is a hell of a job.

Glaser: But you can't pick it up out of nowhere. Did you have music lessons as a kid?

Lewis: No. I had some lessons on the mandolin, which I never learned, and recently on the cello, which I also never learned.

Glaser: Where did the mandolin come in? Was that when you were in Butte?

Lewis: Yes.

Glaser: I didn't know that.

Lewis: So many things have happened in my life; I can't remember all of them.

Glaser: And I don't know all that happened to you; so I have to keep asking questions.

Lewis: I'm glad you do.

Glaser: When did the navy enter into the picture?

Lewis: After my first year in college, I joined the navy--when did I join? October 15, 1918, through December 21, 1918. That was the end of my military service.

Glaser: What were the benefits you got out of being in the navy?

Lewis: I lost two months and eight days. I had a hernia before I went into the service and I had it fixed; when I came out, I had a recurrence. So the navy took care of me; they operated on me. Then they sent me to school and I got three years of vocational training--$85 a month and then $100 a month--till I got my engineering degree.

Glaser: That's very good! You said you lost two months and eight days--what did you mean?

Lewis: Time. School.

Glaser: Do you mean when you had the flu you were gone for that long?

Lewis: Oh no, no. I was only gone a few days--a week or so. But I wasn't

Lewis: in school. I was going to college. We had a war; so I lived in a tent.

Glaser: Oh, I see. You mean that because of the war, you lost that period of time; but then the navy sent you back to school.

Lewis: Yes. I got paid for getting the hernia.

Glaser: How'd you get the hernia?

Lewis: Probably coughing with my flu. I don't know. I had it fixed so I could join. Then I joined and I had to have it fixed again. The interesting thing was, I worked in the navy yard before I went in service. I had a good job; I was a machinist. The next year I went back, after the war, and the navy yard wouldn't hire me because I had a hernia. I said, "Well, that's a hell of a thing! I worked here last year with a hernia."

And he said, "If you want to get the hernia fixed, we'll send you to the hospital." So they did, and it was a good deal.

Glaser: Were you living at home while you were in the navy?

Lewis: No, the folks hadn't moved down to the Coast yet; they were still up in Butte. I was in the navy only two months; they hadn't moved down yet. But then when I went back to school and got into my last year, I was getting this dough. I had a full-time maintenance job working in the mechanical engineer's laboratory, and I got $25 or $30 a month--something like that--for the work. But Leon was ready to go to college; so I sent him to college, and I went to college, and the government picked up the tab for $100 a month. I gave Leon half--that's my brother--and I kept half.

Leon didn't do ROTC; he just objected to it and wouldn't do it. Later on he was appointed a possible Rhodes scholar, and they rejected him because he would not, as a good American, take ROTC. That was 1921, I guess--somewhere in there.

Then Leon went in the navy in World War II and was in Okinawa and came back. The university then had a big hullabaloo. He was a professor in industrial medicine here at UC Berkeley, and there was a question of signing the oath--remember? Leon was one of the six or eight guys in the whole university who wouldn't sign the oath, and never did. Now his record is clear that he didn't have to, or doesn't have to. That was in 1949, I guess, or '50. But he's been a principled guy; I've always just been a whore. Leon's always been principled; I'd sell anything for anything, you know.

Glaser: You're laughing about, but I have a feeling you don't know which of

Glaser: you is right.

Lewis: I never measured us. But he has an honest philosophy and I don't. I never studied philosophy.

Glaser: When you were in Seattle, you did some shipbuilding, you told me.

Lewis: No, when I was in Seattle I worked in a shipyard. I was a crane chaser, till I saw a guy get mowed down by a big sheet of steel that broke both of his thighs; then I wasn't a worker on the crane chaser's job anymore. I couldn't see getting mowed down by a hunk of iron.

Glaser: What is the crane chaser's job?

Lewis: He chases the crane. When you clamp on a piece of steel, you get the hell out of the way and they take it away. Just what it says--you're a crane chaser.

Glaser: The crane didn't pick it up by itself; you got it in--

Lewis: No, no. A crane had clamps and chains and things, and you went away with it. The whole industrial life is a completely different life than one would expect.

Glaser: When you went to Seattle, World War I had already started, so you weren't able to contrast the city before and after the war, or were you?

Lewis: Well, it was only industrial changes that were occuring.

Glaser: Wasn't there a big influx of people because of the shipbuilding?

Lewis: Not terribly. It was a short length of time. See, it wasn't a big war here, but in Europe it was a hell of a big war.

Glaser: Had the aircraft industry started when you were in Seattle?

Lewis: Yes, Boeing was going already. Several of my friends and some professors worked at Boeing. It was a big plant, but now it would be considered just a moderate size tool shed.

Courses and Professors

Glaser: Let's go back to your college years. You told me about courses you had as a freshman; how about subsequent to that?

Lewis: The most impressive course I had in college was my course in mechanics. A guy named C. C. Moore, who came from Michigan as a professor, had worked out how to teach students. His teaching consisted of setting up two different problems for each day: a problem subtitled "K" and a problem subtitled "M." He placed his students on a three-by-five table, each student working at one end of the table, so that you'd be sitting on a high stool facing the guy across from you. You did the work labeled "K" and he did the work labeled "M." Therefore, you were a K that was surrounded by M's and the M's were surrounded by K's. Each problem was different each day. Each problem was solvable, but each solvable problem required a certain amount of knowledge and growth.

So we had this series of people, and they were graded each time their papers came back. The first third of the period--maybe two weeks or three weeks--was a K, and you got for that ten [points] for neatness and ninety for correctness--no, it was the other way around: ten for being correct and ninety for neatness.

Anyway, at the end of a two- or three-week period your next grades were fifty for neatness and fifty for accuracy. And the third was ninety for accuracy and ten for neatness. At the end of each period, you were seated in the class according to your standing on your problem-solving. If you went to the john, you went alone; two people could not go out so that they could check their problems. It was run like a grammar school! But it wasn't a grammar school; it was one of the best learning periods I've ever had in college.

Some ten or more years later, I worked for an outfit in Philadelphia, and the first job I had was checking the design of a piece of equipment. Had I not had that class, I wouldn't have been able to solve my problem. I worked out my own formulas and checked it in a lot less time than if I had known the formulas.

My chief in the drafting office said, "Did you work that problem out?"

I said, "Yes."

He said, "How is it?"

I said, "It's safe."

He said, "Let me see--what formula did you use?"

"I used a formula I made up."

"You made up a formula?! What did you use?"

I said, "Come over here and I'll show you my calculations."

Lewis: He said, "Well, I'll be damned! I'd never do this."

"You didn't have the course I had. I had a course in mechanics in 1919 and I'll never forget it, and I haven't; I still can do it." He was pleased, and I was pleased.

In the same job, I had several other things that I worked on from memory from that class. The course was excellent, and I learned much in it. Many of the things that I should have learned in elementary classes were never in the picture. In 1935, I solved a common fracture of the wrist, only I did it with the stuff I learned in that class.

Glaser: How did that apply?

Lewis: It was a matter of mechanics and applied mechanics; it worked out. I still am, I think, the only person who ever reproduced a so-called Colles fracture of the radius in the wrist. It was a good course.

Glaser: What is the significance of having reproduced the Colles fracture in the wrist?

Lewis: You understand how the fracture occurs, and you learn how to put it together again to heal. It was very effective.

Glaser: I see. How was the method of teaching this class related to how much you learned, and why was this such an effective class?

Lewis: It was done because you couldn't do anything from the books; you had to start from scratch and figure out your problem. You had no references to take, except the tables. But tables didn't do you any good if you're working for a formula. And the guy who was running the class was very fussy about what kind of work you did.

Glaser: You mean he made you work harder than you would ordinarily?

Lewis: No, he made you work--he made you <u>work</u>.

Glaser: Was this business of separating students so that you wouldn't cheat?

Lewis: So that you wouldn't copy, yes, because most errors are made from copying.

Glaser: Was there another course that was as outstanding as Professor Moore's?

Lewis: Only on personality--not from teaching. I think that's the best and most effective course I've taken in twenty years of college.

Glaser: Who were some of the personalities that you remember?

Lewis: Eastwood, who was the head of mechanical engineering, was also a banker; he was at the University National Bank. Beyers was a good guy in chemistry. Dane, who developed dynamite for the woods, was a good teacher of organic chemistry. Winslow was a good designer in mechanical engineering. George Wilson was an excellent teacher in mechanical engineering. Caine, the head of the shop, was an excellent mechanic who could figure out his problems. That's a pretty good group.

Anti-Semitism

Glaser: One of the things you told me was that the ZBT fraternity was formed because you could not get into the non-Jewish fraternity. Was there a lot of anti-Semitism?

Lewis: Always has been. When hasn't there been?

Glaser: That's in the fraternities. How about the university itself?

Lewis: Before I went to medical school a teacher who seemed to be a very good friend of mine asked it I wouldn't want a letter of recommendation. I said I would. His name was Thompson, and he was head of the fisheries and also head of inorganic chemistry. He wrote a letter to the University of Pennsylvania, which I have seen. He said, "Yes, he is a this and that, and a nice guy, pretty good standing in the school, but you must remember he's Jewish."

I thought that was a kind of a snotty trick of him to pull. He knew me, he knew my brother, and so on. But that's how they do. They didn't have enough Jews to matter, but Jews didn't make fraternities; frequently they didn't make Phi Beta Kappa, frequently they didn't make other honor societies.

Glaser: Did the Jewish students deserve to make Phi Beta Kappa?

Lewis: A lot a them did, and a lot of them didn't make it.

My brother made eight undergraduate honor societies, Sigma Xi, Phi Beta Kappa, honor chemistry, honors for the philosophy groups, and so on. But he's always made all the honor societies.

Glaser: You're saying it was prejudice, but your brother managed anyhow.

Lewis: Yes.

Glaser: Because he was so much of an achiever, is that it?

Lewis: He's one of those guys. In medical school he made honors in medicine. The next time they were choosing, the highest guy was someone in my class. His name was brought up, and they said, "No, we don't want to take him because, because, because." You know? With answers that were more repugnant.

My brother got up and said, "Look. If you're not going to take Harry Silbrinski, who stands first in his class, then I think this whole society is not one of achievers, but of birth rights. And if it's that sort of thing, I don't want to belong, so kick me out.

"This is how I feel: if I belong to your society because of my grades and Joe Doakes doesn't belong, not because of his grades, he has high grades, but because of his being Jewish, I don't want to belong to your club."

So they begged around that one and Harry Silbrinski made it. Leon is that kind of a guy, or was. I don't know how he's doing right at the moment.

Glaser: He was willing to stand up for his beliefs?

Lewis: He always has. He was one of the five guys at the university who objected to the oath.

Glaser: That's here in Berkeley?

Lewis: Yes. All the good guys objected to the oath until it came right down to the nitty-gritty, but he was one of five who stood up and said, "To hell with you."

Glaser: It sounds like you have a lot of respect for your brother.

Lewis: He's a very bright and very able guy, but he ain't much at the moment.

Glaser: I know. What's the latest news?

Lewis: He seemed a little better today.

But he was that sort of a guy. He objected to belonging to the ROTC up at Washington, and this cost him a Rhodes scholarship. So he was not a Rhodes scholar. He preferred being a non-Rhodes scholar to being a Rhodes scholar with signing the oath. He's always been that sort of a guy.

He ran the show out at Highland [Alameda County Hospital]. They were treating people with polio. Most of them, I felt, were pretty well paralyzed. He took over the medical management and in two or

Lewis: three years he had no deaths.

Glaser: How far back was that? Was that before the Salk vaccine?

Lewis: Yes.

Glaser: How did your brother Leon finance going to medical school?

Lewis: In his pre-med he lived on fifty dollars a month that I contributed. When he went to medical school he got a competitive scholarship for his medical tuition. He drove a cab his first year--he was driving at the time of the Dempsey-Tunney fight, and he made a lot of money. He did a little tutoring. He tutored one of the medical school professor's son, who was going to Haverford. That was about the way he went.

Engineering Employment upon Graduation

Glaser: When you graduated, what were some of the jobs that you had in Seattle?

Lewis: The first year I worked as a materials handling engineer for an outfit that was a representative of different companies. I'd travel the country and try to promote sales. So I designed conveyor machinery and things of the kind, on a commission basis.

Glaser: You called on their clients to design systems for them, is that it?

Lewis: Yes.

Glaser: How long were you with that outfit?

Lewis: A little over a year. The name was A. E. Fryer and Sons. They were in the Lumber Exchange Building at Second and Seneca.

Glaser: Did they specialize in industrial design?

Lewis: They didn't do much industry; I had the industry. But the other products were building materials, locks, hardware, wall surfaces, roofing, and all kinds of stuff that you could order several hundred of something, or two or three, and put them together.

Glaser: That was the other aspect of the company's business, plus the

Glaser: conveyor belts that you were designing?

Lewis: Yes. They were different. I'd go and look at where it was and try and work out a reasonable system for handling.

Glaser: For handling material that was ordered from Fryer?

Lewis: Yes. For example, I went to a mill that handled apples. The apples came in wooden boxes, and you put them on a belt that was motor-driven or on an incline so they'd slide down the incline. I would sell them the equipment and show them how to put it up.

Glaser: What was the year that you worked for Fryer?

Lewis: Twenty-two.

Glaser: Where did you go from there?

Lewis: That's when I beat my way east, and I worked for Lamson and Company in Syracuse.

Glaser: What made you go there?

Lewis: There was a job opening. I had seen an ad in one of the engineering magazines for this, and I went to them in New York. They sent me out to Long Island where I worked erecting some conveyors for the General Baking Company. I set up chains and positioning of some conveyors. Then I went up to Syracuse for a few months and up to Boston, where I worked for them. I got a better job working for Lockwood Green, engineers up in Boston. Then I got a job with a machine company up in Lebanon, New Hampshire. I finished off the year and went home.

Glaser: Then you were back East one year. What made you decide to go anyway?

Lewis: I told you, there was a fraternity affair and I wanted to go there with a girl.

Glaser: Oh, I thought that was just for a few months in the summer.

Lewis: No, I stayed and worked there for a year. I got interviewed by the Herald Tribune.

Glaser: Why?

Lewis: From my bumming experience--I beat my way east as a bum and I shipped out as a machinist. They had a strike in Montana. I didn't want to work on the strike--by now I'd gotten religion--so I took the ride, stole that, and then went on to Butte. I wanted to go on east

Lewis: so I beat my way to Fargo, where my brother was living with his wife and my niece. Then I went to Chicago and New York. I beat my way on the Twentieth Century Limited on the blinds (a space between the engine or the water tender and the baggage car). I got that ride.

I shipped out of Fargo with a cargo of potatoes and onions. I slept back there with them. It was warm too; there was a kerosene heater in the car. So I was comfortable, had onions and potatoes to eat. When I got to New York there was this big to-do at the fraternity convention. The New York Herald Tribune came down when they heard that I was a bum and that I'd gotten to this fancy convention at the Plaza Hotel. This guy picked my brain and put a big story in the paper about it. If I was smart, I could have made some money on it, selling the story, but I wasn't smart. It was in December--December 21, I guess--of 1922.

Glaser: You told me once that you had worked in Providence, Rhode Island, but you didn't mention it today.

Lewis: Oh, it was a job I was doing for the Lockwood Green Company, where I said I worked in engineering. Lockwood Green was taking off the motors at the lamp base for General Electric. I lived in Providence, but the motors I was studying were in the plant at the lamp base works in Providence or Pawtucket.

Glaser: Let me see if I understand this. You were taking the lamps off the base?

Lewis: No. The lamp base works in Providence made the little brass ends on bulbs, and they made the whole bulb there. So the lamp bases were made and then they were wired and glassed. They were put into bulbs and glued up somehow with hot glass or something. Then they were made into bulbs and shipped.

So the machinery that I was studying were motors that were bought there and put in the shop for appraisal, because they were put in during the war. They had to appraise them to set up new values for them. We were taking off the motor numbers and all the rest so they could amortize the lamp bases, motors and stuff they built. It was a long, drawn-out job. When I finished that, I went up to New Hampshire.

I went up to New England, and I worked as chief engineer of a small plant where I got a tremendous wage; I got $60 a week, which was a lot then. The guy who had the job, and stayed on after I left, got $45; but I got $60. So I guess I was a good salesman.

Glaser: You talked your way into the higher wage?

Lewis: Yes. I was there until the end of that year; then I went home. I got kind of bored with the job. It wasn't interesting, I wasn't learning enough. I was devising and making things, but it wasn't enough.

Glaser: And your romance had fallen through?

Lewis: Oh, I suppose that took a very definite secondary place once I got working again.

Glaser: Were you glad to get back to Seattle?

Lewis: At first, not particularly. But then afterwards, I got into it. I had a job in engineering design for a guy named Weber. I'd met him in my junior year in engineering. He was a big-timer; he did the eighteen-story medical building in Seattle; he and I did it, really. So then I started moving around again. In engineering, that's what happens, you know. The jobs run out, so you've got to get another job.

Glaser: There must have been a lot of building going on in Seattle, though. It was developing fairly--

Lewis: There wasn't much going on then.

Glaser: How long did you work with Mr. Weber?

Lewis: Two or three years, I guess, off and on. I worked steadily for a while and then irregularly for a while when he'd be out of town. But we've been friends for a long time; we still are, more or less.

Glaser: Did you ever want to go up to Alaska?

Lewis: The two places I've never wanted to go to are Alaska and the Hawaiian Islands.

Glaser: You had enough of the cold in Butte, did you?

Lewis: Alaska isn't that cold, you know; Alaska is only cold in certain area. They grow strawberries in Alaska and do truck gardening.

Glaser: What did you do when you stopped working for Mr. Weber?

Decision to Attend Medical School

Lewis: I came home one day and said to my mother, "I'm going to be a doctor." This was in '25. I decided that engineering didn't have it, because you were never exposed to liberal-minded people or people who could think about problems. You're always at the whim of the guys who are hiring you. If you got a good boss, that was one thing; if you didn't, it was something else.

Glaser: And you thought people in medicine were more liberal-minded?

Lewis: I thought that the people who were your patients, who were the people you talked with--[Interuption]

Glaser: You were talking about telling your mother that you wanted to become a doctor.

Lewis: She said, "Where are you going to get your money?"

I said, "I just got a job. I'll sell electric signs, and I think I can make it if I can get a loan." So I did. I sold electric signs that year, and I ended up with my living expenses--about $400 in cash--and a sale to Foster & Kleiser.

I was selling electric signs when I was in premedics. Then when I decided to go to medical school, I talked with Foster and Kleiser, and they were going to keep selling to my customers and give me the sales.

Glaser: Like a commission, then. Did you do your premedical work at--

Lewis: At Washington.

Glaser: Were you influenced by the fact that your brother was studying medicine?

Lewis: I would never have made Pennsylvania except for him.

Glaser: I mean the decision for you to go into medicine from engineering.

Lewis: No. I made the decision to make <u>him</u> go into medicine. I had a friend who was a doctor, and I was impressed. Leon went on to Penn. He was trying to get into medical school and he applied at Penn, at Harvard and at Johns Hopkins. Leon was accepted at Johns Hopkins. He thought he wanted to go to Harvard but it was getting late and Penn said, "We'll take you."

Leon said, "I'll come," and the next day the letter came from

Lewis: Harvard saying that he was accepted there. So he made the three top medical schools in the country and did very well.

I did the other. I wrote to Penn, and they wrote back and said my grades weren't good enough. So Leon went down and sold them a bill of goods and they accepted me. Then later on, they were very congratulatory when I'd won the first prize in undergraduate medical research, and I thought that was nice.

I tried for a scholarship. I knew practically no French when I took an exam in French. I think I got ten or fourteen on the grade, where seventy was passing. But that didn't matter. I got first prize in undergraduate medical research, Sigma Xi, and the silver medal at the AMA convention in Detroit.

[Tape turned over]

Lewis: In the spring of each year, undergrads who were doing research problems present their work. The first place presentation was usually made by teams. There was one very bright guy who had won it about four years before; the last individual who did. Then I came along and won it it 1930, I guess. It was my last year in medical school.

Anyhow, I carried a medal and a prize, and then later on I showed this at the AMA Convention in Detroit, and I got the second prize. First prize went to U.S. Public Health for the making of Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever vaccine.

Glaser: That's good competition. What was your project?

Lewis: Measurement of cerebral spinal fluid pressure in the animal--it was a dog. I built the equipment and did the research and the evaluation of it. It was a pretty good problem.

Glaser: May I go back and ask you a question concerning Leon and his decision to go to medical school? How was it that you were the one to convince him to go, or the one to influence him?

Lewis: A guy I went around with in Seattle was a doctor--Norman Klein. He has since died. Leon then accepted the idea of going to medical school for some reason--I guess it was the $50 a month (as I told you, I split the money I got from the vocational board with him because I was working and I had plenty of money). I couldn't save that money because you're not supposed to do that with government money--

Glaser: What vocational board? Is this when you were back in the navy ROTC?

Lewis: No, it was after I got out of the navy, after the war was over. I was being sent back to the school by the Navy Vocational Bureau.

Glaser: Well, he wasn't ready to study medicine when you were still in school.

Lewis: Sweetheart, I got that money until I graduated. So I just set it aside so that he could use it, which is taking my savings--that's really what I should say.

Glaser: I see. I was confused because I know he's five years younger. Sorry to interrupt.

Lewis: That's all right.

Glaser: Did you have a lot of medical friends when you were in Seattle?

Lewis: No--a half a dozen, I guess. Guys you go to college with, and then you get to be friends.

I applied to Northwestern and they turned me down because my grades weren't any good, and then Leon got me into Penn. That in medicine is a characteristic deal, anyway. People talk about going to Edinburgh to do their medicine. When they say that to somebody who was at Penn doing medicine: "Oh yes, I know." And what he knows is that the guys who made Edinburgh were guys who flunked out at Penn and went to Edinburgh because Edinburgh was nice enough to take them in.

Glaser: Really? I thought Edinburgh had a great reputation.

Lewis: It does. Nothing wrong with that. It merely means that grading is no way of finding out about people, anyhow.

Glaser: For how many years did you need to study premed?

Lewis: I got it in a year. It was unusual--I don't think anyone ever did that before or since they put on the four-year premedics.

Glaser: How were you able to do that?

Lewis: My engineering. Engineers scare the hell out of people, you know.

Glaser: But you had to do a lot of stuff like chemistry to make up, didn't you?

Lewis: I had practically all my chemistry. I didn't have any physical or advanced organic or advanced inorganic. But that wasn't hard. My grades in chemistry were pretty good, and they just let me go. I never suffered much from it.

Glaser: But isn't the kind of chemistry you need for medicine different from engineering?

Lewis: You don't really need chemistry for medicine unless you're in chemistry of medicine. There's a lot of bull, you know, that goes on.

Glaserr: How did you get to Mr. Shemanski?

Lewis: Some friends of mine introduced me.

Glaser: Tell me about your relationship with him.

Lewis: There wasn't very much. He was very friendly and he wrote letters. He was very friendly, I mean a nice guy. But that was it. I think he was afraid of me and I was afraid of him, but we were kind of communicative.

Glaser: How did you get him to finance your schooling?

Lewis: He gave me a loan. He told me how much it would be and all his restrictions. A friend of mine, who was a very good friend of his, talked to him and then Mr. Shemanski talked to me.

Glaser: Was he in the habit of financing students?

Lewis: I think so. I don't know if they've all been as unsuccessful paying the loan off as I've been. He was the kind of a guy that you'd never dream of cheating, and he had enough money so it didn't hurt. So I got some of it. It wasn't very nice of me, but what can you do?

Glaser: What do you mean, you didn't think it was nice of you?

Lewis: If you borrow money you ought to figure on paying it back, but by then I was paying back money that I borrowed from the university and here and there.

Glaser: You mean you didn't repay him after you set up a practice?

Lewis: Not all of it, no. I don't know if he's still alive. I don't think so.

Glaser: How much did he loan you all together?

Lewis: Three thousand dollars.

Glaser: That's quite a bit of money.

Lewis: Yes. I think I've paid him back maybe a thousand of that.

Glaser: He was a clothier, wasn't he?

Lewis: Yes. He ran the Eastern Outfitters on Second and Union, I guess.

Glaser: He must have been quite a wealthy man.

Lewis: He was well-to-do.

Glaser: Did he do this for a goodly number of students?

Lewis: I don't know. I had met him before, and that's about it.

Glaser: Was it hard to approach him to ask for a loan?

Lewis: No. He was a very friendly guy and there was no problem. When I started to use up his money I wrote to him and told him that I couldn't pay him right away, and I would have him just add up the interest and keep it going. He wrote back and said that he wasn't interested in that, his greatest interest was in me, which I thought was a remarkable statement. Fortunately it proved to be true. But then you go one way, you get married and you got a wife. Your wife gets a cancer of the breast. You get hurt. You go on and you get married again. Life's funny. It has many bad angles.

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February 5th, 1930

Mr. R. M. Lewis,
c/o Memorial Hospital,
Roxbury, Conn.

Dear Mr. Lewis:

I was certainly very pleased to learn of the splendid progress you made, that out of one hundred and twenty two men taking examination for the appointment as an interne you ranked number seventeen.

I congratulate you and know that through this appointment you will be in a position to broaden yourself to a great extent and before long will be one of the most prominent surgeons in the United States. Anyway, let us hope so.

You are correct in your calculations, $2800.00 is the amount you have borrowed from me.

For a few weeks we had real wintry weather and quite a bit of snow and frost but we are having a little sunshine now and before long I believe we will be enjoying our usual nice spring weather.

Mrs. Shemanski and I are in the very best of health.

With kindest regards, I am

Sincerely yours,

AS:GY

March 4th, 1930

Dear Mr. Lewis:

Sorry that this letter was mis-directed, but the news remains much the same.

A. S.

January 5, 1939.

Dear Mr. Shemanski:-

It has been sometime since I have written to you, but the New Year is here, and with it my best wishes for your health and happiness.

The past year has been rather interesting to me from a professional standpoint. I have been doing a great deal of work in the surgical treatment of tuberculosis along with my other surgery, and as a part payment of my obligation to you, you and I have been responsible for a number of lives. We have been following up results on some of our patients who would have died were it not for our operative work, and these patients are now home and well. So, I say you and I have been responsible for some lives.

It has been quite gratifying to look back at the time I sat in your office in Seattle, and asked you for your assistance with my goal as major surgery, and to realize that I am at least accomplishing in a small way some of the things that I set out to do. I must console myself and you with this as a partial because money is not flowing in too fast. However, I feel that my contribution to humanity is worth a great deal more than the silver or gold which I might have reaped along other lines of endeavor.

With these recapitulations I shall close with my regards to you and Mrs. Shemanski, and in this Elsie and Patsy join me.

Again my Best Wishes for the New Year.

Sincerely,

Mr. A. SHEMANSKI,
305 Pike St.
Seattle, Washington.

65c

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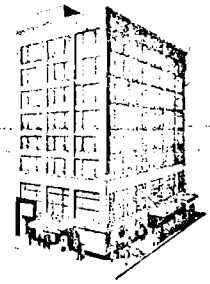

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3/8/39

Rubin M Lewis,
2031 Pine St.,
Philadelphia, Pa.

Dear Mr. Lewis:

Your very complimentary letter received, and in answer wish to say that I rejoice with you in your success. I had never quite thought of the matter in the light which you have reflected it to me. My primitive thought was to assist you in something you had chosen for your goal, and if in that assistance even more than that has been accomplished, I believe it was thru your sincerity and faithfulness.

Your humanitarian objective is indeed a compliment to your achievement, and I believe when we lose ourselves in other's interests we are much happier than thru anything that can be recompensed by money alone. If it is your desire that I remain a silent partner in this field, I will not object, and am gratified by your expression of such gratitude.

With kindest regards to you and your family, in which Mrs Shemanski joins me, I remain

Sincerely yours,
Alfred Shemanski

as vr

Mrs Shemanski and I were in California for six weeks returned about a week ago. We had a real vacation

AS

IV PHILADELPHIA, 1926-1946

Medical School, University of Pennsylvania, 1926-1930

Glaser: What was the year you left Seattle to go to Philadelphia?

Lewis: Nineteen twenty-five, at the end of the year.

Glaser: You were twenty-six then.

Lewis: Yes.

Glaser: Was it difficult to get into the University of Pennsylvania Medical School?

Lewis: Not terribly for me. My brother was there. He did that.

Glaser: He did it for you?

Lewis: He was there and they said, "He doesn't have the kind of grades we'd like to see."

"Oh, that was four years ago. His grades are good now." It's good they were, but my brother sold them a bill and they took me. I think they were not unhappy about it because in my last year in medical school I won the first place award for undergraduate medical research for the whole medical school. I went to Detroit to the AMA convention and got the silver medal for research in competition with the U. S. Public Health Service, who got the gold medal. I thought that was pretty good.

Glaser: What kind of a research project did you have?

Lewis: I did a problem of spinal fluid pressure in relation to the posture of the animal and I built the equipment for it and showed

Lewis: it at the AMA in Detroit where I got the silver medal. I also got Sigma Xi out of that.

Glaser: What is that?

Lewis: Honorary science, like Phi Beta Kappa, except in science.

Glaser: Why did you switch from engineering to medical?

Lewis: Engineering--there's not enough people in it. You are selling machinery and you aren't talking to other people. It was an impersonal goddamn business, and I was glad to be out of it. It made a big difference to me and my ego.

Glaser: Tell me about your years in medical school.

Lewis: Frankly, it was no great shakes, really. I had to do our cooking while my brother cleaned our apartment. We went to school in the morning and came home in the evening.

Glaser: Where did you live?

Lewis: The first house we lived in was on Thirty-ninth Street between Baltimore Avenue and Spruce Street. Then we moved up to 4144 Walnut Street. Then we moved to 3908 Baltimore Avenue.

Glaser: How is it you moved so often?

Lewis: In the first place, we moved because we didn't like having one room. We got a house where we had a room, a bath, a kitchen, and a living room. Then we moved again and we had two rooms, a bath, and a kitchenette. Then we moved back to the original one where we had two rooms and that was that.

Glaser: That sounds more than adequate for students.

Lewis: You buy them by how much they cost, not what they got.

Glaser: How did you do as a cook?

Lewis: Before I went blind I was an excellent cook. I think I can still cook even being blind, moderately blind, like I am. I could do good pastries, matzo ball soup, pies, cake, roasts, eggs.

Glaser: You were quite a cook. Where did you learn all of this?

Lewis: I guess because I've been cooking all my life. I knew how by doing.

Glaser: By watching your mother?

Lewis: No, by having to cook. I used to go fishing and hunting, and we had to eat out there. So we cooked when we went fishing, and we cooked when we came back. It wasn't hard to cook.

Glaser: You mean when you were living in Butte and you would go up to those little cabins?

Lewis: When we were living in Butte, we'd go out on the river, out on the big hole.

Glaser: You sound like you knew how to take care of yourself.

Lewis: I never had any trouble. I cooked our first twenty years of being married. I did the cooking. I just quit cooking since I can't get around or see well.

Glaser: Did you cook during your first marriage, too?

Lewis: Yes. I learned that if you don't eat it ain't good. So I eat.

My first wife was a very active woman, but she couldn't cook. When I married Emily, we came home and I said to her, "Let's make up some sustenance."

"I don't know what you mean."

"Hell, you know how to boil water, don't you?"

"I suppose I do, but I never learned."

"Get yourself some water and let's start." She wouldn't.

Glaser: Some sustenance?

Lewis: Yes. Tea, I think. I don't remember what it was.

Glaser: You must be teasing me. I'm sure she knew how to make tea.

Lewis: She's a damn good cook now.

Glaser: But she didn't know anything at all?

Lewis: Even how to boil water, I don't think.

Glaser: Tell me about your student years in Philadelphia. It must have been difficult--a medical student must carry a tremendous number

Glaser: of hours, doesn't he?

Lewis: No. Really that's a big bull. I don't think it's such a--medical schools are made for kids that are going to school, and they're made for what they can do comfortably. There's no reason why medical school should be that far away from law school, or mathematics, or music, or anything else. And so it wasn't very difficult. It was there, that's all. It had to be done.

Glaser: How many students were in your class?

Lewis: We had a hundred.

Glaser: Every year a hundred were graduating?

Lewis: It varied. We had a hundred and then the third year we got about thirty-five from North Carolina, Utah, and a couple of other schools, and we graduated 135.

Glaser: Which of your courses did you enjoy the most?

Lewis: I suppose, of all the courses, I liked pharmacology, laboratory physiology, and pathology, and the clinical specialities, medicine and things like that.

Glaser: What about your professors?

Lewis: They were mostly nice guys who were working for a living. Yes, I think they were a very fine group of people.

Glaser: Was there one that you responded to more than any of the others?

Lewis: That's kind of hard to say. One day you hate him, the next day you like him. In general, I think they were all a very good bunch of guys.

Glaser: You said that Leon drove a taxi. Did you have time to earn money while you studied?

Lewis: I sold electric signs.

Glaser: In Philadelphia, too?

Lewis: Yes, but I didn't have enough business to keep me busy because I had to go to school most of the time. I think that's just an angle for a lazy guy.

Glaser: How do you mean that?

Lewis: If you're lazy you don't work nearly as hard as if you're not lazy.

Glaser: As far as selling the signs is concerned?

Lewis: Yes.

Glaser: What was your social life while you were going to school and working part time?

Lewis: It was fairly active. I had girls in a couple of the nurse's training schools and in the hospitals.

Glaser: You had friends among the nurses?

Lewis: I had friends wherever they were, among the nurses, in the office where I was spending the summer engineering--

Glaser: Tell me about that.

Lewis: I just had to have a job, so I got one.

Glaser: Was there a summer break in medical school?

Lewis: Yes, from June to September.

Glaser: Was this engineering job in Philadelphia?

Lewis: Yes.

Summer Trips to Seattle

Glaser: Did you go home to Seattle while you were in medical school?

Lewis: I went there in 1933 when my father died. I went back home twice. Once I went home in 1929 by taking a freighter from Philadelphia, Brooklyn, through the Panama Canal, to San Francisco, and I took a bus up to Seattle.

Glaser: Did you work on the boat?

Lewis: Yes.

Glaser: That sounds interesting.

Lewis: Dull as hell.

Glaser: What did you do?

Lewis: I sudgied and I scraped.

Glaser: You did what?

Lewis: Sudgied. To sudgie you take some soap powder and you put some water on it and you scuff the top surface off. Then you take plain water and wash that off, you wipe it, and go to the next area.

Glaser: Are you talking about the decks or the bulkheads?

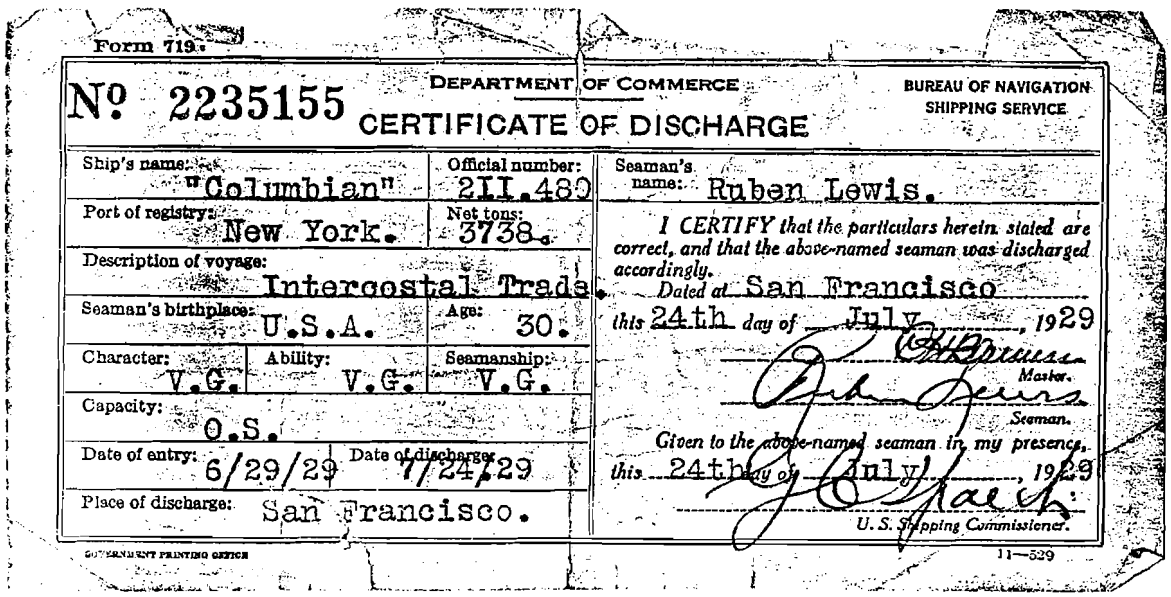
Lewis: I'm talking about the cabins and the bulkheads, wherever there was paint.

Glaser: It's a way of washing the painted surfaces?

Lewis: You wash the old paint off and put new paint on.

Glaser: Where did that word sudgie come from?

Lewis: Sudgie is the name the sailors on the asiatic lines gave to the washing powder; they call it sudgie. So when you wash the ship you call it sudgie moodgie.



Form 719.

No. 2235155 DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE BUREAU OF NAVIGATION SHIPPING SERVICE

CERTIFICATE OF DISCHARGE

Ship's name: "Columbian"	Official number: 211.489
Port of registry: New York.	Net tons: 3738.
Description of voyage: Intercoastal Trade.	
Seaman's birthplace: U.S.A.	Age: 30.
Character: V.G. / Ability: V.G. / Seamanship: V.G.	
Capacity: O.S.	
Date of entry: 6/29/29	Date of discharge: 7/24/29
Place of discharge: San Francisco.	

Seaman's name: Ruben Lewis.

I CERTIFY that the particulars herein stated are correct, and that the above-named seaman was discharged accordingly.

Dated at San Francisco

this 24th *day of* July, 1929

Master.

Seaman.

Given to the above-named seaman in my presence,

this 24th *day of* July, 1929

U. S. Shipping Commissioner.

GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE 11—529

Glaser: Was it difficult to get a job on a freighter?

Lewis: No, and the work wasn't too bad. The wages they paid gave us a buck and a half a day.

Glaser: Plus your room and board?

Lewis: Yes, such as it was.

Glaser: How long did it take you to go from New York to San Francisco?

Lewis: Thirty days.

Glaser: You went through the Panama Canal?

Lewis: Yes.

Glaser: That must be very interesting.

Lewis: It was kind of interesting.

Glaser: Aside from everything else, weren't you meeting people that you wouldn't ordinarily know?

Lewis: I'd known that kind of bum all my life.

Glaser: The same kind of person that was working in the shipyard? Is that what you mean?

Lewis: No. The same kind of people that go to sea. They're bums, generally. They were a nice bunch of guys. They were interesting. Some of them were better than others.

Glaser: Where had you met this kind of bum before?

Lewis: Some of them were miners and some of them worked on the longshore. Some of them worked many other places.

Glaser: What do you mean exactly when you say they were bums?

Lewis: They're not the kind of guys who were used to walking around with a new Brooks Brothers suit and new shoes with a shine on them. They were just plain working guys; "working stiffs" they used to call them.

Glaser: Were these men who chose to go to sea rather than to have a more settled life? Were they running away?

Lewis: People and their jobs are dependent on a lot of things, none of which is unsocial. Everybody who thinks of going to sea has a traveler's animal in his breast. Those who don't want to go to sea want to be landlubbers.

You go to sea and you plan on how much you are going to make and what you're going to do when you come back. When you come back, if you don't find a job the first day, you go down and sign up and go to sea again. That's how you work.

Glaser: If it took you a month to get to Seattle, how did you get back?

Lewis: I came by train. In those days, people bought round trip tickets. When they got to their destination, if they had decided that they were going to stay, they would sell their return passage for as much as they could get. We would go around looking for people who had a return part of the ticket. Then you'd change their name and you went on the trip.

Glaser: Did Leon go back with you when you went home?

Lewis: That time he was in the East, and he stayed. He had just seen my father the year before that.

Glaser: How did you feel going home? Was there any "You can't go home again" feeling?

Lewis: No. Our home was never like that. It was never a case of you can't. We wanted to because we had a very nice father and mother, and we had a nice home. It wasn't fancy; it was a plain-people's home. And we had friends. We wanted to go back, so we went back.

Glaser: I meant had you perhaps outgrown Seattle?

Lewis: I don't think so. I wanted to go back after I finished my training. I went back, but then Seattle had changed for me.

Glaser: In what way?

Lewis: I left and I went to medical school. When I came back I had had prizes, and had good positions, and a fellowship in surgery which was one place out of eighty-five applicants. I thought I was riding high. I practiced medicine for a number of years in Philadelphia.

The Medical Board in Seattle said, "You are in a position, academically--We can't understand why you want to come back."

Lewis: I said, "Look, that's what I want to do. If you're going to restrict somebody, let's not talk."

Eventually I took my exams and passed and left it so that if I ever wanted to go back I could use my county medical society membership and practice.

When I finally got around to that (I took my exams in '41), I wanted to go back there after I returned from Ecuador. But those bastards still were straight-arming me. So I decided to hell with them.

Somebody offered me a job in Germany, so I went to Germany.

Glaser: The first time that you took these exams, was that right after you graduated from medical school?

Lewis: No, that was in '41.

Internship, Philadelphia General Hospital, 1930-1932

Glaser: What year did you graduate from medical school?

Lewis: Thirty.

Glaser: Let's go back, to be chronological, to pick up your internship.

Lewis: Yes, and to my fellowship, too.

Glaser: Tell me about both of those.

Lewis: My internship began in June or July of 1930. It was a two year internship at Philadelphia General. I had tuberculosis as my first subject. I had a whole group of patients on the old TB ward. I had probably twenty patients on men's and about twenty-five patients on women's tuberculosis.

I had the problem of having to give all my patients spinal taps because my chief had an idea about spinal tuberculosis. I had to do laboratory samples on all patients. The lab work had to be taken by the intern on duty. I think we got lab work on all patients twice a week. We took lab work on about half of each one's patients.

Glaser: Was it your decision to go into TB?

Lewis: It was a rotating service. That was only a two month service. My next service was on a cancer ward. I was on service for one other guy. We had one nurse who was older than any other--

[Tape turned over]

Lewis: That was my second ward in Philadelphia General. It was interesting, but I went back a month later and all my patients were dead. So it wasn't a very heartening service.

I could tell you about going to Philadelphia General. In those days they took sixty interns all together, thirty one year and thirty the next year. Usually you apply to several hospitals because it was tough to get into an internship. Philadelphia General was considered one of the good ones. We applied to it, and with luck we made it. So then we had six months to wait for the next shift, and we already had that appointment.

We continued and at the end of that there'd be six months, and at the end of that we had to decide what we wanted for our next residency or special training, the same as with internships. I decided to become a resident at the university hospital. You know, you go to an institution and you get gummed up in their tradition.

Glaser: What do you mean by that?

Lewis: If you're interning at Philadelphia General or the university hospital, you generally try to get a fellowship or a residency at the university or at Philadelphia General. I didn't want one at Philadelphia General, but I wanted the one at the university hospital.

Glaser: Why didn't you want the one at Philadelphia General?

Lewis: I didn't think that they had an academic approach. They were almost a trade school. You learn how to do it and this is it. At the university you worked in a special group, you did research, and you tried to get the best training you knew how.

Fellowship in Surgery, University of Pennsylvania, 1932-1934

Lewis: So I applied to the university for the fellowship in surgery. I had done some work with one of the guys, and thought I knew the area. There were eighty-six applicants for the one fellowship. The odds were eighty-six to one. I got it.

Glaser: That's quite a feather in your cap.

Lewis: Yes, I thought so.

Then I got the son-of-a-bitch who helped operate on Eisenhower. He was a wash-up. I had to work with him. I couldn't get him out of my hair because he glommed on to me.

Glaser: What was he?

Lewis: He was professor of surgery. He later became my chief.

Glaser: What was his name?

Lewis: Ravdin. He was my chief and figured that I had to go with him. When my old chief resigned because of him and didn't have a place for me on his staff, I had Ravdin back. He was a no good bastard. I had a year with him and it was hell.

Glaser: What does it mean if he's your chief? You're like an apprentice to him?

Lewis: You're working with him on his right hand side, or left. That's your place.

Glaser: What made it hard to work with him?

Lewis: He was a dishonest guy, I think. He was kind of a miserable-- There were a lot of things I didn't like. My first chief was such a wonderful guy that I couldn't get off the ground with Ravdin. I just decided to hell with him.

Glaser: In what field did you work with him the first year? Was that surgery?

Lewis: Yes, general surgery and chest surgery.

Glaser: Was this at the university hospital?

Lewis: Yes, the University of Pennsylvania.

SEATTLE TIMES 1932

Seattle Studetn Is Given Scholarship

Reuben Lewis, Seattle medical student, has been awarded a three-year fellowship in surgery under Dr. George P. Mueller, noted abdominal surgeon of the University Hospital of Pennsylvania, according to word received yesterday by his parents, Mr. and Mrs. L. M. Lewis, 513 19th Ave.

Lewis has been studying medicine at the University of Pennsylvania since 1925. He graduated from the University of Washington in 1921.

Glaser: When did you decide, and what made you decide, to specialize in thoracic surgery?

Lewis: There was an opening. That's how you decide all these things.

Glaser: Do you mean it's economic necessity?

Lewis: No. If you get a job. There're fewer jobs than applicants. Eighty-six to one, for example.

Glaser: I didn't think this country ever had an overabundance of doctors. What made it so tough back then?

Lewis: It depends on your training. Your training is a big problem. The higher the fewer.

Glaser: You mean that GP's don't have too much trouble, but the--

Lewis: They don't have much training either. And they don't know much, also. That's one of the reasons why they hate specialists.

Glaser: How did you feel about the field of thoracic surgery, if you went into it just because it was there?

Lewis: I liked it. I had done some research in it and it was fine. I enjoyed tuberculosis as a specialty, and I worked at it for a number of years.

Glaser: Had you decided upon graduation that you wanted to become a surgeon because you liked to use your hands, or is this something that just happened?

Lewis: I liked to do surgery because of my hand skill, which I had at the time, and my mechanical skills, which I also had at that time. But that's about it.

I turned down several jobs because I was riding pretty high having gotten these prizes. I turned down a job in brain surgery with two professors, one from the university and one from Temple. I turned down a job in fractures with a doctor at Cornell, a guy named Clare Ray Murray, a leading traumatic surgeon. And I turned down a job at Western Reserve with Beck, who did cardiac and vascular surgery as well as chest surgery. I wanted to go to the University of Pennsylvania, which I did.

Glaser: Can you tell me why you turned these jobs down?

Lewis: I didn't think they were what I wanted. I think they were both quite wonderful guys, and I might have done much better with either of them. I didn't look for Ravdin kicking the dog around. But he did.

Glaser: I think my question really was, did you choose--

Lewis: Did you choose chest surgery because that's what you wanted to do? No. I chose it because it was there and available and I could stay over there at the university. I thought it was probably the best one.

Glaser: You chose the place rather than the specialization.

Lewis: Place and school, and "I'm home again" business.

Glaser: Tell me about the treatment of TB when you started out in the early thirties.

Lewis: It was not what it is today, because we didn't have the drugs. We got them in a few years.

Glaser: You didn't get the drugs until the early forties, so you had about a decade without them, didn't you?

Lewis: Yes. But that's a short time.

Glaser: What were your cases like? What were you doing?

Lewis: We treated them similarly except the surgical approach was getting somewhere. We were doing something in surgery with tuberculosis.

Glaser: What were you doing?

Lewis: Operating on them.

Glaser: What were you doing when you operated? Was this lung collapse, pneumothorax, is that what they call it?

Lewis: Pneumothorax, cuttingoof the adhesions, later taking out the ribs, and later cutting out the lung that was diseased. Anyhow, our approach to surgical problems was if you solve it, that's fine. But how do you know your approach is correct? Every answer I give you I've argued against and fought with and for.

Glaser: Are you saying there was a futility to what you were doing surgically because there was no real answer to which procedure was best?

Lewis: Yes. Actually many people said, "What the hell are you doing that for? The results are bad; mine are good." You heard that, yet you knew they were wrong. So you have that problem all the time. No matter what is being done for the patient, it's usually wrong.

If you spend thirty or forty years in medicine, you get to the point where, if you're going to be honest about it, you can't talk about treatment because treatment--there ain't no such.

Glaser: Let's talk about the different steps in your training. You did your internship from 1930 to 1932 at Philadelphia General Hospital. Then from '32 to '34 you had a fellowship in surgery.

Lewis: That's right, at the University of Pennsylvania.

Glaser: The fellowship covered your period of residency, I guess.

Lewis: Well, we weren't residents, we were fellows. I had already served two years as an intern, and then I had no resident training because in Pennsylvania the fellowships didn't live in. We lived out of the hospital. We were really cheaply paid assistants.

Glaser: Does this come at a period between your internship and your residency?

Lewis: No. That is actually a residency. It's a training period. At Pennsylvania they call it a fellowship.

Teaching and Surgical Assignments, Philadelphia, 1934-1948

Glaser: Then from '34 to '39 you were Chief of the Surgical Clinic?

Lewis: Yes, the Outpatient Surgical Clinic at Philadelphia General.

Glaser: From '43 to '48 you were Chief of Thoracic Surgery, TB Division, Philadelphia General Hospital.

Lewis: That's right. And in that time also I was Assistant Professor

Lewis: of Surgery at Women's Medical College of Pennsylvania.

Glaser: Then from '36 to '45 you were a consultant in surgery at the Frederick Douglass Memorial Hospital?

Lewis: Yes.

Glaser: Was that a black hospital?

Lewis: Yes.

Glaser: Tell me about your getting the first black chief of services.

Lewis: He came to work for me in '36 at Philadelphia General in the outpatient department, and I became consulting surgeon to the Douglass Hospital in Philadelphia and also to the Mercy Hospital, which is another black hospital in Philadelphia. When Stubbs became my assistant--

Glaser: Can you give me his full name?

Lewis: Frederick Douglass Stubbs. He died in 1947, age thirty-nine.

Glaser: What happened?

Lewis: He went to New York with his wife. He walked down the train aisle to get a drink and he died. Nobody knows why.

He was a real wonderful guy. He was Phi Beta Kappa at Dartmouth. He was AOA in Harvard [Alpha Omega Alpha], honorary medical. He was married and had two daughters. His wife's father was school physician to the school board in Philadelphia, a very nice guy. Mrs. Stubbs then married an old friend of the family in Detroit whose father was a surgeon. He too--these are all high-class blacks, all college-trained people.

We went to a party at one of the guy's houses. Everybody there except my wife and me (maybe there was one girl married to a black doctor) was black. It was rather interesting because everybody had minimum of a bachelor's degree. Many of the wives were masters and doctors in science and literature and various things. We thought we did pretty well.

Glaser: At that time Philadelphia was a segregated city, wasn't it? With a lot of prejudice?

Lewis: It was just like Washington, D. C. It had a high percentage of Negroes, many of whom were qualified. Some doctors wouldn't

Lewis: accept Negro patients in their regular hours, and other doctors wouldn't take Negroes.

But I didn't find that Philadelphia was much different from most cities in America. It's there whether you like it or not. Just like anti-Semitism. It's here, there's no problem with that. It's only a question of how far you can go.

Glaser: You had quite a battle getting Dr. Stubbs accepted?

Lewis: I had no battle at all. It's just that nobody tried to do it before.

Glaser: He was the first Chief of Surgery?

Lewis: No. He was the first man on the active staff, that means chief or assistant chief, in the hospital, rather than the visiting staff. He was my assistant.

Glaser: He was a surgeon, too?

Lewis: Yes. He was trained in Cleveland and then in Philadelphia. He was accredited by the Board of Surgeons. He was a certified surgeon. He was a high class guy.

Glaser: On the program of the second annual assembly of the International College of Surgeons that met in Philadelphia in 1938, you are listed as a member of the thoracic surgery team from Philadelphia General Hospital, headed up by Dr. Moses Barron.

Lewis: Yes. He was chief then.

Glaser: This dealt with extra-pleural pneumothoracoplasty. Did you put on a demonstration?

Lewis: I think we presented a paper. I don't remember.

Glaser: That was quite an honor for you in 1938.

Lewis: I've been talking before groups for a long time.

Glaser: Did you teach at Philadelphia General Hospital?

Lewis: Yes. Everything we ever did was for education and self-perpetuation. [Laughter]

Lewis: I presented a number of things. One of the most interesting things I presented was a show being put on by a nose and throat man the night that we had the interns and residents banquet, which is a yearly happening in November or December, and it's a drunken brawl. This guy and I started down to the meeting after we'd been fed and before the speeches. On the way down I was just drunk as a hoot-owl. [Laughing] I didn't know what was going on or anything.

He presented the paper and I gave a discussion. I was very well received, but when I got the paper back I found that I didn't talk in sentences. I talked in clauses and verbs. As it was given, the concepts were not bad, but it was highly technical. It was so technical that I don't think I understood it.

Glaser: Who was the audience--other doctors?

Lewis: They were all nose and throat specialists in Philadelphia. It was somewhere around 1935 to 1937. I was going to all the meetings.

Glaser: What was Philadelphia like when you first got there?

Lewis: As it was a hundred years ago, except that it had a subway. Philadelphia is a very lovely town. It's not flamboyant like New York, but it's somewhat like Boston. It's not like Chicago.

Glaser: Was it a closed society?

Lewis: Mmmmm, more or less. You can't tell when you're going to school, because school provides social contacts if you want them, and it provides educational things if you want them. There are four medical schools there, I think. It's quite a place. There's theater; you might see an opening in Philadelphia. It's a pretty good place.

Glaser: It's a staid place, isn't it? Or is that the way it used to be?

Lewis: They say that's true. The big gag is, "First prize is a trip to New York, second prize is a week in Philadelphia."

Glaser: But you enjoyed it there?

Lewis: I had a very nice life in Philadelphia. I lived there twenty years, six years of which were in school or residency.

Lewis: I was married there in '35. My brother was married the year before that in the fall of '34. He lived in New York.

Glaser: Did he marry someone from New York?

Lewis: He married Mortimer Adler's sister.

Glaser: How did he meet her?

Lewis: I don't know.

Glaser: Where did he meet her?

Lewis: In New York.

Marriage, Private Practice, Death of Wife

Glaser: Where did you meet your first wife?

Lewis: I went out to dinner one night at an ectodontist's house.

Glaser: What is that?

Lewis: He's a guy who pulls teeth for a living.

Glaser: Ectodontist?

Lewis: "Ect" meaning "out," and "donto," meaning "teeth." He's a tooth-outer! That's a specialist.

I met her at his house, and married her in 1935 in Philadelphia. She was a nice gal, and I enjoyed her. She enjoyed me. We had a nice time. She died ten years later, I guess.

Glaser: How long was your courtship?

Lewis: Half an hour, maybe. [Laughter] I always had long engagements. Emily came to Philadelphia and asked if I'd give her a job. I said yes, I'd call her when I got to Ecuador. She was going down visiting with her brother. I didn't call her, and she finally called me.

Glaser: I didn't realize you and Emily met in Philadelphia.

Lewis: Well, she came to the office and she said to my secretary, "Is he taking his staff with him when he goes to Ecuador?"

She said, "No, I don't think so."

"Well, I might as well leave. I was going to talk to him about it."

My secretary said, "Don't go. He might just be interested in you."

Glaser: How did Emily know that you were going to go to Ecuador?

Lewis: Her brother was living down there.

Glaser: I see. You went down to Ecuador, and then came back.

Lewis: And then went down again.

Glaser: That's kind of jumping the gun a little bit. I want to find out more about you in Philadelphia. Among other things, I want to find out about this Colles fracture. You presented your paper before you went to Ecuador, didn't you?

Lewis: Yes.

Glaser: Could you tell me about that?

Lewis: Well, there was a lot of talk about Colles fractures. There was a guy who taught applied anatomy who came in one day and said that he had worked out this thing. He put a wrist in position on the table, and he hit the shoulder with a sledge hammer, and he broke the radius.

You know, I didn't think that was the cause, because you'll never get a fracture with a sledge hammer in use, or very infrequently, if any. One day I decided how it happened. I went to the anatomy department and asked for a forearm. He gave me one, and said, "What instruments do you want?"

I said, "Instruments, hell. I'm going to break this with my hands."

He said, "Oh, you can't do that."

I said, "Sure you can."

He said, "This I gotta see with my own eyes."

Lewis: So I took the arm and put it under my arm, bent it back, and it broke. It wasn't that easy, but it broke. He was very enthusiastic about it. That was about in 1933 or '34, somewhere around there. Finally, in 1950, I had it published in Surgery.*

Glaser: Why such a long time between doing this and your publishing it?

Lewis: I wasn't very anxious or very particular about what I did to become famous.

Glaser: You bent it back--up or down?

Lewis: Any way you can bend the wrist, this way or that way or that way. To get a Colles fracture, you bend the wrist. [Demonstrates]

Glaser: I see that you're bending it back towards the forearm.

But your specialty was thoracic surgery. What were you doing with bones?

Lewis: Oh, my work in the occupation department was fractures of the old and bone disturbances like fractures and things. One becomes a specialist only because there's a job open. My interest in thoracic surgery was in my first research job, which was done in spinal fluid pressures. I was really in thoracic surgery as a result of other things.

We were doing inter-thoracic pressures--chest pressures--with Overholt, who was then one of the big chest surgeons in the country. He and I worked there together for a while.

Glaser: What was his name?

Lewis: Overholt. Just like the whiskey. I was launched, in a way, into thoracic surgery already. I'd done quite a little work in that. Then when you go to make a living, you've got to get listed in it as an expert. That's another part of the business of making a living.

Glaser: How does one go about getting that kind of a reputation?

Lewis: I guess one just falls into a spot that happens to be open

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*"Colles Fracture--Causative Mechanism," Rubin M. Lewis, M.D., Philadelphia, Pa. Reprinted from Surgery, Vol. 27, No. 3, pages 427-436, March 1950.

Lewis: and get it. I had already had some of my training following my internship. I was a fellow in surgery with one Professor Muller. I got my training in research in surgery with Ravdin. He was professor of experimental surgery, and a louse. He just died here recently a year or two ago. Two years ago, I guess.

Glaser: What was his full name? Do you remember?

Lewis: Isador. Isador S. Ravdin. I got the fellowship from that course and built my trail into the surgical department. There were eighty-six applications and one job, and I got the job.

Glaser: What year was that? Was that '32?

Lewis: Nineteen thirty-one, I guess, or '32.

Glaser: Your fellowship, under Dr. Muller--he was an abdominal surgeon?

Lewis: Muller was general Surgery, and he was also one of the early presidents of the American Society for Thoracic Surgery. He was a really great guy. He was wonderful.

Glaser: Tell me, Dr. Lewis, of all the kinds of surgery that you did, and of all the kinds of medical work that you did, which gave you the greatest pleasure?

Lewis: A live patient who was very sick, I guess.

Glaser: It was the act of healing that gave you pleasure?

Lewis: Well, no. It's the accomplishment of the task that you had put before you.

Glaser: The challenge of it?

Lewis: Actually, the accomplishment rather than the challenge.

Glaser: So you would have had this reward no matter what field or specialty you were in?

Lewis: Well, yes. It was the same reward when I was designing machinery, to come up with a good design.

Glaser: The feeling of a task well done?

Lewis: Yes, I think that's what everybody measures it on, isn't it? Except for the Americans, who measure it on how much money they make a month.

Glaser: Let's touch a bit on your first marriage. What was your wife's maiden name?

Lewis: Her maiden name was Krader. She married a guy and her name became Elsie Finn. She was a movie critic on the Philadelphia Record. She'd also written Lily Pons's first (and only, I guess) movie, I Dream Too Much. You probably don't remember that.

Glaser: What year was that? Was it in the thirties?

Lewis: That was in the early thirties.

Glaser: Was this before you were married to her?

Lewis: No. The movie was made after we were married. I think probably 1935. We went out to Hollywood when they were getting ready to film it, I believe.

Glaser: Was your oldest brother living in Los Angeles at that time?

Lewis: Well, he was living somewhere on the coast--Los Angeles or Fresno or Cucamonga or somewhere. [Laughs] He had a winery or a brewery in Cucamonga. He had it for a short time. He had been sales manager for Giannini Wineries, and he was active in fruit extract and various things in the fruit line.

Glaser: Was your mother living with him at that time?

Lewis: She and my father lived in Seattle at that time. My father died in 1933. Then she lived on in Seattle. She went down to live in California, I guess, between Berkeley and Los Angeles--my older brother was living there--until '50, when she died.

Glaser: What was the year that she moved from Seattle?

Lewis: I don't recall exactly, but I think it was probably in '45 or '46, somewhere.

Glaser: Then she lived alone in Seattle for quite a while.

Lewis: Yes.

Glaser: Did she come to Berkeley because your brother Leon was here?

Lewis: Yes. She came down and lived here for a while.

Glaser: I see. Was your wife a native of Philadelphia?

Lewis: Yes. She was born in Philadelphia, near Germantown somewhere.

Glaser: Did she have a good relationship with her family?

Lewis: She had a very bad relationship with her mother, especially. I didn't get along well with either of them. They were tiring, very boring people. They thought I was terrible because I had a point of view of my own. I got along with the relatives.

Glaser: Did she have a big family?

Lewis: Her mother had two sisters, and her own mother was still alive in Philadelphia. They had four or five offspring.

Glaser: You're talking about Elsie's nieces and nephews now?

Lewis: Yes, Elsie's cousins and aunts and uncles.

Glaser: How many sisters or brothers did Elsie herself have?

Lewis: She had one, who died of diabetes early in life.

Glaser: She was really an only child then?

Lewis: Practically. She had a child who was practically an only child also, who lives in New York.

Glaser: I thought Pat was an adopted child.

Lewis: Well, I adopted her.

Glaser: Oh, I see. Was Pat from Elsie's marriage to Mr. Finn?

Lewis: Yes. I was adopted by her, really. She asked me if I would. I said yes. I never say no to a girl.

Glaser: How old was she then?

Lewis: She was ten when she became related to me.

Glaser: It sounds like you had a very nice relationship with her.

Lewis: We did. It was very good. It still is. We're very good friends now. She's married, with three sons. They just got divorced.

Glaser: What was her married name before she was divorced?

Lewis: Jaffe. She has three boys. One graduated magna cum laude at

Lewis: Harvard in astrophysics. He has a fellowship at Bonn Institute in Germany for a year. He's coming back to Harvard for up to five years or more as a member in astrophysics. The other kid's going to Harvard. He's taking biophysics and he's a clarinet player. So that's pretty good, out of three.

Glaser: Do you have a good relationship with your grandchildren?

Lewis: Well, I don't see them often, but when Danny comes out here, he stays with us; also the other kid and their mother. I've seen them, but you know, when you're three thousand miles away, you don't do much about it.

Glaser: Which one is Danny?

Lewis: Danny's the one that's got the scholarship in Germany.

Glaser: What are the other names of the other two boys?

Lewis: Danny, Toby, and another good Bible name. For atheists, that's a good setup. Toby's the youngest, Danny's the elder, and Joshua is the clarinet player and biophysics major.

Glaser: What organizations did you belong to in Philadelphia: social, professional, or community groups?

Lewis: I didn't have time for them, really. I was learning.

Glaser: But once you set up practice--?

Lewis: I didn't do anything else. I was busy with what I was doing, and enough was enough. I've never been socially active in anything, except I belonged, at one time, to the IWW, and at another time, to the carpenters' union and the machinists' union. I was just an ordinary plug.

Glaser: Well, you were very active in your fraternity. At one time you were secretary, weren't you?

Lewis: I was president of the Graduate Club as a young fellow. I never thought of that as being very active.

Glaser: You must have had medical society memberships.

Lewis: Well, I did. I belonged to the undergraduate medical groups, and was doing research.

Glaser: You set up private practice in Philadelphia?

Lewis: Yes. I didn't know what I wanted to do, you know. I wanted to go back to Seattle, but at the moment I didn't. I was handed a job as being the surgeon for Warner Brothers--the movie people. They had about twenty theaters, and I took care of the sick people, the examination of them for jobs, and that sort of thing.

Glaser: Was this in the Philadelphia area?

Lewis: Yes.

Glaser: Were these people applying for jobs or already on the staff?

Lewis: They were applying for jobs--really in the projection part of it, in the theaters. Then the Will Rogers Hospital in New Saranac offered me a job being the surgeon up there. I didn't ever want that, so I didn't take it.

Glaser: You still had some connections with Philadelphia General after you set yourself up in private practice?

Lewis: Yes, for about fifteen years I was outpatient department manager, until around '40, '41. Then I ran the assistant chest surgery through the TB department. I think that's that.

Glaser: You bought an apartment building and had your offices there, is that right?

Lewis: Yes. I lived across the street, and a friend of mine bought the building after I rejected it. When he decided to move in and take over, I had to get another place. So I moved across the street. It was a bigger house, and we bought it. We did very well.

It was a four-story house with offices and one apartment on the first floor, and apartments on the above three floors. The people living in them became our friends. It was during the time when things weren't good, and we had a pretty good way of living.

We had a man and his wife who were our employees, whom we hired for fifty dollars a month for both of them. They lived on the top floor, and we lived on the second floor. A guy named Hauck lived on the third floor front, and a friend of ours named Margaret Billet lived on the third floor rear with her daughter.

Glaser: In one of the letters to you, there is something about a mention of Roddy, who was living with you. Who was that?

Lewis: Rudy Roddy was a kid who was a classmate of mine. We remained friends pretty much all the time we were in medical school, up

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PHILADELPHIA (Post Office) PHILA (County) PENNA. (State)

Legal (Voting Residence) PHILADELPHIA (Post Office) PHILA (County) PENNA (State)

Date of Birth AUG. 14, 1899 Age 37 Yrs 10 Mo.

Place of Birth BUTTE (Post Office) SILVER BOW (County) MONTANA (State)

Height 5'-9½" Weight 182 Nationality JEWISH-AMERICAN

Are you married or single MARRIED Number of Dependents 2

If married, is your husband or wife employed YES

Where PHILADELPHIA RECORD

How many other members of your family are employed No.

Where

Kind of Work Desired MEDICAL DIRECTOR & CHIEF SURGEON - EASTERN PENITENTARY

Location Desired EASTERN PENITENTARY

Education	Name and Location of School	Date Entered	Date Left	Total Years	Course Pursued	Graduated Yes or No	Degree or Cert. Rec'd
ammar School	WEBSTER - BUTTE MONT	1906	1913	7½		Yes.	YES
gh School	BUTTE HIGH, " "	1913	1917	4	SCIENTIFIC	YES	YES
paratory School							
llege	UNIV. OF WASHINGTON, SEATTLE	1917	1921	4	MECHANICAL ENGRNG	YES	B.S. IN ME.
~~duate School~~	" " " "	1925	1926	12 Mo	PRE MED.	COMPLETED REQMNTS.	
~~respondence School~~ MEDICAL SCHOOL	UNIV. OF PENNA, PHILA	1926	1930	4	MEDICINE	YES	M.D.

(DO NOT FAIL TO FILL IN REVERSE SIDE)

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RECORD OF EMPLOYMENT

(Begin with First Employment and Account for Entire Period to Present Date)

Period From Mo.	Period From Yr.	Period To Mo.	Period To Yr.	Total Yrs.	Total Mos.	Organization or Firm and Location	Title of Position	Duties	Annual Compensation	Reason for Leaving
	1922		1926			Various jobs as mechanical engineer from Sales & Design to Chief Engineer of Lebanon Machine Company, Lebanon New Hampshire.				
	1918					United States Navy.				
July	1930	July	1932			Philadelphia General Interne	Interne	House Physician	0	Completed
July	1932	June	1934			Hospital University of Pennsylvania	Research Fellow and assistant Surgeon		$1200 to $1500 plus	Completed appointment
Dec	1934		—			Phila. General Hosp.	Chief.	Surgical Out Patient	0	Still active.
June.	1936		—			Phila General Hosp	Associate	Chest Surgeon in Tuberculosis	0	" " Still Active

Designs and research for development and application of new technical methods in experimental surgery. 1930 Silver medal Award by Amer. Med. Association. New design & construction of surgical instruments.

Member of Sigma Xi. (Honorary Science Society)

Member Phila County Med. Soc., Amer. Med Assoc., Pan Amer. Society

All statements made on this form are true.

Signature of Sponsor .....

Address .....

Date .....

Signature Nathan M. Lewis M.D.

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Lewis: until the time I went away. I feel kind of sorry that I haven't continued with him. He's a kid from Texas who damn near died in his third year after graduation. He got an infection in an anal operation and almost died, but he didn't.

Glaser: Were you a good businessman?

Lewis: No. I made a good living, but if people couldn't afford to pay me, I said, "What the hell. I'm sorry you can't afford it. Maybe you can afford it some day. You'll pay it some day." But I couldn't get tough.

Glaser: In your files there was a letter from somebody named Teddy, who seemed to be an actress. She mentions meeting your family in Seattle, and how nice they were to her.

Lewis: She also met my family in Los Angeles. I forget what her name was, but she was a girl friend of the cellist in the Philadelphia Orchestra. She was a very nice girl, really a gorgeous gal. She was in one of the Broadway shows. I met her through the cellist.

Glaser: I wanted to ask you when your interest in music and art developed, because I know you made a cello yourself.

Lewis: No, I just repaired it. I put a piece in it.

Glaser: When did you get interested in music and in painting?

Lewis: Painting I started in 1946, because my kid had left some paints home. My music I took--oh, I went to the Cornish School in Seattle, and got interested in singing in the chorus. I did that, and then I took some voice lessons at the University of Washington. When I went to the University of Pennsylvania, I sang in the glee club. I played around with music that way. Eventually, at the age of sixty, I decided I'd like to study cello. I waited a little long.

Glaser: You were here in Berkeley then?

Lewis: Yes. My teacher and I are still friends, but I couldn't make the studies. I was a little slow-witted by that time. You have to be able to remember and think and plan if you're going to be any kind of musician. You have to be willing to work like hell, and I wasn't. But anyhow, I had fun.

Then I met some people through the cello club. I met the cellist who just died, and his wife remarried somebody important.

Glaser: Pablo Casals?

Lewis: Pablo, yes. Margaret Rowell was an important gal in the Pablo Casals group that were invited to the cello club. I had a nice relationship with her.

Glaser: Was this group in Berkeley?

Lewis: Yes, the cello club was a little group. It was pretty much Margaret's enthusiasm that built it. She is one of the most important of the cello teachers in this area. She is really a marvelous person and so knowing about things. I met a great many good cellists there. Casals was one of them. Mstislav Rostropovich was another. Rostropovich came here once and practiced on my piano, because it was a good piano.

Glaser: I want to ask about some checks you received from a publishing company for your participation in a publication called The Thoracic Patient. You got some royalty payments.

Lewis: I did?

Glaser: You didn't?

Lewis: I don't know!!

[Tape turned over]

Glaser: There is a statement of the number of copies sold in this country, the number sold in foreign countries, the breakdown of royalties--your share and the amount going to the other participants.

There's another letter from the Pilling Surgical Instrument Company. It asks you for the details of the raspitory you mentioned at the Atlantic meeting. Can you tell me about it?

Lewis: Yes. Well, I made the original one and gave it to them, and they built them. I think they're still building it now.

Glaser: What's a raspitory?

Lewis: It's a thing that scrapes the covering off the ribs before you remove the rib, in thoracoplasty.

Glaser: Was this an invention of yours?

Lewis: Yes.

Glaser: Did you patent it?

Lewis: No. You never do. I just gave it to Henry Pilling and said, "Go ahead and make it." And he did! I don't think he ever made much money over it, but it was written up by Mr. Sweet, who has died since. He was professor of chest surgery at Harvard. In his paper on the raspitory, he said that the best raspitory that had been developed so far was the one done by Rubin Lewis of Philadelphia, and there was a picture of it.

From Thoracic Surgery, Richard H. Sweet, M.D. 1954

RIB RESECTION METHOD. The rib periosteum is incised from the costochondral junction in front to the neck of the rib posteriorly. The periosteum is freed from the rib with a raspatory such as that developed by Alexander, Lewis*or Matson. Because of the direction of the inser-

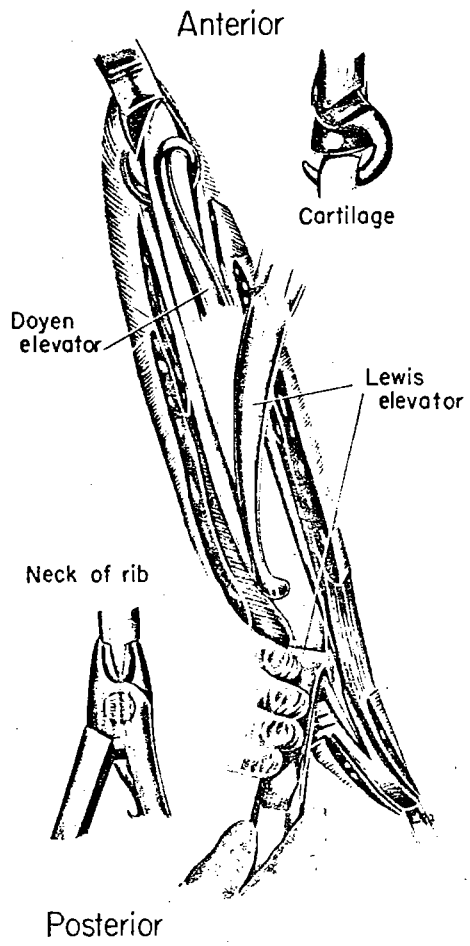

Fig. 45. Standard thoracotomy incision (rib resection technic). Muscles are completely divided. Three phases of the elevation of the periosteum are shown, using the Lewis elevator to strip the outer aspect of the rib and to free the edges, and the Doyen elevator to free the inner surface of the rib. Inserts show the technic of transection of the neck of the rib posteriorly and the cartilage anteriorly.

tion of the fibers of the intercostal muscles, the freeing of the attachments to the edges of the rib is best accomplished by passing the instrument from back to front along the superior margin and from front to back along the inferior margin. The T-shaped end of the Alexander rib periosteal elevator, which is especially constructed for this manipulation, accomplishes the purpose admirably. The corresponding end of

*As cited on page 61 of same source, "Lewis Rib Periosteal Elevator. Valuable for general use."

V ECUADOR, 1946-1948

Vacation Respite After Wife's Death

Glaser: When you went to Ecuador, was this shortly after your first wife's death?

Lewis: Yes.

Glaser: Was this to get away? She had died of cancer?

Lewis: Yes. She died seven years after her operation.

Glaser: Was it a lingering death?

Lewis: Oh, it was a horrible death. She had pain all the time, and a lot of morphine.

Glaser: At that point, you felt you needed a change of scenery?

Lewis: Oh, I was beside myself. I didn't have nearly as much trouble as she did, though.

Glaser: When did you go to Ecuador the first time?

Lewis: Forty-six--I went there first in March of '46. I went there for a year, I guess, in October or September. I went down the first of October.

Glaser: In '46?

Lewis: Yes.

Glaser: What made you choose Ecuador as the place to go to?

Lewis: Oh, I had a friend down there who was sending me surgical cases. He was up visiting me, and said, "Come on down and spend a vacation with us." So they gave me an apartment with a big, nice bedroom that I inherited. He did it over, put a window in it, in a four-story apartment. So I stayed there. He had three kids.

When I got down there, he asked me if I wanted to come to work for him. I thought maybe I would, if he'd give me a break. So I did.

Glaser: Did you feel that with your wife's death there was not much to keep you in Philadelphia?

Lewis: No, I was just kind of fed up with everything. I guess this offer was a good offer. It paid awful well, and he gave me a year to decide what I wanted to do.

Glaser: What about your daughter?

Lewis: Well, Pat had graduated at Wellesley, and she had a job as a secretary, I guess, to the Motion Picture Projector's Union. She went to work as the union secretary, or organizing committee, in New York. She got into movies and televisions and various things, on the production side. She's done that since.

Glaser: You felt that she was well-launched and could take care of herself?

Lewis: She couldn't do too bad--she'd already gotten a college degree.

Glaser: How long did you intend to stay?

Lewis: I took it for a year.

Glaser: No, I mean the first time, when you went just to get away from Philadelphia.

Lewis: A month.

Offer from Liga Ecuatoriana Anti-Tuberculosa

Glaser: By that time, you'd decided that that was where you'd like to work?

Lewis: Well, they* decided. They offered me a good job, as organizer of thoracic surgery in the country of Ecuador.

Glaser: Was this in Guayaquil?

Lewis: Guayaquil and Quito.

Glaser: In both? Were you able to go back and forth?

Lewis: Oh, yes. I spent three months in Quito and about nine months in Guayaquil.

Glaser: What was being done in the area of TB when you got down there?

Lewis: Well, it wasn't very good. Not as good as it was in Philadelphia. It was pretty good, if they knew what they were doing. I thought we did. I taught there.

Glaser: No, I mean what was the situation before you actually started to work?

Lewis: Well, it was just bad.

Glaser: Describe it.

Lewis: Well, they weren't trained in doing that kind of thinking, and that kind of surgery. I went down there and geared some courses, and took on some new patients. I set up a new hospital, revised the whole operating suite, and accomplished some things.

Glaser: Where were the local doctors trained?

Lewis: Usually in America or in Ecuador. They had medical schools there, but they didn't even have anybody to teach them. Eventually it got better, I guess.

Glaser: How widespread was medical care? Was it limited just to the two big cities?

Lewis: No, they had medicine all over the country. It wasn't very good, much worse than the bad medicine in Philadelphia or Seattle or San Francisco.

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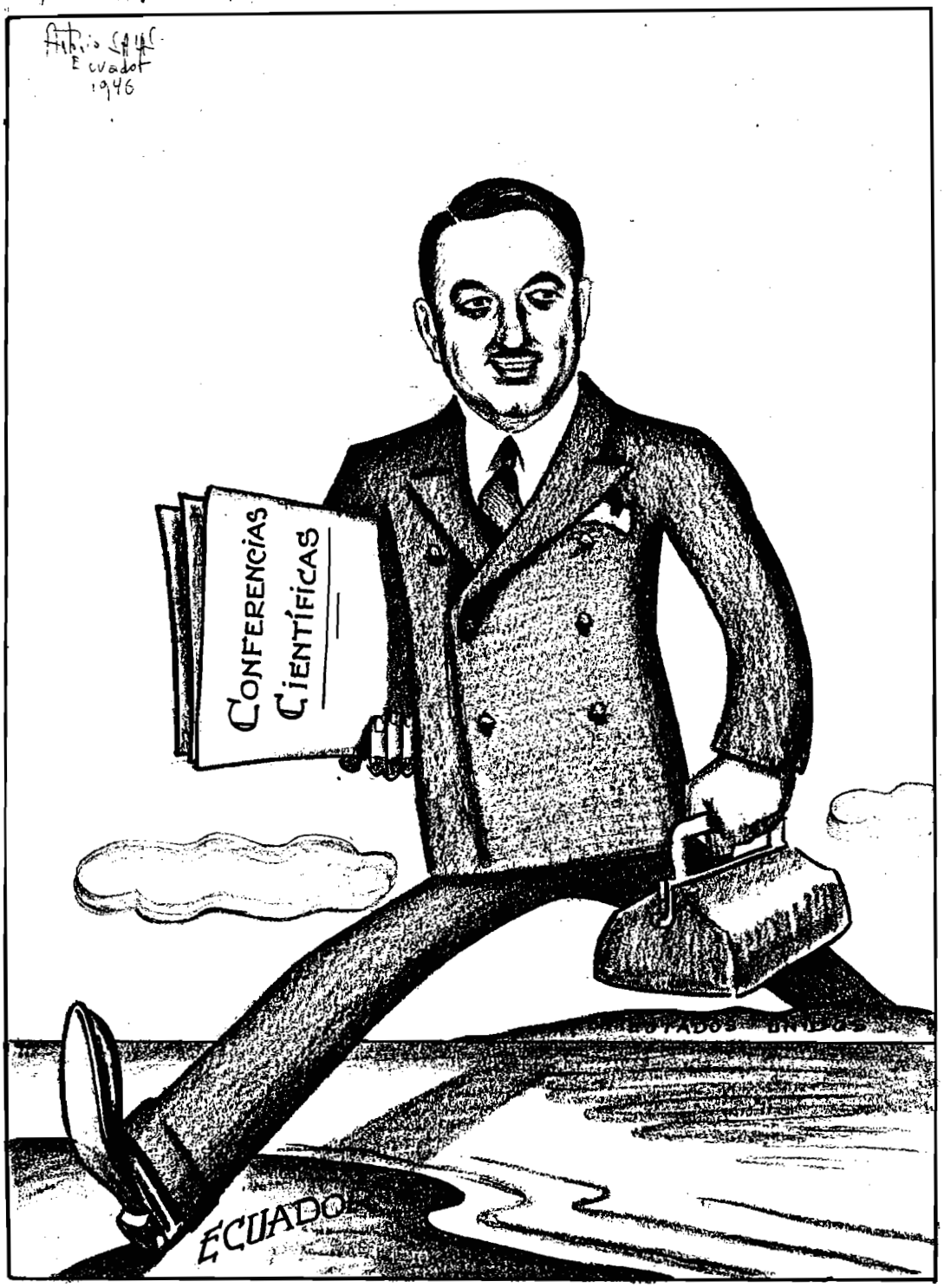
*Liga Ecuatoriana Anti-Tuberculosa



Dr. RUBEN M. LEWIS. — Jefe del Departamento de Cirugía del Philadelphia General Hospital; Cirujano Consultor del Mercy Hospital y del Douglass Hospital, quien es grato huésped de los ecuatorianos, invitado especialmente por la Dirección Gral. de Sanidad.

WELCOME TO ECUADOR!

AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE LIGA ECUATORIANA ANTI-TUBERCULOSA AND DOCTOR RUBIN M. LEWIS

This agreement prepared and signed in four copies, two in english and two in spanish, is a contract covering the following conditions:

ARTICLE 1.- CONTRACTING PARTIES :

The parties included in this contract are, for the first part, Sr. Carlos Julio Arosemena, representing the LIGA ECUATORIANA ANTI-TUBERCULOSA, in his capacity of President of Executive Committee of that organization; and for the second part, Doctor Rubin M. Lewis acting on his own right.

ARTICLE 2.- WORK TO BE PERFORMED :

Dr. Rubin M. Lewis agrees for the period of this contract, hereinafter set forth, to provide the following personal services for the LIGA ECUATORIANA ANTI-TUBERCULOSA:

a) To organize and administer a program of chest surgery in Ecuador;
b) To provide intensive post graduate course in theoretical and practical chest surgery in Guayaquil and Quito in accordance with any plan later mutually agreed upon by both parties;
c) Provide training as required to any necessary assistants needed in the carrying out of the aforementioned program.

ARTICLE 3.- PAYMENTS :

The LIGA ECUATORIANA ANTI-TUBERCULOSA agrees to pay to Dr. Rubin M. Lewis the sum of $ 25.000. U.S.A.Cy.(Twenty-five thousand dollars, In U.S.A.Gurrency) for his services as outlined in this agreement. Payments to be made in twelve (12) installments each at the end of each month ofter the start of his work in Ecuador and the funds deposited in any bank in the U.S.A. designated by Dr. Lewis. The LIGA ECUATORIANA ANTI-TUBERCULOSA also agrees to pay the traveling expenses of Dr. Lewis from and returning to the United States, and all taxes, particulary, income taxes.

ARTICLE 4.- SPECIAL PRIVILEGES :

Dr. Lewis is authorized by the LIGA ECUATORIANA ANTI-TUBERCULOSA to practice as a consultant or surgeon in his specialized field, for private individuals; however, 50% of the fees received by such practice shall revert to the LIGA ECUATORIANA ANTI-TUBERCULOSA.

ARTICLE 5.- MATERIALS TO BE FURNISHED :

Dr. Rubin M. Lewis agrees to personally purchase and bring to Ecuador, at the expense of the LIGA ECUATORIANA ANTI-TUBERCULOSA, any material, instruments or equipment, etc, necessary for the surgery, anesthesia and Physiology of the Thorax. All materials, instruments, equipment, etc, shall be purchase in duplicate so that a complete and identical service can be set up in Guayaquil and Quito. Before making the commitments or purchases mentioned above Dr. Lewis shall prepare a detailed estimate for the consideration and approval of the LIGA ECUATORIANA ANTI-TUBERCULOSA.

ARTICLE 6.- DURATION OF CONTRACT :

The period covered by this contract shall be one year, starting October the first of 1946 and ending September 30,1947. It may be renewed by mutual consent.

ARTICLE 7.- JURISDICTION :

Both contracting parties will establish their legal domicile in Guayaquil and any matters arising form the performance or interpretation of this contract shall be submitted to arbitration before the courts of the Province of Guayas, Ecuador.

The above contract, to be firmely enforced, is signed in Guayaquil, this day first of October 1946.

Carlos Julio Arosemena,
Presidente del Comité Ejecutivo

Dr. Rubin M. Lewis

Glaser: Were there clinics in the more remote areas?

Lewis: Yes. I think that the possibilities were there, without the actual utilization of people who had good training and the desire to do good treatment, who weren't bad.

Glaser: But you set up both the treatment and the training at the hospitals? Is that right?

Lewis: Well, we had one hospital, which was limited to chest diseases like tuberculosis. We had conferences, we did surgery, and we talked to civic groups and to doctors. I think for the year that we were there, we accomplished quite a little.

Glaser: In which city was that?

Lewis: That was mostly in Guayaquil.

Use of New Antibiotics

Glaser: Was this anti-tuberculosis league associated with the International Association Against TB?

Lewis: Well, it was the international body. It was the tuberculosis diagnosis and treatment center. It was a very interesting thing sociologically, in that countries--the importing countries--charged one percent tax on everything that was admitted through the duty department, aduana.

Glaser: What is aduana?

Lewis: Aduana means "duty." We had plenty of money, and we built several hospitals down there, and bought equipment. In general, it wasn't too bad.

Glaser: Then most of the money raised by duty levied on imported goods was used for medical care?

Lewis: It was used to pay my salary, and to run the hospital, and pay out the salaries that went into it.

Glaser: Was this at the time when antibiotics first started to be used?

Lewis: We used them from the start.

REPORT FOR WEEK ENDING OCTOBER FIFTH 1946.

Rubin M Lewis
Chief Surgeon to the LEA

The first day I visited the Hospital Valenzuela at eight o'clock on Oct. 1, '46. I made a cursory examination of the operating suite, and the instruments. I then visited the kitchen and some of the wards. The following is a brief summary of my findings for this day.

Instruments:

The instruments are not complete or perhaps adequately selected for thoracic surgery. There are many of them that will serve well for the time, but there are many which will be of little if any value. None of these instruments are of stainless steel, and as a result, many are already rusted in spite of the fact that they are still covered with grease.

There are several hundred needles which are still packaged. Examination of random packages showed that many if not all are rusted. It is doubtful if any of these can be salvaged.

I believe that in the future it will be necessary to purchase only stainless steel equipment because of the great tendency to rust. I believe that in the long run it will be much to our advantage and also more economical.

Operating Room:

The operating room is equipped with an adequate table, but in the shipping or in unpacking, the casters were either lost, stolen or misplaced. It is necessary that these either be located or replaced. The overhead light is satisfactory, but additional lamp or lamps of the movable floor type is essential.

Operating Suite:

In the design of the operating suite, no attention was paid to the function of the department. It is essential to have a work room for the preparation of supplies, and also to have a dressing room for personel, especially for the surgeon, assistants, and nurses. Also there is no provision for scrubbing other than a single lavatory in each operating room. The plan of the floor is being studied relative to a possible solution of this problem.

The instrument room is not accessible and appears to be too large for the rest of the suite. The sterilizing room may very well serve as the instrument room and the sterilizing room. The only objection to this is that there will be more humidity in this room than in the others because of the sterilizers, and this may be deleterious to the instruments. However, I believe

that as work progresses, and the instruments are bieng used the rust factor will not be too difficult to overcome.

Wards:

The hospital wards are clean, the morale of the patients is excellent. The beds and the linnen are quite satisfactory except that the beds are of the flat type. It will be necessary for the post operative beds to secure either Gatch type beds or Decker type beds so that the head of the bed may be elevated, and the knee broken.

Histories and Charts:

My first examination of the hospital resulted in a complete failure to find a single completed chart. Neither history nor physical examination was present on any of the charts and I was told that none of the charts were worked up. I spoke with Dr. Freile about this condition, and I believe that this will soon be corrected. It is to be remembered that the progress notes, and the history and comparative examinations are the records by which progress is measured. Without records, the patient may as well be at home under the care of his physician.

Kitchen:

My first visit to the kitchen was rather shocking. The floor was dirty and littered with earth from potatoes, and with caggage leaves and other debris. There were uncovered buckets and pans filled with milk on the floor. Almost every one had at least one or two flies floating on the surface. One of the workers was sweeping the floor near these cannisters, without any thought of contamination the milk with the dust that he was raising. I spoke about this with the superintendant who in turn spoke with the kitchen help. I hope that this situation will be corrected. I plan to make unannounced visits to the kitchen to inspect, since I believe that it is folly to try to cure by surgery those patients which may be becomming ill from their food.

A study of the floor plan of the operating suite resulted in a rather simple solution for the time being at least. The septic operating room was considered of little importance in view of the fact that all cases in this hospital are septic in a sence. Also this room is not equipped for surgery. The room adjacent to the operating room which is considered aseptic is of little value because it has no means of ingress for beds. It was decided to make this room a bronchoscopic room and pleurolysis room. This was easily accomplished on the planning by merely closing off the wall between the operating room and putting in a double door on the hall side. The septic operating room is to be divided into an office for me, and a doctors dressing room in which a toilet and shower bath will be installed. The room marked anaestesia will become a supplies room. The slop sink and the bedpan sink will be removed, and the basins from the operating rooms will be placed in their stead for scrubbing.

The study of this change was done on the second and on Oct 3, the work was started. It is hoped that in the next week work may be started in these operating rooms.

I spoke with Miss Vernon, and hope that we may utilize her services in organizing the nursing care and assistance in the operating room by the practical nurses. Miss Vernon is an American Nurse who has had some teaching experience before her training period, and after her training she spent almost two years in the army of the United States. I am sure she will be a valuable addition to our staff.

Conferences:

I have inaugurated the conference system in handling the cases in the hospital. Since it is necessary to start the work by having some idea as to the number and type of cases in the hospital, the entire hospital patient list is being studied. It is to be hoped that in about twenty or twenty five days we may have reviewed all the cases. During this time these conferences will provide operative material. Once the entire population is surveyed in the hospital, the conferences will settle down to two conferences a week. One will be a therapeutic conference where all new cases, and cases presenting problems other than surgical will be presented. The other will be a strictly surgical conference where cases for surgery will be presented, and the type of surgery indicated will be chosen for that patient. I believe that these conferences provide the best teaching facility, and shall try to utilize them for my classes.

Glaser: When you were still in Philadelphia?

Lewis: Yes.

Glaser: That's during the 1940s?

Lewis: No, I think we used it a little before that.

Glaser: I would imagine the results were quite dramatic.

Lewis: Well, they were pretty good. There were patients that you would never have gotten well except for them, and some who died because you believed in them. You never know what's going to happen, you know.

Glaser: Did you have any problem in allotting the antibiotics? They were in very scarce supply, weren't they?

Lewis: Oh, yes. We all had problems.

[Tape turned over]

Glaser: You were talking about antibiotics, telling me how one went about handling the situation of having more patients than your supply of antibiotics.

Lewis: Oh, in Philadelphia we had plenty of antibiotics. We were trying to set up standards for the acceptance of patients. We had patients that we thought would be benefitted by antibiotics, but not as much as this other patient. If we had to choose one of the two to do, it's easy to know which one to choose. But if you weren't sure of your borderlines, then you'd have difficulty.

In Germany, we had a great deal more in the way of antibiotics, but there again was the problem of which one should we use it on? Should we use it on the far-advanced case, or should we use it on the one we thought could reverse the action of the disease? We had big problems with that.

Glaser: How was that problem solved?

Lewis: Argument and discussion. Finally somebody would rush up and say, "I want to do this! I want to do that!"

"Well, that's not acceptable." We'd take a vote.

Marriage to Emily Vernon, 1948

Glaser: Tell me about Emily. She was a nurse?

Lewis: She was a nurse. She'd been in the army. She came back to Reading, where she lived--Reading, Pennsylvania. Eventually, she decided to go to Ecuador, and came down to my office to see me before I went to Ecuador. I met her in Ecuador. We married.

Glaser: What was Emily's maiden name?

Lewis: Her name was Vernon.

Glaser: What was her brother doing there in Ecuador?

Lewis: He was working for the brewery and the dairy. I guess that was it.

Glaser: Was he a plant manager?

Lewis: Yes.

Glaser: Was it a local business?

Lewis: Well, it wasn't really. It was related to a lot of things. This company was British, and they set up the brewery. I guess he even drank the beer. [Laughs]

Glaser: Did he have his family with him?

Lewis: A wife and kids, one his own and two his wife had. They live in Los Angeles now.

Glaser: And Emily went down to stay with them?

Lewis: Yes. It didn't last for long.

Glaser: Did you tell me she was the only trained nurse in the whole country?

Lewis: No, but practically the only available graduate nurse. She wanted to do something while she was down there. It wasn't that she was hungry; she'd been in the service, and had some money left over. Her grandfather was the dean of arts at Syracuse; he was Edward Vernon. An ancestor was known during the Revolutionary War as "Old Grog," because he cut the amount of rum allowed the British sailors during the Revolution.

Glaser: How had Emily heard that you were going to Ecuador?

Lewis: Her brother had written her that I was going to Ecuador.

Glaser: She did contact you in Philadelphia before you left?

Lewis: Oh yes. She was leaving about a month or so before me. Then I was to call her when I needed a nurse.

Glaser: You had decided to hire her?

Lewis: Well, I decided to look her over, to see what she could do. She was pretty capable in the operating room [in Guayaquil], which was what I needed.

Glaser: So you gave her a chance to show what she was capable of doing, then decided to hire her.

Lewis: Oh, I hired her and then let her see if she could hold the job I had in mind.

Glaser: She became your surgical nurse?

Lewis: Yes.

Glaser: How long after that did you get married?

Lewis: A couple of months, I guess. We got married to keep the show together, because her brother moved across the river. It meant a couple hours' trip a day. So we got married instead.

Glaser: Where did you set up housekeeping?

Lewis: I had an apartment.

Glaser: In which city?

Lewis: Guayaquil.

Glaser: And how long did you spend in Ecuador altogether?

Lewis: A year and a half.

Glaser: Did you leave in 1950?

Lewis: Forty-eight.

Glaser: Who was the person who invited you to vacation in Ecuador?

Lewis: His name was Jorge O'Higgins, or just Higgins. His grandfather came to Ecuador, and met a gal walking across the isthmus, which it was then, the Isthmus of Panama. They got to like each other, and he married her and stayed in Ecuador.

His father, or grandfather, was the great hero in Chile. He stayed in Ecuador, and was made a president of Ecuador.

Surgery in Guayaquil

Glaser: And how did you meet Senor Higgins?

Lewis: Well, Senor Higgins came to Philadelphia to study medicine at the university, in the graduate school. We got to know each other. I operated on a guy from the Argentine, from Rosario. Eventually, he invited me--why don't I come down and visit with him? My wife had just died. After she died, he wrote me and asked me to come and live with him. So I did for about a month, and enjoyed it very much, and later on I entertained his daughter and her husband when they came up to Philadelphia to live.

Glaser: What had been Senor Higgins's field of study?

Lewis: He was doing tuberculosis. He was also in business. He ran a drugstore, kind of a wholesale drugstore.

Glaser: Tell me about setting up the blood bank in--

Lewis: [Interrupts] Never did one.

Glaser: You didn't set one up in Quito?

Lewis: In Guayaquil, no. I set up anti-tuberculosis surgical programs.

Glaser: But wasn't the blood bank part of that?

Lewis: Well, we got blood on the property. We took our blood directly from the donors and gave it to the patients.

Glaser: There's a lot of correspondence on setting up a blood bank.

Lewis: Where?

Glaser: In your files.

Lewis: Like what?

Glaser: I'll bring it to you, and then we can go over it.* What are some of the innovations that you made?

Lewis: In what?

Glaser: In the hospital in Guayaquil.

Lewis: I wish you'd say it "Gwhya-keel."

Glaser: I'll try to remember--"Gwhya-keel."

Lewis: That's right. I didn't do much in the way of innovating. I practiced the kind of surgery that I'd been doing in Philadelphia.

Glaser: But you practically rebuilt the hospital.

Lewis: Well, that was only because I didn't like the way it was built. I made more space in the operating rooms, and for the visitors to watch family surgery, and all the things that went with it.

Glaser: But you also emphasized hygiene and sanitation, which hadn't been done before, I believe.

Lewis: I don't think that's true. It's just that they didn't practice it the way I did. It was pretty much the same.

Glaser: Well, there's something I read about a container of milk standing uncovered, and a man sweeping the floor, not concerned about the dust getting into the milk, and the lack of nursing services for the patients after four o'clock in the afternoon.

Lewis: Well, that was a matter of the country. But Emily did most of that. She and I did those things.

Glaser: So you feel that Emily deserves the credit for tightening up the nursing services?

Lewis: Yes, but you see that this was a hospital--I think we had a nurse for afternoon and evening, and perhaps for the night. Emily and the nurse ran the day, maybe two nurses. But they didn't have trained nurses, so she ran a course in nurse training. And she did a good job.

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*See letter dated July 12, 1947.

C O P Y of letter to Richard A. Overholt, M.D., 1101 Beacon Street, Brookline, Massachusetts

July 12, 1947

Dear Dick,

I was glad to hear from you, and really expected to hear it in Spanish. Higgins tells me that you are a real Castellano. (Like me.) My wife does our talking - pardon me for repeating myself, but I think I said that before.

We just finished a course in tuberculosis. We used up six weeks. Higgins, a radiologist named Mata, and I did about ten or twelve lectures each, with a few lectures on lab and public health thrown in. I did all my lectures in Spanish, and all ad lib. I guess with gestures (which come naturally enough) I conveyed the ideas I was trying to get across.

Teaching here is like feeding babies. The Latins like their food prepared, but won't go into the kitchen. So is it with their science. They'll read prepared stuff, but research or investigation is like cooking, and they never touch the stuff. We have begun using the surgical part of our hospital and will have the official dedication on the twentieth. In addition to being surgeon, lecturer, and reformer, I have also been architect, engineer, carpenter and electrician. Makeshift is the important work in this country of shiny equipment worship.

With a bit of pencil pushing I have changed a thoroughly inadequate operating room (suite) with a three bed pavilion into a modern suite with space for twenty-four beds.

I've been trying to get over the idea of a blood bank, but so far the motion is relatively zero. Who knows someday we may get it under way. I have almost convinced the docs down here that an operating room isn't a public highway. I even have them putting on masks and caps and observation gowns in some of the hospitals. In my hospital they are not allowed on the operating floor. I have a nice observation gallery - simple but effective.

I'm sorry to be so long winded, but I hope it isn't too dull to read and to compare with your impressions of the south-you all.

Best regards,

Glaser: Did you feel that things were pretty primitive?

Lewis: Oh, it wasn't bad because, see, the thing is that with the people we had, we were better trained than most hospitals around there. It was a difficult thing to put on a good show with what was there.

Glaser: You traveled back and forth between Guayaquil and where else?

Lewis: Quito. But we didn't travel back and forth. We went to Quito for four months, until we came back to Guayaquil.

Medical Politics

Glaser: I came across an interesting letter in your files that you wrote to Jorge Higgins in 1947.

Lewis: What did I say to him?

Glaser: [Reading] "Thanks for the prompt and newsy letter. It is a great tribute when such illustrious men as Fraile and Valenzuela single him out and plan a campaign against him, in which they deem it necessary to use the bishop. I think if it were more chess and less anti-Higgins, they'd have used the queens, the castles, and a few knights. I see they used the pawns. If I were in control of the LEA, I would have used the patients' strike and the needs of cleaning the house of a bunch of junk, and starting over with a group of patients interested in getting well, instead of factional and fictional politics.

"The highly intellectual Valenzuela has been shooting at me for some time. You know that I didn't fall for his trap on high fees and consultations, after talking with you about them. Also, I pooh-poohed his ideas about a hospital for patients to die in--incurables. Also, he is a friend and supporter of Fraile, and the reverence for his dead forebearer forbids his doing other than kill Higgins or anyone tied to him--Lewis, Jalamillo, Brione. So here we are.

"The funny thing about this is that I haven't made any efforts to have the LEA ask me to come here. I did nothing that could be called coercion. My record, training, and associations are all open, and anyone wanting to investigate me is free to do so at any time he wishes. When such investigations are made, if the investigators are not squared on it, then I think it is time for me to see to it that some attention is paid to such little details.

Glaser: "Emmy will be in Guayaquil on Thursday, and I on Friday. We'll see you then. Best regards to all the Higginses."

Lewis: That's a nice letter.

Glaser: Yes. What was going on?

Lewis: Oh, this guy Fraile and Valenzuela--a couple of nincompoops who knew nothing--got into positions of power, and we had to chop their ears.

This is in the LEA. The guy that was in charge, Jalamillo, and Tanca and Ortega and another bunch of guys--were very, very good, high quality guys and able. So we really didn't have too much trouble with them.

Glaser: Were they trying to cut off your funds?

Lewis: Oh, no, no. The funds--there was never any question of funds, because it was a contract. We never had any problem there.

Glaser: No, I don't mean your salary. You had a contract for your salary.

Lewis: With the LEA? No.

Glaser: No, I mean getting funds for hospital supplies. You did a lot of changing there, and you needed funds.

Lewis: Oh, all I did was to make an operating room that you could get into without getting dirty and equipment that they bought without any sense. But in general, it worked out well. We moved the X-ray department, which was formerly open to the sky. I wanted to move it downstairs. They didn't want to move the church down below one floor.

Glaser: What, a little chapel?

Lewis: Yes. Because they wanted to have circulation open to the heavens, which is kind of cute. Kind of cute, but it wasn't worth any more than that.

Glaser: Were these people trying to undermine you and Higgins?

Lewis: No, everybody tries to undermine everybody, just like America! If you've got a job, somebody wants it. Why? Nobody knows. No, there was no problem there. My contracts ran for a year, and ended at the end of the year. I suppose it could have been

Lewis: increased another year or two, but I didn't think I wanted it, because I didn't see much point in fighting people to help them.

Glaser: So, by and large, you stayed out of the medical politics that were going on?

Lewis: Oh, yes. I couldn't get into that.

Glaser: Why was this directed at Higgins, then?

Lewis: Because he'd gotten me to come down there. I lived with him, and he was a friend of mine.

Glaser: This was enough to direct the politicking against him?

Lewis: See, he was a doctor, and he also ran a whole set of drugstores, the Emporium Drugstore. So he was making a good living. Later on, he won a lottery for a million sucres. [One sucre = 20¢ U.S.]

Glaser: Hmm. Them that has gets, right?

Lewis: Yep! [Laughter]

Glaser: I read a copy of another letter you wrote, to Dr. Tanca in 1947. You said, "How is the progress of the war coming on in LEA?"

Lewis: Oh, that's the LEA, the Ecuador Tuberculosis League. Tanca was the head of it, and he has died since.

Glaser: What is the private little war you're referring to?

Lewis: Well, he was fighting some of the political things. He was fighting opponents of the Liga.

Glaser: Was a lot of politicking going on?

Lewis: You know any place where there isn't? [Laughs]

Glaser: Well, what were the policies of the League?

Lewis: Oh, it was just a matter of whether you did something correctly or not.

Glaser: By whose standards?

Lewis: By ours, of course! If we were opposed to them, it was our standards.

Glaser: Then it wasn't that the League was fighting you, you were fighting the League?

Lewis: Yes.

Glaser: I see. What were some of the things that you were fighting about?

Lewis: Well, what we thought were the reasons for doing things a certain way, and the reasons for adapting to certain types of treatments. You know, the usual things.

Glaser: When you left Ecuador, did you feel that you had established a procedure for good TB care? Did you think that things were in good hands after you left?

Lewis: I think that we accomplished something.

Glaser: Was there any regret in leaving?

Lewis: Yes. I would have liked to have stayed there two or three more years, but I don't think I could have done that at any time, except before I accepted the job.

Glaser: I don't quite understand what you mean.

Lewis: If I said at the start, "I won't take this job, unless it is for a minimum of four years, or five years," I'd have gotten it. But after that, I didn't think that they wanted to put out twenty-five thousand dollars a year and taxes for keeping me there. That's what I made, at that time. It was a lot of money.

Glaser: Reading your correspondence files, I got the impression that it was an ideal period in your life--contact with an entirely new culture, your pleasure in your boat, The Marion--

Lewis: [Correcting pronunciation] The Marión.

Glaser: --and that life was easy, even though you were working hard. You enjoyed what you were doing.

Lewis: Yes. It was a good assignment. It was good for Emily. Emmy got along fine. We had a great time.

Glaser: Was the center of your social life the yacht club?

Lewis: Partly only. On the weekends, it always was, and the other times we went to social affairs and dances at the tennis club, and all those things.

C O P Y

Dec. 5, 1946.

Dear Doctor Muller,

December 5, 1946.

Thanks so much for remembering me in relation to the Thoracic Surgeons problem in the Veterans Administration. Philadelphia, 3, Pa.

Your letter dated October the first was sent by regular mail and was intercepted by the strike on the steamship lines. I have it now after many weeks. Needless to say I was more than pleased to know that you thought of me in relation to such a problem, and I am grateful.

I talked with Brian Blades at the Detroit Meeting of the Thoracic Surgeons, and considered doing some work with the Veterans in the Pacific Northwest, and also in Sawtelle at Los Angeles, but the offer I had for the work I am doing here was so much more attractive that I came down to tackle a really hard job.

I am teaching thoracic surgery, and doing the work of organizing and teaching and doing the thoracic surgery for the Liga Ecuatoriana Antituberculosa. In Guayaquil there is a two hundred bed hospital, with about twelve to twenty beds for surgery and I expect to have twenty beds in Quito. We expect to have a new hospital here for about six hundred more in the next year. My problems include many things other than thoracic surgery. I have designed my operating room, my operating shirts, trowsers, gowns, and am now laying out the new wards. In the mean time I am doing neumonolyses, phrenics, bronchoscopies, thoracoplasties, esophagectomies etc. Of course I'm not doing too many cases, but hope to increase the number as the set-up gets smoother.

Besides the surgical problems, there are public health problems and language problems to overcome. I am having a lovely and interesting time, and expect to stay here for a while at least. I do however hope to be at the St. Louis Meeting, and hope to see you there.

Best regards, and greetings for the Season.

Sincerely,

Lewis: I went with a girl from Ecuador until Emmy came along, and then I got to Emily. The girl was a very nice girl. Her brother was a big guy in the bank, and her uncle was the president of the bank, and former president of the country. It was rather nice.

Glaser: Were there a lot of Americans and British?

Lewis: There were quite a few British and quite a few Americans. There were quite a few of them from everywhere else.

Glaser: You had a good social life?

Lewis: Yes, it was very good.

Glaser: And who were your friends? Dr. Higgins and many local people?

Lewis: Oh, yes. That's who we knew. They were fine. We had a lot of good friends who were Ecuadorians. I guess that was a very important part of my life, about that time.

Glaser: Did you ever want to go back?

Lewis: To Ecuador?

Glaser: Yes.

Lewis: Oh, I've been back.

Glaser: When?

Lewis: In '57.

Glaser: Was this on vacation?

Lewis: No, I was asked to come down and operate on the banker's wife.

Glaser: You were living here in Berkeley?

Lewis: I don't remember. Berkeley or Philadelphia. I guess it was Berkeley. Yes, it had to be, because I came here in '51.

VI GERMANY, 1949-1950

Return to United States from Ecuador

Glaser: After you left Ecuador in '48, you were at Philadelphia for a short while, and then you went to Seattle. Did you set up a practice in Seattle for a year?

Lewis: No, I didn't set up practice there. The damn county society held me up. They couldn't understand why I wanted to move out of Philadelphia to Seattle. I said, well, I had planned it all the time. Those numbskulls couldn't see that, so the hell with them.

Glaser: They thought that if anybody wanted to go from the east to the west coast, that something was wrong with the kind of medicine they practiced?

Lewis: No, I don't think that was it. It was, why does a guy who has reached his ultimate in medicine want to leave and go to Seattle? Which I couldn't understand!

Glaser: That sounds short-sighted.

Lewis: Well, that sounds kind of crappy!

Glaser: Had you packed up completely from Philadelphia at that time?

Lewis: Oh, yes. We moved here into an apartment, had friends.

Glaser: How long were you in Seattle altogether?

Lewis: Well, the baby [Steven Lazarus] was born the tenth of February. I'd come there the end of January, the first of February. We left around the first of May.

Glaser: Was that '49?

Lewis: Yes. I'd always had an idea of wanting to go back to Seattle. So we went there and found out that I didn't like it. It was kind of a chintzy little area. It really wasn't, but it meant that to me.

Glaser: This must have been an unhappy time for you, because it didn't work out.

Lewis: Well, kind of. I was rather annoyed with it. But they thought, "The guy was in the prime years of his practicing life; why should he move to Seattle?"

They were fighting competition, too, so that was it.

Glaser: What do you mean?

Lewis: Well, Seattle was growing pretty fast, and all the guys who were trained specialists were fighting for their professional lives. They'd just come back from the war.

Glaser: Do you mean that everybody was starting up again, and they didn't want an influx of physicians coming in to compete?

Lewis: Yes.

Glaser: Well, if Seattle was growing, wasn't there room for everybody?

Lewis: You never think about that. You think about what's going in and out of your pocket. I was just coming home.

Glaser: With a new baby and all, that must have really upset you.

Lewis: Oh, that didn't bother us. We had plenty of money, but it was just the idea of not being welcomed home, you know.

Glaser: You still had some relatives there. You had aunts and uncles.

Lewis: And a great many friends, and teachers from my four years of engineering studies.

Glaser: By that time had your mother left? Was she in Berkeley?

Lewis: No, she was around, or was she living down in Los Angeles? I don't recall.

Glaser: What made your brother Leon move? He was practicing in New York, and then he moved out here to Berkeley.

Lewis: Well, he'd joined the navy, and came back to Fort Mason as a commander in the navy. He liked it here, and just decided to stay.

Glaser: Why weren't you in the services in World War Two?

Lewis: I couldn't make services in World War Two. I was in World War One.

Glaser: You weren't too old.

Lewis: No, but I didn't make it. I had a lump in the lung that they weren't sure was something or nothing. It's been there thirty years, but it didn't matter.

Displaced Persons Sanatorium, Gauting bei Munchen, Germany, June 1949 to October 1950

Glaser: How did you get connected with the hospital in Germany?

Lewis: I came through Joint and through the IRO. Each one took up half of the tab.

Glaser: What is IRO? The International Relief Organization?

Lewis: The International Refugee.

Glaser: How did you make contact with them?

Lewis: The Joint did all that, the American Joint Distribution Committee.

Glaser: How did you make contact with the Joint?

Lewis: I was a chest surgeon in Philadelphia, and they were looking for a chest surgeon, preferably one who was Jewish. They called me in Seattle. No, I guess they called me in Philadelphia, then I talked to them in Seattle. I wanted to go to New Orleans, so I got my ticket through New Orleans to New York. I stopped there and gave them my curriculum vitae. They hired me. Then I went home, and we packed up; got all the household things packed up, and shipped it down here to Berkeley, where Leon was. We went off to Germany for two years.

Glaser: You had a new baby, and you went off to Germany? Conditions must have been very rough right after the war.

Lewis: They were very good for us. We got a very nice four-story-high, small chalet on the lake, on Wurmsee. Do you know where Wurmsee is?

Glaser: Was this outside of Heidelburg?

Lewis: Outside of Munich. We were right across from where Brahms wrote a couple of his major symphonies.

Glaser: What were your duties at the hospital?

Lewis: Setting up surgery, doing surgery, teaching, and learning German.

Glaser: Were all the patients displaced Jews from the camps?

Lewis: No, they were all former Kasettlers, all former people in the concentration camps.

Glaser: So that meant they were all Jewish, I suppose.

Lewis: No, there were many people who weren't Jewish in the concentration camps. Gypsies were there, people from various countries, Russians; it was a mixed crowd.

Glaser: Did you enjoy being there?

Lewis: Well, we did, because we were really the people. Our rating was that of a major or a lieutenant colonel in the field grades. We had this lovely house with a tennis court and a motor boat. We had a girl and a gardener and his wife. We were never at a loss for aid in the house. It was pretty good.

Glaser: With whom did you socialize?

Lewis: Well, generally with either local people or the people from the Joint, or people from the university.

Glaser: Were you able to establish social relationships with the Germans?

Lewis: Yes. There was no reason why we shouldn't.

Glaser: Well, language, for one thing.

Lewis: Oh, we both talked German. Emily speaks excellent German,

INTERNATIONAL REFUGEE ORGANIZATION

ORGANISATION INTERNATIONALE POUR LES RÉFUGIÉS

Palais Wilson
Rue des Pâquis
GENÈVE

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

Name of Staff Member Dr. Rubin M. LEWIS

1. This is to certify that MX Dr. Lewis has been employed by the International Refugee Organization at a tax-reimbursible salary in the following positions :

   a. Appointment Medical Officer
   From 12.6. 1949 to 16.10. 1950 Initial Salary $4400 Final Salary $4560

   b. Appointment
   From ..... 19.... to ..... 19.... Initial Salary ..... Final Salary .....

   c. Appointment
   From ..... 19.... to ..... 19.... Initial Salary ..... Final Salary .....

   d. Appointment
   From ..... 19.... to ..... 19.... Initial Salary ..... Final Salary .....

2. In addition to Basic Salary, the staff member was in receipt at the time of termination, of the following allowances :

   a. Per Diem Allowance of : $1 :

   b. Dependent's Allowance of : $673.75 :

   c. Expatriation Allowance of : $800 :
   (Granted only to Staff Members who are assigned to Posts of Duty far distant from their Home Stations.)

   d. Organization's contribution to the Provident Fund of: 7 1/2 percent of Basic Salary.

3. Reason for termination of service : Reduction in Force.

4. **Description of Duties :**

Thoracic Surgical Consultant of IRO, US Zone. Chief Surgeon, Sanatorium Gauting. Performing or directing all General, Thoracic and Orthopedic Surgery done at Gauting. Senior Medical Director Sanatorium Gauting.

This installation had a maximum of 860 Patients and about 600 employees. Staff Member's work in addition to the organizing of the surgical department, organizing blood transfusion service, directing the Hospital and running a biweekly conference where he was responsible for all proposed therapy, included designing special equipment, hospital facilities and new proposed physical changes in the institution. Staff member was employed as a Thoracic Surgeon.

Date 26 October 1950

[signature]
Director of Personnel
~~(Headquarters Geneva)~~ (Field Office)

The Staff Member is not in possession of a Testimonial of Service from the supervisor in the final position held with the Organization.

Lewis: Italian, French, and Spanish.

Glaser: But you had to learn it?

Lewis: I'd taken a year of college German. I could make myself understood. I can do better in German than in French, for example.

Glaser: You have mentioned what a fine linguist Emily is. It seems you are also.

Lewis: Yes, but she's a good linguist.

Glaser: But you picked it up very fast.

Lewis: Yes, but she does it accurately. [Laughter] I build my words. But Emily's really an excellent linguist.

Glaser: You must be very good in German, if you were able to supervise an entire staff.

Lewis: Well, I conducted all my classes in German--my conferences, and classes. The maid we had working for us said, "I'll have to study English now." I said, "No, you won't. We're going to talk German here!"

"Oh!" she said. She was really surprised. We did very well.

Glaser: Did you and Emily talk German in order to improve your vocabulary?

Lewis: We talked German because we could.

Glaser: You also conducted classes when you were in Ecuador, so you had to speak Spanish very well down there.

Lewis: That's right. I had to lecture in Spanish. At first, I dictated in English, and the secretary transcribed them into Spanish. Then I read them in Spanish, which nobody could understand.

Glaser: How long did it take you to become fluent in Spanish?

Lewis: Oh, I suppose a few months. It wasn't very fluent, but it worked. Then I talked entirely in Spanish.

Glaser: I think that's unique.

Yugoslav Committee
Warner Caserne
Munich-Freimann

112a

August 10th, 1950

TO: Dr. R.M. LEWIS
Director of I.R.O. Sanatorium
at G A U T I N G

On several ocassions we have had the chance to visit the patients belonging to our Yugoslav national group in the hospital under your direction.

To our great satisfaction we could hear from our patients there about your abilities, human work, justice and fatherlike care, only the best. On statements of our patients, for you a patient is a patient only, no matter whot religion or nationality-and that represents a rarity at the present time.

We are moved and we take us the liberty to thank you sincerly in the name of all our patients at hospital in Gauting and likewise in the name of all other emigrants of Yugoslav group for your care and ablites that affter you as a doctor and as a human being.

Most respectfully,

Yugoslav Committee

Secretary,

M. Ornik

(M.Ornik)

Yugoslav Committee * MUNICH * D.P. Camp Warner-Kaserne

President,

Blagoje Orovic

(Blagoje Orovic)

To:

Dr. Lewis
Medical Director
of IRO TB-Sanatorium,
Gauting.

From:

Anita Rosenberg
Room 51, C-IV,
IRO TB-Sanatorium,
Gauting.

September 11, 1950.

Dear Sir,

It is rumoured here, in our sanatorium, that you would leave us soon and go to America.

I don't know whether it is true, but I feel very much troubled and depressed, because of this rumour. And that is the reason why I write you. Our physician told me that I shall undergo an operation - thoracoplastic. Therefore, I beg you to do medical examination of my illness once more, and make the operation (if you'd decide I need it) before you leave for America.

As long as you are here as our surgeon I see the good results only. I see that everyone, whom you made operation, feels very good now, and sputum became negative soon after operation, and everything is good. We, patients, speak with one another each day. And from these conversations I see that everybody, on whom you made operation, is very satisfied.

Therefore, I tell you the truth, I want YOU to make me thoracoplastic, because I have trust in you. I see such good results of all the operations you made here, in our sanatorium, and I feel, therefore, that I would have no fear and I would bear the operation, if it will be YOU to make it.

But when you'll find me not yet ready for operation (perhaps, because of the state of my health), then I should be very obliged to you, if you would be so good as to postpone your departure to America until you make me the operation.

I beg to excuse my troubling you, and I thank you wholeheartedly in anticipation!

Respectfully Yours

Anita Rosenberg.

Travel Through Europe

Glaser: Tell me about your traveling in Europe while you were stationed at Gauting. Did you mention Garmisch?

Lewis: We used to go to Garmisch quite often, and we went up hunting in various areas in--what the hell was the name of that? The area behind Frankfurt, and various places.

Glaser: The Black Forest?

Lewis: No, that's below Frankfurt, you know. That's to the west. Oh, what was it? Gruenwald?

Glaser: The Green Forest?

Lewis: Yes. That was one of the places that we went hunting in.

Glaser: I didn't know that you were interested in hunting.

Lewis: I did when I was in Germany. I enjoyed it very much. I've still got my guns downstairs. I was very good with rifles and shotguns.

Glaser: What did you hunt?

Lewis: Deer, ducks, quail, pheasant, and rabbits.

Glaser: Who got you started on that?

Lewis: Oh, the guys in the hospital, the guys on the German staff. They couldn't go hunting. They liked to walk, so we went hunting. My Czech friend, who was a good hunter, used to shoot psychologically. I'd see a rabbit, and I'd shoot it, and he'd say, "I got him before you did." [Laughs]

Glaser: When you say that the Germans couldn't go hunting, do you mean it was illegal for them to possess arms?

Lewis: Yes. They were not allowed to hunt. My Czech friend, who was a real good hunter, used to talk about how much it cost him. He'd get a buck, and it was usually twelve hundred dollars for a roebuck, counting the rent and the guns and the price. It was something!

Glaser: You were also very interested in photography at that time, weren't you?

Lewis: Well, I've been interested in photography since about 1915. I've exhibited in clinics and in shows in Seattle, in Boston, and in Philadelphia.

Glaser: How did you exhibit in Boston? You never lived there, did you?

Lewis: Yes, I lived in Boston for several months.

Glaser: Oh, that's right, when you were doing engineering work.

Lewis: Yes.

Glaser: Did you do your own developing and printing?

Lewis: Yes, I did then. I did them with the camera club. They had good equipment and good location. They were right down on the corner of Boyleston and Tremont. They were right next door to one of the good hotels there.

Glaser: Did you do much painting when you were in Germany?

Lewis: I did a little. Maybe half a dozen oils, and the rest water-colors.

Glaser: Tell me more about traveling when you were in Germany.

Lewis: Well, I went to Berlin two times, and we went to Paris and London and Italy. I guess that's pretty good.

Glaser: You went to Holland, I think.

Lewis: Yes. We went to Holland, we went to Belgium.

Glaser: Was this your first time in Europe?

Lewis: Let me see. [Reflects] I guess Gauting was the first time, really the first time, in Europe. Since then we went back and forth a dozen times, I'd suppose.

Glaser: That was also a very special time for you, wasn't it?

Lewis: Oh, yes. Yes, Europe was great!

Glaser: You didn't find it was depressing, right after the war?

Lewis: Not very much. I had no relationship to it. I knew that it was bad, but I didn't--no member of my family was done in. I hated the Germans, or thought I did.

Personal Relationships

Glaser: Did you have any feeling of discomfort or awkwardness about having relationships with Germans in the community?

Lewis: Well, the community--you see, the hospital in Germany was in Gauting. Gauting is like the Village, like Greenwich Village. It was an art colony. The people you met in the city didn't know where the hell we were from. We didn't know many of the people in the city or the town of Gauting. We weren't bothered by them at all. We lived out of town, on the lake.

Glaser: I thought that you had relationships with the local people, other than those in the hospital.

Lewis: No. We did have some with the people in Munich, but not many in Gauting, where we had the hospital. Where we lived was up on the lake at--up near one of the castles of the area. We had friends that lived in the area, and we took piano lessons from this German woman, whom we fought with all the time. The people who owned our house had been big contractors. They were our neighbors. There was a TB hospital just over the hill from us. It was called some long name like Krankheit Gebau. I don't recall now who owned it. I think the county ran the hospital there.

Glaser: Is your voice giving out?

Lewis: No, it's just getting a little husky. [Clears throat]

Glaser: Let me ask you one more thing, and then we'll be able to take a break. I'm still trying to figure out how you, as an American Jew, felt in a country in which millions and millions of people were killed. Did you feel comfortable there?

Lewis: Well, I was comfortable because I had not been into the war. The first night I got there, I heard the international guard, who were mostly boys dressed in black uniforms. They were marching on the sidewalks, changing the guard. I heard the clatter of hobnails on the concrete of the sidewalks, and that really upset me a little at first. Then I figured, "Oh, what the hell. It's our club now. We've inherited them."

That was about the only upset. I went into the city one day, into Munich, to the university in an ambulance. They were all Germans in the ambulance except me. We got into some kind of a discussion, and I said finally, in my very best German,

Lewis: "I don't see how a German can hold his head up and look at the man coming down the street and still feel comfortable. I think Germans from now on in the world ought to never be able to raise their heads again." I thought afterwards, what indiscretion! Those bastards could have killed me without any trouble! But they were Germans, and so they didn't. That was an after-the-fact feeling of discomfort, but I always say things like that, so it doesn't matter.

VII FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

Mother's Biography by Harry Lewis

Glaser: Among the things that I came across in your folders was a biography of your mother, written by your brother Harry after her death.

Lewis: Oh? It's nice to hear that. He was a little romantic.

Glaser: Yes, I got that impression too. But I'd like to verify some of the things he wrote, the more objective facts. I'll start from the beginning, and any time you want to interject--

Lewis: All right.

Glaser: "In a little Ukrainian village, not far from the city of Kremenchug in southern Russia, on the sixteenth day of September, 1870, the third child of a family of six children was born, a girl bearing the name Rivi--English translation, Vera.

"Amid the toils and hardships of the Ukrainian countryside, she grew into womanhood. Hers was an early maturity because her mother was a semi-invalid after her last child was born. Vera became the mother of her two sisters and three brothers."

Lewis: Well, that was right so far. I believe that there were four brothers, because one died, I think. Yes.

Glaser: Then he has her leaving in 1889 from Hamburg. "She didn't like New York or Chicago, staying in each city only one day. Her destination was Omaha, to which her two oldest brothers moved after trying their hand at homesteading for a few years on the barren prairie of South Dakota. Omaha became the family home, where her brothers went into the retail furniture business.

Glaser: "For six years, Vera Rosenberg worked in an overall factory, did odd jobs, and kept house for her oldest brother while his wife was busy rearing a family. In August 1895, Vera married Lazarus M. Lewis, another immigrant Jew, from Grodno Province in Poland. They were married in Omaha, Nebraska, where their first son was born in October 1896, whom they named Harry.

"The following year, Lazarus became obsessed with the Western fever, and went to Butte, Montana. The following year, his wife and two-year-old baby boarded a rickety old day coach on the Burlington route headed for Butte.

"When her husband first brought Vera to Butte, Montana in 1898, people were gasping for breath from the smoke and arsenic fumes belching from the mines and smelters in that rip-roaring mining town. Within sight of the windlasses and the derricks of the copper mines, with living quarters in the back room of her husband's butcher shop, she gave birth to two additional sons, and began the rearing of her three boys, continuing on through their adolescent period into manhood, setting an example for them to become strong, honest, fearless, and resourceful men.

"After a few years living in the rear of the meat market, her husband met with an accident. He chased a thief who stole a turkey from his store, and in catching the thief, Lazarus stumbled and fell down an old abandoned mine diggings, mangling his right leg. He became crippled for life. This necessitated giving up the butcher shop, and the thief got away."

Is that okay so far?

Lewis: Yes. It's pretty good, in fact.

Glaser: I think your version had him falling over a fence?

Lewis: Yes, I think so.

Glaser: "--and moving to a small pasture farm south of Butte, where Lazarus made a living for his family from his few dairy cows, chickens, turkeys, and hogs."

Lewis: That's wrong.

Glaser: What's wrong?

Lewis: We never had a hog in our house! I mean, near our house. But he did own half of a big hog ranch up on the mountainside.

Glaser: "In 1904, Lazarus was appointed crematory custodian for the city of Butte."

I guess "crematory" is a euphemism for the garbage dump.

Lewis: Yes.

Glaser: "--and placed in charge of all the city property south of the town, consisting of one hundred and sixty acres, where the dog and cow pound was also located. Shortly thereafter, he was made supervisor of an Indian reservation adjoining the Butte city property."

Lewis: That's imaginary. There were Indians who lived there, but they had nothing to do with my father. They were just friends.

Glaser: What does he mean by a "cow pound"? Were stray cows rounded up?

Lewis: It really wasn't a cow pound. They were animals who were ready to be killed. They got a lot of those animals with broken legs, or animals with serious illness. They would be done in.

Glaser: "He was ably assisted by Gus Dahlberg, his loyal, diligent, honest, Swedish friend. They handled both city and federal jobs well."

What federal jobs did they handle?

Lewis: I think he dreams.

Glaser: "They both idolized Teddy Roosevelt, and felt a great sense of responsibility in handling the Indian and in dealing with his problem of rehabilitation. And in so doing, they thought they were serving their new country well."

Lewis: Christ! That's all stuff that nobody ever heard of in those days! [Laughter] He tells some great stories.

Glaser: Well, this is interesting.

Lewis: Yes.

Glaser: "Then came the trek of pioneers from the Middle West onward to the Bitterroot Valley in Montana, and the Yakima and Wenatchee valleys in Washington.

Lewis: Correction of pronunciation--

Glaser: Yes?

Lewis: "Ya-kim-MA," and "We-NATCH-ee."

Glaser: We-natch-ee. Thank you. "As these covered wagons rolled down the grade of the Continental Divide, and passed along the rail fences of the property handled by Lazarus and Gus, these worn-out trail-blazers would stop for a few days, rest their horses, take on nourishment. The pasture, the water, and the food would cost them nothing.

"One poverty-stricken group of land seekers was so appreciative of the treatment they received during their prolonged stay, that they left their little Hambletonian bay colt, Billy, whom they adored, as a token of their appreciation. Billy became the family pet for years."

Lewis: I never knew that.

Glaser: "--and was one of the gang with the neighboring youngsters."

Lewis: He was a beautiful little stallion, but I never knew that's where he came from.

Glaser: "Then came the Chicago, Milwaukee, and St. Paul Railroad, on its way through to Seattle, Tacoma, Spokane, and the Pacific Northwest. They cut through the Continental Divide, came down the eighteen-mile grade southeast of Butte, and went right through the property of the city of Butte.

"Lazarus negotiated the sale of the southwest corner of the quarter section of land that he was custodian of, and he and his partner Gus sold a piece of their own land to the Milwaukee Road.

"Their kids had a great time riding the switch engines of the construction crews, while they were laying steel across Northwestern America. These boys grew into manhood personally familiar with the winning of the West."

Lewis: Who were they? Us?

Glaser: Yes, and I guess the Dahlberg children.

Lewis: Yes. The Dahlbergs didn't come that much. Us and the Indian kids and Bert Mullenbee, who later became a test pilot for Western Air, and a few of the guys.

Glaser: But this is true so far?

Lewis: Pretty much, yes.

Glaser: "Throughout all the commotion, as people would come to the gate of the old farmhouse seeking water or food or shelter or the use of the special Butte city telephone; the little lady from the Ukraine in southern Russia would wipe her hands on her apron, and with a smile on her face, willingly lend a helping hand wherever it was needed.

"When her husband would be called into a council meeting of the City of Butte, many miles away, Vera would be left alone with her little children. It was then that two or three bucks from the Indian reservation (Crow Indians) would sit on a fence rail at the ranch gate, with a rifle across their knee, guarding the little family against harm, so intense was their devotion."

Lewis: I don't know where all that came from. I remember a guy came to our house once to get some water to drink, and my mother looked up, and there was an Indian. She said she almost died, but he was very nice. She gave him water, and they were good friends from then on. That's all I remember of that sequence.

Glaser: Was this an Indian from the adjoining reservation?

Lewis: Yes. There was a little camp that was near us.

Glaser: "In the summer of 1919, the Lewis family moved to Seattle, bought a home there, and Vera was brought together with her two younger sons, Rubin and Leon, who had left Butte two years earlier to enter the University of Washington and also the navy.

"After her two younger sons finished school and left home to attend medical school at the University of Pennsylvania, and her oldest son was away from home on business trips, Vera opened her home in Seattle to several boys and girls who were away from their homes, and she cared for them as though she was their mother.

"Several of them were married in her home, and she became a godmother for their children. This maternal process lasted until Vera sold her home a year after her husband died and went to Southern California to live with her son Harry and his family.

"And now they sleep, both of them, in a little cemetery north of Seattle. Lazarus passed away on the 30th day of April, 1933, the year the New Deal began. He voted for Franklin Delano Roosevelt, and lived to see him take office. He also lived to see the advent of Hitler, in January 1933, but he did not live to witness the destruction that this maniac and his fellow Nazis wrought to humanity at large and the Jews in particular.

Glaser: "Vera died just recently, on the 18th day of February 1950, in Los Angeles, and her remains were shipped to Seattle and buried in the plot next to the old Western pioneer, her husband, Lazarus. She lived to see her sons grow to manhood, become useful citizens, good husbands and fathers. Her second son Rubin, now with the Allied Military Government, a renowned chest surgeon, in charge of a DP Hospital in Munich, Germany. Her youngest son Leon, a professor of public health at the University of California in Berkeley, and a commander in the Medical Corps of the U. S. Navy. And her oldest son Harry, a businessman, who has been active in the growing, shipping, and marketing of fruits and produce in California for a quarter century, as well as an active participant in the development of the grape and wine industry since the repeal of prohibition.

"The little immigrant girl from Kremenchug is gone now. She dozed off into eternal sleep in the early morning hours of the Sabbath, just as the lights of the candles in her room flickered out. In her last moments of consciousness, her dying words were: "I am tired, oh God, take me home."

[Tape turned over]

Daughter Pat Jaffe

Glaser: There are some very interesting letters from your daughter Pat in the folders. I enjoyed reading them. She sounds like a bright woman.

Lewis: Oh, she is. What did she say?

Glaser: She was in Europe, I believe, about the same time you were.

Lewis: Yes.

Glaser: And before she married she was traveling around.

Lewis: We married her off in Paris.

Glaser: Was that where she got married? She was meeting important, interesting people there.

Lewis: Yes. She always has.

Glaser: And doing interviews, traveling around Spain, and down to--

Lewis: --Italy.

Glaser: And down to Morocco, I believe.

Lewis: And Italy.

Glaser: Her assessment of people and places is really absorbing.

Lewis: Yes, she's a good writer. She is in television and movies; that's what she does.

Glaser: Now she's got grown children. It's a shame her marriage broke up.

Lewis: Well, it isn't really. People do much better breaking up something that isn't any good. In fact, she liked Bob; they did pretty well for a while.

Glaser: Was he a doctor?

Lewis: Bob is a neuropsychiatrist, yes. He's a neurologist. Trained at Philadelphia Jewish Hospital, and he trained in London. He did very well. He makes pretty damn good wages.

Glaser: Is he practicing psychiatry?

Lewis: In New York, yes.

Glaser: Also doing physical medicine?

Lewis: No, he does psychiatry and neurology. His father was a doctor, and one of his brothers is a doctor. I'm kind of mad that he and Patsy don't get along, but what the hell. She's got a guy she likes better.

Glaser: She was always forthright in her opinions when she was abroad, wasn't she? She also wrote what was going on politically in this country at that time.

Lewis: That was McCarthy, wasn't it?

Glaser: Yes. Even before McCarthy. It was Truman and the Un-American Activities Committee.

Lewis: Yes, that and the bombing in Japan, the atom bomb.

Glaser: Well, the letters I've read so far are after that, the beginning of the Cold War.

COMMENTS ON RUBIN M. LEWIS, M.D. BY PATRICIA LEWIS JAFFE
OCTOBER 1976

This is Patricia Jaffe, making a tape for the University of California's oral history of Rubin Lewis. It's very hard to make a tape about a period of your childhood, and to remember it with any degree of accuracy, particularly when you haven't spent time with the person in question for many years. But I'll try.

Rubin Lewis was married to my mother when I was eleven years old. I remember him as a diamond in the rough: opinionated and daring about his opinions. For example, I remember him riding to the Philadelphia General Hospital on a motorcycle. I remember that he was the first surgeon who got his patients up out of bed the day after they were operated on. That caused a big stir in the hospital at that time.

I remember his going horseback riding with me, when I was perhaps twelve or thirteen years old, and his throwing away the saddle to ride bareback through the country club park in Philadelphia. He was a kind of westerner, really, in the Butte tradition.

He was considered by many people in Philadelphia to be a very different kind of person from those that traveled in the circles that he normally did. For example, in the thirties he made a speech at the AMA--the American Medical Association--in favor of socialized medicine or a form of it, at least. It caused quite a stir.

As far as his social life with my mother is concerned, I only remember it in bits and pieces. My mother, Elsie Finn, was a movie critic for the Philadelphia Record. I think that most of Rabs's social contacts came through her. They spent a lot of time with people from the Philadelphia Orchestra: Eugene Ormandy; William Kincaid, the flutist; Adrian Segal, the cellist. All those people were their friends. Their social life in Philadelphia

was quite full and interesting. They had many friends who were artists--like Harry Rosen and others whose names I forget. They had a really wide range of friends: lawyers, critics, newspaper people. They seemed to have a lot of fun.

For example, at one point in their lives, they had a D'Oyly Carte club. They used to get together on Friday evenings and sing through a Gilbert and Sullivan opera. Of course, none of these people could sing. On Frederick's twenty-first birthday (Frederick, that is, from the "Pirates of Penzance"), they took a huge dummy of a pirate out to dinner at the Art Alliance, which was a club in Philadelphia.

My mother spent a great deal of time traveling and having contact with film and theater people--and music people as well. I think that most of Rabs's contacts were through her.

In the case of Paul Robeson, I don't know whether he actually met Robeson because of my mother's work or because of Dr. Stubbs, but it is true that he was a close friend of Dr. Stubbs. In those days, black people were not invited to your home for dinner, but they were invited to ours.

As far as my relationship with Rabs, he was very opinionated and pushed me a lot to do things, daring things, like to drive an automobile like a maniac, to learn woodworking, to go to medical school. I, of course, was always in a state of rebellion against him.

The things that are most prominent in my memory are a man who had a sense of himself, who had very definite ideas, and who tried many things. He tried to paint at one point in his life, and he tried to learn to play the cello.

As far as his personality is concerned, he had a great enthusiasm for everything that he did. As I said, he was opinionated and difficult.

He always did things with his hands. To watch him cook was like a work of art, because of the way that he handled the materials and the knife. Everything he did, he did well.

Jaffe: Also, I remember that at one point, before Rabs was married to my mother, he wanted very much to go to China with Norman Bethune.* I think the fact that they did get married prevented him from doing so, but that's an interesting episode in his life.

As far as my own life is concerned, I'm glad to have had the opportunity to have had that brush with him. I am now a film maker who lives in New York and has three children and teaches at NYU.

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* Dr. Norman Bethune was a Canadian-born thoracic surgeon who headed a medical unit on the side of Loyalist Spain in the Spanish Civil War. He then went to China to serve with the communist forces of Mao Tse-tung in his war against Japan and the Kuomintang army of Chiang Kai-shek. He died in China in 1939 at the age of forty-nine from septicemia resulting from operating without rubber gloves and of having no sulfa drugs for treatment. Dr. Bethune was the first medical man to bring blood banks to the battlefield, according to his biographers. [See Ted Allan and Sydney Gordon, The Scalpel, the Sword. Boston: Little, Brown and Company; Canada: McClelland and Steward Limited, 1952.]

Glaser: Soon you'll be going north to see your daughter get married. I was wondering what it must have been like to become a father for the first time at the age of--fifty, weren't you?

Lewis: Fifty when Laz [Steven Lazarus] was born.

Glaser: That must have been quite an adjustment.

Lewis: Why?

Glaser: The noise, the tumult--

Lewis: Oh, I didn't mind. I didn't have any pain.

Glaser: I'm not talking about that. Even for a very young couple, a baby makes a great difference.

Lewis: [Intoning] There but for the grace of luck--I would have gotten there sooner! You know, a fool man has no chance at all if a lady wants to make him a father. Even if it isn't true! You know that, don't you?

Glaser: Well, be that as it may, Dr. Lewis [Lewis laughs], I'm talking about the kinds of adjustments that go on. Obviously, judging from your letters to friends, you were absolutely delighted with the children. You enjoyed every bit of their growth and development.

Lewis: Oh, they were wonderful!

Glaser: But to have been--well, not childless, because you did adopt Patsy. But Pat came along in your life when she was about ten.

Lewis: She was just right! She was exactly right for me. She was ten when I got married to Elsie. That was '35. So that was exactly right. I should have been thirty-five when I had a ten-year-old daughter. So that's the right age. Then the other kids came just right too, because they were fifteen years later! [Laughs]

Glaser: So you didn't find it a hard adjustment.

Lewis: No problem at all. The kids were never any problem. They were perfect darlings. They still are. They were really the greatest kids I ever saw. They're smart and they're pretty and they're able, and they're goddamn good farmers! They're really wonderful!

Laz has found himself a new girl friend he's going to live with. I said, "Go on! Don't be a goddamn fool and marry her, now!"

Lewis: "Oh, I won't. She won't let me. Besides, I'm still married."

Glaser: He doesn't have any children, though?

Lewis: No. They decided that when they got married. I hope this one doesn't want 'em, too. She's a nice gal. She teaches at Sacramento State. She lives in Grass Valley.

Glaser: That's kind of a happy medium between the two places; he's in Nevada City, isn't he?

Lewis: Yes.

Emily Vernon Lewis's Family

Glaser: What was your relationship with Emily's family?

Lewis: Very good.

Glaser: How big a family is it?

Lewis: Her mother had five girls and one boy. Her husband was dead.

Glaser: Of course you met her brother in Ecuador?

Lewis: Yes.

Glaser: His name was Stephen, was it?

Lewis: Stephen, also her father's name.

Glaser: What's Reading, Pennsylvania like?

Lewis: That's Emily's birthplace.

Glaser: I know, what's it like?

Lewis: It's like a little town. There's some rich people and some poor people, and a high school.

Glaser: Where did Emily's family fit into that picture?

Lewis: They started there.

Glaser: No, I mean in the rich people/poor people part.

Lewis: I won't tell you, because I don't know. They always gave me the poor mouth then, but I don't know.

Emily Lewis: [From adjoining room] My grandfather was a poor boy who made good. He at one time had a lot of money.

Glaser: How did he make good?

Lewis: He sold nuts and bolts.

E. Lewis: He ended up owning a steel mill.

Glaser: And what did your father do?

E. Lewis: He was a civil engineer who then went into Grandfather's business. After that he was in banking. He retired very early.

Glaser: That's quite a different background from Dr. Lewis's. I asked Dr. Lewis how he got along with your family. He said fine. No conflicts, then?

Lewis: I think we got along better than all the other sons-in-law and daughters-in-law. [Laughter]

E. Lewis: Well, we don't see the family very often.

Lewis: Oh, we're good friends all the time.

VIII RECAPITULATION

More on Ecuador

Glaser: Dr. Lewis, when you were in Ecuador, was there a dictatorship?

Lewis: [Ponders] No. He was elected something like six times, Mr.--

E. Lewis: Jose Maria Velasco Ibarra.

Glaser: Did you have any contact with him?

Lewis: Oh, I think I met him once or twice.

E. Lewis: He'd been elected six different times to be president of Ecuador, and every time, about halfway through his term, he declared himself a dictator, and then he'd get overthrown. Then he'd go to the Argentine and teach political science! [Laughs] And then he comes back and runs again, and they reelect him.

Glaser: Are you using the present tense?

E. Lewis: The last time was not very long ago, and he was overthrown again. Now there's a military junta.

Glaser: He's been doing this for over twenty years?

E. Lewis: Yes.

Glaser: Was he president when you were there?

E. Lewis: He was president--

Lewis: [Interrupts] --and he was overthrown, too.

E. Lewis: We went through numerous revolutions there.

Lewis: I read an article by our friend--

E. Lewis: Galo Plaza.

Lewis: Galo Plaza, who went on at great lengths talking about how Ecuador discovered oil in large amounts, not in miniscule amounts as it had. He was sure that this was going to be the thing that would bring Ecuador into the OPEC. Did you know that?

Glaser: No, I didn't. Where did you hear that?

Lewis: It was in something that came out of the United Nations.

E. Lewis: It was in the Atlantic Monthly.

Lewis: Yes, that's right.

Glaser: Did you feel that it was a well-run country when you were there?

Lewis: The most wonderful country in the world! There's no starvation. If you're hungry, you go out in the fields and pick up a banana or a whole stalk, get some coconuts, corn, grapefruit--whatever you want. Oranges. They're all there. It's a wonderful country. I had a friend there, who was an Ecuadorian, who said, "Where is there a country in the world where there is no starvation?" It doesn't mean there's no lack of nutrition, but that was it.

Glaser: This was a special time in your life, wasn't it?

Lewis: Well, it was a special time for many reasons. One is that it took me from just an ordinary surgeon in Philadelphia to the surgeon in Ecuador. It also put me into an area where there was no anti-Semitism that I knew of. I mean not directed at me. I had a beautiful wife, we had good friends, we belonged to the tennis club and the yacht club, and we had a yacht. We did all kinds of damn nice things. It was just like having money.

Glaser: You were earning a lot of money.

Lewis: I was making twenty-five thousand a year net.

Glaser: Back then, that was a lot. And also you had your income tax taken care of.

Lewis: It's pretty good for now, isn't it?

Glaser: Yes, that's right. But back then it was worth even more.

Lewis: Yes.

Glaser: You had a new wife, and you were starting life afresh, actually.

Lewis: Yes. It was really a very, very charming time, and a nice time to live.

More on Philadelphia

Glaser: By remarking on the absence of anti-Semitism, you're saying something about Philadelphia, aren't you?

Lewis: Well, there's a lot of anti-Semitism in Philadelphia.

Glaser: Did you feel that when you were there?

Lewis: Oh, I didn't particularly, except getting jobs and becoming a staff man in various hospitals.

Glaser: You felt some prejudice about getting positions?

Lewis: Well, of course. Going into medical schools, going into an office--anything else. It's the same thing all the time.

No, Philadelphia is not the home of brotherhood, as Mr. Franklin would have you believe. Nor was he an honorable man, Mr. Franklin. He was a grifter, and he was out to make as much money as he could; build up as much real estate as he could. He was quite a boy.

Glaser: If you felt it was that difficult for you, that really means it was quite an achievement on your part to get Dr. Stubbs in as your assistant.

Lewis: No, the superintendent of the hospital and I both agreed it was about time. I said, "I'm glad you feel that way, because he's going to go anyhow. I'm going, and he's going to come as my friend, that's all."

Glaser: I thought it was against great opposition that you managed to get him as the first black.

Lewis: There was plenty of opposition. I got the first black in, in my graduate school of surgery, also.

Glaser: Tell me about that; I didn't know.

Lewis: Oh, he was a guy that went to graduate school. When he got out, he wanted a job. There were no jobs, and so we got him a job at Philadelphia General.

Glaser: Do you remember his name?

Lewis: Thomas. Artie Thomas.

Glaser: What did he do at the hospital?

Lewis: I think he was called surgical staff, after I left.

Glaser: You got this position for him?

Lewis: Yes. I remember him sitting in the staff meeting, when they started dragging their feet. I said, "You people have a hell of a nerve, really!" (This was the whole surgical staff.) Here's a man who has become what you said black people never become, that is, trained. He wants a job with us, and now you don't seem gracious enough to give it to him. I think that's absurd!" They agreed, and they accepted him. I thought I was going to get the hell thrown out of there, but I wasn't.

Glaser: It sounded as if you were fighting on a lot of different fronts when you were in PHiladelphia.

Lewis: I played on all fronts all the time. I've never been afraid of anything, really.

Glaser: You also had an active cultural life in Philadelphia, didn't you? There's a letter to you in Ecuador, telling you that the Eugene Ormandys had gotten a divorce, and a letter from somebody who was going to be down in Ecuador to write a book.

Lewis: He was a jackass! [Laughter]

Glaser: I can't remember his name. Evidently you know who I mean.

Lewis: Yes. I forget it now. He and his brother both wrote on newspapers, but he came down. He came out on the boat for dinner, and of course, we didn't have a whole crew to cook his dinner, but we had a very nice dinner for him. I didn't think he was particularly gracious. That was the last time I saw him. Josephs, his name was.

Glaser: Right. Ray Josephs, and his wife was named Patty?

Lewis: Pat.

Glaser: Was life in Germany as pleasant as it was in Ecuador?

Lewis: Well, it was different. It was quite pleasant, but it was Germany.

Glaser: Where did you start your sketching? Was it when you were in Europe or when you were in Ecuador?

Lewis: Actually, I started in Chincoteague, Virginia, on the Delmarva Peninsula, across the bay from Annapolis.

Glaser: Were you on a vacation from Philadelphia?

Lewis: I had a babe. We went down there to spend the weekend. We lived with a rabbi down there and his wife.

Glaser: Was this before you married Elsie?

Lewis: Oh, yes.

Glaser: When you were in Ecuador, and also in Europe, you were into photography.

Lewis: Oh, I've been in that since about 1916. Are you interested in color photographs? We've got millions of them.

Glaser: I'd like to see them.

IX BERKELEY, 1951

Return from Germany

Glaser: When you came back to this country, you had the chance to pick and choose where you were going to settle.

Lewis: Yes.

Glaser: For a while, you were going to make it Philadelphia, weren't you?

Lewis: No. I went there because we had a house there. We had a four-story house on Pine Street. We were going to Seattle. I got to Seattle, and it wasn't any good, so then we went to Germany. I gladly did.

Glaser: I was talking about when you came back from Germany.

Lewis: When we came back from Ecuador, we went to Seattle, and didn't like it there because of the doctors. We went to Germany, because they offered us a job. Then we came back and went to Berkeley.

Glaser: Did you go directly? Had you made up your mind that that would be your move?

Lewis: No, we came back and went to live in Reading for a while, with Mama-in-law, who's having a birthday next weekend, I guess.

Glaser: But when you first came back from Germany, did you have any idea of where you really wanted to set up practice, or what you wanted to do?

Lewis: No. We were going to look around and see. But Philadelphia wasn't the place, because I--I don't know. I came to Berkeley.

We'd sent our stuff down here, and it got derailed; the bus went over, and they lost a lot of the stuff. I made the adjustment for our loss and knew how much it was going to be, so we went to England

Lewis: and bought some antiques.

Glaser: Did you go to England from Germany, before you came back home?

Lewis: Yes.

Glaser: You shipped your belongings to California--did that mean you had decided to settle in California before you even had left Germany?

Lewis: No, it meant that I had sent my stuff down here. No use leaving them in Seattle. I wasn't going to live up there.

Glaser: I see. I thought you were talking about sending things from Germany to California, but you mean from Seattle.

Lewis: Yes. I could have done that. I could have sent antiques from Germany, boxed with the freight paid and everything else. I just wasn't smart.

Glaser: Then when you came to California, and after you--what's the technical term, when you have to pass a board to practice in California?

Lewis: Yes.

Glaser: That would be in '51, I believe.

Lewis: Yes. Those were really no problem.

Medical Practice and Hospital Affiliations

Glaser: Did you set up private practice?

Lewis: Yes, immediately.

Glaser: Where was that?

Lewis: My office was on Ellsworth and Channing, I guess. Then I moved up to Webster.

Glaser: Near Alta Bates Hospital?

Lewis: Across the street.

Glaser: You were affiliated with a lot of different hospitals. Do you want to tell me about that?

Lewis: Well, they were all Oakland staff hospitals. I was at County Hospital for about fifteen years.

Glaser: Was that Highland?

Lewis: Yes. I was a chest surgeon out there, one of the chest surgeons. Then I was at Herrick and Alta Bates and Brookside, and the one on--what the hell's the name of it? It's on the west side.

Glaser: How large was your practice?

Lewis: Oh, I was building the house--I ran twenty-five, thirty thousand dollars gross. I took on a secretary, although I hadn't before. My gross income was around forty thousand right away. When my other secretary worked for me, it went up to a point where it was eighty thousand. I decided that was too much, so I cut it down.

Glaser: That's a heavy load, isn't it?

Lewis: It depends. In surgery it ain't much. If you're doing two or a half-dozen cases a week, you're doing pretty good.

Glaser: What were your surgical cases? TB had decreased to some extent, hadn't it?

Lewis: No, not much. Why, it's TB and cancer and bronchiestasis.

Glaser: You hadn't found that the miracle drugs cut down on the incidence of TB?

Lewis: Not on the incidence. It cut down on the seriousness of it. It cut down on the death rate a little. It took pretty good care of itself. But it was there. The incidence of tuberculosis remained about the same, but the seriousness of it decreased.

Glaser: Were you able to obtain the drugs when you were down in Ecuador?

Lewis: We used them a little there, and we used gallons of them down in Germany.

Glaser: That's when it really became available?

Lewis: We used the drugs instead of in grams, we used in kilograms.

Glaser: What is the significance of that?

Lewis: We used a thousand times as much drugs.

Glaser: Are you telling me that antibiotics were more available, or that the need was much greater?

Lewis: Well, both. The need in Ecuador was just as much as in Germany.

Glaser: But you couldn't get that much?

[Tape turned over]

Glaser: You used it by the gram, and in Germany by the kilogram?

Lewis: Well, also in Philadelphia it was hard to get too.

Glaser: So you had as great a need in Ecuador, but you weren't able to get drugs?

Lewis: That's right.

Glaser: And then by the time you got to Berkeley, it was available?

Lewis: There was plenty.

Tool and Equipment Shop

Glaser: Tell me about the business that you established. Jay Gittelsohn told me that you had a machine shop on San Pablo Avenue.

Lewis: God, he's a big talker!

Glaser: He admires you.

Lewis: Yes, I know. Well, my brother needed a tilt table for his rehab work, so I said, "What do you want?"

"Oh, you know. Just take a couple pieces of plywood and put a hinge on it."

I said, "How much do you think we could sell it for?"

"Oh, fifty, seventy-five dollars."

"No, I don't think I want to work on a thing like that. I'd have to buy machinery, and I don't think that kind of money's going to pay for machinery."

"Well, do what you want, and tell me what you're going to do."

So I did. I made tilt tables. I sold them for various amounts. I started at three hundred dollars. I sold one to the space age, to

Lewis: NASA, for five hundred dollars. That was an electric drive, with an electric brake.

Glaser: Was there something different about your tilt tables than what had been made before?

Lewis: Well, they hadn't been made before, when ours came out. Then there were several came out.

Glaser: What kind of doctors used them?

Lewis: Physiotherapists, podiatrists. They stand the people, from the horizontal to the vertical position, exercise the renal flow, and things like that.

Glaser: That sounds terribly important.

Lewis: It was important. I made enough to buy my machine shop. I think I spent about forty thousand dollars on equipment and materials. I sold the whole thing for five thousand dollars when I finished it, before I went to Switzerland.

Glaser: Why did you sell it for so little?

Lewis: Because all the equipment was--When you build a shop, you know, you build it by what you have to pay for it. You sell it for what you can get for it. But I made a reasonable amount of money for the time I put in. It was kind of fun.

Glaser: How many employees did you have?

Lewis: Me.

Glaser: You did it all? In your spare time?

Lewis: Yes.

Glaser: And building the house too?

Lewis: Oh, I had the house built by then.

Glaser: I see. Did you do anything besides the tables? Did you make any tools?

Lewis: I built a lot of junk, yes.

Glaser: I mean for medical uses.

Lewis: Yes, that's what I'm talking about.

Glaser: That's not junk. [Laughs]

Lewis: Junk to me.

Glaser: What did you build?

Lewis: I built some surgical instruments. I built some electrical, micromagnetic attachments to the instruments.

Glaser: What kind of instruments?

Lewis: Taking the cover off of ribs when I took ribs out.

Glaser: Was this an invention?

Lewis: Yes, it was a design.

Glaser: And what else?

Lewis: I made a bronchoscoptic carrying case, and rebuilt some bronchoscoptic instruments. I kept my hands dirty.

Glaser: Did you have your things patented? I asked you that once, and you told me you don't patent medical things.

Lewis: I've never patented anything. There's no way to sell the goddamn stuff.

Glaser: There are always other doctors, aren't there?

Lewis: No. I gave them to the people who manufacture them, and they sold them for five years. I don't know what the hell people want that much money for!

Glaser: For you, the pleasure was in figuring out a need and filling it.

Lewis: Yes, and the pleasure of travel and all that. I had enough money so that when we decided that I would quit, I looked over the money I had, and I had maybe a hundred thousand dollars. I decided that collecting up pieces here and there and everywhere--

Glaser: Pieces of what?

Lewis: Money! [Laughter]

Glaser: Where did you find pieces that you could collect here and there?

Lewis: People owed me money. I ended up with the house in the clear, and about two hundred thousand dollars in cash, which I bought bonds with. I had an income of approximately ten thousand dollars a year, or

Lewis: twelve thousand a year, from investments alone. I figured out that that was the equivalent of about three-tenths of a million dollars. That's enough for me.

Retirement, Travel with Emily, 1971

Glaser: What year did you decide to retire?

Lewis: Seventy-two.

Glaser: That was when you went to Switzerland?

Lewis: Yes.

Glaser: When you came to Berkeley, Emily decided that she wanted to go back to school, is that right? She got a master's degree in public health.

Lewis: Yes, but that was before she went to Africa.

Glaser: After she got her degree, she got a job with the State Department?

Lewis: First, she worked for the Public Health Department, then she got a job in Africa for the World Health Organization.

Glaser: This was in family planning?

Lewis: Yes.

Glaser: At that point, when she had this offer, you told her you didn't want her to go, and she decided to go anyway. When did she come back, '71?

Lewis: Yes.

Glaser: And she had another job offer in Switzerland?

Lewis: Yes, when she came back from Africa, she worked in Switzerland.

Glaser: Oh, on her way home from working, she stopped there in Switzerland? Was this with World Health also?

Lewis: Yes.

Glaser: So then in '71, you decided to retire and go with her?

Lewis: No, I decided to retire. Then she asked me to come. I said I would, so I closed up shop and went.

Glaser: I think you told me that you stayed in Switzerland, and she went on to Africa?

Lewis: No. She came back from Africa to Switzerland. Then she took several trips to Africa, one a big tour, and another one to Cairo, to Egypt, and another one to Tunis. Then we came back. So we went to the Philippines and India and various places. Then we came back. I left from England to come here. Emily stayed there another couple of months. Finally, she came back to Berkeley.

I got here and went to bed, and went to the hospital. I goddamn near died.

Glaser: What happened?

Lewis: I don't know. I got sick.

Glaser: What was it?

Lewis: It wasn't anything that anybody knew much about. It was mostly a complication of diabetes.

Glaser: Was this the first indication that you were diabetic?

Lewis: No. I got acute symptoms back in 1960.

Glaser: You were here in Berkeley then?

Lewis: Yes.

Glaser: How long did that lay you up?

Lewis: Two or three months, I guess.

Glaser: How long were you hospitalized when you came back from England?

Lewis: I don't recall. Two or three weeks.

Glaser: Did you lose your leg at that point?

Lewis: No, I didn't lose my leg until last year. I fell and broke my hip. Then I had my leg amputated.

Glaser: Emily told me the reason you have some difficulties talking is that a tube was put down your throat.

Lewis: Yes, that stupid goddamn guy down at Herrick put a tube down to give me air. He'd have done much better if he'd left me die, that son of a bitch! Anyhow, I couldn't talk for weeks. I had a beautiful voice. I sang in glee clubs. I had a nice voice! Now my daughter's got it. Jesus, can she sing! She has the voice of a bird.

Glaser: Has she had voice training?

Lewis: Oh, a little in high school. She sang in their vocal groups.

Glaser: It must have given you great satisfaction to actually build your own home!

Lewis: It was pretty good. I didn't do it all, but I did a lot of it.

Glaser: When did you start?

Lewis: In July of '51, I guess. No, '52. We opened it up in April of '53. We moved in in April of '53. I walked down the stairs and tripped, and broke my ankle!

Glaser: You mean right on the day you moved in?

Lewis: Yes!

Glaser: Ah, that's not fair!

Lewis: Oh, it doesn't matter, really. I never had a fracture until then, and I've had at least fifty since then.

Glaser: Fifty?

Lewis: [Chuckles] I think so. It seemed that's all I had were fractures.

Glaser: Is it because there are so many steps in the house?

Lewis: Oh no, no. It's just that I'm getting older.

Glaser: Does it have to do with the sense of balance?

Lewis: I think it has to do with blood vessels.

Glaser: In your lifetime, you have seen fantastic changes. Not just in medicine, but to have gone--

Lewis: The whole civilization has changed!

Glaser: So much has passed into your--

Lewis: [Interrupts] And I've seen most of it.

Glaser: Right. To have gone from horse and buggy to the space age--

Lewis: Well, that's true. It's an interesting thing. I was thinking the other night of the changes that have occurred to me. I mean in the area where I live. We used to plow the road from my house to the trolley line, which was about a quarter of a mile. It was always drifted, and we couldn't walk it without a path. So I built this snowplow and hitched the horse to it, and drove a path to the trolley line. We drove our horse to school when it snowed. We drove the horse with the drag behind, to get to school. We later rode the bicycle from the house to school. Then later, a motorcycle to school. I think that's pretty good.

We had a horse and buggy. We had a team of two light grays once. We had three cows. We used to deliver the milk. We used to churn butter, and do all the things that people talk about--the great things in the frontier.

It was an exciting way to live, because when we needed something, we went and made it. If we were going to make butter, we took some cream and separated it from the milk, put it in a pot, and let it settle, and drained off the cream. We churned the butter and washed the butter, and washed out the buttermilk and drank the buttermilk, and made cottage cheese from the sour cream. We did everything at home.

Glaser: Were you involved in this, or is it that you watched your mother do it?

Lewis: Well, I would get involved. I would certainly have to carry the milk in, and have to go get the cows. I did try to milk, but I was never big enough. In general, I can put my hand to it a little.

Glaser: Did you do the churning?

Lewis: Oh, yes, we always churned.

Glaser: You boys took turns on that?

Lewis: Until we got tired. My kids will be making butter soon now. They're going to have cows. They've got two cows. One's going to be bred.

Glaser: Your daughter Vera or your son?

Lewis: My daughter. My son ain't got no cows.

Glaser: In your lifetime, you've seen the changes not only in transportation but in medicine. Haven't there been--?

Lewis: Oh, yes, medicine has been completely reversed, actually. But that's something again.

Glaser: In what way?

Lewis: Well, you see, I didn't go to engineering school until I was seventeen. I graduated at twenty-two. I went back to pre-med and then to medical school at twenty-six. I graduated at thirty. I served my internship after that. I was a little late getting to medical school.

Glaser: But you still saw a great deal of changes from the time that you were thirty until the time you retired?

Lewis: Yes indeedy. I saw many diseases eliminated. I saw many diseases cured, with various ways. In general, I certainly saw my share.

Glaser: Just in your field alone, there were lots of changes.

Lewis: In chest surgery alone, it's practically all since I've been in medicine.

Glaser: Do you want to tell me in detail about that?

Lewis: No, I don't think so, because it's all a natural development that happened in that form of surgery. I've given lectures on the development of chest surgery, for example. Some of my friends who are local chest surgeons wondered where I got the paper that I read, because it was so complete and so thorough. He thought it was something that he'd like to have a copy of. I never gave it to him, because I didn't have it.

Glaser: You mean you spoke extemporaneously?

Lewis: Well, it was just stuff I knew, and my lectures were about an hour and a half.

Glaser: Where was this?

Lewis: In Berkeley.

Glaser: For someone who came out of a little mining town in the West, from a family that was comfortable and happy but without much money, you have had many marvelous experiences.

Lewis: Yes, they've been pretty good.

Glaser: You've met important people, people who have accomplished, and <u>you</u> have accomplished, a great deal.

Lewis: I think probably that's true.

Glaser: Did you ever have a sense of wondering, "Is this really me having these experiences?" Did you ever feel like that?

Lewis: No, not particularly. I never thought they were that great. They were things that just happened to jell, involving me, that's all.

Glaser: So that you were never really surprised?

Lewis: I have never been very much surprised with anything. I told you I had a fellowship in surgery that was a matter of one out of eighty-six applicants. I suppose if that can happen, anything can happen. I'm not saying it was a big thing; I'm saying it was just a matter of luck. I got the fellowship largely because I built the equipment to measure pressure.

Glaser: Why is that luck? That sounds like ability.

Lewis: When you invent something, it's because it presents itself out of something that's unknown that you're trying to overcome. This I did. I had a basic bit of information and design. I think all designs are luck. If you invent something and it hits, that's great. But for every one thing that's invented, that solves a problem, probably five hundred do not.

Glaser: You really have a philosophy that it's luck that determines the difference between those who succeed and those who do not?

Lewis: No, I have a philosophy that if you have luck and ability you can put them together.

Glaser: I wouldn't reject luck completely, but I would think it's a very small part of the total scheme of success.

[Tape turned over]

Lewis: There was nothing smart about it. I just happened to make a good guess. Anybody can do that. Medical school isn't such a great challenge. It's just something that's made for the average guy. It's not made for anybody other than that.

Glaser: Be that as it may, you're the one who came up with that particular thought or invention. It wasn't somebody else, it was you. Why be modest about it?

Lewis: I'm not really modest. It's for anybody to do it.

Glaser: But you were the one.

Lewis: Given the same opportunities, anybody can do them, I think.

Glaser: You had a classful of fellow students, and they didn't. You did; you came up with it.

Lewis: I did a little crooked work first. [Snickers]

Glaser: Like what?

Lewis: Like guessing the right answers and things.

Glaser: Well, you were in good company there. That's nothing unique.

Lewis: Yes.

Glaser: It's quite true that there are very few pure inventions. A great deal of the time it's a matter of putting a number of different things together. But that in itself is unique, and that's the creativity--being able to perceive what can be put together.

Lewis: That's true. I agree with that.

Glaser: Well, then that is an achievement, and why don't you take credit for it?

Lewis: I do!

Glaser: [Laughs] You haven't been talking--

Lewis: I can't be sitting around saying, "Gee, ain't I great?!" Listen, I'm not that great!

Glaser: How great are you?

Lewis: Really, not very great. I'm lazy. If I was an energetic guy, and made use of most of my time, I'd have written several books on surgery, I'd have done a lot of different things, I'd have capitalized on some of my engineering designs. You know, those are things that ambitious people do. I'm not that ambitious. But I've done my share of junk.

Glaser: You said you were not interested in money.

Lewis: Well, I haven't been. If I had been interested in money, I would have put my money to work earlier. I had twenty thousand dollars sitting around the bank for ten years. I got not one nickel of interest on it. Now that's stupid, don't you think?

Glaser: Yes.

Lewis: Now that's what I did!

Glaser: Would you have written medical books and put your inventions to greater use if you were more interested in money?

Lewis: I could have, if I was interested in making money.

Glaser: Has that been the thing that kept you back, do you think?

Lewis: Oh, I don't think so. I'm lazy!

Glaser: I don't think a lazy man goes back to school, after having one degree, to change his field.

Lewis: I suppose that's true. And yet, there are a lot of things that one has to iron out, and get out of the way somehow.

X INTERVIEW WITH EMILY LEWIS AND DR. LEWIS

Ecuador

Glaser: Dr. Lewis, I've asked Emily to go over some things with us. Number one, your meeting and courtship; [laughter in background] and number two, her reaction to the hospital and medical situation in Ecuador.

Dr. Lewis told me that you had come to interview him in Philadelphia to be taken on as a staff member in Ecuador.

E. Lewis: Yes.

Glaser: Would you tell me about that?

E. Lewis: I was going to visit my brother, who lived in Ecuador. My brother had written me that he was delighted that I was coming, but he felt that I might get a little bored after I was there for a while. He wondered if I would be interested in working while I was there. He had heard that there was a famous surgeon from Philadelphia coming and wondered if he was bringing a staff with him.

He gave me his name and told me that he was in Philadelphia. I looked him up, and I went to his office. He was not there, but I talked to his secretary. I asked if he was taking his staff with him to Guayaquil. She said, "Oh, no." She looked at me and smiled a little, and said, "But he might be interested in you!" [Laughs]

Glaser : He told me about that.

E. Lewis: Then about a couple of weeks later, I went back. I made an appointment to see the doctor, and I went back and talked to him just before I went--

Glaser: Now this was the fall or late summer of '48?

Lewis: Late spring or early summer?

E. Lewis: No, it was late summer. I got down there at the beginning of September, and you got there a few weeks later, in October. Then I saw all these headlines in the Guayaquil newspaper--"Famous Surgeon from Philadelphia Arrives." I kept thinking that he was going to get in touch with me, and he didn't. So finally I called him.

I don't remember how I finally found you. I thought you were at the Metropolitan Hotel, and you weren't there. But they knew you and knew where you were or something.

Lewis: I was at Higgins'.

E. Lewis: Right. So I finally found you. Then you discovered that I was the only registered nurse in Ecuador and decided that you'd better hire me as a surgical nurse.

Lewis: And see what I said about selling yourself down the river? [Laughter]

Glaser: Why do you say that?

Lewis: Well, because it isn't entirely true. There were two other nurses.

E. Lewis: There were? [Laughs] Well, you had a wide choice.

Lewis: Well, I had three.

Glaser: You had some nurses on the staff, but they were not trained?

Lewis: None on the staff. They were in the area. In the whole country.

Glaser: Were the nurses in the hospital the equivalent of our vocational nurses?

Lewis: Pretty much.

E. Lewis: There was a school for registered nurses in Quito, Ecuador, which had just been started by Rockefeller, I think, or with Rockefeller money, or the Rockefeller Institute. But they had not yet graduated a class.

There were some very good nurses in the hospital where we were, but they had just been trained by the sisters who ran the

E. Lewis: hospital, the nuns. They had had no actual, formal training.

Glaser: I would like to have your reaction to the hospital itself, to the physical layout of the hospital, and how it was run.

E. Lewis: The tuberculosis hospital, which was the hospital that we were working in, was in a pavilion up on a hill above the regular general hospital for the city. It was a very beautiful location.

The idea of separate pavilions was that it looked very attractive. It turned out, of course, not to be very practical, because then any moving of patients between one pavilion and another, especially if they had to be brought to the surgical pavilion, meant that they had to be moved outside and along pathways on stretchers. That was a little bit difficult.

Then there was a lot of things that happened about the need of reorganizing and restructuring the surgical pavilion. I'm not sure if I can remember it all. There was something funny about the chapel.

Lewis: The X-ray department was upstairs, and the chapel was downstairs. Well, when we put the X-ray department in, the believers felt that they should have open access to the sky--

Glaser: By "believer," do you mean those who were religious?

Lewis: Yes. We couldn't see how we could do that, but eventually after a great deal of argument, we lost. The chapel was moved upstairs. The X-ray department was moved downstairs.

You know, X-ray equipment is pretty heavy, and Ecüadorians are pretty little, so instead of having six guys lift the X-ray machine, pick it up, and take it down the ramp, we had something like sixteen little guys lifting. They picked it up with no problem at all. We had enough hands so that we could divide it. We moved it downstairs, and God was happy, because he could breathe freely.

We moved it downstairs, and it was pretty good. Actually, it was better than if it was upstairs, because we had no lighting.

Glaser: Carbon copies of letters you wrote from Guayaquil to people back in Philadelphia and elsewhere indicate you were critical of the design of the hospital. You said that this was built by Rockefeller funds. I think the organization was the Office of Inter-American Affairs, is that right?

Lewis: I don't know.

E. Lewis: Yes, as I recall.

Glaser: You were critical in your letters, but when I asked you about the hospital, you passed it off rather lightly, as if, "Oh well, it was the best we could have expected."

Lewis: As a matter of fact, it wasn't a bad hospital at all.

Glaser: Is that your reaction, Emily?

E. Lewis: Yes. As I said, it was visually attractive, and it looked nice to have these separate pavilions. But practically speaking, it's very difficult to run a hospital that way, with a separate group of attendants for each pavilion.

Attendants can't easily supervise a large group, and there's a lot of time wasted in walking from one place to another, carrying food from one place to another, and so on.

However, since there's lots of people and lots of time in Ecuador, it really didn't make that much difference.

Glaser: What about hygienic standards within the hospital?

Lewis: It's always greater outside the hospital than inside! [Laughter]

E. Lewis: That's one thing that the pavilion setup gives you, lots of fresh air. The hygiene itself--I think when we first arrived, I was rather appalled at--just because their standards for hygiene in general were lower. For example, in the surgical wing that we were working in, there was a clean operating room and a dirty operating room, which is something that has been thrown out of the American system.

Glaser: Why would you want a dirty operating room?

E. Lewis: You would have a room that you would operate on cases that had abscesses, and things of that sort. You wouldn't want to take a case in there, a person in there, who did not have an abscess, for example, or who had some sort of open--But, of course, in the United States, you so thoroughly scrub an operating room between operations that you presumed that any--

Lewis: [Interrupting] Unless they have gas gangrene. Then they keep them vacant for three days.

Glaser: Gas gangrene?

Lewis: Yes, where you lose a leg because of a kind of organism. You have to scrub and let it cool for two or three days.

December 14, 1946

Sr. Carlos Julio Arosemena
Dr. Juan Tanca Marengo
Dr. Armando Pareja
Dr. Alfredo Valenzuela

Gentlemen:

The problem of nursing in the hospital Alfredo Valenzuela is giving me considerable amount of concern. The nurses which have come from Quito although I don't know all of them certainly do not reflect much in the way of good training or desire to cooperate.

I have in the hospital at the moment three post-operative cases. Not one has had 24 hours nursing care since operation. These three cases are large cases for this country. They are first-stage thoracoplasties. One patient has had moderate care, the other patient, a ward patient was seen by me at 1:30 in the morning after operation and I found that he had vomited in his bed, that he had had a reaction from his transfusion, his sheets were completely saturated with perspiration and vomit and his wound-dressings were likewise saturated with vomit and some blood. There was no nurse on duty when I arrived in the hospital and I was informed that the nurses only work until three or four o'clock in the afternoon and that we do not have surgical nurses around the clock. This of course is one of the most serious criticisms that one could make in an institution. Patients usually need the best nursing care between dark and day-break rather than between day-break and mid-afternoon. During the day there are many people around, including doctors and other workers who can be of some value to the patient. But at night to leave these fresh post-operative cases in the hands of uninformed orderlies or practical nurses is just another way of inviting danger.

As I said when I arrived at 1:30 in the morning, the patient's bed was completely disheveled, dirty and wet. When I asked for sheets, they told me that there were none in the hospital, which of course was only another way of getting out of doing some work. However, I did secure sheets from our operating room supply shelf and made the patient's bed. This I thought would be a somewhat of a stimulus to put these people on their toes however, this morning when I came to the hospital to look at my fresh post-operative of yesterday, I found her head-end of the bed covered with vomited and her bottom was sitting on a Turkish towel completely saturated with urine. In a bed, the mattress of which was new and on which there was no rubber sheet to protect the mattress.

It seems to me that where things are as expensive as they are in this country, that one would spend a great deal of time trying to save rather than to waste the assets that are available. In view of these conditions, I have a proposal to make. I presume that the nurses that were trained at Quite are not at all interested in doing nursing work as we know nursing work, and on that basis I should like very much when I return, or even before I go, to try and

find four good intelligent muchachas whom Miss Vernon and I can train in the ways of reasonable good surgical nursing and who are willing to work 24 hours. The shift time can be arranged so that they do have adequate time for rest and diversion and at the same time provide the patient with reasonable good surgical nursing care. I don't believe that we ought to take the responsibility of major surgery without having adequate post-operative observers and workers in the ward or in the room with the patient. It is absolute folly to subject a patient's life to the carefree attitude of people who are not in the least [interested] in making the patient comfortable and in reporting aberrant changes to the physician in charge.

Yours very truly,

Rubin M. Lewis M.D.

RMLewis/mz

E. Lewis: It's an organism that has spores, so it's very difficult to get rid of by scrubbing. Generally speaking, operating rooms in this country are just cleaned between operations. You just assume, rightly or wrongly, that we're not contaminating the next case with the last case's organisms.

Glaser: One thing that I wanted to ask you about is the politicking within the sponsoring organization--the League for Anti-Tuberculosis. Dr. Lewis says, rather offhandedly, "Well, you have that in any organization." Is that your reaction, too?

E. Lewis: The Anti-Tuberculosis League was financed by a one percent tax on all imports to Ecuador. It had quite a--

Lewis: Bankroll.

E. Lewis: --bankroll. It was well-financed, because there are a great many goods imported into Ecuador. Almost all manufactured goods had to come in, especially then. Almost everything manufactured came in from the outside.

The person who was president of the Anti-Tuberculosis League was a man named Carlos Arosemena. I'm not sure exactly how he had been chosen to be president of the Anti-Tuberculosis League. He was a banker. I suppose he was just a very well-known figure.

Lewis: He was interested in social things, and he became head of the League.

E. Lewis: Anyway, as a result of one of the overthrows of Jose Velasco Ibarra, he was elected president, a temporary president of the country, during the time that we were there. Then, of course, as happens in every country, all his potential political opponents began taking potshots at him for whatever--you know, finding fault with every decision that he had ever made about anything.

One of the things that they were very critical about in a newspaper article was the fact that when he was president of the Anti-Tuberculosis League, he had seen fit to import from the United States a very expensive surgeon who was getting a fabulous sum of money on a contract for a year, during which time he was supposed to teach chest surgery as well as perform chest surgery.

E. Lewis: Some of their criticism, for example, was "Here this famous surgeon, Dr. Lewis, has been here for six months, and he hasn't even taken out a lung yet! What kind of a chest surgeon is that? He hasn't done any huge major surgery!"

Lewis: That's the same number we took out in Philadelphia. [Laughs]

E. Lewis: The fact that there wasn't any anesthesia for that sort of major surgery wasn't considered. All the surgeries that were done had to be done under local anesthetic. So even doing things like removing ribs was quite an operation. What would ordinarily take you about an hour in Philadelphia took us five hours.

Lewis: Maybe three.

E. Lewis: It would take five hours from start to finish.

Lewis: Yes.

E. Lewis: Rubin had to give the local anesthetic while he was doing the operation, to make sure that the person was comfortable while he was removing the rib. That was about the most major surgery he could do. You just can't take out somebody's lung without having them properly anesthetized, and nobody there knew how to do things for them in case they stopped breathing.

Glaser: How long did it take before that problem was solved?

E. Lewis: It turned out there was an American anesthetist in Quito. We finally did, when we were up in Quito, get to do some major surgery with Ferguson, didn't we?

Lewis: Yes.

E. Lewis: And then he did come down to Guayaquil several times. All the time that we were there, Rubin was trying to get permission to buy good anesthesia machines, and so on. I don't think we ever really totally resolved the problem.

Lewis: We bought a machine from Forrager and had it shipped to Guayaquil. It's a company that makes anesthesia machinery.

E. Lewis: I can't remember whether that had arrived by the time--

Lewis: Well, I know we had it down in Ortega Clinic.

E. Lewis: I didn't remember whether it had arrived and been set up, and we actually had an anesthetist.

Lewis: We had that, and we had Ferguson with us.

Glaser: Dr. Lewis didn't respond to me about the politicking, because it wasn't terribly important, was that it?

E. Lewis: Well, I think it was important from the point of view that he did become sort of a political football there, among the people who were opposing Carlos Arosemena as continuing the presidency.

Glaser: Did it hamper your work?

Lewis: Not very much.

E. Lewis: There began to be a division among the doctors of a pro-Rubin Lewis faction and an anti-Rubin Lewis faction.

Lewis: It was Fraile and Valenzuela's group, and Gilbert.

E. Lewis: I think that we really never were able to figure out whether it was involved with their opposition to Arosemena as president, or more involved with their feeling of having a North American surgeon there.

Glaser: Professional jealousy?

E. Lewis: Right. No question. Rubin was very, very good friends, as he has told you, with Dr. Higgins. There was also some politics around that. After we left, not long after we left, Dr. Higgins became mayor of Guayaquil. He probably was also one of these people who might eventually have become a presidential candidate. There's a lot of that sort of--

Lewis: All doctors become politicians!

E. Lewis: --professional and political jealousy in South America, because in contradistinction to the United States, doctors are very often--

Lewis: Political.

E. Lewis: --political. Doctors very often become members of the parliament, and members of the cabinet, or president. It's just a stepping-stone towards--

Glaser: But where do they find the time?

Lewis: Oh, they make it. They always have some place to go to see a patient, or break off.

E. Lewis: It's like going into law in this country. It's a way of going into politics. Many sons of wealthy families, for example, go into medicine not really because they're interested in medicine per se as a career, or interested in taking care of sick people, but as a way to become political.

Glaser: That's very interesting, because in this country we consider the study of medicine to be so demanding that you wouldn't go into it unless you're very dedicated. [Dr. Lewis laughs]

E. Lewis: That's right.

Glaser: I know, to counterbalance that idea there are those who go into it because it's reputed to be very remunerative.

E. Lewis: Right.

Glaser: Let's get back to your romance. You met in September--

Lewis: What?

Glaser: Romance. Are you questioning that, Dr. Lewis [laughter], after all these years, and two children?

Lewis: Oh, I guess not.

Glaser: You met in September, and you were married on the fourteenth of December.

E. Lewis: Yes.

Glaser: That's fast stepping, isn't it, Dr. Lewis?

Lewis: Oh, I don't think it was very fast.

E. Lewis: Not for <u>you</u>! [Laughs]

Lewis: Neither of us thought it was very fast, did we?

E. Lewis: I'm sure it was catalyzed by the fact that we were in a foreign country, and there were not a lot of other people around that we knew.

One of the things that precipitated it, probably, was that I was living with my brother. He was working at a brewery. The brewery also owned a variety of properties of different kinds. The brewery had been started by an Englishman who had dabbled in a number of Ecuadorian projects. He'd been involved in building the Ecuadorian railroad.

E. Lewis: The brewery, because they had machinery for pasteurizing, was also involved in pasteurizing and selling milk. It was, in fact, the only place where you could get pasteurized milk. Because they were involved in that, they also had a dairy farm and raised cattle.

My brother was asked by the man who owned the brewery to go and run the dairy farm for a while, because they'd been having problems there. He had to move out of the city of Guayaquil, across the Guayas River, to the area where the dairy cattle were. They had a very lovely house there, and a hacienda called Lucreo.

So he announced to me that he was moving, and he said, "If you're going to work for Rubin, I don't know how we're going to figure out your living arrangements." I told this to Rubin, and he said, "Well, you'll just have to move in with me, I guess." [Laughs] And that's what happened. That was one way of solving our living arrangements, though.

Lewis: Higgins said we had to get married, because it wouldn't look nice if we just lived together. So I got married. [Laughter]

Glaser: That sounds like the story of your daughter, too.

Lewis: No, she was already living in. [Laughter]

E. Lewis: There wasn't anybody objecting to her living arrangements.

Glaser: This period in Ecuador must have been a wondrous time. Life was pleasant and easy, even though you were working hard. Of course, before the children came, you could have this time for just the two of you.

E. Lewis: It really was splendid, just like being on a year's extended honeymoon.

Lewis: Then we took off a half year after that, and did nothing.

E. Lewis: When the contract was over in October, at the end of October--

Lewis: We stayed on until April.

E. Lewis: We took long trips on our boat.

Glaser: Do you think, looking back, that this was possibly the best time that you've had?

E. Lewis: Oh, in many ways, yes. I think so.

Lewis: I think so too. Especially our boat.

E. Lewis: The sailing was so wonderful.

Germany

Glaser: I know that you weren't working when you were in Germany, at Gauting. Did you get involved with anything at all, simply because you had the nursing background? Did Rubin ever consult with you?

E. Lewis: No. No, I didn't really get involved in nursing.

Lewis: It was hard. She couldn't move because of the organization in the hospital there. The hospital organization took care of everything--secretaries' pencils, streptomyacin, and everything. So there wasn't any choice. We had staff meetings that determined treatment and all that sort of thing. That wasn't a part of the structure.

Glaser: I'm afraid I don't understand what you're telling me about your work.

Lewis: The organization of the hospital in Germany was almost complete. Not that it was good, but it was not bad. We had a staff including the medical staff, the pharmacy staff, and all the rest. It was well organized, and well manned.

E. Lewis: I think he's saying that there were plenty of trained people available. There was no shortage of workers.

Glaser: You had some conflicts with your IRO TB consultant, Dr. Gelner?

Lewis: Yes. He was the sort of a guy who wanted to do nice things for the Germans, while we were trying to cure the people the Germans had spread the tuberculosis around with. He was trying to be good to the Germans. We didn't quite agree with him.

Glaser: You had some problems with getting the amount of medicines that you needed, particularly the PAS? [Para-amino-salicylic acid]

Lewis: That wasn't a matter of personnel. That was a matter of medicines. It was a question of the supply.

Glaser: That was just one of the conflicts that you had?

Lewis: Yes, but our PAS came from the pharmaceutical werke. Is that the name?

E. Lewis: Could be.

Lewis: I think so.

Glaser: There's some correspondences in which Gelner comments on the amount that you need. He felt the amount you used was sufficient for a much bigger place, with more--

Lewis: [Interrupting] That's the sort of conflicts we had. This man had absolutely no sense. Then he published a typewritten letter in which he copied a paper that came out of the AMA. He copied it verbatim. I called his attention to it. He didn't like that particularly, but I don't blame him.

E. Lewis: Wasn't that at the time when they were just beginning to evaluate the usefulness of PAS and INH? Was that part of the conflict?

Lewis: Well, it seemed that that was all that we had been doing, all the time I was there. We were just trying to up it.

Glaser: I know what PAS is. What's INH?

Lewis: INH is one of the other drugs. We had three drugs--INH, PAS, and streptomyacin.

E. Lewis: Its other name is adsoniacid, and it's used in combination with the PAS. Some reason or other, they're synergistic and they work together. Very often they are given together at the beginning of treatment, and then a maintenance of the INH is continued to keep the arrestable tuberculosis--to maintain the tuberculosis as an arrested case. Am I right about that?

Lewis: You had it right on the nose!

Glaser: In your correspondence, there are a number of references to things you designed for the hospital. You designed an adjustable hammock on a frame for applying a plaster of Paris jacket in the treatment of TB spongelitis.

Lewis: Well, I designed a number of pieces of equipment. I don't recall the hammock. I suppose it's one. Seems there's one in every branch.

Glaser: What does that mean, there's one in every branch?

Lewis: Everything I ever do, I build equipment to use it, you know. So there's always something in the book.

Glaser: You designed and had built a walker.

C O P Y

29 September 1949

The Board of Thoracic Surgery
1151 Taylor Avenue
Detroit, Michigan

Gentlemen: Atten: Dr. Wm. M. Tuttle

I have just received your letter dated September 16. I hope that this letter reaches you in time to consider my application at your October meeting.

At the present time, I am Director of the above Sanatorium and its Chief Surgeon. In addition, I am Thoracic Surgical Consultant to the Tuberculosis Sanatoria in the U.S. Zone in Germany. Our bed total in the three institutions numbers about 1600. The work here will continue for at least another year, perhaps longer. I expect to be in Europe for at least another year and a half.

Perhaps you would like a general introduction to the work being done here. Our sanatorium has 852 beds, and is usually filled. Our patients comprize seventeen different nationalities. Of these patients three hundred are Jewish. Many of the latter are from the various concentration camps of Fascist Germany. Some of our non-Jewish patients are also former concentration camp victims. It is usual to see the tattoo brands of the camps like Aushwitz, Buchenwald, Dachau and others with the number of the patient on the forearm. Grim reminders of man's brutality, and depravity.

Our sanatorium has passed over six thousand patients through it's gates since 1945. The total deaths were less than four hundred. We do considerable collapse therapy, and utilize most modern methods in our treatment. We use about two thousand grams of stremtomycin a month. Our food is quite good. The medical staff of twenty-five physicians is of good quality.

Our work is all under conference guidance. We have conferences twice a week where we discuss all therapy. We operate two or three days a week or more.

Anaesthesia is one of the big problems here, but I have been fortunate in getting a good young man from Paris who had some good training in England, and sounds like he learned from Rovenstein or Waters or some other American. I don't mean that is the best in the world, but then neither am I, so he does what he can. It is necessary to do some improvising at times, and the building of spare parts such as anaesthesia to and fro filters, prone position tables etc. becomes commonplace. In this light, my Ecuadorian experience has served me well.

One of our interesting excursions is in language. Both Mrs. Lewis and I use German almost exclusively. We knew but a few words when we came, but decided that we should learn to talk with these people. It is most necessary for me to use the language as all of my staff are Germans or German speaking people, and as I conduct the conferences, I necessarily must speak German.

I hope to be able to have time some day to put down on paper some of the impressions we get from day to day. Our life here is most pleasant. We have a lovely house on Starnberger See. Our house is just about a fourth mile from where Mad Ludwig drowned. It is across the lake from Tutzing where Brahms wrote one of his symphonies. The Alps can be seen as we look over the lake from our balcony. It really isn't too bad.

I hope this isn't too much of a travelogue, but that's what happens sometimes.

Best personal regards,

Sincerely,

Rubin M. Lewis, M.D.

Address:
Dr. Rubin M. Lewis
Area 6, I.R.O.
APO 407, PM. NY.

Lewis: That was an earlier thing that I designed in the United States, for fractures of the leg, ankle. Yes, I think so.

Glaser: And other things--you designed a new prone-position operating table for resections?

Lewis: Yes. I built one of those in the United States. I built one for my hospital in Gauting. The interesting story of that is that the professor of surgery--

[Tape turned over]

Lewis: --Professor Frei was the professor of chest surgery in Munich. He was a little out of date, but he was a very nice guy. He was about six foot four or five tall.

Glaser: Was he German?

Lewis: Yes. A very nice guy. He came out, and he wanted to know about this table. I showed it to him, and he said he'd send his engineer out to copy it. I said, "Sure, I'd be glad to have you." So he brought his engineer out, and they went over. He got up on it, and the engineer sketched it and took it to Munich. He copied it, and it was all right.

The eyes of the nurses as Professor Frei got up on my table--they came clear out of their sockets! "Herr Professor ist aufen Tisch!"

He had quite a time. He was cute as a bug, because: "Darf ich aufen dem Tisch gehen?" [May I get on the table?] And so he did. We had a big day of it. We went out to visit him at the university, and he made the same kind of a fuss. He was a very nice guy.

Glaser: Emily, how did you react to living in Germany?

E. Lewis: We had a really very lovely situation, because we were living right on Lake Starnberg. We had a rolling lawn that went right down to the edge of the lake. It was a beautiful place. The house itself was sort of like a small castle, not terribly comfortable, but passable.

Lewis: It wasn't bad, really.

E. Lewis: No, it wasn't bad. It wasn't very pretty from the outside.

Lewis: It wasn't palatial, but it was comfortable.

E. Lewis: The only people that we got to know very well were the people who had owned the house and had to give it up to the Occupation because

Excerpt from letter to Caroleonancy* from Dr. Lewis, 11 December 1949. From Oberbayern, Germany.

. . . I was elected to the founders group of the American Board of Thoracic Surgery. I now have both General and Thoracic Boards. Second. I am beginning to do some surgery. Besides the surgery work, I am Medical Director of the Sanatorium Gauting. We have 860 patients. Since I took over the direction of the hospital, I have (Aug. 10) rebuilt the operating room, set up modern anaesthesia, have a medical anaesthetist, built some of our new anaesthesia apparatus, built a new table addition for the use of the Overholt position for resection, built a new Ambulatory Chest Clinic, and raised hell in particular. The whole spirit in reaction of the patients to recommended surgery has changed, and we are having a time getting time to do all the work.

I have instituted some bone work here. We have resected two knees and done arthrodeses, one hip, and have done about eight or more spinal fusions for Potts disease. In the latter we have quite a set-up. Two teams work. My asst. and I do the back, and the other asst. and helper do the saw cut on the tibia. The tibia is done under Esmarchs anaemia, and the back is controlled by pressure packs. We lose a minimal of blood, and the patients are done quickly and effectively. We use Gills modification of Albee's procedure as it is faster and less traumatizing than either the Albee or the Hibbs procedure. We haven't done any resections yet as we haven't been of the opinion that our boys have learned their physiological ABCs yet. The supermen ain't what they're cracked up to be. They just don't have the background medically. They are fleissig and read what they can find, but they have the usual lack of imagination and fluidity of thought processes.

Our work is carried out entirely on the conference (besprechung) method. Every Tuesday and Thursday afternoon from 3 to 5 or 6 we go over all cases either admitted recently (in the preceeding few days), newly filmed cases, and all chest clinic cases. We have chest clinic daily. All therapy is designated here. The entire staff of twenty-five doctors are present. The cases are presented completely, and the recommendations are made by the presenting doctor at the recommendation of his oberarzt. The final judgement as to therapy is made by me. I direct the conference. My deputy is a Sudeten Deutch, a graduate of Pragha, and a very nice guy. The other docs are well trained TB docs all of German stock. I have only one Jewish Doc; he is from Warsaw, was in concentration camps, and is our gynecologist.

*Dr. Leon Lewis, his wife, and his daughter.

E. Lewis: they had been very involved Nazis. That was distressing to me. They were super-nice to us, almost obsequious. I found that really irritating. They spoke English very well. In a way, they were trying to be helpful. They were also trying to be able to use their own tennis courts and their own motor boats, and that sort of thing.

I felt, because of the fact we worked for the International Refugee Organization, and because for a long time when we were there we didn't have our automobile--we lived pretty far from the railroad station--we were pretty restricted. I wasn't really getting a chance to make the friends that I could have. I was sure that there were people that I would really enjoy knowing in Germany but didn't get a chance to meet.

I had a lot of fun going into the little town and shopping. I got a bicycle and rode my bike a lot. The people who lived in our house were supposed to be taking care of the house. They were refugees from East Germany--a man and his wife and their daughter, named Geburtig.

Rudi, the man who was the janitor and the caretaker of the house was also the caretaker of several other houses. He was actually paid by the Occupation.

He had been a prisoner of war in the United States. He had been in the Germany army in Africa, and had been taken prisoner. He had been on a farm in Baltimore. He loved it; he just loved it. Every chance he got, he'd talk to me about how wonderfully he had been treated when he was a POW [prisoner of war] in Baltimore.

He would tell me long stories about it. He had a really marvelous time. I think probably our POWs were very well treated, because they were even invited to parties by the farmers whose farms they worked on, and so forth. He was longing to go back to the States. We got along very well with the Geburtigs. They took good care of us, and we took good care of them. They were very friendly. They loved Laz, and Rudi used to put him on the front of his bicycle and take him all over.

Glaser: How old was Laz at that time?

E. Lewis: He was born in February, and we got to Germany at the end of June. He was only four months old.

Lewis: I didn't think he got there so soon.

E. Lewis: During the time we were there, he learned to walk, and say his first words.

Lewis: His first word in German--or in anything!--was "vieh."

E. Lewis: It means cattle. He saw the cows, probably.

Lewis: [Mimicking] "VIEH!!" [Laughter]

E. Lewis: His second word was "heis." [Laughs] He learned not to touch Frau Geburtig's stove while she was cooking.

Lewis: He didn't learn very good until we went up to the mountains. He even stepped on a hot stove with bare feet!

Glaser: There was some correspondence that had on it, "UNRRA Cemeterian Building, T-1065." How was UNRRA connected with the cemetery?

Lewis: That was the IRO's UNRRA. UNRRA became IRO. The people I worked for was IRO and Joint. [American Joint Distribution Committee]

E. Lewis: We went over on a contract with Joint, actually, to be a a surgeon in the hospital. After we got there, they asked him to take a joint appointment with Joint and the IRO and become the director of the hospital, which had not been anticipated when we went first.

Glaser: Between UNRRA and the IRO, they were virtually the same thing?

Lewis: One paid half, the other paid the rest.

E.Lewis: The United Nations Association for Relief and Rehabilitation became the International Refugee Organization [IRO].

Lewis: "International Raeuber Organisation."

E. Lewis: So it was called, by those who knew it too well.

Glaser: Too well?

Lewis: Oh, yes.

E. Lewis: That was a loaded statement!

Lewis: It was a crooked outfit!

Glaser: It was?

Lewis: Oh, yes! Terrible! They used to steal coal that was coming to the hospital, and sell it to the gasthauses in the area.

E. Lewis: The same sort of thing was going on all over Germany.

Lewis: And in America!

E. Lewis: You would walk down the street in even a little town like Starnberg, and people would be selling all the things that came out of CARE [Cooperative for American Remittances Everywhere] packages and, of course, all the things that came from the commissary and the PX. People would buy it and then resell it on the German market. You could walk down the street and buy pineapple and canned chicken and coffee. There was a huge black market, as I remember.

People were encouraged to send CARE packages to Europe at that time. If you had not some specific relative to send it to, you would just pay money to CARE, and they would send packages to hospitals and places like that. So the hospital would provide a list of names to CARE to receive packages. They would send them the names of people who had died, of people who had long since left the hospital. They would get all these packages and resell them on the black market.

Lewis: They'd break them down and sell them.

E. Lewis: It was very disillusioning. There was also a whole thing with the money exchange.

Lewis: I would take five hundred dollars to Switzerland and bring back five hundred dollars in green bills, which are printed in Germany, and sell them for the price of the marks on the street, on the black market.

E. Lewis: We were paid either in American scrip or in American dollars. You could take those to Switzerland, change them to--You were paid in traveler's checks. You'd take those to Switzerland, and change them into American dollars, and bring them back and buy German marks with them. Instead of getting three marks to the dollars, as you got if you went and changed them in a PX or in a commissary or a proper, official place, you got eight marks to the dollar. That's where everybody went on weekends. They went to change their money and to spend it.

There were all kinds of things like that that everybody was doing then. Unfortunately, many of the officials who were in on it were from the International Refugee Organization.

Lewis: Well, they had it right in their hands. They'd be silly to be honest.

Glaser: Why would they be silly to be honest?

Lewis: Because they had this money right in their hands. Why should they be honest?

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October 11,1950

Dr. R.H. Lewis,
Gauting Sanatorium

Dear Dr. Lewis,

Now that your work in Gauting Sanatorium has come to an end, and you will be leaving us shortly, I should like you to know of the sincere friendship I feel for you.

We started our work in Germany together in January, 1950. During this time I had the opportunity to come in close contact with you, and I got to know you both as a physician and as a friend.

I wish to stress the changes you made in the operation department by which you transformed this department into a modern operation ward. In using modern methods of treatment and operation you enlarge the possibilities of active treatment against tuberculosis considerably. In your position as Director of the Sanatorium you showed great interest in, and understanding of administrative matters. Your main thought was always the unhappy tuberculous patient with all his needs and wants, and to him you gave all your heart and understanding. You won the love and respect of everybody, and in particular of the Jewish patients, in whom your interest never flagged.

.../2

I am very sorry that the close and smoothly working co-operation between us has come to an end, and I sincerely wish you success and good luck in your further professional career and personal life.

Yours very sincerely,

H. Herman M.D.
TB Control Officer

HH/hg

Glaser: That's asking too much, then?

Lewis: Why, yes! They're not trained to do it that way!

Glaser: They're trained to do things dishonestly?

Lewis: Yes. Don't you think that's true in America? It's true everywhere else in the world. It depends on the value you place on wealth. As our Polish administrator used to say, "I went to the race track. I made some money. I bought the overcoat." And who's to say that he didn't? He went to the race track, he bought the overcoat. Whether he won or not, he had the money. So it worked.

Glaser: Afterward, you had some time to do some traveling in Europe?

Lewis: We had more time than we used. We didn't even go to Vienna.

E. Lewis: We did very little.

Lewis: We were raising Vera.

E. Lewis: We did some traveling right after Vera was born; we went to England. We didn't go to Eastern Europe at all. I think that we felt that-- Well, when we didn't have our own car, we couldn't go very well because we couldn't go in an IRO car. You could take the train to Vienna. You could even take the train to Prague. I don't know why we didn't go.

Lewis: I don't know why either. Mostly because you were pregnant! Vera wasn't born until May, and then we had to start thinking about leaving.

E. Lewis: I don't know whether you were the one who talked us out of it, or I was.

Lewis: I don't know either.

Glaser: But you did travel in France and Holland, didn't you?

E. Lewis: Yes.

Lewis: That was another time.

Glaser: This wasn't while you were at Gauting?

Lewis: No.

E. Lewis: Yes, it was. It was right after Vera was born, and Lolly was there.

Lewis: Oh, yes. We didn't travel much, really.

Glaser: Lolly's your sister?

E. Lewis: Yes.

Lewis: We didn't travel much, really.

E. Lewis: Sure we did!

Lewis: We went down to Rotterdam and Amsterdam. Then we went to England. Then later on, we went to Copenhagen.

E. Lewis: We went to Copenhagen for a TB meeting.

Glaser: This is another trip, then?

E. Lewis: Yes.

Glaser: Then you left to come back home from Italy?

E. Lewis: Yes.

Glaser: Would you have liked to settle in Pennsylvania?

E. Lewis: I don't know. There were pros and cons. It's beautiful country around my old home town.

Glaser: Around Reading?

E. Lewis: Around Reading.

Lewis: Yes, it's lovely country.

E. Lewis: But I left there because it was a small town, and it had all the disadvantages of living in a small town. There are advantages to that, too. I think we could probably have been happy living there, but I'm glad we came to Berkeley.

Berkeley

Glaser: Before we started the interviews, Dr. Lewis, when we were just talking about areas for future taping, you voiced your reaction about the various hospitals that you were connected with, and some that you were not. Would you like to have that on tape right now?

Lewis: You mean in Berkeley?

Glaser: Berkeley and Oakland.

Lewis: I think I was on the staff of all the hospitals I wanted to be on.

Glaser: But you were very critical of them.

Lewis: Well, I was critical of some, because of the management. I got thrown out of one, or not invited back on the staff of one.

Glaser: Do you want to name it?

Lewis: Yes. What the hell's the name of that hospital?

E. Lewis: Is that Peralta you're thinking of?

Lewis: Yes, Peralta.

Glaser: Why were you not invited back?

Lewis: We were working to get a guy out of prison.

E. Lewis: San Quentin, off death row.

Lewis: He just died the other day. He was remanded to prison for the rest of his life, without possibility of parole. We were kind of mad about that. That got back to the hospital. The hospital thought that was un-American. That was the time of McCarthy. Such an attitude was un-American. We didn't think it was true.

Glaser: Was he a political figure?

Lewis: No. He was a black. He was a black and he'd been in jail since age eighteen or nineteen. Nineteen, I guess. His big crime was he stole an old Chevrolet. He was paroled, and he couldn't get a job, and so he stole a battery from a car. He was sent back to prison, and he was in for life, actually. He had a bum rap, I think. Originally, he was paroled. Anyway, he went to the halfway house, and he died there.

Glaser: What were some of the other hospitals you felt strongly about?

Lewis: I was a member of the staff of all the other hospitals that I wanted to join. I never applied at Merritt.

Glaser: The only one that you had a good word for was Herrick.

Lewis: Well, I think it's the only civilized hospital in the area! Alta Bates is regarded by many as <u>the</u> hospital, but it's no damn good! I mean,

Lewis: its nursing is no good, and the whole hospital is of questionable value. Although my brother went there. He felt very happy about it. But after he was there for a week or two, he was not so happy. If you're going to be critical, you've got to be critical, you know? If you're not, you're just saying yes. That, I don't think, is any good.

Glaser: You mean a doctor must take a stand, is that what you're saying?

Lewis: For anything. Alta Bates has the name of being a great hospital, and it's only great because the nurses are doing the doctoring. Patients never have to wait for a doctor, because the nurses come in and give judgment and so forth, and say what's to be done. I think that's one of the things that you shouldn't have in a hospital.

Glaser: What about Highland Hospital?

Lewis: Oh, that's a good hospital. I was on the staff there, about fifteen years.

Glaser: Are there any other hospitals that we haven't talked about? Providence?

Lewis: No, I never joined there. It was a Catholic hospital, and I didn't feel that I particularly wanted to be affiliated with a separatist hospital. I was in the hospital out in Richmond.

E. Lewis: Brookside.

Lewis: Brookside. A very good hospital. That's enough. I get nutty enough working around all of them.

Travel with Emily for World Health Organization

Glaser: Did we talk very much about your trip to Europe in the seventies?

Lewis: No. We didn't talk about all of it.

Glaser: You had retired by then, had you?

Lewis: In '71 I retired.

Glaser: When was this trip?

Lewis: In '71. I went out there first in May, didn't I? Emily?

E. Lewis: Yes.

Lewis: Then I came back, and went out in December.

Glaser: What do you mean, you went out? Was that a return to Europe?

Lewis: Yes.

Glaser: I see. It was in two stages, then.

Lewis: I went two times.

Glaser: And each time you went to Switzerland?

Lewis: Yes. I went to Switzerland to visit with Emily, and then I went to Switzerland to move back.

E. Lewis: To come and live with me. I came up to Frankfort to get you.

Lewis: Yes.

Glaser: I think we ought to make all this a little clearer. Emily was working for whom?

Lewis: World Health Organization in Geneva.

Glaser: Emily, were you based in Geneva, or were you actually living there? Did you travel from Geneva?

E. Lewis: I was based in Geneva, and was travelling out from Geneva. World Health Organization had headquarters in Geneva and then had regional offices in various parts of the world. I was employed as the nursing consultant in family planning, headquartered in Geneva. What would happen was that a region would ask to have a meeting about family planning, or to have a workshop on family planning, something of that sort. They would send me to the workshop as an "expert," quote, end quote.

Glaser: So that your trips came about as somebody, or some region, requested you?

E. Lewis: Right, right.

Glaser: Dr. Lewis, did you go with Emily on her trips?

Lewis: Generally not, except when we went to Africa.

E. Lewis: You went to the Philippines with me.

Lewis: Well, yes, but that was different. Oh, that's right.

E. Lewis: The only reason why I went was because we were doing a workshop in Davao.

Glaser: Where?

E. Lewis: In Mindanao in the Philippines.

Lewis: Where this plane was stolen the other day.

Glaser: Was this the time that you had your trip to Hong Kong?

Lewis: Yes.

Glaser: And where did you go in Africa with Emily, Dr. Lewis?

Lewis: To Egypt.

E. Lewis: We went one time to a workshop in Cairo. At that time, we went up to Luxor. The second time we went to Tunisia for a six-week workshop.

Lewis: To Tunisia, in Hammamet.

Glaser: What?

Lewis: Hammamet was the name of the town we were in.

Glaser: How long was the first period, Dr. Lewis, that you were with Emily?

Lewis: A couple of months, wasn't I, dear? No, that was a round trip from Berkeley, so it was thirty days.

E. Lewis: The first time you came, I think you came on a charter flight. You stayed for three weeks or something like that, and then you came back in July.

Glaser: After you retired?

Lewis: Yes.

Glaser: How long was the second trip?

E. Lewis: We were there until January of '73.

Glaser: How was your health when you were in Geneva?

Lewis: Fine. Just fine, until I came back home. Then it wasn't so good.

E. Lewis: Actually, he got sick coming home from Tunisia.

Lewis: I vomited on the way up to Cannes.

E. Lewis: From Cannes, when we were going back.

Lewis: To Crans.

E. Lewis: Oh, to Crans, yes. That was the little village that we lived in.

Lewis: It was a French village.

Glaser: How long did you have your workshop on San Pablo Avenue, all together?

Lewis: Oh God, I don't remember. About eight years, I guess--seven years, six years. I don't recall when I started that. I started before I got the shop. I did it in the high school at Berkeley High. I made my first table there, didn't I?

E. Lewis: Yes. I think it must have been about 1956.

Lewis: Around there.

E. Lewis: Then you had it--

Lewis: --until I left.

E. Lewis: That's right, in '71.

Glaser: There's something quite aside from this that I want to ask you about. You had a letter from Rabbi Jacob Weinstein. I think it was in '34. I think it was before you were married to Elsie. What was your relationship with Rabbi Jacob Weinstein?

Lewis: Very good.

Glaser: Where did you meet him? How did you know him?

Lewis: He went to school up in Portland, and I met him in Philadelphia. He came in with a problem, and my chief operated on him. Then I went to visit him in New York with a girl I was going with at the time. He was a great guy. He died recently.

Glaser: You didn't know him in Seattle?

Lewis: No, I never knew him at all in Seattle.

Glaser: Did he have a congregation in New York?

Lewis: No, I think he worked for Hillel. But he had a congregation in

Lewis: San Francisco. Then he came back, and he had another congregation in San Francisco. He got thrown out of his first congregation in San Francisco for lecturing on Yom Kippur on the release of Mooney and--who was the other guy?

E. Lewis: Billings, wasn't it?

Lewis: Billings.

E. Lewis: Yes, I think he went from there to Chicago.

Lewis: Yes. He worked for a congregation in Chicago, and then he went to New York. He was a real fine guy.

Glaser: Dr. Lewis, I think we're through.

Lewis: You think we're through?

Glaser: I don't think I have any more questions. Perhaps there is more on Seattle, but I don't know what. I think we've done Butte quite extensively.

Lewis: I went to Seattle in 1912, and I got infected by the campus of the university. I decided that I'd like to go to school there. Why, I don't know. I went back there in 1917. The war was on, and the interest in ROTC was high, and I went to the university.

[Tape turned over]

Lewis: I went back there and registered in school, and looked around to see how to make a living, because my total worth at the time was about two hundred and fifty dollars in savings that I had. So I found out that I could work in a poultry store as a picker, which I did on weekends. Later I became a salesman for shoes. Later on, I went to work in a shipyard machine shop, and worked until the following fall, and went back in my previous interests.

The summer after my first year, I worked in a navy yard in Bremerton. Then I joined the navy at the end of that year, or at the beginning of the year. I belonged to the Navy Reserve Force as an SNTC--a Student Navy Training Corps. I worked until school let out, and I was actually in the navy.

Glaser: Were you ever in any danger of being assigned to active duty?

Lewis: Nobody had ever been assigned. As a matter of fact, the only thing I was mad about at the end of the war was that I would not be taken up by the navy. I would be discharged. That was a great calamity because I was a great patriot then. Patriotism was running rampant in America.

Glaser: When did you change your view?

Lewis: Around in that area of time, when conservatism took control of people. The big wars in the IWWs was done by the American Legion. That was pretty much the problem in America anyway. World War I ended up that way; World War II ended up that way.

Glaser: You're referring to the Palmer raids, and things like that?

Lewis: The what?

Glaser: The Palmer raids.

Lewis: I don't know that one.

Glaser: That was right after World War I, when the government was very worried about communism. They started rounding up people in a fairly illegal way, much like what happened after World War II.

Lewis: The thing I remember, mostly, is the thing that happened down in--what the hell's the name of that country? That area now, down by Sedro Woolley, I guess. Anyhow, the American Legion worried that the IWWs did a lot of very bad things.

Glaser: Was this in Seattle, Dr. Lewis?

Lewis: It was between Seattle and Portland. I don't know why I forget the name of the town.

E. Lewis: Centralia?

Lewis: Yes, the Centralia massacre.

Glaser: Was that between Seattle and Portland? I always thought that was out in your old area, in Montana, in the mining towns.

Lewis: No, no, no. It was between Seattle and Portland. One of our boys was killed, and two or three of the other brothers who went to the University of Washington when I did.

Glaser: Can you give me his name?

Lewis: Logg. They were big athletes.

Glaser: Was he a member of the IWW?

Lewis: Oh, no. He was on the other side. He was a clean guy.

Glaser: You're saying that sardonically, that he was a clean guy.

Lewis: Of course! It's like saying that Republicans are nice people, which they, generally speaking, are not. Although my mother-in-law is a Republican, isn't she, Emily?

E. Lewis: I don't know.

Lewis: We don't know what she is now.

Glaser: I would expect a banker's wife to be a Republican.

Lewis: She was! Now, we don't know where she is, because she ain't all together. She forgets.

Glaser: Oh dear, don't we all?

Lewis: Yes. I think I do, even! But I'm pleased that I spoke about what Emily spoke, so maybe there's some continuity.

Transcribers: Lee Steinback, Gretchen Wolfe, Leslie Goodman-Malamuth
Final Typist: Marge Prince

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Eleanor K. Glaser

Raised and educated in the Middle West. During World War II, spent two years in the U.S. Marine Corps Women's Reserve.

Senior year of college was taken in New Zealand, consequently A.B. degree in sociology from University of Michigan was granted in absentia. Study in New Zealand was followed by a year in Sydney, Australia, working for Caltex Oil Company.

Work experience includes such non-profit organizations as Community Service Society, New York City; National Society for Crippled Children and Adults and National Congress of Parents and Teachers in Chicago.

After moving to California in 1966, joined the staff of a local weekly newspaper, did volunteer publicity for the Judah Magnes Museum and the Moraga Historical Society, and was the Bay Area correspondent for a national weekly newspaper. Also served as a history docent for the Oakland Museum.

Additional travel includes Great Britain, Europe, Israel, Mexico, and the Far East.