

Interview with Dr. William L. Vroom by Hugh Auchinclaas, Dr. Donald Hull and Dr. Harlan Esotere, March 6, 1966.

[NOTE: Could not distinguish between interviewers most of the time.]

AUCHINCLAAS: The date—the date is March 6th, Sunday afternoon in Dr. Vroom's living room. Present with Dr. Vroom, Dr. Donald Hull, Dr. Harlan Esotere and myself, Hugh Auchinclaas, recording some earlier remembrances of days—medical days in Ridgewood with Dr. Vroom and Dr. Hull. [tape turned off/on]

?: Dr. Vroom, in this year of 19—

VROOM: Do you want to start now?

?: Yes—in 1966, can you tell me about what year it was you came to Ridgewood? When did you come here to practice?

V: Doctor, I came in 1888 when I graduated from college.

?: Well, you must have had some very interesting experiences in those days. Did you have any interesting confinements?

V: Between two and three thousand. I don't know how much.

?: Well, in all that—

V: Over 2,000.

?: Uh-huh. You must have had some funny ones. Can you tell us about any?

V: Well, I was a young man and there were old doctors here and I fell into the work.

?: How about that time that you had a confinement down on Goffle Road and had to walk to Hawthorne? I remember you telling me about that some years ago.

V: Which was it?

?: The time that you had a confinement on Goffle Road and walked over to Hawthorne. Do you remember that time?

V: Yes, I was called out to make a call that night but he brought a horse and sleigh. And he had a beautiful horse and he took me to his home down in the Goffle Hill. I went down with him and after I finished and returned the case, his [unclear] drives me home. I said, "Leave me off at this way station on the railroad, and I'll go to Paterson up on the Erie." He said, "Oh, that's very nice." So I got out at the station and the stationmaster said, "Why, the last train down has gone." So I had to walk through deep snow all the way to Hawthorne, about a mile. When I got to Hawthorne, I stood on the—on the platform of the railroad waiting for the midnight train. As it came rushing through, it was storming. Snow was blowing. They was going to push right through but the orders were that all passenger trains should stop at Hawthorne. And this man was just coming through. When the engineer—conductor saw me, he backed that train right up and picked me up—

?: Well, you stopped them, didn't you?

V: —and brought me back to Ridgewood safely.

?: [chuckles] In those days, how many horses did you used to have? Did you ever have four horses?

V: Yes, I had—

?: A couple of teams at one time or how do—

V: At the height of my work I had four horses and a pony and a pony cart for my wife and daughter. Then automobiles came in soon.

- ?: What kind did you have, Doctor? What sort of car were you driving?
- V: I had a Steamer. Steam [unclear]—
- ?: That's the car—
- V: Called a Locomobile.
- ?: Is that the car you used to have a license to cross the Hudson River? On the ferry you had to have a license to cross the Hudson River?
- V: A yellow license. I went to New York and they said they had no licenses. They didn't have any automobiles in New York. So I said, "Well"—but they—the old man said, "Here, I'll give you an examination and then I'll send you to Nyack and get it; they have some license up there." So they brought out a slate and drew a picture and they asked me all about the mechanism of my engine. And then I sent up to—they sent up to Nyack and they gave me a license from there, which I have hung upstairs, and New York accepted it.
- ?: [chuckles] What about the telephone, Doctor? Did you have a telephone in those days?
- ?: You built your own telephone once, didn't you?
- V: Well, I built telephone, yeah. We had no telephones. I had a—
- ?: Tell us about the telephone.
- V: [unclear] your questions.
- ?: Tell us about your telephone.
- V: The—as the business grew, I had no way of communicating from town to town. And there was no telephone here except one in a store in Ridgewood connecting Paterson. So I said I'd build my own. And my preceptor had one up in New York State he built and connected with a main line up to the Hudson Valley. And they allowed him to connect in with the main lines. So he sent me the bells. The parts were not [unclear] free yet. I whittled out the part to listen and a part, the transmitter, was a box about the—a board about the size of a cigar box. Behind that were points of carbon connected with the wires. And you spoke against this and the transmitter were two long bar magnets, much as a transmitter is today, [unclear]. I had the wires—I bought in New York, [unclear] Telegraph people. They gave me a lot of insulators. And I got a man—and I bought a whole load of poles. I got a man to put them up, connected them to trees and the poles that were there for telegraph—telegraph poles. And I connected my office with a grocery store in Wortendyke. Wortendyke contained then the repair shops for the Susquehanna Railroad. [unclear] my clientele was quite large up there. I kept that there for two years. And one day a call came through on it that they wanted to see me, meet me in the office. And it was the superintendent of telephones from Paterson. He said, "Doctor, we're going to put the service in Ridgewood. We're going to take yours out." And so they took it all out and turned the wire out—turned from coil to wire. They burned up my instruments and that ended it.
- ?: Did they have to buy a right of way?
- V: How's that?
- ?: Did they buy your right of way? How did they take over your line legally?
- ?: Did they have to give you money to get your right of way?
- V: The right of way, I never asked. My—my office was down almost where the school—school building is, the office building on—what is the street—on—

- ?: East Ridgewood Avenue.
- V: —Cottage Street—Cottage Street. And I had—I went from there to Franklin Avenue up to the railroad here, across the railroad and over the top of the wires. I put poles right here in Ridgewood Village. [unclear] the wires and up Godwin Avenue to Wortendyke store.
- ?: What did you have for a hospital then?
- V: The hospital was an afterthought.
- ?: Well, we've got a good one now. What'd you have back in 1905 and so?
- V: Well, I was talking about a hospital. I had practiced a few years, got the telephone service in. And I took in Dr. Craig as an assistant. The doctor and his family were friends of mine and great patients. I got him through college but he flunked in New York. And so they sent him down to the University of Virginia. He finished up there and he came back. And I said, "Doc, come right in with me and stay right here. It won't cost you anything." I kept him two years. I never paid him anything. I bought a car for him, gave him the offices and let him build a practice, right with him. Because he aided me until then, we became very busy. We had no hospitals. The Paterson Hospital, I remember when they built it. And the hospital in Hackensack, I was there when they initiated it. So Dr. Craig and myself said, "Let's build our own hospital." So we got a carpenter and we built it right next to my home down on Ridgewood—on Ridgewood Avenue. We finished it up, the sterilizers, rooms, cook, waitress and five bedrooms. They weren't done there. We had a beautiful operating room. Now, in operations we didn't attempt ourselves—attempt to do heavy work. The doctors from New York would come and operate in our operation room for any heavy work. But when it came to appendicitis and those things, we took care of those ourselves.
- ?: What'd you do for anesthesia during that time?
- V: How's that?
- ?: What did you do for anesthesia? Who gave the anesthesia, put the patients to sleep and so on for you?
- V: [unclear]
- ?: What did you do for anesthesia, Doctor?
- V: Oh, Paterson—Paterson had a little hospital, which we opened down on Main Street in which the bathroom was the operating room. And they commenced to build a new hospital and I got an anesthetic—a man who came [unclear].
- HULL: Dr. Vroom, this is Dr. Hull speaking. I was one of your first patients in that hospital, had my tonsils out by you.
- V: What?
- DH: I was—[laughter]
- ?: What was the date of that, Don? Do you remember?
- DH: I think it was about 1905.
- V: Yeah.
- DH: When he did you start the hospital? About that time?
- V: I guess that's right.
- ?: Dr. Vroom, we might say at this point, on April 1st of this coming April 1, 1966, how old will you be?
- V: Now? Now?

- ?: Yes.
- V: I'll be 100 first of April.
- ?: And that's only a few short days away, isn't it?
- V: A hundred years old first day of April.
- ?: I think before you operated in your hospital, you used to operate a great deal on the kitchen table. Did you have any experiences on the kitchen table operating?
- V: Yeah.
- ?: Tell us about some of those.
- V: Well, I was going to recite a very interesting thing. One night—it was before we got our autos and I—two men drove up with a covered carriage, took me in and wanted me to go and see his sick wife. Well, I said all right. But he drove around so far I didn't know where he was going. At last, he landed up—
- ?: On Glen Avenue, I guess. You told me once.
- V: —on one of the streets near the railroad.
- ?: What's now Glen Avenue, I think.
- V: Yes, Glen Avenue. And I went in and sat down beside the woman. And as I sat there, I can see into the other room and—other room they had a portable blast furnace going, in which they were feeding silver spoons into it and melting pure silver and running it out into little molds and getting bar silver. [laughter] They were burglars that they'd been hunting for for a long time. Never got a [unclear]. And I recognized some of things standing there in the room from houses I'd seen. For instance, a phonograph, which a very new thing in those days. There was one standing. I saw—I know they stole it.
- ?: Could you tell us a little bit about the early Ridgewood Medical Society? Where did it first begin? Where did you meet?
- V: Our Medical Society was a small [unclear] numbers. We met in the parlor of a hotel in Hackensack about where the prison stands now. We met—
- ?: Are you speaking of the County Medical Society? You're speaking of the County Medical Society.
- V: County Medical Society. The County Medical Society and St. John was a leading spirit there. And one thing I remember, he always had the waiter bring in a cocktail, Manhattan cocktails for each of us. I never tasted them—
- ?: Say, that was pretty good. [chuckles]
- V: I never tasted one before but he always brought them in. And we had a couple women doctors also with us. That medical society kept growing. Dr. Curry of Englewood was secretary. Dr. Curry elected another man as secretary after a few years. And he was quite miffed about it because he wasn't keeping records, particularly, and he burned up all the records he had.
- ?: Hmm. You were president of the society for two terms, weren't you?
- V: Yeah, two terms. I—
- ?: What years were those? Do you recall?
- V: 1896 and 1906. [laughter] Well, we had a nice time there. We brought—I drew up—I kept bringing in the new—new medicines. There was insulin. There was anatoxin and aspirin was new. I know that the druggist here came to me one day and he said, "Doctor, how dangerous is aspirin?" Well, I said, "I don't think it's

dangerous.” Well, he said, “I have a prescription for 15 grains. Do I dare fill it?” I says, “There’s no danger to 15 grains of aspirin.” And—

?: What used to be your early conception of malaria? Was there much of that sort of—

V: Malaria?

?: —condition here? Malaria in our—

V: There was quite a good deal of malaria. I used to buy the cream by the carton. It was a very light in weight like snow. I put it in capsules and I felt that our— something should be done about that. I read a paper then before the State Medical Society on the cause of malaria being carried by the insects—insects. And I told him how—that we were trying to ditch the country round about and keep water from standing still—keep the water moving. After I had described our treatment of malaria and how it was caused by mosquitoes, a doctor in the back of the audience got up and said, “I thought the same thing once.” He said, “I set some slides down on the meadows. I thought maybe I’d catch some on a microscope. I went down there and I found them and I brought them in. And I said, ‘See here. Look at them. [unclear].’ And I sent them up to a laboratory to be examined. And the laboratory sent down words, ‘Those are just sulfur crystals. The sulfur actually makes those.’”

?: [chuckles] And they were malarial parasites.

V: That’s something.

?: What about the story about Jenny Bashida?

V: [sentence unclear]. One day—oh, I was elected coroner of the county—northern part of the county. And I had my steam automobile, drove around [unclear] doing my work. Call came in from—a body found along the Passaic River just at the end of—just at the—between Passaic County and Ridgewood County. I went down and I looked at the body, a girl. She had a gash in her head, no blood and very wet. Clothing was wet. Took her inside of a mill right there, a room, and [several words unclear] found a jury, held an inquest but decided that I couldn’t make a decision as to her death until we had a postmortem. Well, when I asked for aid from Hackensack for a stenographer, they said, “Oh, well. Don’t bother that. Send her over into Passaic County. Let them take care of it.” [laughter] So I got a county physician there and I was a coroner—acting as county physician for Bergen. So we took the body home—[unclear, our?] home and we made a post mortem. I took out the stomach, put it in my medical bag, got it down to New York and took to the professor of chemistry out of New York University to analyze, which he did. Then the culprits were caught because Jenny—this girl, Jenny Bashida, had been enticed into the back parlor of a saloon, had been plied with a drink in which knockout drops occurred. Well—

?: What’d you think?

V: Well, knockout drops were chloral. And the drink was champagne, which she had never tasted before. They got a taxi outside. One of the men went out and got a taxi and the other two men with the girl drove out and came up into Bergen County to Ravine Avenue. She fainted away, apparently. They were a little startled. They took her to a brook and bathed her face with cold water and that’s why she got so wet. And she had [unclear]. They took her to New York—to

- Paterson for a—called up a doctor. The doctor came down and looked at her there in the carriage and said, “Why, she’s dead.” They turned around and went back, put the body alongside the river again. I—you had—the men were arrested, the culprits. And a trial was held. And I made my statement as a coroner. And the chemist from the university made his statement; it was chloral he found in her stomach. Well, the opposition said the gash in the head might have done that. He put his hand in his pocket and pulled out an envelope. He said, “Here are the crystals that I got out of the stomach.” So they went to jail or a penitentiary for 30 years. And when they came out they were gray-headed men—gray-headed.
- ?: When you were coroner, you also had a murder case where a man shot a girl or something. I remember you’re telling me a story about a man shooting down the street here. You were coroner at that time. Do you recall that?
- V: What?
- ?: I seem to remember you telling me once about a murder by shooting that you took care of as a coroner.
- V: I came home one night. It was a Sunday. And I had a maternity case on Godwin Avenue to tend to. I said to my man, “You go home. Put out your horse and have your supper and I’ll walk home when I’m through.” When I got through I walked home and they told me that my man had been shot.
- ?: Your chauffeur?
- V: My driver, yes.
- ?: Your driver.
- V: And I said, “Why, what’s the matter?” They said, “He’s upstairs. He’s up in the undertaker’s establishment. I went up there and I got the girl, a maid, to give me a history of what happened. While he—my man went out to take her to church that evening, he sat in the kitchen before she came downstairs. And when the doorbell rang, she ran down, opened the door and a man with a club put his foot in the door so she couldn’t close it, walked in and walked toward my driver who sat in the kitchen. My driver got up and ran out in the backyard. It was all snowy. He was found and shot. We never found out who shot him and, making the postmortem, I found the slug. It was an Army slug from an Army pistol and that—we arrested a man right back of my house who had been in the Army. But we had no proof. We got no proof that he had done anything. That mystery died without solving.
- ?: Hugh, do you suppose we have time to hear something about Dr. Vroom’s experiences when he went down to search out Pancho Villa down in Mexico?
- ?: Is there time to talk—
- ?: I think it would be great.
- V: That’d be too personal, wouldn’t it?
- ?: Well, I think that’s interesting history of your time. Make it short. Remember where you ended.
- V: I had crossed it off because I thought it too personal. [unclear]
- ?: Well, how about when you went with the hospital of nurses over to France?
- V: Yes.
- ?: Tell us a little bit about that.
- V: [unclear].

- ?: You were a lieutenant colonel in the Army, weren't you?
- V: I had a friend, a Mr. Fuller, in Wyckoff, an international lawyer who got a message from President Wilson to come to see him. President Wilson said, "You speak Spanish and you understand the people. Now, Villa has been raiding across the border killing our horses, mules, soldiers and I've been warned not to"—he'd been warned that he would become [unclear]. "And therefore, I want to send you down with Mr. Fuller and take this message to President—to General Villa telling him that we will invade—we will invade Mexico unless he desisted from raiding into our country." He still raided into the country so that we had to go down. We started on the train here in—at Ridgewood. And I had a bag of my things hanging by me, the train was full of people. When I got out of Jersey City my bag was gone and I had everything in it traveling down there. I telegraphed all along the line and then I woke up a man in Passaic who was asleep. He says, "Yes, there's a bag standing out on the truck on the platform." Well, I said, "That is my bag. Now, you send that to the Willard Hotel in Washington because I'll be there tomorrow. Send it by express." He did. Mr. Fuller and I went on the night train from New York. We got to Willard [several words unclear]. And we were told that in—we would be met by a man down at the border who would direct us across the border into Mexico. In the morning the bellboys—one of the bellboys said, "I know where you can get a suitcase." He said, "There's some Hebrews up here, got stores open all day Sunday." Went up and bought me an ordinary suitcase. I went in the drugstore and bought a razor and other things like that. We—before we left Washington my bag came in—express company. I used that bag to put in the code, the United States code so I could communicate back to Washington. [unclear, Byham?], Secretary of State, picked us up, gave us a \$500 note—bill. [chuckles] Nobody would change it. We had to get the express company, the hotel and the railroad to divvy up around and break it so we could get—pay for our ticket. However, we got down to El Paso and at El Paso we met—went to a hotel and that was filled. We couldn't get room, couldn't get a bed. And I said we—told him why we were there. And he said, "All right. I'll tell you what I'll do. There's a man here, a steady patron, who is away for a couple days who'll give you his empty bed. And so we got through El Paso, across the bridge and got into [unclear] in the Santa Madre Mountains. [sentence unclear].
- ?: Did you find Villa?
- V: [unclear].
- ?: Did you find him?
- V: I'm all right.
- ?: Did you find Villa?
- V: We—no one knew where he was. So we asked at El Paso and then across the line—wanted an engine and a car. Well, they said, "You may have them but the railroad is half broken up. I'll have to send a man or two with you to put the rails in place to get your car—train through." So I had an engineer, an engine and a fireman and a couple men and a soldier as a guard. And we started down and where we came to broken rails, they had to put the rails in place for the trains to move through. Finally, by night, I reached Chihuahua. That's the middle—that's

the capitol of that state. We had no place to go. Hotels were all closed. The house—town was shut up. But we found a little old hotel with waiters that were ordinary people, like, Chinese. Roaches were four inches long.

?: [chuckles] Oh, boy.

V: And I remember the next morning at breakfast we had soft-boiled eggs. You had to keep your hand over the glass to keep those roaches from getting in. They were that ready to get in. Before long, we found a knock at the door and some soldiers came in. And they had a big Packard car and said, “We know that you’re here and we want to take you to a better place.” They said, “We’re going to take you to the mayor’s home. He has a nice home on a park.” Mr. Fuller said, “All right. We’ll go.” So we drove in and there we got our dinner. Servants were there and the family were away in the mountains. And we thought we’d take a little walk. We went down to the railroad station. But they knew nothing where Villa was. Well, we said then, “We’d like to have our car and our engine and go further down.” They said, “The fire has taken out of that engine. Take a long time to steam her up again.” After we got ready, it was getting quite dark. They hitched our car to an immigrant train who were taking refugees out. And we had a message from Villa, telegram, saying, “I’ll meet you at Santa Rosalia [Rosalee?].” That’s down in Mexico. “At Midnight.” Well, he wasn’t there. They took us to a hotel, stayed all night, gave us good attention and in the morning say, “Villa came in last night and he’s at his headquarters next door. And he will be ready to meet you at 11 o’clock.” So we were—arranged to meet him at the proper hour. And he walked in with his staff and I sat down [unclear], and I sat with a doctor who was an Austrian. He spoke English and he was Villa’s personal doctor. He said, “The doctor is”—he says, “The doctor’s in awful pain. He’s got the stone in the bladder.” And he said, “I don’t know what to do for him. I’ve done everything I can.” Well, I said, “The only thing I can suggest now is you’ve got a nice hospital train with everything in it.” Well, he said, “He won’t go there because they’ll catch him. He keeps away from trains.” Well, I said, “Give him 1 to 4,000 solution nitrous silver and wash the bladder out regularly. Keep it disinfected the best you can.”

?: I guess Villa was one of your most distinguished patients then, wasn’t he?

V: Yes. Then we hitched our—Villa—we couldn’t make any agreement with Villa just then. Villa said he’d have to see his other generals and we took—hitched our car onto a train, took us back to the capitol and Chihuahua. And there Mr. Fuller met all the other generals and Villa and they could not come to any understanding. Villa wanted to be a general. I called him General. He kept raiding—continued raiding across the border yet. And when Pershing sent our army in—Pershing took our army in, they followed Villa as far as [unclear]. But the Army of Mexico just opened up and let him pass through and come back. So what could you do?

DH: Nothing in that case. Dr. Hugh Auchinlaus and Harlan Esotere want you to tell us a story that you told us at the Medical Society dinner about the team that you hired for \$12 and went out in a blinding snowstorm to see a girl sick.

V: Twelve dollars? What?

- DH: Do you remember? And when you got there, the father leaned out of the window?
- V: Oh, yes. [unclear] cold night. [laughter] The ground was frozen and my man and I got a horse. In those days, I kept a horse standing harnessed on the carriage floor ready to go to the next call. I had a good—I had two or three maternity cases waiting. And with Dr. Craig Lewis, we had to have—get off quickly. However, we got up about three to four miles up in the country. And the man had sent a messenger. And we got to the house but it was dark, not a light to be seen. I knocked on the door. Finally, a window upstairs opened. A man says, “Who’s there?” I said, “Well, Doc—Doc’s here. I”—“Oh,” he said, “Doc.” He said, “You don’t have to come in. The child just had a fit and is quite well.” [laughter] Don’t come in. That makes me think of another thing. When a little girl [unclear] was born I was called out at night by her father. Horse and sleigh came, for I had telephone. And I started out to go and as I passed the hotel in Midland Park, he had gone in to get a drink. I guess he needed it. [laughter] We went on. We got into a snow bank. The roads were chuck full of snow. We came out, backed up and I said we’d go through the back street and try to get there. We got in there. The horses got up to their neck. We had to unharness the horse and get them out, pull the sleigh out. We came back to the original place where the men were digging and digging and digging the snow out. Finally, I got there. I had to stay all night. So I sent my man home. I said, “You go home in the fields where the snow had been blown off. I’ll stay all night and come back by the railroad.” And the baby was born toward morning so I had a whole night job of it. I had numerous cases happen like that.
- ?: Well, Doctor, I think—
- ?: I suppose that people often paid you in all kinds of goods and food and everything. What was that like?
- ?: Were you paid sometimes by the barter method?
- V: How’s that?
- ?: Hugh suggests that you were paid for these deliveries in—
- V: Ten dollars. Ten dollars and took care of the case nine days afterward to be sure they’re all right.
- ?: Did you ever get stood up for your fee? [laughs] Doctor, you’ve been very good to us to talk to us so long. I think you’re getting a little tired, possibly. And I just want to say that the Ridgewood Medical Society is going to appreciate very much your telling us these anecdotes. And we wish you a happy birthday on the first of April when it rolls around in a few days. Thank you.
- V: Another man called me up like that and I, it was snowing pretty badly. I said, “Well, you just send your team down and I’ll go right up and take care of you.” Three or four miles away. I said, “I wouldn’t turn the horses out in this storm.” [laughter] I had my auto in those days. Auto wouldn’t go through the snow. I went up and I had only one horse left; I’d sold the others. And I went up to the livery stable and I got a team of horses.

[end of side 1, tape 1]

- V: And I started out.
: Tell us how you used they used to warm the bits, the bits for the horses. How'd you warm those?
- V: Well, I'll tell about that. We got up into a snow bank and took—we had to dig us out. We had to get men to shovel us out again so we'd get around well. And I got to the house and he gave me \$3. I came home and I paid \$12 for the team. [laughter] Cold weather—horses. We always had to keep the bits warm by breathing on them. I and my man kept breathing on the bits till they were a little warm so it wouldn't take the skin off their teeth—off their tongue. After awhile, I put heat in my stable, a big pot-bellied stove so that the horses and everything else were warm. I had at that time a German driver. He's very interesting. He built a greenhouse on the back of the barn and put cow manure—horse manure in the barn and used the horse manure fermentation for heat. So many things like that happened. It was a great—it was really a pleasure to practice medicine, even if it was hard.
- ?: You have made it sound very interesting to us.
- V: I got very much attached to the horses. I had a team of horses. They were always known going past people's houses. They could always tell I just went past a house by the way they trotted. They were—and the life—after Dr. Craig came with me we became quite surgical. We had our ambulance running. We had men—people coming in. We had our hospital filled mostly, on time. And we got so the doctor got pretty well up in his surgery. And we thought nothing of opening an abdomen, thought nothing of a mastoid. But in the earlier days—earlier, a doctor up in Sussex County used to come down and practice. He was quite clever. He had taken some surgical work in New York and he got me to be his assistant whenever he needed to do an operation. We'd go to the houses and do mastoids, tonsillectomies, hare lip and all that sort of thing. Well, who would think of doing that today in the kitchen? And we got good results.
- ?: I'll bet you did. I wonder if there's time to tell a funny story about Dr. Vroom.
- ?: Oh, I think that'll be great.
- ?: Dr. Vroom, I want to tell them about the time that the Medical Society went over to Piermont on the Hudson and had a pretty wild time at a beer parlor over there, as we generally did in different places. I might interject here that Dr. Vroom was known among the physicians of Ridgewood as being the most cultured and politest and most genteel of the doctors that practiced in our community. And this is an example of his gentility, because when they got home Doctor got out of Dr. Willard's car. And he stood near the rear of the car, rather close to it and was talking to the doctors. And they thought they'd better see that he got into the house all right safe and sound. So they said, "Well, goodbye, Doctor. Don't you think you'd better go in?" And, well, Doctor kept on talking but the—Harry Willard turned around and said, "Doctor, I think you'd better go in now." And Dr. Vroom, in a very genteel manner, said, "I'd be very glad to, Harry, if you'll please move the car a little. The wheel is on my foot." [laughter]
- V: Well, you must remember in those early days the practice of medicine was very individual. There were no specialists. We had consultants. And do you know? It was nothing for us to think—we'd often call a consultant from New York, from

the colleges, and they'd come out here and do something for us. Don't hear that today. But those professors would come out here, and that [unclear] serve as specialists.

?: I remember—I remember examining Draft—I remember examining Draft Board men with you in about 1942.

V: Yeah, that's where you came—

?: And you recognized one of these men by his name. And you said, "Oh, I think I delivered your father." And the young fellow says, "No, that wasn't my father; that was my grandfather." [laughter]

V: Well, you speak of medical practice. Today I had a patient—my last patient, practically—where one of these patients came to me and said she'd been to psychologists. She could never get any help. I sat down—let her sit on a couch beside me. I went over her history. And I said to Cara, "You're not insane." "No, I don't think I am." But I said, "I want you to go over to Bergen Pines and be analyzed there and see what would be best to do for you." Well, some difficulty getting her there but finally got her over, they shipped her right straight to Morris Plains. [laughter] Well, she was there a year and they said, "You're now [unclear]. You've been a pretty good girl. If you want a little vacation, why don't you go home a little while?" Well, she said, "I'd like to." So they sent her home and she came to see me and told me all about it. Well, I said, "Go out in my garden with me. Plant my seeds and do my transplanting with me and do something. You've never done a stroke of work in your life before." "Yes." She came down the next day. She had a pair of overalls on, all fixed for it. I put her to work that day. We worked in the garden. I felt she was quite some—did her some good. She acted better. Did it the next day again. I gave her work for three or four days. I telephoned Morris Plains, telephoned the doctor what I had done and how she was acting. He said, "Keep her right there and go ahead." So I did. This year she married. Now, before she married I said, "I don't know what's going to happen after you marry." But she says, "I don't either. I don't know myself." Well, I said, "It's a question." But she married. I went to her wedding. She had a baby a few months ago she brought here to show me. She's all in fine shape. I don't see anything wrong with her. She's got her own home. She's running it. Her husband has business in New York. They come to see me occasionally, a little baby. [chuckles]

?: If we had more general practitioners like you, Doctor, we'd only need about half the psychiatrists [unclear].

?: That's right. Along with everything—along with everything else, you're quite a psychiatrist. [laughter]

V: Well, I was only illustrating how we had to do all these different things—our old days. We couldn't ship them off to a psychiatrist or to a surgeon. If it was a surgical job we had to do it ourselves. The hospitals were just beginning to grow up. And the beautiful rest homes now, which I'm going to—down in the rest home.

?: Just for a little while only.

V: I got in there—

?: Just till Alma comes back from the hospital, only.

- V: It's Dr. Wilkes now [unclear].
- ?: I don't know.
- ?: I have a room with him.
- V: And Mrs. [unclear] got to go to the hospital to have a cataract operation and we'll close up here. That's all we can do. We've tried every way.
- ?: Well, it won't be for long and we'll love to see you perhaps at the next meeting at the time of your birthday. We'd love to have you come. Is that right, Harlan?
- ESOTERE: Very good. I hope so.
- V: Oh, just skip the birthday.
- ?: Well, just—perhaps [several words unclear].
- V: [unclear]. There's another hundred years coming yet. [laughter]
- ?: Good.
- ?: I think we ought to do something about a hundred years. That only comes once in a lifetime, as far as I remember.
- ?: Well, we had it in mind.
- V: You know, I know the doctors' fathers so well—Medical Society.
- ?: Can't you tell us something funny about Harlan's father?
- ?: [laughs] Better not.
- ?: Can't you tell something funny about Harlan's father? You and he were great friends.
- V: I don't know much about him, no. [laughter]
- ?: That's good.
- ?: Yes, you do. [laughter]
- V: I mentioned [unclear] wedding of some kind. He was pouring champagne. I remember [unclear]. [chuckles] Well, you remember in those days, we were allowed to do a great many things. I could go to New York and have the run of the hospital. I could see any of the big doctors. [sentence unclear]. I guess you got pert-near enough on there.
- ?: Yeah.
- ?: Dr. Vroom, if you were going to go into practice again, starting today, for example, what of the different specialties do you think you might choose to work in?
- V: Oh, I think I'd—children's diseases. I was pretty well up in that at one time. My formulas were known all over the country in [unclear]. I got letters from doctors all over the country about my formulas. They're no good now; and—
- ?: [sentence unclear]. [laughter]
- V: But it was a great pleasure to have Dr. Craig come in, or Dr. Smith before Dr. Craig. And now—and I've always had someone with me.
- ?: Yeah.
- V: It's nice to talk medicine as well as just think it. In those days, all our electrical machines we had to make. I made my cauteries. I made—all my electric work I made myself. I put it right in my office. I accumulate all our instruments because in those days a surgeon owned his own instruments. Today, the hospital owns them. I had quite some trouble with maternity cases fastened up against surfaces. I went to New York, [unclear] company. They made instruments. And I bought a French traction forceps so I could get a hold of this baby. I could bring any child

down afterwards. Even the other doctors used to come and pull that child down. They wouldn't—they'd stay up behind the [unclear]. You couldn't get the head down. But to get that up on there and one to pull down and one to pull—

?: [unclear]

V: [sentence unclear]. [chuckles]

?: Well, thank you very much, Dr. Vroom. That was a wonderful afternoon. Really great.

V: Okay, sit down there and have a drink, all of you. There's a little drink over there. Alma will bring in something else. Alma.

End of Interview