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**The Vietnam Archive  
Oral History Project  
Interview with Mattie Tippit  
Conducted by Laura Calkins  
November 15, 2005  
Transcribed by Jessica Fontenot**

1 Mattie Tippit: It's on.

2 Laura Calkins: It's on. This is Dr. Laura Calkins of the Vietnam Archive at Texas  
3 Tech University initiating an oral history interview with Mattie Tippit. Today is the  
4 fifteenth of November 2005. Mattie and I are sitting together here in Lubbock, Texas. Let  
5 me first of all thank you, Mattie, for being willing to do the interview.

6 MT: You're welcome.

7 LC: Mattie, where were you born?

8 MT: Fort Worth, Texas.

9 LC: When?

10 MT: November the 28<sup>th</sup>, 1922.

11 LC: What do you remember first?

12 MT: What do I remember first? I really don't know. I keep saying I must've been  
13 born in the basement of a Baptist church in Fort Worth because every time I turned  
14 around my parents took me to church.

15 LC: That's where you were to be found. Had they been Baptists all their lives,  
16 both of them?

17 MT: They were. I haven't been, but they were.

18 LC: Let me ask a little bit about your mom. What was her name?

19 MT: Her name was Edeth, E-D-E-T-H. Edeth Crouch Tippit.

20 LC: Crouch was her maiden name?

21 MT: Yeah.

1 LC: Where were her people from?

2 MT: Eastland, Texas. Her mother and father lived in Eastland, but she was one of  
3 seven, five or twelve children.

4 LC: Wow. Where did she fall in the stack?

5 MT: She was the youngest girl.

6 LC: That's a pretty good place to be.

7 MT: Yeah. I had wonderful aunts and uncles. Mostly aunts, I didn't know my  
8 uncles all that well.

9 LC: Were they living in the Fort Worth area as you were growing up?

10 MT: Oh, they lived all over West Texas. Abilene, no not Abilene. San Angelo,  
11 Ballinger, someplace else. The oldest boy lived in a—he was a rancher. My aunts, one  
12 lived in—let's see. One lived in Ballinger. One lived in San Angelo. One lived  
13 wherever she wanted to. I had an aunt and uncle that lived in Fort Worth out on the  
14 Trinity River. Most of them lived in Texas, but all around the pan handle and West Texas  
15 mostly.

16 LC: Were they close? Was it a close family?

17 MT: Oh, yeah, very close. We had family reunions all the time. We'd have a  
18 family reunion in Ballinger. There'd be a hundred or more people there.

19 LC: Wow. What about your dad? I can't imagine. It's great. What about your  
20 father?

21 MT: My father was one of three. He had a sister that lived somewhere in  
22 Tennessee. He had a brother who was killed when he and his fiancé were killed by a train  
23 accident when I think the brother was twenty-one.

24 LC: Where did that happen, that accident?

25 MT: I don't remember where it happened, somewhere in Tennessee or in that  
26 area of Kentucky, somewhere over in there. So actually my father and his sister were the  
27 only ones that I really knew anything about. I didn't know her that well either, but Daddy  
28 was a funeral director.

29 LC: How did he come to be in that line of work?

30 MT: I don't know. I don't know if he ever told me or not. It was just one of the  
31 things he was. In fact he and my mother met. My mother was a student nurse and my

1 father ran the ambulances to the hospital. They became acquainted and eventually  
2 married.

3 LC: Now what hospital are we talking about?

4 MT: St. Joseph's in Fort Worth.

5 LC: Is it still called St. Joe's up there?

6 MT: Uh-huh. Yeah.

7 LC: That's what I thought.

8 MT: It's still there. Mother used to say that they had no place to go and be alone,  
9 but there was a cemetery across the street from the hospital. So mother always said that  
10 they courted at Solomon's tomb because there was a big head stone there with the name  
11 Solomon on it.

12 LC: Your mom was a nurse then?

13 MT: Yeah. She was a student when they met and then she graduated.

14 LC: Did some of her older sisters or brothers also do medical work?

15 MT: Unh-uh. No.

16 LC: What do you think drew her to nursing? Do you know?

17 MT: I don't have any idea.

18 LC: Did you ever ask her?

19 MT: I don't think she ever told me why. She just went. No. Many of the aunts  
20 were married and had families and just sort of were there.

21 LC: They didn't have to have a career?

22 MT: No. No.

23 LC: But your mom wanted a career it sounds like.

24 MT: Yeah. She apparently did.

25 LC: Did she continue to work after she married your dad?

26 MT: Well, I was born in '22 and my next sister was born in '24. We lived in Fort  
27 Worth. At that time my father's mother lived with them. When my sister Katie was born  
28 within the year afterwards my mother said to my father, "Make up your mind. Do you  
29 want to live with me or your mother?" Mother moved out. My mother raised—she quit  
30 nursing at that time and raised the two of us. Of course Ruthie came along. She was nine

1 years younger than I am. I was born in '22 and she was born in '30, but she was born in  
2 January of the '30 and I was born in November of '22 so it's just nine years.

3 LC: Just nine years almost exactly. Yeah.

4 MT: She didn't do any nursing until World War II. There was such a shortage of  
5 nurses in the United States because they were in the service that she took private duty  
6 nursing.

7 LC: By her own arrangement or did she—?

8 MT: Yeah. Yeah. She made arrangements with the private duty office there.  
9 Things that she could remember and knew she knew how to do. I can remember one time  
10 after she'd been in it a while she worked for a small hospital there in Tyler. I was on  
11 vacation and they needed someone to scrub. I had already had my surgery rotation. So I  
12 scrubbed with my mother circulating. The doctor would say, "Ms. Tippit," and they  
13 wouldn't know which one to answer.

14 LC: Both heads would turn around.

15 MT: So finally he said, "Now I'm gonna call you by your first name, Mattie, and  
16 I'll call her Mrs. Tippit so you'll know what's going on." Anyhow for a couple of days I  
17 scrubbed, did surgery—I scrubbed and mother circulated.

18 LC: Amazing. There aren't very many people who could say that I'm sure.

19 MT: Yeah.

20 LC: Let me know a little bit about growing up. Your father had his own business  
21 by what time?

22 MT: No. He worked for harvesting coal in Fort Worth. It wasn't until we moved  
23 to Tyler in 1936 I think it was, '36, that he had his own business.

24 LC: He opened it or was there an existing—

25 MT: He and a couple of men or some other men opened a funeral home in Tyler.  
26 There was only one there so they went in. We moved there at that time. There was a  
27 tremendous tragedy about the time we moved there. It was called the New London  
28 School explosion. There was an odorless gas that collected in the walls of this school and  
29 something set it off. It blew the school up with all the students in it. My father worked  
30 day and night for a week or more in relation to this tragedy. I saw some of the  
31 reconstructive work that he did. He was very, very good at that. Some of the students had

1 rocks and concrete blown into their face and their body and everything else. Daddy did  
2 the reconstruction. I saw one young man had a picture of him and then the man, the body.  
3 My father had him down to a T. He was good.

4 LC: Did that scare you or did it make you feel—?

5 MT: No. I would feel proud of him.

6 LC: Proud? Yeah? You were proud of him.

7 MT: Yeah. Well, let's see I was about fourteen, thirteen, fourteen, fifteen years  
8 old, something like that. I really was proud of him. He did a beautiful, beautiful job. He  
9 was wonderful at that sort of thing.

10 LC: Did you see the impact?

11 MT: I didn't see him working. I saw the result.

12 LC: Uh-huh. Did you go to any of the services or were you around for any of  
13 that?

14 MT: No. No.

15 LC: So that you could see the families.

16 MT: The New London, it was in the New London which is a little town in East  
17 Texas. Most of the funerals were in that area, but when they worked on the body they had  
18 to bring it to Tyler to the Burks Walker Daniel at that time, Burks Walker Daniel funeral  
19 home. That's where he did the reconstruction work. Then the body was taken for the  
20 funeral.

21 LC: Oh, I see. Okay. You were growing up in the depression and your dad started  
22 this business kind of at the tail end of the depression. Do you remember much about  
23 those years or any problems or did you think you were like everybody else?

24 MT: Tyler was a very closed society. They didn't want any strangers in. So the  
25 funeral home itself, I don't know how, a year and a half, two years, it just didn't go. So  
26 when they all decided to close it my father went to work for the funeral home that was  
27 there, Burks Walker Daniel funeral home. Later on it became the Burks Walker Tippit  
28 funeral home.

29 LC: How did that happen?

1 MT: I don't remember. I just know that he was asked—I don't know if Mr.  
2 Daniel died or what, but he was asked to come in and he did. So it's Burks Walker Tippit.  
3 There's a sign over there on the wall that was on the funeral cars.

4 LC: Oh, sure enough. Uh-huh. Now the business that your dad opened and he  
5 was in with a couple of other guys. It lasted maybe a—

6 MT: Maybe a year and a half, two years. They really tried to make a go of it, but  
7 it just didn't work.

8 LC: Because pretty much everyone was already leaning toward the one place in  
9 town.

10 MT: Yeah. Yeah.

11 LC: Did the other two or more guys that were in business with your dad, did they  
12 stay?

13 MT: I don't know. I lost track of them completely.

14 LC: Why do you think your dad wanted to stay in Tyler even though his  
15 business—?

16 MT: It's a very good town. Oh, Tyler is a wonderful town. It's called the rose  
17 garden of America.

18 LC: Was your mom happy there too?

19 MT: Oh, yeah. Yeah. Well, we were living there—they were living there during  
20 World War II. That's where she went back into nursing. That's where I did my  
21 scrubbing with my mother circulating and so forth right there in Tyler. They're buried  
22 there now.

23 LC: So that really became home for them?

24 MT: That became home, yeah. Most of my memories or growing up memories  
25 are in Tyler. When I went there I went into high school. Katie went into junior high and  
26 Ruthie went into elementary. So we just grew up through the schools there.

27 LC: What was high school like there? You started in 1936 or so, something like  
28 that?

29 MT: Something like that.

30 LC: What was it like?

1 MT: I graduated in—well, don't they go to high school now for eleven years or  
2 twelve?

3 LC: Twelve I think.

4 MT: Well, I graduated in eleven because that's all we had was eleven years. I  
5 was, let's see, I think I was sixteen when I graduated.

6 LC: You were sixteen?

7 MT: I was five when I started school.

8 LC: You were tearing it up. What high school was it? Is it Ty—was it called—

9 MT: John Tyler High.

10 LC: John Tyler High?

11 MT: In Tyler, Texas.

12 LC: What was the academics like? I mean, were you a good student?

13 MT: A B and C. Depended on who was teaching it and what it was.

14 LC: So you had some things that were more exciting and interesting to you?

15 MT: I guess.

16 LC: Like what kinds of things?

17 MT: I don't remember it so much, the curriculum. I enjoyed the physical  
18 education although back in those days I would keep saying, "Ladies didn't do that back  
19 then." I didn't play basketball although I was plenty tall enough to play basketball.

20 LC: Yeah. Just for the record how tall were you?

21 MT: Oh, at that time I was 5'10½".

22 LC: On your way—

23 MT: Up to 6'1".

24 LC: There you go.

25 MT: I was a member of the drum and bugle corps. No, I was manager of the  
26 drum and bugle corps.

27 LC: Were you musical then?

28 MT: No. I was a manager. I wasn't blowing anything or beating anything.

29 LC: You were in charge of—

30 MT: Of making sure they performed right. I can remember I had a math teacher  
31 who would take her math book and hit me across the shoulders and say, "Stand up

1 straight.” I had a physical education teacher who would take her tennis racket and hit me  
2 across the shoulder and say, “Stand up straight,” ‘cause I was so tall. Everybody else was  
3 such a tiny little bitty thing. There was one other girl in school that was as—that’s  
4 okay—that was as tall as I. I guess you slump.

5 LC: Is that what do you think you were doing then?

6 MT: I was slumping and they would say, “Stand up. Stand up,” and hit me across  
7 the shoulders in the back and say, “Stand up.” I enjoyed them. I think I’m not sure, I’ve  
8 always thought that they were two of the teachers that were lesbians and were friends. I  
9 don’t know if they were partners, but they were close friends. One of them was the math  
10 teacher. Heard so much about the physical education teachers, but mine wasn’t. She was  
11 married and happily so, but I enjoyed it.

12 LC: It sounds like you were aware of stuff.

13 MT: No, I was aware later.

14 LC: Later?

15 MT: Yeah.

16 LC: Okay.

17 MT: I didn’t come out until I was nearly twenty-one or twenty-one.

18 LC: What do you mean by that when you say you didn’t come out? To yourself?

19 MT: My first love was when I was twenty-one and that’s when I learned what the  
20 hell I was doing in life.

21 LC: Okay. Between graduating and being twenty-one what did you think your  
22 life was gonna look like?

23 MT: I didn’t even think about it. I was gonna be a nurse. I was allowed to enter  
24 nursing school before I was eighteen.

25 LC: Where did this happen?

26 MT: Parkland Hospital, Dallas, Texas. I was supposed to be eighteen to go into  
27 nursing school, but they started in September and my birthday was in November. The  
28 woman let me in. Every school I’ve ever gone to I’ve gone in ahead of time up to that  
29 point.

30 LC: Did you have an interview?

31 MT: Oh, yeah.

1 LC: What did that consist of? Do you remember it?  
2 MT: No. She finally said yes.  
3 LC: She said okay.  
4 MT: Yeah. Then when I graduated, finished my three years, passed my state  
5 boards, had to make up time because I had been ill a couple of times and had been in the  
6 hospital. When I went in to finally get my pin and be okay that I could wear my whites  
7 and wear my pin she said, “Ms. Tippit, I’m still not sure I should’ve let you in nursing  
8 school.”  
9 LC: Do you remember her name?  
10 MT: Mary Price Smith.  
11 LC: What was she trying to tell you, Mattie?  
12 MT: God only knows. I was into something the whole three years I was in  
13 school.  
14 LC: Now do you want to clarify that?  
15 MT: Well, she had a very hard wooden chair in her office that you sat in when  
16 you were on the carpet. I wore it out.  
17 LC: You were there often.  
18 MT: All the time.  
19 LC: What kind of infractions were you committing? I can’t imagine.  
20 MT: Well, I don’t know. I was just always into something. Nothing big,  
21 nothing—we had to smoke up on the roof. We couldn’t smoke in our rooms and I did  
22 smoke at that time. Somebody was talking one night up there and I said, “Well, Mary  
23 Price will play hell to kicking me out of nursing school.” The next morning in the  
24 breakfast lounge she stepped in, in front of me and she said, “Ms. Tippit I understand that  
25 I’d play hell for this to kicking you out of nursing school.” I said, “Yes, ma’am I said  
26 that.” We had a snitch in our—  
27 LC: Sounds like it.  
28 MT: Yeah. I said, “Yes, ma’am. I said that.”  
29 LC: What’d she say back?  
30 MT: Nothing.  
31 LC: Nothing.

1 MT: What can you say? I didn't deny it.

2 LC: Right. At least you owned up to it.

3 MT: Yeah.

4 LC: So just for someone who might not understand the set up. You're attending  
5 school and would you be living in a dorm that was in the hospital?

6 MT: Yeah. We lived in a dormitory. We lived and we had about twelve people in  
7 a dormitory room.

8 LC: Twelve in a room?

9 MT: In a whole huge room.

10 LC: Okay. So how would the sleeping arrangements be organized?

11 MT: Everybody had their own bed. I don't remember about the clothes or  
12 anything. I just know that there was a big bed. Then after we got past our first year we  
13 were allowed to go into private or semiprivate rooms. It just depended upon the luck of  
14 the draw. I think after we left the dormitory rooms I was in a private room the rest of the  
15 time. I'm not sure if that's because I was always in trouble or what.

16 LC: You might've been being segregated there.

17 MT: It was nice. Yeah.

18 LC: Did your parents help you out with the costs or how was that managed?

19 MT: My parents paid—they paid for me to go to school, yes.

20 LC: Were they excited about your career and supportive of you other than  
21 financially?

22 MT: They were supportive. I don't know about excited, but they were supportive.  
23 I got \$25 a month total spending money.

24 LC: That kept you pretty close to the ground probably.

25 MT: Well, you know what? It's 1940 to '43. That was a lot of money.

26 LC: You could make it go.

27 MT: You could make it go if you wanted to. My parents were always supportive.  
28 My father said to me, "Now, sis, whatever you do you have to finish because I don't have  
29 the money for you to play around." So it was either medicine or nursing. I decided on  
30 nursing.

31 LC: Might there have been a possibility that you wanted to study medicine?

1 MT: He probably would've tried to put me through medical school if I had felt  
2 that I really, really had a calling, but I didn't necessarily have that calling. It was  
3 medicine and nursing was the closest to medicine I would come.

4 LC: He would've supported you, you think, if you had tried to go to medical  
5 school?

6 MT: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. Yeah.

7 LC: Cause again we're talking about 1940.

8 MT: Well, considering the income and everything else it would've been just as  
9 bad as it would be right now.

10 LC: Yes. Yeah and tough.

11 MT: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah.

12 LC: A hard go. So he wanted you to think in a mature way about what you were  
13 committing to?

14 MT: Oh, yeah. Well, they always wanted me thinking in mature way.

15 LC: Did they expect a lot of you?

16 MT: Straight A's of course. I didn't have them, but—

17 LC: Did they give you advice as to how you might improve or were they  
18 accepting?

19 MT: No, I just knew that I had to.

20 LC: Would you say that your relationship with them was strong?

21 MT: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah.

22 LC: Did you go home much during those three years?

23 MT: Well, let's see. In nursing school I can remember being on night duty on  
24 Friday night and Daddy picking me on Saturday morning. I'd have Saturday and Sunday  
25 going home to Tyler, then coming back to school for the Monday classes.

26 LC: Did you look forward to weekends going home?

27 MT: Yeah.

28 LC: Would you rather have stayed?

29 MT: No. I enjoyed going home.

30 LC: In the big city, Dallas.

1           MT: Oh, no. No. I enjoyed going home. I always got along with my sisters and  
2 they were home still. I'd go home and mother would say, "Now Mattie Elizabeth be  
3 quiet. Your sister Catherine was up late sewing the suit she wants to wear tonight and  
4 she's still asleep." I'd get in the car and I'd scoot down and go to sleep. I'd wake up and  
5 I'd light a cigarette and my father would say, "Put those away and don't let your mother  
6 see you using them."

7           LC: But he didn't tell you not to.

8           MT: Mnh-mnh. He smoked.

9           LC: He smoked. He just didn't want your mom to know?

10          MT: Yeah.

11          LC: Did he think it would break her heart or—?

12          MT: I don't know what he thought. He just said, "Don't let your mother see you  
13 smoking."

14          LC: Where did you start smoking? When did you pick that up?

15          MT: Oh, I was in high school. We'd sneak down to the—

16          LC: Were you being a rebel?

17          MT: Yeah.

18          LC: That's what I thought.

19          MT: Sneak down to the pharmacy and charge a pack of cigarettes on my father's  
20 account. I guess I was stupid enough to think he wouldn't know it, but he found it out of  
21 course.

22          LC: I'll bet he did.

23          MT: He said something one day. I said, "Yes, sir. I did." Not much else you can  
24 say about that.

25          LC: It sounds like he loved you.

26          MT: My father was an absolutely phenomenal man. He really was. He was a  
27 male chauvinist, but he was a gentleman of the old school. He cared about all of his  
28 family. I can remember one time my mother said, "Mrs. White is going to divorce Mr.  
29 White." Mother said—my father said, "What did she do?" Mother said, "Tip, he's been  
30 running around on her for years. She didn't do a thing except finally get smart enough to  
31 get out of it," but, "What did *she* do?" No.

1 LC: He had three girls?

2 MT: He had three girls.

3 LC: Do you think that he ever treated you differently than he would've if he'd

4 had a son?

5 MT: No.

6 LC: Not necessarily you?

7 MT: He treated the three of us just the same. He was accepting of us. When I

8 would have a decision to make as I grew up, I would go in and I would talk to my father.

9 Now this is after I'm already out of school, out of the service, anything from the time I

10 was finished high school on I would go in there and I'd say, "Daddy, so and so and so

11 and so and so and so. I'm thinking about doing this." "Well, sis, what"—and he'd ask

12 questions. He'd say, "Do you need any help?" "No, sir I just want you to know what I'm

13 fixing to do." "Okay. If you need any help let me know." That was the end of the

14 discussion.

15 LC: You wanted—what were you seeking? His—

16 MT: I just wanted him to know so that he would know what was going on.

17 LC: Did you have the same kind of exchanges with your mom?

18 MT: Not in the same way. I probably did, but not in the same way. I remember

19 talking to my father about what I'd planned to do with my life or in the next few months

20 or whatever. He was always supportive. He said, "If you need any help, let me know."

21 LC: That's pretty good back up.

22 MT: That's a wonderful back up.

23 LC: Yeah.

24 MT: It was one time and I can't remember when it was. I know what. When I

25 went back to Texas, came back to Texas to go to school and embalment school. I was

26 working enough to pay my rent and pay my food, but not to make my car payment. He

27 made that car payment for me during the year I was in school.

28 LC: That's pretty good.

29 MT: That's pretty neat.

30 LC: Yeah it is.

31 MT: Pretty neat, yeah.

1 LC: What was Parkland Hospital like when you were there?

2 MT: City county hospital was an older building, sort of “E” shaped. Basement,  
3 first floor, second floor—I think they only had those two floors. I don’t remember a third  
4 floor, but there could’ve been. The basement was black. It was segregated. The black  
5 units were down in the basement. The first floor was the offices and some units I can’t  
6 remember them. The next floor had the pediatrics unit and the psych unit and all kinds of  
7 different things. There must’ve been three floors because one of them had surgery in the  
8 middle of the “E” the—

9 LC: Sure.

10 MT: That part.

11 LC: Yeah.

12 MT: Then private on one end and we had also an isolation unit on one of the  
13 wings.

14 LC: Would that be for people who are incarcerated or—?

15 MT: That would be for people who had mumps and measles and all kinds of  
16 contagious disease. It was a contagious disease ward. We had a tremendous amount of  
17 polio when I was a student nurse in the early ‘40s. We took care of the polio patients, did  
18 the hot packs, the Kenny packs and all of that sort of thing. I remember when I was in the  
19 Navy I was in the PX. This young, handsome young man walked up and said, “Aren’t  
20 you Ms. Tippit?” I said, “Yes I am.” “Weren’t you at Parkland Hospital?” I said, “Yes I  
21 was.” He said, “I’m so and so. I was one of the brothers that you took care of who had  
22 polio.” There were brothers and they both had polio. This one was big and muscular and  
23 sturdy. The other one was very slender and very—I’ll call him weak, but he wasn’t weak.  
24 He just was not very big. Well, the bigger one was the one that was in the service and I  
25 said, “What about your brother?” I said, “You’re looking good. What about your  
26 brother?” He said, “He’s pretty crippled.”

27 LC: Wow. Did you have—?

28 MT: So—

29 LC: Go ahead.

30 MT: Anyhow the polio epidemic in the ‘40, early ‘40s was quite a thing for us.

31 LC: There was a lot of public fear wasn’t there about it?

1 MT: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah.

2 LC: How was it spread?

3 MT: You know what, I can't remember, but I think water and contact. I think  
4 there was some contamination of fluids, water and stuff like that.

5 LC: What was the technology for treating it? I mean you couldn't cure it right?

6 MT: You couldn't cure it and you couldn't do much with it except try to keep the  
7 muscles from completely deteriorating. There was a woman from Australia named Sister  
8 Kenny who developed the Kenny packs which were different shaped wool blanket. Do  
9 you remember the old—you probably don't—the old green wool blankets that they had in  
10 the service?

11 LC: Very heavy.

12 MT: Very heavy.

13 LC: Yeah.

14 MT: Okay. They were cut so that you had one that would fit over the thigh and  
15 one that would fit over the leg, one that would fit over the arm. They were cut in different  
16 shapes and you put them in boiling water or as close to boiling as you could get. Then  
17 you'd squeeze them out and you'd put them on the muscles.

18 LC: This was because they would hold heat right?

19 MT: They would hold the heat and they would cause the muscle to relax and to  
20 become functional.

21 LC: You would apply these to the principal muscle groups like a quad or—?

22 MT: Yeah. Uh-huh.

23 LC: How often did you have to do this?

24 MT: I'm not sure. I remember that very much. I know that I had red hands.

25 LC: It sounds like a lot of—

26 MT: From squeezing them out.

27 LC: It sounds like an immense amount of work, very labor intensive for each  
28 patient.

29 MT: Yeah.

30 LC: What was the patient pool like in polio ward? Would it mostly be young  
31 people?

1 MT: Oh, yeah.

2 LC: Under twenty-one?

3 MT: Basically yeah, twenty-one and under. These young men were in their teens,  
4 the one I'm talking about. Of course we had other kinds of contagious diseases there,  
5 but—

6 LC: The polio was—

7 MT: It was destructive. In fact my Dr. Scott, my doctor, has a crippled leg from  
8 it.

9 LC: Did you ever worry about contracting it yourself?

10 MT: No because we were taught how to keep from it.

11 LC: How?

12 MT: Wear a gown, wear a mask, wash your hands, if you had to you could wear  
13 gloves, but we didn't. We used our hands, but then we washed. Outside each room was a  
14 washbasin and hand—to keep yourself clean. The gowns were out there and everything.

15 LC: Were the masks special or was it just a piece of cotton?

16 MT: Just cotton. Just your regular mask. I don't know. You just did what you  
17 were supposed to do if you were smart. If you were stupid you didn't.

18 LC: How many gals were in your class?

19 MT: Thirty.

20 LC: How many of them graduated with you at the same time?

21 MT: Practically all of them.

22 LC: No wash outs?

23 MT: I don't remember more than one or two. I don't think it was a washout. I  
24 think it was a matter of family or something like that.

25 LC: Some intervening issue in their lives.

26 MT: Yeah. Something in the family life.

27 LC: Did you kind of coalesce as a group, the thirty of you, or not so much?

28 MT: We kind of went our own way, but we were together when we were  
29 together. We had to be in at a certain time and they locked the doors.

30 LC: Right.

1 MT: So that—if the ones that smoked all got together on the roof and the ones  
2 that didn't, didn't get together. We had pretty good interaction. Some were more friendly  
3 than others. It was a pretty decent group.

4 LC: What in your training let's say by the different rounds that you had to do was  
5 the one or two that you thought were most interesting or that you liked the most? Was it  
6 emergency room or surgery or wards?

7 MT: Well, it was all new and it was all interesting. I enjoyed public health. We  
8 had a month on public health with one of the public health nurses. I enjoyed the  
9 emergency room. Did what I wasn't supposed to. I ran on an emergency run on the  
10 ambulance.

11 LC: You did?

12 MT: Yeah. Sure did. Everybody did that.

13 LC: Do you remember any of those?

14 MT: Only did one.

15 LC: What was it? Do you remember that one?

16 MT: Went to the second floor to get a woman who was pregnant that was in labor  
17 and couldn't get her down—there was no elevator so we had to carry her down in a  
18 straight chair down spiral steps. It was pretty difficult.

19 LC: Yeah. It sounds like it. Everything turn out okay?

20 MT: I guess so. I don't remember any catastrophes.

21 LC: You weren't supposed to necessarily go on these runs though?

22 MT: We were not supposed to get in that emergency ambulance, but every single  
23 one of us did.

24 LC: Why?

25 MT: Because we didn't supposed to.

26 LC: Cause they said not to.

27 MT: That's right. Anyhow how do you know—it's city county hospital. How do  
28 you know what's going on out there if you don't go out and find out? So we all did it.

29 LC: Did any of the—do you remember hearing about any of the other gals, the  
30 runs that they went on?

31 MT: No.

1 LC: Not so much.

2 MT: No. Emergency room was interesting because everything in God's green  
3 Earth came in. We'd have people—well, I can remember one doctor one time, this  
4 woman—yeah I think it was a woman, somebody came in had tried to commit suicide,  
5 had slit their wrists or something. I remember the doctor saying, "Now if you really,  
6 really want to commit suicide let me tell you how to do it." He told him how to do it.  
7 Take bichloride of mercury tablets, dissolve them and drink it and it will destroy your  
8 kidneys. Even if they pump your stomach out within the next ten or fifteen minutes,  
9 enough of it gets through that it'll destroy your kidneys and you'll die from lack of urine  
10 output. I can remember I was working—I guess I was working at Breckenridge Hospital  
11 down in Austin when I was going to the University of Texas. This woman came in and  
12 she had drunk bichloride of mercury. They pumped her out and she was in just having a  
13 ball. I was just sitting there working. I said, "She'll be dead before the week's over."  
14 Everybody looked at me like I had lost my mind. She was dead before the week was  
15 over. It destroyed her kidneys and she died. I had seen it happen and a lot of these people  
16 had never seen it, never even heard of it.

17 LC: Never heard of it. Was she obviously trying to commit suicide or was—?

18 MT: I think she was trying to get attention and that's one way to do it.

19 LC: Mm-hmm. How much of that did you see in the emergency room there,  
20 people trying to get attention?

21 MT: Not all that much. Not all that much. Not all that much.

22 LC: How busy was the ER there?

23 MT: Oh, it was City County so it was Dallas, Texas. It was busy. There were not  
24 very many nights when there was an hour without something coming in.

25 LC: Yeah. Did you enjoy that, the pace of it?

26 MT: Oh yeah. Oh yeah.

27 LC: Not to mention the variety of—

28 MT: Yeah. It was interesting.

29 LC: Did you see traumas there? What you might call a trauma?

30 MT: Like accidents and things like that?

31 LC: Yeah. Yeah.

1 MT: You saw them, yeah. It's just the general run of things, accidents, auto  
2 accidents or anything like that. I've done so much reading since then and a lot of it had to  
3 do with that sort of thing. So sometimes my mind says, "Oh, yeah. You saw that. No you  
4 didn't. You read about that."

5 LC: Did you feel that you were getting a good grounding?

6 MT: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. We had things at our school that a lot of other schools  
7 didn't have and they came to us to get that experience.

8 LC: Like what?

9 MT: Pediatrics, isolation, psychiatry.

10 LC: Tell me about the psychiatric ward. What did that look like?

11 MT: Locked ward.

12 LC: Yeah.

13 MT: It was locked. You had to knock to get in and you had to identify yourself.  
14 You just took care of the patients whatever they were whether they were catatonic or  
15 whatever. Some of them extremely excitable so you used the hot tub to calm them down.

16 LC: Can you describe that?

17 MT: Huh?

18 LC: Can you describe that?

19 MT: It was just a tub with a canvas sort of envelope. The person was put in there  
20 and then the top was put on and just their head was out. They were put into warm water.

21 LC: That was to calm them down?

22 MT: Oh, yeah.

23 LC: Would you ever use cold water in one of those?

24 MT: Oh, no. No. Not for that.

25 LC: But for some thing?

26 MT: I don't remember ever using cold water. I remember using only warm and  
27 hot water. Not hot, hot, but better than tepid.

28 LC: What you would think of as a relaxing—?

29 MT: Yeah. Yeah.

30 LC: Was it effective?

31 MT: Yeah. Well, it worked.

1 LC: Of course you know, now—  
2 MT: They have to know so many medicines now.  
3 LC: Yes. It's write a script and here's your valium or whatever to calm down.  
4 MT: Yeah. No. It worked. It worked.  
5 LC: Were there drugs that could be used?  
6 MT: There were not that many. Not as many as they have now.  
7 LC: Oh, sure, but did—  
8 MT: I don't remember any of them because I remember occasionally giving  
9 medication, but mostly I remember when they really got upset and excited and stuff that  
10 we used the tub.  
11 LC: Did the patients dread that? I'm trying to—  
12 MT: No, I don't think they did. They didn't like necessarily being restrained  
13 because you're restrained when you're an envelope. I don't think they necessarily liked  
14 that, but it worked for them.  
15 LC: How long would you have on each of these different rotations?  
16 MT: Three months on every rotation.  
17 LC: Three months?  
18 MT: Days three to eleven and eleven to seven.  
19 LC: That's packing it in.  
20 MT: That's packing it in.  
21 LC: Yeah. You didn't have a lot of time for high jinks. Yeah, but it sounds like  
22 when there was time you found a way to bring yourself to the attention of Mrs. Smith.  
23 MT: Yeah.  
24 LC: Well, you were notable anyway. She definitely—  
25 MT: "I'm not sure I ever should've let you go to nursing school." Goodness. Let  
26 me tell you something.  
27 LC: Sure.  
28 MT: One time I was living in Los—I was living in Pasadena, California, and was  
29 traveling to the University of Southern California on the red car, the public  
30 transportation. I got on the streetcar one time to go to the red car station. I thought I saw

1 that woman get on the streetcar and I nearly fainted. She was really a tough woman and it  
2 just scared the hell out of me.

3 LC: She was tough.

4 MT: She was very rigid, very uptight, very one way.

5 LC: What we might think of as someone with control issues?

6 MT: Absolutely. Absolutely and she—I just nearly fainted when I saw this  
7 person get on. Now it could've been her, it could've not been her, but I thought it was. I  
8 want you to know I was at the back of the car and I stayed there.

9 LC: She left an impression.

10 MT: Very definite impression. Now she was a good person as far as being a head  
11 of a nursing and all of that. She did a fine job, but she'd scare the hell out of you.

12 LC: Was that the impact she had on pretty much everybody do you think?

13 MT: Oh, yeah.

14 LC: She ran the shop that way it sounds like.

15 MT: She ran the place, the nurses.

16 LC: Who did she report to?

17 MT: Her.

18 LC: Would she report to a doctor at all?

19 MT: No. She was the head of it.

20 LC: So she was on her own to—

21 MT: She was it.

22 LC: Wow. There's no one with—no one had a choke chain on her at all.

23 MT: At that time in Parkland, our nurses' instructors taught us everything we  
24 knew. We took anatomy and physiology, microbiology, all of the courses were taught by  
25 nurses in our nursing school.

26 LC: Now these would all be the faculty essentially who worked for her?

27 MT: That's right. Yeah.

28 LC: Did you have any particular close relationship with any of those instructors?

29 MT: We had one instructor. Her name was Emma Pope. She taught anatomy and  
30 physiology and I just—she was a woman in her seventies I think. I just adored her. When  
31 I got my state board grades back, I went screaming over there. "Mrs. Pope. Mrs. Pope.

1 Mrs. Pope. Guess what I made on anatomy and physiology?" "I don't know, Mattie."  
2 "Ninety-six." A hundred was perfect and I can tell you what I didn't get. I said, "I left  
3 one blank." At that time you had to fill in the blanks.

4 LC: Yeah. No multiple choice.

5 MT: No. You filled in the blanks. I said, "The one that I left blank was 'What is  
6 the name of leprosy? What is the other name for leprosy?' and I couldn't think of it." It's  
7 called Hansen's disease. You better believe. I've never forgotten that. In my psych—one  
8 of my psych tests one time. You know how when you're sitting around and you're  
9 saying, "What is so and so? (tongue noises) What is so and so?" Then someone rattles it  
10 off.

11 LC: Right. Drill me.

12 MT: Yeah.

13 LC: Right.

14 MT: Let's see one question somebody said, "What are the three kinds of shock  
15 therapy?" I thought three kinds? There's only two, but someone rattled them off. One of  
16 them I had never heard of. So the question on the test was, "Name the three kinds of  
17 shock therapy and tell what you know about them." So I talked about the first two and  
18 then said, "There's a third one named so and so about which I know absolutely nothing."

19 LC: That's what you wrote down?

20 MT: That's what I wrote down. I made a hundred on the test. That's what she  
21 asked. What do you know about them, but you better believe the next day I could tell her  
22 everything there was about that test.

23 LC: Did you run and check as soon as you walked out of the testing room?

24 MT: As soon as I went out of there I went to wherever I could get it and found  
25 out what it was all about.

26 LC: You're on the details. Interesting. Wow.

27 MT: "About which I know absolutely nothing."

28 LC: Well, you're a straight shooter. I can see that. What lay in front of you when  
29 you finished your state boards? Did you think that you would stay in Dallas?

30 MT: I still had to finish nursing school. At that time you took your boards before  
31 you finished nursing school.

1 LC: How much longer did you have?

2 MT: I took the boards in the summer and I had till September. Well, I had about  
3 thirty or forty-five days of make up time because of illness. I had already passed boards  
4 by the time I finished nursing school.

5 LC: Was it your expectation that you would go into the service? I mean this is the  
6 height of World War II.

7 MT: No. No. I knew I was gonna go to the University of Texas and get a degree  
8 in nursing, in teaching.

9 LC: In teaching. You wanted to be on the faculty.

10 MT: I wanted to be a nurse teacher. While I was there they said they were going  
11 to, what, bring the nurses into the Army. I said, "Not this child."

12 LC: Draft them essentially.

13 MT: They were going to draft them, yeah, basically. I said, "Not this child."

14 LC: Why not?

15 MT: I didn't want in the damned Army.

16 LC: What did you think of the war at this point?

17 MT: World War II?

18 LC: Mm-hmm.

19 MT: Oh, I was in favor of World War II. First reason I didn't want in the Army is  
20 they had split shifts and I had had my fill of those. Work till twelve, come back at three  
21 and work till seven. No way. The Navy had straight eight hour shifts so I said I'm going  
22 into the Navy. I'm not getting into that damned Army.

23 LC: How did you manage?

24 MT: I went to Houston and was interviewed. I've forgotten some kind of  
25 recruiting thing there in Houston. I was in Austin. I went to Houston and was interviewed  
26 and signed up.

27 LC: Do you remember that visit, the recruiting visit that you went on?

28 MT: I don't remember how I talked to or anything about it. I just know I slept in  
29 the train. I'd never been to the sleeping car sleeping. I can remember that.

30 LC: Your goal was not so much to get into the Navy as to avoid being in the  
31 Army?

1 MT: That's right.

2 LC: Did you feel like you were entering into part of a big patriotic movement?  
3 How did you view it?

4 MT: I just felt like I'm not going to be drafted. I'll just take my own life and do  
5 what I want to with it. Don't tell me what to do.

6 LC: You weren't I'm gonna gather checking the newspaper everyday to see how  
7 the war was going or any of that?

8 MT: No. I never have read the newspaper.

9 LC: Really?

10 MT: Really.

11 LC: Why?

12 MT: It's just a bunch of stuff and it's only one person's opinion.

13 LC: It doesn't influence you that much.

14 MT: No. I might look at it if there's a big headline or something. Like there was  
15 one headline, let's see, Roosevelt's first name. What was it?

16 LC: President Roosevelt?

17 MT: Yeah.

18 LC: Franklin.

19 MT: "FDR OKs TVA (Tennessee Valley Authority)." Now I remember that one.

20 LC: Cause it was all just letters.

21 MT: All just letters and it made good sense to me because I knew what the  
22 Tennessee Valley Authority was and I knew who FDR was, but most of the time it was  
23 just stuff.

24 LC: Did you have an impression of President Roosevelt? Did you—?

25 MT: I liked him.

26 LC: Why?

27 MT: I just thought he was in a bad situation and was doing the best job he could  
28 possibly do. On top of which he was also handicap.

29 LC: Did you know that at the time?

30 MT: Yeah.

31 LC: Did pretty much everyone know that?

1 MT: Oh, yeah.

2 LC: Cause historians now have gone back over this searching for photographs of  
3 him wearing his braces and all this sort of thing.

4 MT: You don't have very many of those. Mostly he's standing, maybe he has a  
5 cane.

6 LC: Usually he has someone at his elbow assisting him.

7 MT: Yeah, right beside him.

8 LC: You knew he had had polio?

9 MT: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah.

10 LC: The idea was that he was as a public figure trying to project strength and so  
11 on and he didn't want that dwelt on anyway.

12 MT: To be a part of it. Yeah.

13 LC: Was there a sense that you should feel sorry for him in some way?

14 MT: Oh, no. Oh, no. You admired him or you disliked him intensely, one or the  
15 other.

16 LC: You were more admiring of him.

17 MT: I was more—yeah, I admired him. He was the reason we only have two—  
18 that a person can only be elected twice because he had three terms, four. Yeah. That's  
19 right, four terms. But we needed him at that time. There's not anybody else that I can  
20 think of that could've done the things that he did.

21 LC: Yeah. He changed America that's for sure.

22 MT: Yeah. He really did.

23 LC: What about Mrs. Roosevelt? Did you see her as—?

24 MT: I can always remember, "We can't bomb there because Eleanor is there."

25 LC: She was something else.

26 MT: She was something else.

27 LC: As we learn. Did you have an impression of her, favorable or unfavorable?

28 MT: I accepted her as a nice person, a good person who was very active in the  
29 war effort and everything.

30 LC: Yes. She changed the position of the first lady too by her activities. She was  
31 quite independent as you know.

1 MT: (inaudible).

2 LC: She was something else. I wonder, you know you're from Texas. You're a  
3 Texan and proud of it. These were a couple of serious Yankees. Did you feel the  
4 difference between them and you?

5 MT: No.

6 LC: Did you ever listen to him on the radio?

7 MT: Oh, yeah. "Yesterday, a day that will live in infamy. The Japanese bombed  
8 Pearl Harbor." Oh, yeah I listened. He was quite a man that president was. We've had  
9 one or two since then that were good.

10 LC: I'll ask you which ones those are another time. What did you feel like when  
11 you heard that we were at war with the Japanese?

12 MT: You know where I was when I heard it?

13 LC: I'd love to know. Where?

14 MT: I was in nursing school. We had three stories and a basement to our  
15 building. We had a mailbox, A B C D E F G and you just went through your—T's to find  
16 if I had any mail. It was on the first level, not the basement, but the first level in the  
17 hallway. I had stopped to check my mail and someone came down the stairs or came into  
18 the little platform area and said, "The Japanese just bombed Pearl Harbor," just  
19 absolutely wiped the feet out from under you nearly.

20 LC: I believe it.

21 MT: Yeah. Total silence after that was said. It was absolute total silence. There  
22 was only one or two of us there. I mean besides me.

23 LC: Yeah. Yeah. What do you do?

24 MT: Nothing. You can't do a dang thing. So of course I was probably—I still had  
25 a year, a year and a half, maybe two years to go. There was no way I was gonna be  
26 involved in it at that point.

27 LC: Did you feel anything as the months went on about the Japanese themselves?  
28 There was so much propoganda and a lot of it very racist.

29 MT: I don't know that I did. I didn't like the Japanese that bombed us.

30 LC: But you were distinguishing them from the Japanese people.

31 MT: From other—yeah. Yeah.

1 LC: You didn't like the military government and what they had done.

2 MT: It was just one of the things that hit you like a ton of bricks.

3 LC: Can't imagine it.

4 MT: Of course when I finished nursing school I went to the University of Texas.

5 I didn't go into the service. It wasn't—well, I told you that was later that I went into the

6 service, that I even applied. I don't know.

7 LC: Mattie, let me try to draw a comparison and see if you can measure it out.

8 Was that day that you were sorting your mail, trying to find your mail and you heard this,

9 was that day something similar to what you might've felt when you found out that New

10 York City was being attacked, the twin trade towers?

11 MT: Oh, my word. Very much the same.

12 LC: Same kind of thing.

13 MT: Very, very much the same. I sat and I watched those towers go down and go

14 down and go down and go down. You're numb. You're just numb. You can't even get

15 hatred. You think how stupid are those people? Right now they blow up somebody over

16 somewhere, how stupid can you get? That's not religion. That is stupidity of the first

17 order and that's being a total puppet for some idiot.

18 LC: Right. To the point of taking not only someone else's life, but your own.

19 MT: Your own and many others.

20 LC: As many as possible.

21 MT: That's right. Then, what? On the news yesterday or day before some damn

22 husband and wife, only hers didn't go off.

23 LC: This is the bombings at the hotels in Jordan.

24 MT: Yeah. Yeah. You know what? That's not religion. That's not religion of any

25 kind. I don't care what you are. That's not religion. That's stupidity.

26 LC: Mind control?

27 MT: Sure it's mind—

28 LC: Surrendering your will?

29 MT: Yeah. That's it. Yeah.

30 LC: Mattie, can I ask you a little bit more about the hospital?

31 MT: Sure.

1 LC: You mentioned that the downstairs was the segregated area for the black  
2 people. Now did you have any black nurses going through your school?  
3 MT: No.  
4 LC: Were the people who were giving treatment to the black patients also black  
5 or white?  
6 MT: They're white.  
7 LC: So all the employees of the hospital essentially were white?  
8 MT: Unless you cleaned the floors or did the scut work.  
9 LC: Then you could be black or Hispanic?  
10 MT: Mostly Hispanic.  
11 LC: Mostly Hispanic?  
12 MT: Very few, very few—I don't remember very many hardly any blacks,  
13 mostly Hispanic.  
14 LC: How did you feel at that time about segregation?  
15 MT: Well, when I lived in Fort Worth we had an alley between the back of our  
16 backyard and the backyard behind us. On the back of the property, not all of them, but  
17 some of them in that block were little houses where black families lived. So I grew up  
18 with a nanny, a black lady who cleaned our house and was very important to me as a  
19 child.  
20 LC: What was her name?  
21 MT: She lived about two houses down and across the alley.  
22 LC: What did you call her?  
23 MT: I don't remember. Whatever her name was, I don't remember.  
24 LC: Did you call her Mrs. Whatever her name was or just—  
25 MT: No. Martha or whatever her name was. So I had black people that lived right  
26 next to me, with me more or less. They were wonderful people. They really were. I had a  
27 cousin who lived in Dalhart, Texas. Dalhart, Texas, had a sign at the entrance to every  
28 road entering their town, "Nigger, don't let the sun set on you in the city limits." This  
29 young lady, my cousin, was terrified of black people. When she would come to visit if we  
30 were walking down the street and a black person, didn't matter how big or how little or

1 what sex came toward us she would put me between her and them. She would move  
2 around me to make me be the middle man.

3 LC: This was out of fear?

4 MT: Yeah. Oh yeah. She was terrified.

5 LC: This was driven by fear.

6 MT: She was terrified of black people.

7 LC: Because she thought what would happen?

8 MT: I don't know. When you grow up in a town that says, "Don't let the sun set  
9 on you here"—

10 LC: It's sending a message.

11 MT: It sends a message.

12 LC: You're right.

13 MT: I enjoyed working with the black people, the black patients. I enjoyed it  
14 very much. They were friendly. They were warm. They're human beings. I don't think I  
15 ever had a problem with it at all. Now I have some problems with black people. I really  
16 do, but I have worked real hard to get over a lot of it. I still have them. I still have some.  
17 It depends on what happens.

18 LC: Is some of that just from growing up in the segregated South?

19 MT: Yeah. Oh, yeah. I've never personally had any problem. Now I'm gonna tell  
20 you this. When I had my surgery, a black doctor came in my room. I was angry.

21 LC: Why?

22 MT: He didn't—I don't ever remember him introducing himself. I presume he's  
23 Dr. Richard's partner, but he'll never touch me and he'll never be in the room whenever  
24 he looks at me for any reason.

25 LC: You have this feeling—it seems less because he's black, but more because  
26 he didn't introduce himself to you or speak to you as a patient.

27 MT: No, because he's a black man who thinks he's somebody. That's southern  
28 segregation. He's the only one I really reacted that way to in years.

29 LC: Really?

30 MT: Yeah.

31 LC: So you're kind of surprised?

1 MT: I am sort of surprised, but I'm not gonna have anything to do with him.

2 LC: Interesting.

3 MT: Yeah. It is interesting.

4 LC: Yeah. Is this something that you've thought a lot about over the years or  
5 have you—?

6 MT: No. This just happened. I've thought about it since.

7 LC: Your own, kind of the baggage that you are carrying around because of the  
8 attitudes that were in place when you grew up. Is that something that has intruded on you  
9 or not so much?

10 MT: I don't know. I don't know. There are several a number of black people that  
11 work right here. I don't have anything against them and I'm friendly with them.

12 LC: Yes. Sure. Sure.

13 MT: I think I'm just reacting to him.

14 LC: Going back to your days when you were training in the hospital those  
15 patients you saw them as patients.

16 MT: They were patients and they were people. It didn't matter what color their  
17 skin was.

18 LC: Who needed help.

19 MT: Yeah. There was one of them I remember, a man—we had what they call a  
20 burn cradle. It's a metal cradle that goes over your body and you put the sheet over that.

21 LC: To protect it—so that it doesn't lie on your skin? Uh-huh.

22 MT: I was in there one day, two men side by side. One man was saying, “Man,  
23 what happened?” He said, “Well, she found out I was playing around on her and so she  
24 just boiled up a pan of water and poured it on me.” The other man said, “Whoa, are you  
25 going back to her?” He said, “Yes, sir. I'm scared not to.” Now see that's humor. That's  
26 wonderful. “Yes, sir. I'm scared not to.”

27 LC: Did they replicate on that lower floor the same kinds of wards and  
28 everything that they had upstairs?

29 MT: Yeah. They had private rooms, four bedrooms and eight bedrooms.

30 LC: But would never allow black people to be treated upstairs?

1 MT: That's right. They had their own unit. Well, one was surgical and one was  
2 medical. They had two units. Now I'm trying to remember about delivery, labor and  
3 delivery. I think if a woman was in labor she went to the labor and delivery unit. It didn't  
4 matter what color her skin was.

5 LC: Because they didn't have one downstairs?

6 MT: Yeah.

7 LC: Yeah.

8 MT: We had one nursery, one premature nursery, one regular nursery, one unit  
9 and then I think two or four rooms, delivery rooms.

10 LC: What about the emergency room? Could the black people come in there?

11 MT: Oh, yeah. Yeah.

12 LC: Then they would be—

13 MT: Sent where they needed to be sent.

14 LC: Okay.

15 MT: Emergency room was sort of interactive. I think—if I remember right, also  
16 labor and delivery.

17 LC: How did the doctors treat the nurses, the nursing students I should say?

18 MT: Oh, fine.

19 LC: No problems?

20 MT: Well, not that—I was so damn big.

21 LC: They didn't pick on you.

22 MT: They didn't pick on me, yeah. I could've stand there like this with my hand  
23 up and it was one doctor that could just run right under my arm he was so short. They  
24 always thought they were God.

25 LC: Yes.

26 MT: But they weren't. They'd put their pants on just like I did.

27 LC: Did they pick up from you do you think that you weren't gonna play that  
28 game?

29 MT: I was bigger than they were.

30 LC: That's a distinct advantage. See all that stand up straight thing actually paid  
31 off.

1 MT: Well, yeah it did. I was there to learn and I learned a lot. Someone asked  
2 one time in one of our classes, “Who is the most important person in the hospital?” Every  
3 damn student there said the doctor and they said, “No. It’s the patient.” Learned a lesson.  
4 The most important person in the hospital is the patient.

5 LC: It sounds like even though Mrs. Smith was tough, she ran a pretty good shop.  
6 MT: She did. She ran a great shop.  
7 LC: Yeah and set you up pretty well.  
8 MT: Yeah. Oh, yeah.  
9 LC: When you did leave there did you go then to the university to study?  
10 MT: I worked there for about four or five months until I could get into the  
11 university.  
12 LC: Right. So you started in that fall?  
13 MT: No. I worked that fall and went in that next spring of ’44.  
14 LC: Okay. Okay. You were there for, what, a year and a half or two years?  
15 MT: About a year.  
16 LC: Did you earn a degree?  
17 MT: Oh no. Not at UT (University of Texas).  
18 LC: Later you did that.  
19 MT: Let’s see. I went to the University of Southern California and got a couple  
20 of degrees there, but they were in radio and television. Then went to embalmmnt school  
21 and then went to Orange and was teaching. So I started working on my master’s in  
22 education up here at Tech. Then after I’d been teaching for five years mind you, they said  
23 I had to have a BSN, a bachelor of science in nursing.

24 LC: Now this is at Methodist they said this?  
25 MT: No the state board of nurse examiners.  
26 LC: Oh, they changed the rules. Yeah.  
27 MT: Said you can’t teach if you don’t have a degree in nursing. So I challenged  
28 at West Texas State and got my degree.  
29 LC: So just to recap here, how many degrees do you have, Mattie?  
30 MT: Radio and Television.  
31 LC: That’s BA (Bachelor of Arts).

1 MT: BSN.

2 LC: BSN.

3 MT: Education. I have a couple of degrees from the University of Southern  
4 California, both of them in Radio and Television.

5 LC: Is one of those a master's degree?

6 MT: I did all the masters work. Yeah. I didn't do the—I told the man to go shove  
7 it up his—where the sun doesn't shine. He was telling me what I was doing was not right  
8 and I said, "I'm working in the industry and you're telling me sitting up here in your ivy  
9 tower that I'm wrong? You can have it and shove it where the sun doesn't shine."

10 LC: What was the issue there if I can ask you about?

11 MT: I don't remember. I don't remember. He was just such an egotistical son of a  
12 gun. I told him to shove it.

13 LC: Yeah. You meet those people along the way. He wasn't gonna win you out.  
14 That's clear.

15 MT: Anyhow when I left there that was it. I worked in television for five years.

16 LC: Yeah. I want to ask you about that in some detail if you're willing. Maybe  
17 our next time. Let's take a break there.