

Mississippi Oral History Program

Simpson County Historical and Genealogical
Oral History Project

An Oral History

with

Kathleen Reed Miller

Interviewer: Joe White

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An Oral History with Kathleen Reed Miller, Volume 1217, Part 21

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Biography

Mary Kathleen Reed Miller was born to Charlie Reed and Noblee Winham Reed in Hosston, LA in April 1925. She went to school in New Iberia, LA, and afterwards went to a three-year training school for nurses at Southern Baptist Hospital in New Orleans during World War II. After completing nursing school, Kathleen married Dr. Archie Carlyle Miller. The couple moved to Weston, MS to work at a clinic, where they mostly helped deliver babies out in the country. They later worked at a clinic owned by George Alexander. In 1948, Miller began working in the hospital surgical unit at Sanatorium, between Mendenhall and Magee. After leaving the sanatorium, Miller went back to work at the Simpson County Health Department. She also worked part-time as the nurse on staff at the sheriff's department. Miller then worked for Simpson County Hospital in the early 1960s.

Miller and her husband had three children together, two boys and one girl. Miller has three grandchildren and four great-grandchildren. She retired from nursing in 1999.

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AN ORAL HISTORY
with
KATHLEEN REED MILLER

This is an interview for the Mississippi Oral History Program of The University of Southern Mississippi Simpson County Project. The interview is with Kathleen Reed Miller and is taking place on April 27, 2003. The interviewer is Joe White.

White: My name is Joe White. Today is Sunday, April 27, 2003. This interview is conducted under a grant from the Mississippi Humanities Council as a part of the oral history project at The University of Southern Mississippi. Today we're interviewing Ms. Kathleen Miller at her home in Mendenhall, Mississippi. Ms. Miller, could you state your full name, please?

Miller: Mary Kathleen Reed Miller.

White: Your maiden name was Reed.

Miller: Reed.

White: And where were you born?

Miller: I was born in Hosston, Louisiana.

White: H-O-S-S-T-O-N?

Miller: Uh-huh.

White: And what were your parents' names?

Miller: Charlie Reed and Noble Reed, Noble Winham.

White: N-O-B-L-E-E, is that the way she spelled her name?

Miller: Uh-huh.

White: Winham, W-I-N-H-A-M.

Miller: Uh-huh.

White: What year were you born? When were you born?

Miller: I was born in 1925, April the—

White: You're like me. I have trouble remembering my birthday sometimes.

Miller: I sure do.

White: My wife tells me I have trouble remembering our anniversary sometimes, too.
(laughter)

Miller: Well, let's see. I was born April the twenty-fifth, 1925.

White: Nineteen twenty-five. And where did y'all live at that time?

Miller: In Hosston, Louisiana.

White: Hosston, Louisiana. You went to school there?

Miller: No. I went to school in New Iberia, Louisiana, and I finished school there, and then after that I went to training school, Baptist Hospital in New Orleans.

White: That's a nurses' training school?

Miller: Nurses' training school.

White: How long were you at nurses' training school? What was that like, your education in nursing?

Miller: Well, it was mostly learning, and I was taught—this was during the war. And so we had to, they wanted us to get out early so we could go on and finish and go on into whatever we were going to do, marry, if that's what you wanted to do.

White: Wanted to get you out into the medical profession as fast as they could during World War II.

Miller: That's exactly right, uh-huh.

White: What was it, a two-year course?

Miller: About three years.

White: Three-year course.

Miller: Three-year course, uh-huh.

White: And what hospital were you affiliated with?

Miller: Southern Baptist.

White: Southern Baptist Hospital in New Orleans?

Miller: In New Orleans, uh-huh, and that was on Napoleon Avenue.

White: I'm trying to envision where that was. That hospital is no longer there, is it?

Miller: Well, it's not there anymore. It's on MacFarland(?).

White: OK. That's what I was trying to place, then.

Miller: And it's altogether different than what I started.

White: I had two friends who went through nursing school in Louisiana in New Orleans, and went through Charity Hospital. I think that's a big school there (inaudible).

Miller: Yeah, it is. Uh-huh.

White: What did you do after graduation? What was your first job after you got out of nursing school?

Miller: Well, after I got out of nursing school, I thought I had to get married.

White: That was the thing to do?

Miller: That was the thing to do, to get married to a doctor. And I married a doctor.

White: And his name was?

Miller: Archie Carlyle Miller.

White: OK. Was he practicing medicine or in school in New Orleans?

Miller: He had just finished school, and he really didn't know what he wanted to practice. He thought he wanted to go back to school at the Charity Hospital, but we married.

White: And when did you marry?

Miller: In 19—

White: I had asked you where you practiced first, or where you went first.

Miller: Yeah. Well, we went to Weston, Mississippi, and this doctor had a clinic, an old clinic there, and so we stayed there for about a year because we felt like we were just losing time there.

White: It was a small clinic?

Miller: A small clinic. And then we would go out in the country to deliver babies, and that was the home delivery.

White: There wasn't much public health service other than private doctors, physicians then, was there?

Miller: That's right.

White: But do you remember the doctor's name in Wesson?

Miller: No, I really can't remember.

White: And had Dr. Miller and you met him in Louisiana? Was that the reason—

Miller: Yes, right, and we married—

White: —for the connection?

Miller: —in Louisiana.

White: And came to Wesson?

Miller: And came to Wesson; stayed there a year, and then Dr. Rottenberry(?) had a clinic here in Mendenhall.

White: That would be Dr. C.G. Rottenberry?

Miller: Yes, uh-huh. And he wanted to go to Jackson because he felt like he could better serve the people there. So he came to Wesson and wanted to know if Dr. Miller would come to take his place here in Mendenhall. And so he did, and Dr. Rottenberry went on to Jackson, he and his family. And after he got there, he realized that was the wrong thing that he had done. So then he wanted his clinic back.

White: Dr. Rottenberry wanted (inaudible) back to Mendenhall.

Miller: Yeah. And so then some of the citizens here in Mendenhall decided that they didn't want us to leave. So we went down to Mr. Mahaffey(?). He had a drugstore here.

White: I remember that drugstore.

Miller: Uh-huh. And so we stayed there until George Alexander (inaudible) clinic.

White: Doc Mahaffey, I think, which is what he was known as. What was his first name? I'm trying to remember. You practiced medicine out of the drugstore there, an office in the drugstore?

Miller: Yeah, um-hm.

White: And then George Alexander, who was a businessman here, helped find a clinic, or did he build a clinic?

Miller: He had a clinic. I mean, he had buildings.

White: Oh, he had a building.

Miller: And then it was real convenient for us. It had several rooms, and we fixed one room for a delivery room, and—

White: Well, delivery was a big part of medicine then for every doctor almost, wasn't it?

Miller: Oh, yes, uh-huh. And we delivered—I can't tell you how many babies. We had a room. We had it all fixed up for a delivery room.

White: Was this the building on Maude(?)? Is that what it is? Right off of Main Street downtown?

Miller: Yeah.

White: The little, white clinic building.

Miller: That's right.

White: OK. I didn't know George Alexander owned that building. What was the early practice like there? What were the early deliveries like, for one thing? Did you do home deliveries still?

Miller: Well, we did home deliveries for a long time, but then it was convenient for us to fix the delivery room there in that building. So we had our patients to come in about once a month for checkups. And we did the lab work on them, and then Dr. Miller would check them. And then sometimes at night they would call us and tell us to come quick; somebody was fixing to have a baby. So we'd rush down there, and sometimes we had to stay all night. (laughter)

White: I can imagine.

Miller: But they finally delivered. And we've had breech deliveries. We've had twins, and we just cleaned the mother up and the baby up and had them ready to go home the next day if it was during the night.

White: Right. Well, other than the clinics, there was no hospital in this end of Simpson County, was there?

Miller: No.

White: Wasn't?

Miller: No.

White: Magee Hospital had been established, I think, by then. Had it not?

Miller: Yes, uh-huh. They had a hospital there by then. And Dr. Miller would go out and check the mother and the baby the next day after delivery, make sure that everything was all right. And then he would circumcise the little boys.

White: Was that automatic then?

Miller: Yes, uh-huh.

White: During the late [19]40s and the early 1950s.

Miller: That's right, um-hm.

White: Don't mean to jump off into another area here, but we had mentioned the war several times. That probably affected the practice of medicine in Simpson County for a year or two at least. Didn't it?

Miller: Yes, it did.

White: Did you have returning soldiers to deal with, who had health problems due to the war?

Miller: Very few.

White: Not many.

Miller: Not many, no. Seems like the government took care of them.

White: It was a big birth rate—

Miller: It was.

White: —immediately following (laughter) the war.

Miller: It was. It really was. And the thing about it, Dr. Miller enjoyed delivering babies, and I enjoyed the same thing. (laughter)

White: Well, that helped. Didn't it?

Miller: Yeah, that really helped, uh-huh.

White: How far did your patients come from in Simpson County?

Miller: Oh, well, they came from Pinola, came from Puckett, and we got a lot from Magee.

White: I know my family came from Pinola to your clinic.

Miller: Pinola, uh-huh.

White: General practice of medicine is what you were involved in there for a number of years.

Miller: Yes, it was, uh-huh. Sometimes I would be here. I would be sleeping, and the doctor would call me and tell me to, "Come quick. We're fixing to have a baby." And I enjoyed that part of my nursing.

White: Were most of them, most of the babies delivered in the clinic, or most of them delivered in the homes?

Miller: In the clinic, and then we had some out in the country that couldn't get to us. And it was out in the country.

White: How many night calls, average night calls did you make?

Miller: Oh.

White: Something physicians don't do very often these years, I don't think.

Miller: No. But Dr. Miller never failed to go and to take care of a patient that was sick at night, and the babies, the mothers couldn't get back in to see him because they didn't have transportation.

White: Well, didn't—and I'm certainly not asking any legal questions that would get you in trouble, but didn't a nurse, particularly in the [19]40s and the [19]50s, almost have to practice medicine? Didn't you have to do a lot of things that nurses don't do these days?

Miller: Oh, yes. That's right.

White: Can you talk about some of the tough days and the tough times of nursing? Without mentioning any names, of course.

Miller: Yes. Well, we had a lot of sick children, and had to make some kind of provision for them to go to Jackson to be checked. And then Dr. Miller was a very good doctor, and he knew exactly what to do and what to say and how to treat these children. And then sometimes we had mothers who were real sick, and he knew how to do that. He did a lot of things that doctors don't do now. Well, I wouldn't say they don't like to take care of their patients, but he was really a good physician.

White: Went the extra mile.

Miller: He did.

White: There was not an ambulance service—

Miller: No.

White: —at that time. Was there? Did most people transport their own family members to the hospital?

Miller: That's right. And then maybe a friend would transport them to Jackson.

White: Were there any type illnesses that were much more common during the [19]40s and [19]50s that have almost disappeared over the years?

Miller: Yes, especially the children since we have health departments, like the babies have to have immunizations. Well, they would go to the health department to get the medicines now, and it would be free. But now I think it's kind of changed. They charge for all these things they do, and the mothers go for checkups, too, before they have the babies.

White: The inoculation, basic governmental inoculation program started, I believe, about the time you were in Mendenhall, practicing medicine.

Miller: Um-hm.

White: Wasn't the [19]50s—

Miller: That's right. I worked in a health department with Millie Lee(?).

White: I remember Ms. Millie; sure do.

Miller: She was the first nurse for the health department, and—

White: Go ahead. Tell me about the health department.

Miller: And Ms. Lee would go out in the country and see the mothers that were going to have babies and then to see a sick child. And then sometimes she would bring the child into the clinics for the doctors to see. And she was really faithful for years. I'll tell a little tale about Ms. Millie Lee. I was working with her, and she wanted me to go to Jackson to a meeting for the health department. And so I said, "Well, we've got to have our car, and we're supposed to pay to go up there and to be at these meetings." And she says, "Oh, don't worry about that." And so Millie liked to go up there to these meetings because she would dress up, (laughter) and they'd wear pretty hats. And so when it got time for us to go in, well, Millie jumped up, and I was right behind her. I didn't know what to do. And she said, "They'll let us in." But they stopped us. So we didn't go to that meeting, and I was so embarrassed. (laughter) Millie thought sure we could get in there because she was all dressed up. (laughter)

White: I do remember her. You worked for the health department first?

Miller: No, I—

White: Or did you just work there part-time?

Miller: Yeah, just part-time. I worked with Dr. Miller for several years.

White: Yes. I don't mean to change the subject here. You brought it up, though. What was the public health department, the public health service like then? Did they travel around to the schools or to individual homes?

Miller: Yes, they did. And if there was a sick child, the public health nurse would go see that child. And then she went around the schools, giving shots.

White: The inoculations.

Miller: Inoculations, uh-huh. And she would go around and then go around to the schools.

White: It had to do mostly with schools and the younger people or anything like that. What about—I hate to use the word epidemics, but they almost were then. But diseases like tuberculosis, were there any of those treated in the homes or in the clinic?

Miller: No. They were mostly sent to the Sanatorium.

White: What was then known as Sanatorium, between Mendenhall and Magee.

Miller: That's right. And I worked in the hospital surgical unit.

White: At Sanatorium?

Miller: At Sanatorium, uh-huh. They would be removing lungs, and later they were able to just remove part of the lung. And then there was a doctor that would come from Jackson to do these operations, and I was one of the surgical nurses there.

White: Roughly, what years was that?

Miller: That must have been in 1948, I would say.

White: Forty-eight. You were one busy person. Do you know that?

Miller: Yeah.

White: You've named about four full-time jobs already (laughter) that you were doing.

Miller: Well, I enjoyed doing that, doing that surgical nursing. I really enjoyed that, and I was taught how to handle instruments. And I enjoyed that. And these doctors were well known throughout the state. Doctor, oh, what was that doctor's name? But he's (inaudible) now. But—

White: The tuberculosis patients were pretty much segregated into that hospital at that time. Were they not?

Miller: Oh, yes, uh-huh. The surgical nurses were separated from the ones who were just taking medicines. And they had to take medicines every day, and sometime they would hemorrhage, and the doctors would come from Jackson, take care of them, or the nurse, if the doctor's there, would already know what to do. We had one doctor; he lives in Magee now. I can't even remember his name. But he was really a (inaudible) doctor that was in Jackson, and he's retired now. But these doctors really were good with their patients.

White: Did they work as doctors in other areas, or did they just specialize?

Miller: They specialized in tuberculosis.

White: I'm making a guess here that at the time, people were so paranoid about being exposed to tuberculosis that most of them probably would not have gone to a doctor who specialized in tuberculosis treatment or not? Is that right, or am I—

Miller: That's right. That's right.

White: I figured that, but I didn't really know it.

Miller: They had a routine for these patients. First they would put them to bed, and they would stay in those beds. The nurses would have to bathe them, and then they had to give them their medication. And then they were checked every so often to see if this medication was doing them good. And if not, they would go ahead and try to operate on them. But then that was another procedure that you went through. And then they would check them. And then, say, they were ready for surgery, and some of them died that was bad, but most of them lived and had a good life.

White: Wasn't there a—there was a cemetery at one time down at Sanatorium, also. Was there not? Was anybody ever buried down there?

Miller: I don't believe.

White: I might be wrong about that. I was trying to remember. Did any of these people go back to their families?

Miller: Yes, after so many months. They stayed in the hospital, and then if they were doing good, well, they sent them home and on medication.

White: Do you remember any other types of common, debilitating diseases back then? Other than the social diseases, I mean. (laughter) STDs [sexually transmitted diseases] I'm thinking about. Penicillin came in about the early [19]50s also. Didn't it?

Miller: Yes, it did, uh-huh.

White: I imagine that made a difference.

Miller: Oh, it did. And—

White: Did the early antibiotics make a difference in the treatment of medicine?

Miller: Yes, it did.

White: I would imagine people started recovering a little sooner than they had before.

Miller: That's right. And then the doctors were able to give the penicillin, and the nurses could give that.

White: Well, if I remember rightly, you were quite a dispenser of penicillin. I was the recipient in the 1950s of several shots (laughter) from you for earaches and colds and things like that.

Miller: That's right.

White: You probably got to know a lot of kids from all over Simpson County. Didn't you?

Miller: That's right, uh-huh. Took care of many a patient.

White: You practiced in the clinic down there until about what year? At what point did you take another job is what I'm relating to.

Miller: Well, after I left—

White: I know you've done several things in your medical career.

Miller: Oh, yes. After I left the sanatorium, I went back to the health department.

White: Simpson County Health Department.

Miller: Simpson County Health Department.

White: Was Millie Lee still working there then?

Miller: No. Millie was dead by that time. But I worked at the health department, and then part-time, I worked at the sheriff's department.

White: You were the nurse at the jail. Is that right?

Miller: Um-hm.

White: I know you've got a story or two to tell about that.

Miller: Yes. (laughter)

White: Who was the sheriff when you—

Miller: Sheriff Jones.

White: Sheriff Lloyd Jones(?)?

Miller: Uh-huh, yeah. And I was there, worked for twenty years, part-time and sometimes full-time, but I took care of the prisoners. And I would examine them when they would come in to see if they had any kind of disease. And then a lot of times they would call me at night, telling me somebody was sick. And I would get up and go down there (laughter) and check them. And then I worked for Simpson County Hospital.

White: Yeah. When was the hospital built here? You were head of nurses over there, I think, for several years, weren't you?

Miller: Yes, I was. And then I worked there in the operating room, and also the emergency room.

White: You've been one busy person.

Miller: Yeah, and loved every minute of it. (laughter) Loved every minute of it.

White: Let's see. The hospital opened in, I think, the early 1960s.

Miller: I think it did.

White: Sixty-three, somewhere along in there I believe. And were you one of the early employees of the hospital?

Miller: Yes, uh-huh. And Dr. Miller delivered the first patient to the hospital, and then I didn't have enough to do. (laughter) I went to work for the jail, Simpson County Jail, and I would do that part-time.

White: Well, it was hard to make a living in Simpson County then, too, wasn't it?

Miller: Yes. (laughter) And then being divorced, too. (laughter)

White: Really hard to make a living then.

Miller: Yes, it was. It really was. And I worked in the operating room there, too, and delivered babies at the hospital.

White: I believe you liked delivering babies.

Miller: Oh, I did. That was my favorite thing and working at the sheriff's department because I wanted to make sure those patients got a good meal and that they exercised and that they were taken care of properly. And I went to Dr. Munn(?).

White: Dr. William Munn.

Miller: Munn would come to see the patients, and then I would beg to send them out to see him with guards.

White: Right. (laughter) With guards. (brief interruption) We were talking about the jail and your years of service there. I know you have been particularly pleased, as you mentioned to me earlier, about the jail. Can you tell us a little bit more about your service there and what it meant to you?

Miller: Every year we would have accreditation, and we would have to fill out forms and the things that we had done.

White: Accreditation by the government?

Miller: By the National Commission on Accreditation for Health Care. And this was done in Chicago, Illinois.

White: —sheriff here.

Miller: Sheriff at that time. And this was done June the second, 1998. (End of digital file named tape one, side one. Beginning of digital file named tape one, side two.) During 1998 I was working for Doyle King(?) the Sheriff of Simpson County. This was about the first time that we had met the accreditation, and they were congratulating us on this because we had a lot of work to do on it.

White: Um-hm. Been trying for a long time to reach the accreditation standards.

Miller: Yes. And finally made it, and they said Dr. Judith Stanley, she was director of accreditation, and we had the award that year for it. And we (inaudible). They put it up on the board.

White: A lot of years work went into it.

Miller: Oh, yes.

White: I'm sure.

Miller: Uh-huh, a lot of years.

White: Well, somehow during the middle of all of this, I think you had time to have a family and raise some children, didn't you?

Miller: Yes, uh-huh. (laughter)

White: I don't see how with those four or five careers you had going there. Could you tell me about, can you name your children and tell me when they were born?

Miller: Yes.

White: A little bit about them.

Miller: The first child I had was a boy, and his name was Archie Carlyle Miller Jr.

White: Known as Carlyle.

Miller: Uh-huh, yes. And he was born November the sixteenth, 1947. And he was born in Jackson, Mississippi.

White: That's when you lived in Mendenhall.

Miller: Uh-huh, we lived in Mendenhall, uh-huh. And we lived in this very same house that (inaudible). And then I had a daughter, and her name is Mary Kathleen Miller. I just think—

White: Known as?

Miller: Yes.

White: Kitty.

Miller: Uh-huh, known as Kitty. (laughter) And she was born October the eighth, 1949. And that was in, she was born in Jackson, Mississippi.

White: What hospitals were they born in?

Miller: Baptist Hospital.

White: Baptist Hospital.

Miller: And then I had a boy by the name of Robert Reed Miller. He was born March the eighth, 1955, and he's the comedian of the family.

White: Is he?

Miller: Yeah. (laughter)

White: Well, I thought Carlyle was, but I was wrong, huh? (laughter)

Miller: Yeah. Now, these two boys—and he was born at Baptist Hospital. But these two boys went to work in the oilfield.

White: Both of them.

Miller: Both of them. And Carlyle has worked overseas most of the time. He's worked in Muscat(?), Oman, and now he's worked in China. He's worked in, right now he's working in Scotland. And he has spent most of his life overseas.

White: He has a home—

Miller: He has a home here in Mendenhall.

White: I thought it was in Simpson County, but I wasn't sure exactly where it was.

Miller: Yeah. And he married a girl from Australia, and they have two—

White: That's out of Simpson County, but I guess it'll have to do.

Miller: Yeah. (laughter) And they have two boys, and they were born at the Baptist Hospital.

White: Part of the family tradition there, huh?

Miller: Yes, uh-huh. And then Robert worked in, he's working in Russia now.

White: Still in the oil business?

Miller: Oil business, uh-huh. And these boys have positions. They were recommended.

White: I'm sure of that. They've worked for a number of years.

Miller: Yeah. And Robert was kind of afraid, going to Russia, but he said it was a good place to go.

White: Is that right?

Miller: Uh-huh. (Inaudible) has enjoyed the places that he's been, and they were young when they started out, about eighteen years old. And—

White: (Inaudible) interested in that profession and stayed with it.

Miller: Yes. Well, and their grandfather, my daddy, was.

White: He was an oilfield worker?

Miller: Oilfield worker.

White: Is that right?

Miller: Yeah, just oilfield worker. And he enjoyed coming here, talking with the boys.

White: Oh, he was probably from Louisiana, then.

Miller: Yes, uh-huh. He was a tool pusher, but these boys were higher than that.

White: Yeah. Well, does Robert have a home in Simpson County now?

Miller: Yes, uh-huh. It was the old Bush place. Do you remember Zula Bush(?)?

White: Oh, yes, yes, uh-huh.

Miller: Well, he bought her home, and they remodeled that house. Carlyle bought land out here on Cado(?) Road, and he has a lovely home out there. And they attend—what church is that?

White: Camel's(?) Creek?

Miller: Camel Creek Church.

White: Robert, does he have children?

Miller: Robert has two children.

White: Two children.

Miller: The boy is in training to be a nurse.

White: Oh, good. There's another family tradition reappearing, then. That's very good.

Miller: And then the daughter, she's in school to be a dentist, and she's working. She goes to school in Hattiesburg, and he's in school in Hattiesburg, too.

White: At The University of Southern Mississippi. And Kitty lives in Simpson County also, doesn't she?

Miller: Yes. Kitty lives in Simpson County, and she helps with the school. She teaches the little ones. Holly got married after she got out of school, and she's going to be a nurse, and she has two children. And then—

White: So how many grandchildren do you have out of this bunch, now?

Miller: Well, out of this bunch, I have (laughter) three grandchildren, and then I have five great-grandchildren.

White: Five great-grandchildren. Could you tell us a little bit about your grandchildren and great-grandchildren?

Miller: Well, I have three grandchildren, and then I have four great-grandchildren. One was born (inaudible). And then I had another one that was born—

White: (Inaudible) ago.

Miller: Two months ago.

White: You're still building this family, then, aren't you?

Miller: Yeah, uh-huh. And they're all boys.

White: All boys.

Miller: All boys. And their parents, their daddies are all boys, I mean, yeah.

White: Well, they would be, I guess, wouldn't they?

Miller: Yeah. (laughter) And so no telling how many more we'll have. (laughter) Their parents are football players.

White: Is that right? Most of them live in Simpson County? Is that right?

Miller: Right, live out in (inaudible), Mississippi.

White: Four or five great-grandchildren?

Miller: I have four. I've had two that were born this year. (laughter)

White: I was thinking you said five at one time, and then four at another time. That's the reason I was trying to count there.

Miller: But I have three grandchildren, the oldest ones, and then (inaudible), and that's three great-grandchildren.

White: Great-great-grandchildren.

Miller: Uh-huh.

White: OK. Yeah, I have trouble keeping track of my children sometimes, too. I know exactly what you're talking about. Did you want to say anything special about any of them or to them or anything?

Miller: Well, my grandsons, two of them, have been athletes, but really enjoyed playing football. And one boy went to Alabama to play football.

White: Is that right?

Miller: And then the other one, he didn't go anywhere. I don't believe he did. (Inaudible) went to Alabama. And they went to Simpson County School, and I just had one granddaughter. And she worked for *Clarion Ledger* for a number of years.

White: Yes. I knew her there.

Miller: And now she's going to be a nurse.

White: Another nurse.

Miller: Another nurse. (laughter)

White: That's very good.

Miller: Yeah.

White: And she has how many children?

Miller: She has two children.

White: Boys, of course, I'm—

Miller: Boys, uh-huh, (laughter) two boys.

White: That's the way this thing runs these days in your family, isn't it?

Miller: Yeah. Two boys.

White: Well, that's good. In summing all of this up, around Simpson County, what's been some of the high points of medical treatment for Simpson County? What do you remember mostly, say for instance, around Boswell? I'm sorry. I keep calling it Boswell. That's the name today. It was Sanatorium.

Miller: Sanatorium.

White: What are some of the unusual things that you remember from Sanatorium?

Miller: And Dr. Boswell was, well, he was—I guess you'd call him superintendent.

White: He sort of founded the place, didn't he?

Miller: He did. He founded the place. And then there were a lot of stories told about him. (laughter) But he really meant business, and I think the main thing that has changed, and that is the medicine, medication that these patients got, and how long they had to stay in the sanatorium.

White: Well, you had talked about the surgery earlier. Was there some unusual aspects to the surgery then, when they would take a lung out, or parts of a lung and replace it?

Miller: Yes. And then they would put a [tennis] ball into the—

White: Golf ball or tennis ball?

Miller: A tennis ball into the chest, and that would—

White: Yeah. I think the golf course came later down there at Sanatorium.

Miller: Yes. (laughter) That was one thing everybody enjoyed. But these [tennis] balls would lower the, keep the lungs kind of collapsed and—

White: Fill the chest cavity, huh?

Miller: Fill the chest cavity, uh-huh. Well, before I left the sanatorium, before it closed, this lady had an x-ray, and she showed us her lungs and how she had lived all these many years with that—

White: Still had that tennis ball in there? Did they take it out?

Miller: No. They left it in her.

White: Left them in.

Miller: Um-hm. And it saved her life. And another thing, Sanatorium, taking care of patients, a lot of them hemorrhaged, and that was really frightening for them and for the nurses. But they would give them blood and give them their medication and kept them down in the bed, and they had a farm there. There was milk, and they had—

White: Raised the cattle and got milk.

Miller: Yeah, raised cattle. And then they would have milk for breakfast, dinner, and lunch, and supper. And they would gain a lot of weight, but that milk really did help them. It—

White: (Inaudible) probably had a lot to do with their health improving.

Miller: Oh, it did, uh-huh. And the food was just delicious. But sometimes they had to stop some of the milk for some of the patients because they gained so much weight.

White: Got a little too healthy in other words, huh?

Miller: Uh-huh. And they had to stay on the grounds. They weren't allowed to say, "Well, I'm going to town this evening." You stayed. You had orders to stay on the grounds and not unless you had permission—

White: Well, I remember after Sanatorium closed, going to the movie theater down there. Was that movie theater in existence for a long time?

Miller: Yes. It still is. They're using it.

White: It's now what? Boswell Center? Is that the name of that facility down there now?

Miller: I (inaudible).

White: I believe that's right. They must still be using a lot of the same facilities then. I noticed the old train station at the front was torn down and removed.

Miller: Just recently.

White: Yeah. Do you remember when trains would still bring patients in?

Miller: No.

White: Or when you could catch a train from down there?

Miller: No.

White: That probably stopped—

Miller: That stopped.

White: —in the [19]40s, I would imagine.

Miller: Um-hm, that stopped, but old people still go down there, I think, to play golf. And now it's just a total, different hospital.

White: People don't worry about catching anything down there anymore.

Miller: No.

White: The way they used to worry about the TB patients then. What other changes have you seen in the practice of medicine in Simpson County that might be worth passing on? Who are some of the other doctors and nurses that you ran across over the years that you think made a difference here?

Miller: Well—

White: Perhaps that wasn't the right question. The changes really in medicine in Simpson County was what I was asking about in general. We have more clinics, I know, than we used to.

Miller: Yes. We do have more clinics, and the health departments are different.

White: The general health level improved any over the years here?

Miller: Yes, it has. And just like working at the jail, that has changed. They get better food and better health care, which is good.

White: Did you retire from nursing?

Miller: About four years ago.

White: That would be 1999?

Miller: Uh-huh.

White: What kind of changes did Medicare, Medicaid, anything like that bring in as far as health care goes in Simpson County? You remember the early days of Medicare around here?

Miller: Yeah. We had Medicare and then we had Medicaid, and now they're changing again. I have something here now. I had to go to the doctor.

White: You're on the receiving end of this thing all of a sudden. (laughter)

Miller: Yeah. Dr. Chaim(?) that works here.

White: Dr. Chaim Praba(?)?

Miller: Uh-huh. And he's a surgeon, and a real good surgeon, and he's got two boys that are surgeons.

White: Is that right? I didn't know that.

Miller: One works in Vicksburg, and another one works—

White: Did any of that begin affecting medical practice back during the [19]60s any? And by that, I meant as far as money goes. I would imagine there've been some—Simpson County hasn't been, traditionally, very high on the economic rung around here. It was probably pretty hard back in the early clinic days to financially make a go of it, wasn't it?

Miller: That's right. That's right.

White: That's what I was wondering. If the governmental programs had made any difference.

Miller: They really have because back when we were practicing in the clinics, we didn't have Medicaid or Medicare.

White: Yeah. And very little insurance, I would imagine.

Miller: Very little. Very little. This is funny.

White: I remember my grandfather who was a country doctor, talking about taking vegetables or meat or anything in on trade for some medical services. Did you ever get any food?

Miller: Yeah.

White: Traded?

Miller: We did. Got some eggs, a lot of eggs. (laughter)

White: A lot of eggs and not much corn and butterbeans, huh?

Miller: No. (laughter) But a lot of times the patients would bring vegetables into the doctor. They enjoyed doing that.

White: Out of the garden.

Miller: Out of the garden, uh-huh, yeah. And we were glad to get it, too.

White: I can imagine so. Can you think of anything else you'd like to share here on life in Simpson County and raising a family in Simpson County or changes that you've seen?

Miller: Well, I've enjoyed living in Simpson County although I had a divorce, but that didn't last long because I didn't have time to worry about it. (laughter)

White: Doesn't sound like it with five jobs.

Miller: Didn't worry about it, not one bit. And my children, I knew if I cried all the time and worried all the time, that would fall on them, and they would worry. So I never tried to worry about anything, and we just lived here and—

White: That sounds like a good, healthy philosophy.

Miller: —went to church, and sometimes I thought my boys were in church, but they were probably like you; they weren't. (laughter)

White: Look. She must know something about me, too, making a comment like that. (laughter) You did make a comment earlier about at least one of your two sons being somewhat of a jokester.

Miller: Yeah.

White: Would you like to explain that? (laughter)

Miller: His name is Robert Reed, and he is just a comedian. That's all you can say. (laughter) He had a party last night for about a hundred people; had a crawfish boil.

White: Oh, me. That's sounds good.

Miller: And I'm telling you. And then they had somebody that played the guitar. Well, he was in the guitar business. And then they had George Alexander's boy, David. He was playing some type guitar. And I mean they were stomping their feet. (laughter) But oh, they had a good time, now!

White: Sounds like some of your early Louisiana days. (laughter)

Miller: Yeah. Yeah, that's right. (laughter) Oh, yes.

White: Well, I appreciate you sharing these memories with us. Thank you very much.

Miller: Well, I hope (inaudible).

(end of interview)