



February 16, 2006
guest speaker was
Robert W. Palmer,
M.D., a retired Indianapolis physician attempted to enlist in the Army on December 8, 1941, but his enlistment was delayed until March, 1942. He was thrilled to train as an aviation cadet and eventually learned to fly P-40 and P-51 fighters. "We were hotshots." Because the Pacific theatre needed more B-24 bomber pilots than fighter pilots, he was transferred to the bombers. As soon as he qualified as a B-24 pilot, he was sent to New Guinea where he joined the 400th Bomb Squadron, 90th Bomb

Group (Jolly Rogers), of the 5th Air Force.



Bob remained with this group until the end of the war, having completed a remarkable 175 missions. "I was there because they liked me." Actually, Bob had the most combat and instrument hours, so they kept him to become an instrument

instructor pilot. The 90th Bomb Group island hopped across the Pacific, ending up at Ie Shima where they were preparing for the invasion of Japan. Following the end of the war, he completed his undergraduate degree and went on to medical school and a successful career.

An Interview with My Father

Robert W. Palmer, MD A Real American Hero



About beliefs and actions: *"If you want to know what a person believes, watch what he does with his life. That's what he believes, no matter what he professes."*

About World War II: *"It was exciting and interesting, and since I didn't get killed, I rather enjoyed it."*

About priorities: *"[In combat], whether you live or die is the main thing ... I got my priorities in order right there. When I went to college and medical school, I studied hard, but never spent any time worrying about grades. I had already faced the ultimate issue:*

whether I was going to live or die. Compared to that -- a test in biology? What the hell is that?"

I didn't know it growing up -- I'm not sure that my father knows it, even now -- but the name "Palmer" is actually an English title of nobility derived from the Crusades. Knights who distinguished themselves in battle were awarded the "Order of the Palm" -- similar to the Medal of Honor in the American armed forces. Over the years, the knights and their descendants became known as "Palmers." Most of the people currently named "Palmer" are descended from this small group of knights.

The Knights of the Palm could scarcely have hoped for a more worthy descendant than my father, Robert William Palmer. Born in the 1920s, then helping to support his family during the Great Depression, he joined the Army Air Corps in 1941 and flew almost 200 combat missions as a bomber pilot in the South Pacific, where he won the Distinguished Flying Cross and many other honors. On his return to the United States after the war, he completed college in three years, with honors, and enrolled in the University of Rochester Medical School. Since his graduation, he's devoted his life to helping the sick and serving his community.

As a doctor, he makes house calls, works on time, and actually listens to his patients. When I was a child, he often treated poorer patients without charge, or took payment in whatever they had: farm products, baked goods, and in one case, a puppy. In 1991, he was voted "Distinguished Physician of the Year" for his contributions to the medical profession and to the community.

I'm fortunate to be able to say something that some people can't: If by the end of my life, I achieve as much and become as good a man as my father, I will feel that my life has been well-spent.

Following is the transcript of an interview I did with my father on May 30, 1988, in which he discusses his life and beliefs.

Scott: I am Scott Palmer, the date is May 30, 1988. I am about to interview my father, Robert William Palmer, about his life and opinions ...

Dad: My life so far.

Scott: His life so far. Major achievements. Why don't we start out, Dad, with a little bit about your parents and early family life. Can you tell me a little about that?

Dad: My father was Roy A. Palmer -- Roy Almond Palmer. My mother's maiden name, before they shortened it, was O'Camic: her name was Cassie O'Camic. And through the years, I think they took off the "O" and called themselves "Camic." Both my mother and father were raised in northern Wisconsin, a rather primitive area.

My mother's people, as I understand -- and I'm sorry that I don't know more specifics about my ancestors -- were basically Irish, with some other strains mixed in. My father was a mixture of Dutch and Welsh and a few other things. And they both were well-educated people for their day. They were born in 1884, both of them, in different parts of Wisconsin. And they had high school education, one year of teacher's college -- it was called "normal school," then. And my Dad had 18 months in what was called a "seminary," in training for the ministry.

So for his day, he was a very well-educated man. In the first decade of this century, to have a high school education was unusual, and to have a year of college -- which was considered adequate to teach -- was remarkable. They were well-educated people. They valued education. We had books everywhere when I was a kid. We didn't have television or radio, we had a lot of books.

Scott: What kind of books?

Dad: Everything from philosophical things that my Dad liked to read, to children's books -- *The Wizard of Oz* was one that I read over and over when I was a kid. One of the books that I treasured when I was a little boy was written by Charles Lindbergh [first man to fly solo across the Atlantic] in 1927 after his flight across the Atlantic. It was called *We*, for him and his airplane. I read that book several times. Each of these small towns we lived in in Minnesota seemed to have a library, and I was an avid reader. I read just about everything I could get my hands on.

We were a reading family. We didn't have a lot of affluence, and we didn't have a lot of material possessions, but we had eyes and ears and brains, and could see, and we read.

Scott: And your father was employed as a minister?

Dad: He was a minister until 1929, when he quit. And during the decade of the 1930s, he was unemployed most of the time. We were very poor.

Scott: How did you survive?

Dad: Mostly, by one or another of us working from time to time. My family was too proud to accept any "relief," which was welfare, or charity. And I always seemed to have a job. Even when nobody else in the family had a job, I always seemed to have a job. There were times in the 1930s when I was the only one working, and I was just a little kid.

Scott: How did you manage to get employment when so many people were out of work?

Dad: I would work at anything, for anybody, for any fee. I worked for John Daywalt for 15 cents a day.

Scott: That was the drugstore?

Dad: No, that was a meat market. But I worked for 15 cents a day, and all the butt ends of lunch meat and stuff I could take home. And you couldn't sell liver in those days, and I used to take liver home every night. And we had a lot of liver.

But we were so poor that we would make modern poor people look affluent. Modern poor people don't know what "poor" is -- it's a federal definition, now. There were many days when we had nothing to eat. I don't mean that we didn't have *enough* to eat -- we didn't have *anything* to eat. And I can imagine the torture that my mother and father must have gone through, wondering how they were going to feed these kids. Because there were many days when we didn't know when our next meal would be.

Scott: How many brothers and sisters did you have?

Dad: I had five brothers and sisters: three brothers and two sisters. I was the fifth in this group. My oldest brother, Wayne Almond Palmer, was named after my Dad, was born in 1912; my mother and father were married in 1911. Wayne was born on November 7, 1912. My sister Kate was born on February 15, 1914, about a year and three months later. Russ, my second brother, was born on July 11, 1917. My sister Peg was born on July 16, 1919. I was born on June 21, 1922, and my kid brother, Dick, was born on May 31, 1928. He is almost six years younger than I am. In fact, his 60th birthday is tomorrow.

Scott: What were your parents like as people? Let's get back for a second -- your father quit the ministry. Was that for theological reasons?

Dad: For philosophical reasons. He was forced to stand up and say things that he just didn't believe. Philosophically, he was compromising his own honesty every time he opened his mouth. And his intellectual honesty was valuable to him, and he just wouldn't do it, anymore. He quit the ministry at a bad time: he didn't realize that that time [1929] was the beginning of the Depression, and that he would not get work again for years. And he tried to work at this, and tried to work at that.

My Dad was such an honest person; he tried to sell insurance, for example, and he would tell a person the good things about the insurance policy, and he'd tell him the bad things about it. He was scrupulously honest, almost to the point of being pathological. [laughs] He was such a nice person that he was almost too nice. My father was a kind and gentle soul, the epitome of kindness.

Scott: What about your mother?

Dad: My mother was *tough*. She had to be. My Dad was a dreamer. He was always stating that some day, his ship would come in. And he really believed that. He really believed that some day, he would strike it rich, somewhere, some way, something would fall in his lap. That was what kept him going. My mother, on the other hand, was a pragmatist. She was tough; at times, she was a little bit on the mean side. I remember that she used to beat the devil out of me when I was a little kid. My Dad never touched me. But my mother used to

whack the hell out of me. I probably had it coming. She was quick with the whip.

Scott: You mentioned in another conversation, though, that your Dad did strike you once.

Dad: He hit me one time, when I insulted my mother at the dinner table. He just reached over and belted me, almost knocked me out of my chair. That's the only time he ever struck me in anger.

Scott: So how did your parents influence you?

Dad: They were solid, honest, hard-working, predictable people. They were what we would call moral, upstanding, honest people. They would no more lie than jump over the moon. They were people who would suffer before they would do anything dishonest. They were people who gave me a sense of myself that I value. I have never envied any other human being. I have never wanted to be anybody but who I am, and I think that's a gift from my folks.

But I have always been contented with myself, and I believe that that's a sense of pride that my mother and father instilled in me. They always told me that with my eyes and my ears and the books in the libraries, I could learn all the knowledge of humanity if I wanted to. And I felt that was quite an opportunity.

Scott: That's quite a principle. Did they have any other favorite sayings?

D: My Dad was the master of the cliché. [laughs] He knew every cliché that was ever uttered, I think. He used them all. But he was bright. He was not a fool. He was a dreamer. That's the best way to describe him. He always felt that just around the corner, good fortune would be there. He never got depressed, he never gave up, he never felt ill-used, he never complained -- about anything. He always felt that his day would come.

But he had some deep ideas, too. One of the things that he used to say frequently was that people get what they want, and cry for what they need. And that's true. That's true not only of goods, it's true of time to do things. It's true of how they use their lives. If you want to

know what a person believes, watch what he does with his life. That's what he believes, no matter what he professes.

My Dad was a thinker. He used to tell us things like, "no matter how ignorant a person is, he knows something that you don't know. Even if he only knows one thing, it's likely something you don't know." So he always felt that we could learn more by listening than by talking. He was a good listener. And he read avidly. I have a picture of myself when I was three years old, sitting in my father's lap, and he was reading to me. And that was taken in Lind, Minnesota, on a Sunday afternoon, and the sun was shining into the living room, and I was sitting in my Dad's lap, and he was reading to me. He read to me before I learned to read, he read to me a lot.



My mother did, too. But she was the one who held the family together. She did the work, she did the thinking, she made the decisions. My father's decisions were always whatever my mother said they should be. No one questioned her authority. It was strictly a matriarchal home.

Scott: It seems as if you are just the opposite, in the sense that -- I believe you are aware of the fact that we sometimes call you a "beneficent dictator." Is that a reaction against .. ?

Dad: Probably. I am a lot more adventurous than my folks. I am a lot more positive. They tended to be timid, for fear that the world would deal them a harsh blow. They were not adventurous, they would not take a chance. I'm sure that neither one of them ever

gambled on anything, other than the fact that life is a gamble. But they were timid people in terms of the world that we live in now.

For example, if my father were alive now, he would just not fit in this world. He thought it was *kind* to refer to black people as "darkies." He didn't like the word "Negro" because he thought it was harsh. And he never called anyone "black" -- when I was a kid, that was an insult. He would refer to them as "darkies." Can you imagine my father talking to a bunch of high school kids on a corner, saying "How are you darkies, today?" They'd cut him up! [laughs] Poor guy, he would be an anachronism in this world. He was just a kind, gentle soul -- not a simpleton, but a kind and gentle soul. He just felt that if he lived a good life, and was kind to other people, that it would be reciprocated. Sometimes it was, but more often than not, it was the opposite. He lived to be almost eighty-five, and I am quite confident that when he died, he had no enemies. And I guess if you're measuring human success, that's a success story.

Scott: What did he think about his life? Did you ever have any inkling?

Dad: Not really. My folks didn't talk to us about themselves. We never spoke about certain subjects. We never spoke about sex, or pregnancy, or your innermost thoughts, or other people's business; gossip was just forbidden. Gossip was considered a sinful thing to do. They talked to us about *us*. My folks didn't talk to us about themselves. In fact, that's one of the reasons I don't know more about them. It was too late to find out when I got interested. And a lot of things my sisters told me, particularly my sister Kate, who had a fantastic imagination -- a lot of things they told me when I was a little kid, I have since found out weren't true at all.

Scott: Did your parents have any eccentricities? Did your Dad smoke a pipe, or have a favorite suit, that kind of thing?

Dad: Yes, he smoked a pipe, and my mother just thought that was the dirtiest, nastiest thing that anybody ever invented, that pipe. He enjoyed his pipe. He smoked the cheapest tobacco he could get, and it was *awful*. My mother had the attitude that if anybody drank any alcohol whatsoever, they would go straight to Hell, with no stops in between. One gulp, and you were doomed.

Scott: Did you ever sneak into the living room in the middle of the night and try your Dad's pipe?

Dad: No, I never was interested in the pipe. When I was a little kid, we used to smoke corn silk, and all those silly things that most kids do. But I never tried that pipe. It was too gross. It smelled like the dickens, and I wouldn't have anything to do with it.

Scott: So, apart from your parents, when you were a kid, what was your childhood like? You worked, but you went to school, had friends ...

Dad: I had a good childhood. I had a lot of fun. We were all poor as hell. Everybody was poor. We didn't feel particularly singled out. Everybody else I knew was just about as poor as I was. This was in the height of the Depression, when if you *had* a job, you probably made four dollars a week, or two dollars a week -- if you *had* a job, which most people didn't. So we didn't feel particularly ill-used, because we were just part of a group of people who were all struggling to survive.

We had a big garden, we saved our food as much as we could, we were willing to accept the largesse of the various farmers around, who would give us squash and pumpkins and things like that -- we all pretended that we didn't need them. Most of the houses I lived in when I was a kid, we didn't have any indoor plumbing or electricity. We would sit out in the yard in the evening, pretending that we didn't want the lights on. [laughs] We didn't *have* any lights.

But we had a good time. My brothers and sisters were a lot of fun. We used to do all the things kids do, fight, and laugh. Lots of times, we'd get up in the morning and say, "Hey, if we had any eggs, we could have bacon and eggs, if we had any bacon." And then we'd all laugh, and if we were lucky, we'd have some cornmeal mush. [chuckles]

Scott: Easily amused.

Dad: All of my brothers and sisters had a sense of humor except Russ, who tended to be more somber. He had a sense of humor, but he didn't bring it out very often. He usually felt as though things

were pretty tough. Russ seemed to feel the pressure of our poverty a lot more than the rest of us. But my brothers and sisters ...

Wayne, in particular, the oldest one, was a laugher. He'd laugh at the Devil if he arrived at the door. And he was a lot of fun. He died suddenly at the age of 72, doing the things that he loved to do, smoking a cigarette and drinking a beer, getting ready to go fishing. Fell over dead. I loved him, but I won't cry for him, because he lived his whole life, right up to the last second, he just fell over dead right in his tracks and never knew what hit him. He smoked two packs a day for fifty-five years, at least, maybe sixty years. When I was a little kid, I'd find cigarettes hidden all over the barn, and all over the place, that Wayne was smoking. In fact, my Dad was dismissed from one of the Methodist pulpits that he served because Wayne was seen smoking.

Scott: Wow.

Dad: This was in the 1920s. Wayne was probably 14 or 15 years old. He was seen smoking, and Dad was canned right on the spot. Those small town Methodists didn't tolerate much.

Scott: What about boyhood friends, and heroes, and school chums, that kind of thing?

Dad: I had a normal childhood, despite our difficult economic circumstances. I had a lot of friends. I played all the sports that the kids played, in fact, I was a pretty good athlete. My heroes, when I was a little kid, were Charles Lindbergh [who made the first solo flight across the Atlantic on May 31, 1927], Jack Dempsey [world heavyweight boxing champion for most of the 1920s], Jack Armstrong on the radio --

Scott: ... "the All-American boy," right ...

Dad: Every evening, at 5:30. We had a Philco radio, in the 1930s .. back in the 1920s, we had a crystal set, and then in about 1928, we got an Atwater-Kent battery radio, with a 12-volt battery and a big tulip-shaped speaker. And it would fade out and come back .. the only program I remember on that radio was "Amos 'n Andy." But then, we got a Philco table set in about 1931 or 1932. I don't

remember where we got it, but that was our source of entertainment. That's all the entertainment we had. In those days, you could go to the movie for a dime, but we didn't have a dime, usually.

But "Jack Armstrong, the All-American Boy" came on at 5:30 in the evening, every evening except Sunday, and we listened faithfully. He was one of my heroes. Jack Dempsey was one of my heroes, as I said, and Charles Lindbergh, who flew the Atlantic in 1927.

I had many other heroes. One of them was Theodore Roosevelt. You know, it hadn't been that long since he had been president -- it had only been 15 years, when I was born. And some of the people in history that you think of as being "way back there" -- some of my family knew some of those people. My father's and mother's people, some of them were involved in the Civil War, they met Lincoln and Sherman. The Civil War was only 55 years before I was born.

Scott: It's interesting that you looked up to Jack Dempsey and Charles Lindbergh, and later on, you became a Golden Gloves boxer and then a pilot.

Dad: Oh, I wouldn't say that I became "a Golden Gloves boxer." I got into the Golden Gloves, and almost got killed. [laughs] I entered, and that was a mistake. I just about got my head knocked off. But when I was a kid, fighting was one of the things we did for amusement. I knew which kids could whip me, and which kids I could whip, and you knew exactly where you stood in the school. You knew exactly who you could tell to go to the Devil, and who you'd better be nice to. Because we had a pecking order that was very discrete. I was not much of a fighter, but I was strong, and I wasn't afraid of anybody.

But Jack Dempsey was everybody's hero in those days -- as was Babe Ruth. They were national heroes because they overcame what normal people would feel were insurmountable obstacles. Jack Dempsey was only a 180-pounder, and he whipped these 250-pounders like they were a wisp of smoke. He just pounded them right into the ground. He was so quick and powerful that everyone admired him because he was a powerful figure.

Scott: Babe Ruth was short and fat, or ... ?

Dad: Babe Ruth was a womanizer, and a drinker, and pot-bellied, but boy, could he hit that baseball. He *made* baseball. Until Babe Ruth came along, baseball was sort of a minor occurrence. People weren't terribly interested in it. He really put baseball on the map. There were a lot of heroes in those days. They were heroes who did specific things. They were not heroes like [disdain] Bruce Springsteen. What the hell does he do? He just stands up there and shouts. Van Halen? What does *he* do? He has huge amplifier. What kind of heroes are those? I'm talking about people who did things that took power, brains, imagination, adventure, or courage.

Scott: Were there any specific heroes that really had a lot of influence on you, apart from the general heroes that everyone looked up to?

Dad: I can't say, really. One of my immediate heroes, in the small town we lived in, was the scoutmaster. His name was Dr. Rieke, and he was a dentist. He wasn't *my* dentist, because we couldn't afford a dentist. My first dental care was when I was in the army. But Dr. Rieche was the scoutmaster, in Waterville, Minnesota, and he was one of my role models. He was a fine gentleman, spent a lot of time and gave a lot of himself to the community. His wife was a teacher. They were just exemplary citizens, two of the leaders in that town.

Scott: So you were a Boy Scout? What did you do in the Boy Scouts?

Dad: I didn't get my Eagle, because I couldn't swim well enough. I never could pass lifesaving. I had enough merit badges to be an Eagle Scout twice. But I never could get lifesaving, and that's one of the required merit badges to be an Eagle Scout. My brother Russ was an Eagle Scout; I think Wayne was an Eagle Scout, though he took scouting rather lightly. I don't think that Dick ever got involved in scouting. But my father started the first Scout troop in the state of Minnesota in 1914. He had the Troop #1 flag in Minnesota, and he was very proud of that. When he was a minister, wherever he went, he started a Scout troop.

Scott: I'm a little surprised that he wasn't your scoutmaster.

Dad: Well, by that time, he was a little bit long in the tooth. My Dad was 40 when I was born. And in those days, that was old. I was 50 when our youngest was born, and nowadays, that isn't old. But in those days, that was old. My father never played games with me, catch, and things like that, like I played with you guys. But he never played games, he never came out and played ball, or anything like that.

Scott: Was there anything in particular that you learned from the scoutmaster, either by example or by teaching?

Dad: He was just such a fine person. He was honest and kind, and available. And he had a profession, which seemed almost out of reach for us kids in a small town. To be a professional person was just, almost like a dream. And he not only gave of his time, and his knowledge to the scouts and the church, and the town, but he was always available if you needed someone to talk to, or tell your troubles to. If you got into trouble, he would stand up for you.

Scott: Could we touch on something that might go across quite a few years? You grew up as the son of a Methodist minister, evidently a fairly strict religious upbringing ...

Dad: Fairly. But my Dad was more of a Unitarian all the time.

Scott: Now, you are at the very least, a skeptic in religious matters, and very scientifically oriented. What's the evolution of your thought on religious and moral issues?

Dad: It's fairly simple. I've been a skeptic ever since I can remember. I remember a funeral service that my Dad preached at Lake Wilson, Minnesota, and I was four years old when we lived at Lake Wilson. And he had his church there, and a little church at Oxford, Minnesota. Most of the small communities couldn't support a church, so a preacher would have two or three churches. He'd go preach in this one at nine in the morning on Sunday, and the next at eleven, and the next at one in the afternoon, and sometimes, one in the evening.

And he was preaching a funeral service at the cemetery, out at the edge of town -- the cemetery was always out on the edge of town, in

these small towns. And I walked out there and listened. And he was describing how the soul would go to Heaven, and actually pointing [up], and all these things. And I just watched and watched, and thought about that, and stayed there after the service and watched, and I never saw anything happen. And from then on, I was skeptical.

Scott: You were an empiricist at age four. [laughs]

Dad: I just didn't feel that the things I was told corresponded to the things I experienced. And as I went on in life, I found that to be more and more true: that what I was *told* and what I observed and experienced in my life were not the same. And I have to believe what I see. I'll accept any reasonable evidence, but I don't have a whole heck of a lot of blind faith in anything.

Scott: And I gather that your father was .. even if he didn't talk to you about it when you were four years old, that he had a lot of the same thoughts.

Dad: He influenced us. He had a lot of books around the house that he used to read and I was aware of, that had to do with liberal religious philosophy. John Dietrich and some of the theologians of that time. He read them avidly. He became uneasy with being a Methodist minister, and he quit. He just couldn't do that anymore. And he started going to the Unitarian Church when we moved to St. Paul, Minnesota, when I was a freshman in high school, and I started going with him. And I've been going to the Unitarian Church ever since.

Scott: Were there any major events in your childhood that were turning points?

Dad: The most major event in my childhood was getting the hell out of those small towns and moving to St. Paul, Minnesota where I had some opportunities. If we had stayed in Waterville, Minnesota, I'd probably be working for Meany Duesbabbick in his meat market. There was a guy there named "Elmer Duesbabbick," and we called him "Meany" because he was so mean. He had a meat market, and I probably would have worked for him.

Scott: What year was that?

Dad: I was a freshman in high school, so that would have been 1935. But I have thought many times that the most important event of my youth was to get the hell out of those small towns where there was no opportunity for any kind of evolution of your personality, or of your abilities, and no chance for education other than readin', writin', and 'rithmetic, no opportunity for any employment. Really, it was kind of a dismal place to live.

And when we got to St. Paul, I went to a big, inner-city high school, 75 percent black -- I was the only white kid on the first-string football team when I was a junior. And I had all kinds of opportunities open up to me. I had a job all the time, I started thinking about going to college, I got into various things -- singing groups -- got into Golden Gloves and got my head knocked off -- it really opened up a lot of opportunities for me.

Scott: What about girlfriends?

Dad: I had girlfriends from the time I was a little kid. I remember Camille Meyerbachtov.

Scott: She was your first girlfriend?

Dad: No, I don't think so. She was about my third or fourth. We used to have "Mayday," in those days. You'd put a little May basket on your girlfriend's door on May 1st, and then run like the devil, because she was supposed to come out and try to kiss you. I don't think people do that anymore.

I had a normal childhood, a good childhood. I remember the pleasure. I don't try to remember the miserable things.

Scott: When you were a kid, what did you think you would end up doing in life?

Dad: I didn't know. I knew that if I worked hard, and read a lot, and got all the education I could ... that's what my folks kept drilling into me, that education was your key to success. But I always had in mind that I would go to college someday. That was sort of background music for all the rest of this: my *certainty* that someday, I would go to college. I didn't know where, or when, or how, but I knew that someday, I was going to do that.

And when I finished high school, graduated in June 1940, I went to work for a trucking company because I didn't have enough money to go to college. And I washed trucks, and did menial stuff. And there would be a few runs to pick up some machinery here, and haul it there, and they couldn't find a driver, so I'd take it. I was old enough then, and I had a driver's license. And pretty soon, some of the drivers wouldn't show up for an over the road trip, maybe to Milwaukee, or Chicago, so I'd get that. And it wasn't long, I hadn't worked for that outfit for more than a year, and I was driving regularly.

I was just getting good at backing up a semi when World War II broke out, and I joined the Air Force. But I always knew that if I worked hard, and saved my money, and read a lot, that I'd get my education. I was confident about that.

Scott: Can we touch on a couple more things -- did you have any hobbies?

Dad: Everything. I was involved in all the sports: I played football, basketball, and baseball in high school. In fact, I was first-string on the football team.

Scott: What position did you play?

Dad: Quarterback. I was first-string two years in football, and I was first-string in basketball one year. I was on the basketball team all four years of high school, but only first-string one year. [Lifelong friend] Larry Williams and I were on the basketball team together.

I played baseball, that was my favorite sport, and I was on the team but I was too slow. I was a good hitter, but I was pretty slow. Third base, mostly, or outfield.

Scott: What was your batting average?

Dad: I don't remember. I don't think we kept batting averages. Fact of the matter is, when I was in high school, we had our games after school in the afternoon, 4:30 in the afternoon. The only time we had evening games was during the sectional and regional tournaments. And most of our games, in the afternoon, if 25 people came, we

were surprised. Nobody gave a damn. They weren't particularly interested. We'd win a few and lose a few.

Scott: Were you especially interested in science?

Dad: I don't recall that I was intensely interested in any one thing, but I read a lot. I read everything I could get my hands on. And I do recall being quite interested in chemistry in high school; I took some extra chemistry courses that I didn't need to take. I think it was because I admired the chemistry teacher.

Scott: Anyway, it was 1941. You actually enlisted in the Army Air Corps?

Dad: As you know, Pearl Harbor [the Japanese attack on the U.S. naval base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii] was December 7th, 1941. That was the day the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor. And I joined the army December 9th.

Scott: Why did it take you two days?

Dad: Because I wasn't 21 years old, and you had to have your parents' permission. They had not yet changed the law. They didn't have time to change it.

Scott: Did your parents give it willingly?

Dad: No, they didn't think I should go. And I remember saying to my mother, "It's going to be over before I get in there, if you don't sign this paper."

Scott: So you finally talked her into it.

Dad: Yes. And besides that, you had to have two years of college to go to air crew training, to be a pilot. And I had never been to college. So I went into the ground forces of the Air Corps. It was basically like being in the infantry. We spent most of our time drilling and marching. And then, about a month after I joined, they put up a notice "Air Crew Training Exams." If you could pass, they'd waive the two year college requirement. And Larry Williams and I took it and passed.

Scott: Where was that, by the way?

Dad: Fort Snelling, in St. Paul. But Larry got the highest mark on that air crew training exam of anybody who had ever taken it. The highest mark of anybody who had ever taken it.

Scott: So how come you ended up being a combat pilot and he ended up flying transports?

Dad: He and I were both ticketed to go to pilot training, but he washed out because of his eyesight. He was nearsighted, as I remember. And he washed out of pilot training, in other words, he went to navigator school. And he became a navigator. He was a navigator on a B-17 in the Eighth Air Force in England. I went through pilot training in a single-engine outfit, flying P-40s when I graduated from flying school in the spring of 1943. And we were going to be the first P-51 outfit in the U.S. Army Air Corps. And they suddenly took the darned whole bunch of us and sent us to Clovis, New Mexico to fly B-24s. We weren't too happy about that, but as it turned out, it probably saved my life.

So after I learned how to take off and land, and all the training you needed in a B-24, I went to the South Pacific in December 1943, and I was there until the war was over.

Scott: You mentioned that getting transferred out of flying fighter planes probably saved your life. Was the P-51 ...?

Dad: Oh, yeah. We were crazy men. We'd get into those fighters and dive straight down to see how fast we could go, fly upside down 20 feet off the ground, and all that crazy stuff. A lot of people got killed doing things like that.

Scott: Just because they were such hot dogs?

Dad: They were just a bunch of nuts. But in a B-24, you don't do that. You fly it pretty much like you drive a truck -- straight and level. So it probably saved my life. But the reason I became a squadron commander is because I didn't get killed. And where I was, if you didn't get killed, you got promoted. And it turned out, at the end of the war, I was one of the oldest officers 90th Bomb Group, in terms of service, because I had outlived everybody else. And they

promoted me. If you didn't get killed, you kept getting promoted. And I was fortunate. I never got a scratch. I was in combat over two years, and never got a scratch.

Scott: Did you ever ... I know that you're an empiricist, and a scientist, and all that, but did you ever think to yourself that you were incredibly lucky?

Dad: Oh, yes, every day. But I felt invincible. You had to feel invincible in order to keep your sanity in that situation. I faced the possibility of my death every day, 10 times a day, some days. And I never knew if I was going to see that sunrise again. Sometimes, I didn't know if I was going to live another 10 seconds. I had to feel as though I was invincible. And I did.

Scott: Has that experience affected the way you look at life?

Dad: I got my priorities straightened out damn young. When I was over there, whether you live or die is really the main thing, you know. And I got my priorities in order, right there. When I got out of the Air Force and went to college and medical school, I studied hard and worked hard. But I never spent any time worrying about tests, or had any anxiety about my grades, because I knew I was doing the best I could, and that was all I could do. And I had already faced the ultimate issue: whether I was going to live or die. Compared to that -- a test in biology? What the hell is that? That's no problem. I had an easy time in school because I didn't waste any of my energy on anxiety.

Scott: So what about your war record? I've heard snippets of stories about landing burning planes, and getting various decorations. Would you go through some of that?

Dad: I did a few things like that. I was in combat over two years. And people who are being shot at occasionally get hit. And some of my planes got hit, and I crash-landed two of them. It really wasn't nearly as exciting as it sounds, because those old crates, you could bring them in and stall them at about 75 miles an hour over the kunai grass, which is like bullrushes, 10 feet tall, it was like jumping into the hay. If the plane didn't catch on fire, you were fine. I'd let the crew jump out, and I'd bring it in.

But I didn't do anything unusual. Everybody did stuff like that. Heroes depend on the audience. People who do things that are heroic often do them because they have no choice. They cannot do otherwise but to do what eventually turns out to be heroic.

I think the gutsiest thing I ever did was to take pictures of Mannis Island, one of the Admiralty Islands north of New Guinea and west of New Britain. General MacArthur wanted pictures of all the coastline of Mannis Island, which is about 25 miles long and 10 miles across, with an irregular coastline. He was going to invade Mannis Island with a large force, and wanted pictures of every inch of coastline. And he wanted a B-24 to take big, wide-angle cameras in the waist of the airplane, fly 50 feet off the water, 500 feet offshore, all the way around that island, and take pictures. And I drew the short straw that time, because we knew damn well that we were going to get blown right out of the sky.

Well, we didn't. And I think the reason we didn't, was because we had eight P-47s with us. A P-47 is a tough fighter, heavy, heavy armor, eight machine guns. If anybody had opened fire from the shore, which I fully expected any second -- it seemed like it took 25 years to go around that island, though it really took about an hour and a half. If anybody had opened fire from the shore, those eight P-47s would have just demolished them. Because they were flying just above us, four on each side. And they had to keep peeling off and coming back, because they couldn't fly as slowly as we could. And I guess that's what saved our bacon. But that took guts, boy, to fly that thing 50, 60 feet off the water, 500 feet offshore, as slowly as we were, 175 miles an hour -- all the way around that island, expecting any moment for them to open up on you.

But we encountered ack-ack [anti-aircraft fire] everywhere, we encountered Jap fighters, we encountered all the problems of combat, and so did everyone else. I wasn't unique.

Scott: Was there ever a time when you thought, "This is it. Goodbye, Charlie?"

Dad: Oh, yes. Over Manokwari, had number three engine burning, number four engine shot out, the landing gear shot off on that side. I had full power in the left two engines, and partial power in number

three, which is the first engine inboard on the right-hand side. And I didn't think we'd ever get back. Manokwari was a Japanese air base, well-fortified with anti-aircraft guns, northwest of New Guinea. And by God, we got it back down there. Everybody jumped out as we went over the strip, and I just flopped it in.

Scott: When was that?

Dad: That was in 1944. It would have been the fall of 1944.

Scott: Can we go through the nuts and bolts of your service record, your promotions, and when you got various decorations, and so forth?

Dad: I was commissioned as a second lieutenant in spring 1943. When you go through flying school, you get your wings, and your commission. And then I went overseas and got to be a first lieutenant in about a year, and got to be a captain in about six months more, sometime in late 1944. And then I was put in for major when I was made a squadron commander in May 1945, and that caught up with me when I was on leave at the end of the war. We were too busy -- my promotion never caught up with me. Fact is, I was a captain for six months before I ever got hold of a set of captain's bars. You didn't worry about stuff like that. We were worried about staying alive.

I was decorated 22 times, altogether. But some of those decorations were automatic. If you flew 100 combat hours, you got an Air Medal. You got an Air Medal if you led an important mission: for example, I got an Air Medal for leading the squadron on the day we bombed Leyte, in the battle of Leyte Gulf, October 20, 1944. That was the day MacArthur came back to the Philippines, in the battle of Leyte Gulf. I led one of the flights of bombers that saturated the beaches with bombs just before the landing ships with troops in them hit the beach. Obviously, we had to hit what we were aiming at, or we would have killed our own people. I got an Air Medal for that. I got a DFC [Distinguished Flying Cross] for bringing in that plane that was burning. I got an Air Medal for every 100 hours of combat flying, which added up to about 15 Air Medals.

Scott: How many missions did you end up flying?

Dad: I had 76 bombardment missions -- that's where you drop bombs on a target. Over 100 reconnaissance missions. And a couple hundred training missions because I trained a lot of the pilots in instrument flying. You see, by the time I had been in combat a year, I had more time in instrument flying than almost anyone else in the group. Because weather was our main enemy.

Weather destroyed more of our planes than the Japanese. We never knew what the weather was going to be like over the target. And a lot of times, we'd head out over a target, and [some planes would] never come back.

Scott: Really?

Dad: Oh, yeah. Terrible weather. But for a long time, I was doing some instrument check riding with all the pilots and co-pilots who came over from the States.

And frankly, I have to admit, I enjoyed World War II. I enjoyed the whole thing. It was exciting, and I never got hurt, and I got a lot of recognition. And I got a lot out of it. It made me feel as though I could do anything that I set my mind to do.

Scott: And the name of your plane was ... ?

Dad: The "Twin Nifties." I had a lot of different planes, but the one I flew most of the time was called the "Twin Nifties."

Scott: Did your squadron have any particular designation?

Dad: It was the 400th Squadron, the "Pirates." The group that I belonged to was called the "Jolly Rogers," and it had a skull and crossed bombs on the tails of all the planes.

Scott: What the number of the group?

Dad: 90th Bomb Group, Fifth Air Force.

Scott: You mentioned that you enjoyed World War II. Is that just in retrospect?

Dad: I enjoyed it while it was going on, too. It all depends on your attitude toward things like that. It was exciting and interesting, and since I didn't get killed, I rather enjoyed it. [laughs] If I'd gotten killed, I wouldn't have enjoyed it as much.

Scott: [laughs] It wouldn't have been nearly as much fun. So you were discharged from the Army when?

Dad: December, 1945. I joined in December 1941, discharged in December 1945, four years almost to the day. And I decided to go to college, because the G.I. Bill gave me 48 months of college -- the maximum, because I was in combat all that time. So I went over to the University of Minnesota and took all their tests. And talked to this guy, and asked what I was best suited to do. And he said, "Do whatever you please." And I said, that's not what I came here to find out. I want to know what I'm best at. So he asked, "Why don't you be a doctor?" And I said, "Okay, I will." And it was that simple.

Scott: I seem to recall, from another conversation, that the reason he said "do anything" was that you *could* do whatever you pleased, that you were very versatile.

Dad: I think so. But I said, "By God, I will be a doctor." It was kind of a cold choice. So I matriculated at Macalester College because it was right down the street, and I could walk to school.

Scott: How much did it cost?

Dad: I don't remember.

Scott: I guess that it was G.I. Bill, so you didn't really worry about it that much.

Dad: Yes, they paid the tuition, and I think that I got \$50 a month living money. And I got that for 48 months. So I got five years of school out of that.

Scott: Was \$50 a month adequate?

Dad: I worked 40 hours a week all the way through college. I worked for Harry Shapiro.

Scott: So that was the drugstore. I always thought that was during high school.

Dad: I worked for him in high school, too. Maintained an 'A' average, went through four years of college in three and a half years. Went to medical school at the University of Rochester.

Scott: When did you enroll at the University of Rochester?

Dad: Started in the fall of 1949. And graduated in the spring of 1953. Then I took four years of residency training, and started my practice in the spring of 1957.

Scott: Getting back to Macalester College for a second, what did you major and minor in?

Dad: Majored in chemistry, and minored in biology and mathematics.

Scott: Mathematics? Did you like math?

Dad: No, but I was advised to take it, and I had an excellent math instructor. I'm a dummy in math, but he sure helped me through, because I had good marks.

Scott: Did you have friends in college?

Dad: I didn't have time, much, for friends. I didn't go out for any sports, I didn't have many girlfriends. I worked hard. Because I had been out of high school six years before I started college. I really didn't learn a whole heck of a lot in high school. And I knew that if I was going to go to medical school, which I had already decided, that I had to get really good marks. I knew I couldn't fool around, that I really had to bear down. And I did.

Scott: Were you more serious about your studies than most of the students?

Dad: Yes. I didn't belong to any of the campus things. I just worked hard, got my grades, worked nights and evenings, and studied till two in the morning most nights. I had a goal, and I went after it. I was older than most of the kids.

Scott: Were there any professors who especially influenced you?

Dad: My math prof, Dr. Scott, was great. My chemistry prof, who taught physics too, Dr. Chester Schiflett, was just marvelous. He could make physical chemistry simple. And you have to make it simple if I'm going to understand it. [laughs] And he was a marvelous instructor.

I walked into my first English class, and the professor was Dr. Johnson. And I looked at the professor, and I said, "Are you Kenny Johnson?" And he said, "Captain Palmer!" [laughs] I had been his commanding officer for a while over in the Pacific. He was a co-pilot on one of the B-24s.

Scott: Well, I hope you treated him right.

Dad: Oh, yeah, I did, because he gave me straight 'A's in my English class.

Scott: So how did you decide on Rochester?

Dad: As I've told you, and you know, I've always been lucky. If you play a game of skill, you might beat me, but if you play a game of luck, I'll win. One of the guys I was in the Air Force with, Charlie Koster, lives in Rochester. He and I flew together over the Pacific for a year and a half. I went out to visit him while I was a student at Macalester. And I went out to see the University of Rochester [Medical School] on a Saturday afternoon. This was 1948.

I walked up there, and was looking around. It was a rather famous school, still is, one of the leaders in medical education. This kindly gentleman asked if he could show me anything. I said that I was a pre-medical student from Macalester College, and I was just looking around, kind of sightseeing. And he showed me the place. Didn't tell me who he was, just showed me around. He was very cordial, and nice. And I said to him, "My, this is a wonderful place. I'd love to go to school here, but I doubt that I could get in." And he said, "Oh, I think you'll get in, why don't you apply?" It was the dean, George Whipple: world-famous doctor, Nobel Prize winner, dean of the medical school. I applied, and was accepted immediately. I needed

no further interview. That's how I got into Rochester. I never applied to any other school.

Scott: That was a piece of luck. I guess he must have been very impressed with you.

Dad: I didn't know he was the dean. We were just walking around, talking, and I was asking about this and that.

Scott: Did you have any favorite courses or professors in medical school?

Dad: I just enjoyed the whole thing. I thoroughly enjoyed medical school. It was fun. It was the culmination of a dream that I had built toward for years.

Scott: You mentioned, earlier, when you were a kid, the idea of being a professional ...

Dad: But I didn't dream of being a doctor. Just a vague idea that being a professional would be nice. But I worked my butt off in college, and this was the culmination of my efforts, to be in medical school and have that MD almost in my grasp. I worked hard, but I enjoyed it.

Scott: So you worked hard at your studies ... the G.I. Bill would have run out by then. How did you pay for it?

Dad: I worked nights. I worked weekends. I would involve myself in any experiments the physiologists were doing where they'd pay you five or ten bucks. I was janitor of a church. I had to clean the whole church between one Sunday and the next, and I could do it any time I wanted to, as long as there wasn't anything going on. I did most of it between midnight and five in the morning. I've always been able to get by on not too much sleep. I worked and borrowed money; I borrowed money from Larry Williams. And I had good friends who helped me.

Scott: Larry Williams had stayed in the service.

Dad: Yes.

Scott: I seem to remember that at one point, you worked as a singer.

Dad: A singer?

Scott: Or is that just a bit of family lore that turns out not to be true?

Dad: I took voice lessons in college, as a lark. And I occasionally sang a solo in church choirs, various places, and got five bucks for it. That was a real minor thing.

Scott: You've told me some amazing stories about some of the gags you pulled as a medical student. Would you share some of those?

Dad: Some of those things were just awful. In anatomy, where you'd dissect human cadavers. We used to go up there in the evenings to review for our tests. Austin Levy, one of my classmates -- incidentally, I just talked to him on the phone the other day, it was his birthday. I call him the 23rd of April every year and sing to him, "Happy Birthday." He lives in Rochester. Austin Levy and a couple other guys were up there one night, and as Stu MacCleary, and two or three other people and I walked in, they appeared to be eating out of this cadaver's stomach. [laughs] They had put a bowl of pea soup down in there, and they were eating out of it. Good Lord, what a sickening sight. And one evening, Austin went around and propped up all the penises of the male cadavers with wire, straight up in the air. Crazy stuff like that. We did all the crazy things that medical students all do. Silly stuff, mainly gross jokes of that kind. Nothing unique or inventive.

Scott: So you graduated from Rochester when?

Dad: 1953.

Scott: And you took your internship and residency?

Dad: Part of it in Rochester, and the rest of it here in Indianapolis, as chief resident of Methodist Hospital.

Scott: Did you pick out a specialty?

Dad: When I started my internship, I was going to be a general practitioner, but I quickly got sick of treating piles and runny noses. So I did an internal medicine residency and a cardiology residency simultaneously.

Scott: Another thing that happened in medical school was that you met Charman Frazee. You want to tell a little about that?

Dad: When I met Charman Frazee, she was attractive in every way. She was young, and beautiful, and smart as a whip. And I met her the first day of medical school. She came there from Indiana University, and I came there from Macalester, and we were classmates starting in September 1949. We got married in December 1949, three months after we met. That was kind of a whirlwind romance. But she was a brilliant woman, very attractive. And I just thought, "hell, I'd be crazy to let her get away." So I married her, and our marriage did not turn out to be a happy relationship, as you know. But you are a result of that marriage. And as you mentioned in your writing, you hoped that was a positive thing, and I think it is. But it was not a very happy marriage, and it didn't survive.

Scott: There was a time when I was not sure when you got married. I thought it might have been in 1952.

Dad: No, we were married in December, 1949. We had only known each other three months.

Scott: Why was that? You're normally a very thoughtful person, who doesn't rush into things.

Dad: I was 27 and a half years old. And I had never met a woman like that, who was brilliant, and good-looking, who just seemed to have everything. And I said, "hell, I'm not going to find another one like this, I'd better grab this one."

Scott: And you were glad you never *did* find another one like her. [laughs]

Dad: That proved to be true.

Scott: How did the marriage affect you?

Dad: It didn't affect me much at first. I just kind of went about my business, and concentrated on my profession -- which she did, too, incidentally. And we had less and less in common. Because she was much more intense in her pursuit of her profession than I was. And we had little or nothing to talk about after three or four years. We talked about *you* -- that was about all we talked about, because she was headed in a different direction than I was.

As you know, she competed intensely with all males. And she competed with *me*, all the time, to prove to me that she could do anything I could do, and do it better. And she often did do it better. But she was so unpredictable. You see, my strong point was solid predictability. And she was just the opposite. She was totally unpredictable. And that made her less valuable as a professional. She would make appointments with 25 people, and then leave town. You can't do that. But that was an interesting era in my life. Not a happy one.

Scott: Was there anything in particular that brought you to Indianapolis?

Dad: This was Charman's home. Her folks lived here, and she wanted to come back here and practice. And I didn't have any particular objection to that.

Scott: You know, that's odd, because I think she always said that you were the one who wanted to live in Indiana.

Dad: I'd never been to Indiana except to get married. And her folks lived here. Her mother, Mrs. Hosmer, was a wonderful lady. A fine lady, a very generous person. A real high-class lady.

Scott: Were there any other notable events in life or career in the 1950s that you want to touch on?

Dad: Well, did that cardiology residency because of the Korean War. The resident who was supposed to be cardiology that year was drafted, and so I was put in as a cardiology resident without any discussion. Then I started practice in 1957, which was 31 years ago. No, nothing very earth shaking.

Scott: So in the 1960s, the big thing I know about, of course, the marriage eventually unraveled and you met our mother.

Dad: I separated from Charman in 1965, and married Carol a year later, in 1966.

Scott: Anything else in the early 1960s?

Dad: I was busy, working hard. Making a good living. That was the golden age of medicine, when everything was developing. And you could do no wrong. Now, doctors can do no right: they are looked upon as being untrustworthy. But that was the golden age of medicine, the 1960s and 1970s, when you almost had carte blanche, you could do almost anything you wanted, as long as it was ethical, and everybody approved of it. And you got paid for it.

Scott: So I guess, in the mid-1960s, the marriage really started to fall apart. Was there anything in particular that happened?

Dad: It was an accumulation of things. And as you know, your mother's mental status became more and more fragile and unpredictable. And she would do things that were just totally unacceptable, not only personally, but economically. She'd just take off whenever she felt like it, and go to New York, or someplace. And run up a few thousand dollars on the credit cards. When I divorced her, I was so far in debt, I didn't think I would ever get out. And I made a good living, but she spent twice as much as I made. And it took me about 15 years to get even.

Scott: You're ordinarily a very even-tempered person. Did this affect you to the point of ever feeling depressed?

Dad: I never felt depressed. I was angry a lot. And I think that it showed sometimes. I tried not to let it show, or to affect my relationship with my patients or friends. I don't get depressed. But I used to get mad.

Scott: What were the circumstances under which you first fell in love with Carol?

Dad: I had seen her out at Community Hospital. She worked in the lab out there. And I thought, God, what a good-looking woman.

When it became obvious that my marriage was going to disintegrate, she and I talked, and I hired her to be my lab technician. Although I fell in love with her right there. Seeing her every day, that's all it took. She had married Tom Anderson more out of convenience than love, and she fell in love with me, too, and we just said we had to shed our spouses and get married, which we did.

Scott: Now, I remember the events, in October of 1965, when everything kind of came apart. How do you remember that sequence of events?

Dad: I don't remember much about it. I think that I've wiped it out of my mind.

Scott: I'll tell you what I remember. A couple of things. One is, you came to pick me up at school. And you took me over to your apartment, you had an apartment on 52nd Street. We ate at Lum's that night. And then we went back to your apartment, and you talked on television -- I have that tape of you on television, and you talked about people not showing their emotions. But you were not a big person to wear your heart on your sleeve. But that night, you cried.

Dad: I don't remember.

Scott: And it was the only time I have ever seen you cry.

Dad: Is that right. I don't remember that.

Scott: You cried, and you hugged me, and I cried. And I never felt so close to you as I did that night.

Dad: I'll be darned. I don't remember that. I wish I did. It sounds like it was a very intense moment.

Scott: It was a tragic circumstance that brought that about, but it's a night that I will never forget.

Dad: Well, I wish I had not forgotten that, but I wiped most of that out of my mind long ago. Because the whole scenario was so difficult. And I think I just probably jettisoned that along with a lot of other things that were less pleasant.

Scott: Then, of course, in December, Lucille [Charman's mother] wanted to have Charman committed, and Charman grabbed me and headed for the border. What were you doing along that time?

Dad: I don't recall. Because I was not aware of what she was doing most of the time. I couldn't keep track of her. I didn't even try.

Scott: Anything else notable in the 1960s, besides a new family?

Dad: David was born in 1967, Steven was born in 1968.

Scott: And you came up to Chicago. I was in the Varsity theatre, seeing "Robin Crusoe, USN," and you came into the theatre -- maybe you should tell it.

Dad: Well, you can remember it better than I can. I'm not sure how I found you in there.

Scott: I guess that you went by the apartment and saw Charman, and she said I was at the movies. And I felt this hand on my shoulder, in the dark, and turned around, and it was you, up from Indianapolis, to tell me that I was going to have a baby brother. And so that was quite a thrill.

Dad: I vaguely remember going into that theatre looking for you, but I can't remember how I knew you were in there.

Scott: And we went out to the lobby, and you told me. That was really exciting. Anyway, why don't we move along to the 1970s. What were some of the big events?

Dad: Jim was born in 1971. And we moved here, to this house. We bought our first house in 1970.

Scott: That was 7144 Derstan Road.

Dad: And we moved here on August 1, 1976, we'll be here 12 years this summer.

Scott: And this is 6040 Brokenhurst Road, in Indianapolis.

Dad: And we've really enjoyed living here. This is a marvelous place. I've worked hard, and have a good practice. And I've been fortunate. I've been able to give back to my profession some of the things that it has given me. I've been chairman of all kinds of medical committees and task forces, and been on the board of the hospital, and all the various structural components of the medical staff. I've been on television innumerable times, talking about medical things. And I've been a speaker at dozens of places on various subjects.

Scott: You've also been in politics, on the school board and on a pollution control board.

Dad: And then on the board of my church two or three times, and president of the congregation.

Scott: All Souls Unitarian Church.

Dad: The 1970s and 1980s have been exciting and interesting, and Carol has made my life meaningful.

Scott: Any major events or accomplishments in the 1970s?

Dad: Off the top of my head, I can't think of any specifics. But there have been a lot of exciting things happening over the years. When you say, "what are they?" I can't think of what they are. But we don't live a dull life. There's always something.

Scott: On to the 1980s, then.

Dad: In the 1980s, the practice of medicine has become difficult. The practice of medicine is under siege -- orchestrated by the federal government, but participated in by the insurance companies of North America. The practice of medicine has become a real struggle since about 1983 or 1984. And I can still make a living, but it's getting harder and harder.

Scott: We think of the Reagan years as being dedicated to less interference.

Dad: Reagan doesn't have any influence on this.

Scott: What are the things that have happened, specifically, since 1983 or 1984, to make the practice of medicine more difficult?

Dad: One of the big things was the Tax Equity Act of 1983, when they said, now, we're going to cut certain programs to the bone. And they started with medicine. What has happened in medicine is that physicians are now assumed to function only in self-interest, without ethical constraints that we all feel we abide by. We are assumed to be incompetent or dishonest or both. And we have to continuously prove to some government agency or insurance company that it's not the case. If I send a bill, I have to prove to some third party -- repeatedly, sometimes -- that I really did what I said I did. In order to receive part of my fee. And that's a demeaning experience to have to justify everything that you do to some faceless bureaucrat.

When you said, Reagan stood for less government control, sure he does. But the entrenched bureaucracy in Washington was there before he got there, and it will still be there after he's gone. And that is the most powerful political force in the United States. They answer to no one, they were never elected, they are faceless, but their directives have the power of law, and I have to follow them. I have no choice.

What's happened is that federal intervention in my profession has changed it from a profession -- a profession being a self-regulating body of practitioners of a certain body of knowledge -- to an industry which is controlled and regulated by external forces, the government, mainly. I'm part of a huge industry now, called the "health care industry." I'm not a member of a profession.

It's frustrating to realize that my efforts have had very little effect on anything. As you know, one individual can make a difference, but so often, one individual feels as though he hasn't made *much* difference. And that's the way I feel sometimes about my political efforts. But I won't give up. I have never failed to vote. I have always participated in political forums where I have a chance to speak up, because I'm not bashful.

But we live in a society that has built itself a monster called the medical industry, and they can no longer afford it. They are blaming the people who are the practitioners of this art. And we are culpable:

we accepted this largesse. We should have told them, no, we won't accept any government money.

Scott: I seem to remember in the 1960s, when they were first talking about Medicare, you were against it then.

Dad: Yes, I was against it then, and I'm against it now. But when Medicare came in, July 1, 1966, I began to get paid for some of the patients who I used to treat for nothing. And I thought, "gee, this is nice." My income increased. And I was like the rest of the doctors: I accepted Medicare payments because it increased my income. I started getting paid for things I used to do for nothing. I shouldn't have done it. I should have said "no." And all the rest of the doctors should have said, "no." We should have said, "we will continue to take care of these patients for nothing." Because now, they've got us. Now, they've got us by the throat, and it's an economic noose that they're tightening around our necks. I don't have much choice about how I practice medicine anymore, because I am supervised and harassed by federal committees, constantly.

Scott: Let me ask you this. You said that you shouldn't have taken the money. For example, I have very strong political views. As a newspaper reporter, I do not take political stands. There are things that I do because I want to make a good living, for myself and people who depend on me. And what I tell myself is, that although I am not taking as hard and principled a stand as I might have thought I would when I was 20, that I am making, what I tell the kids is, "You make the best and most honest moral deal you can with life, and that's what you do." So isn't that just what you did?

Dad: Yes, but I was seduced by a fee that I could get that I hadn't previously received -- the Medicare patients that I'd took care of for nothing. And the government said, you will now file a claim and get paid for these people. I didn't realize that they would eventually call in that IOU and tell me that they now owned my soul, which is what they've done. But it wasn't greed, it was something over which I had no control. The only group of people who were solidly against Medicare when it was passed were the doctors, almost 100 percent. And we thought, well, we don't have any control over it. It increased our income, but it decreased our freedom to practice medicine. We

kind of sold our soul to the devil, was what we did, as a group. Now, we're not a profession anymore.

Scott: So what's the thing to do, in terms of principle. Sometimes, we face these decisions: principle vs. taking care of your family. What's your thinking on that? Would you do things differently now?

Dad: Maybe not. But I do know this. The reason that the medical profession has been so easy to fragment and disrupt is that doctors don't even get along with each other. They're such a bunch of individualists and prima donnas, you can't get two of them to agree that it's Monday. [laughs] I try to communicate with doctors at the hospital, that's part of my job. They get mad at me. It's not something I invented, I'm just the messenger. I think if they would all sit down and stop shouting, all get involved in politics and try to make some difference instead of griping at each other, we might be able to get something done.

Scott: So you've become kind of disenchanted with the practice of medicine. And one thing you mentioned is that even though you are almost 66, you have had a couple of job offers.

Dad: Yes, and I am seriously considering them. I like my patients, I like what I do, even though it's more difficult to do it. And I would hate to quit the practice of medicine. But at the age of 66, if someone offered me a good job at a good salary, I'd have to consider it. Because how many 66-year-old men do you know who are offered a job -- someone comes to them and offers them a job?

Scott: I know one. Moving on to the philosophical, are there any lessons you've learned in your life?

Dad: The most important thing I've learned in 65 years is that I might be wrong. I just might be wrong. I've also learned that I'm not indispensable. I've learned that sometimes, there's nothing to do but just throw back your head and laugh. You can cry and bitch and groan, but you won't have anybody with you. I tell my patients, don't complain to anyone but me, because if you do, there won't be anybody at the funeral.

Scott: Is there any single principle that you live by?

Dad: I have always tried, and still try, to be reliable and honest. If I tell you I will do something, I do it. I do not say one thing and do another. Hypocrisy is an anathema to me: I can't stand a hypocrite. I'd rather see a good, honest burglar with a gun in his hand, than a hypocrite. The burglar who doesn't pretend to be anything else. But I have tried to live my life in such a manner that people around me can depend on me, that they don't feel uncertain about my performance or attitudes or availability or responsibility. And I think that I've accomplished it. I hope that I have. That's the main basis of my existence, is to be a responsible, reliable, dependable human being.

Scott: So how would you characterize your current life?

Dad: I enjoy my life, even though I bitch and growl about the government and complain about the society we live in. There's no other game in town. If I'm not here, I'm not anywhere. And I am enjoying this whole business. It's never dull. I've got all kinds of things to keep me occupied. Not only my profession, but the family, and all the other things I do. I'm a *participant* in life. I'm not an observer. I've participated in everything that I've come into contact with. I get involved. I try to influence the procedures with which I'm associated. And I guess, if you had to describe my life in one word, you'd say I'm a "participant," and I will continue to be so.

Scott: One more thing. And I believe that you have perfect pitch, and I know you can play things on the piano from hearing them.

Dad: Oh, I can't do that. Jim [one of his sons] can do that. But I used to play the piano by ear. I haven't played the piano much in the last few years. Jim can do that. He can sit down and play a piece that you hum. But I can't do that. Where did you ever get the idea that I could do that?

Scott: You could do that.

Dad: I used to play the piano when you were a kid, but I haven't played it for years. I've kind of forgotten how. But I like music.

Scott: Do you think that your sons are like you?

Dad: I think so. You are, and I think David, Steven, and Jim are all like me in some ways. I hope that they're trying to be like me in some ways. That would be the ultimate compliment.

Scott: Okay. Well, Dad, thank you.

Dad: Thank you, Scott. I enjoyed the interview.

Scott: I did, too.

