

Wright State University

CORE Scholar

Boonshoft 50th Anniversary Oral History Project

Boonshoft School of Medicine Oral History
Collection

1-15-2022

Michael Oleksyk Interview for the Boonshoft School of Medicine 50th Anniversary Oral History Project

Michael Oleksyk

Kristen Dilger

Follow this and additional works at: https://corescholar.libraries.wright.edu/boonshoft_oral_histories



Part of the [History of Science, Technology, and Medicine Commons](#), [Medical Education Commons](#),
and the [Oral History Commons](#)

WRIGHT STATE UNIVERSITY
Boonshoft School of Medicine 50th Anniversary Oral History Project
Interview with Michael Oleksyk (MO)

Interview Date: January 15, 2022

Interviewed by: Kirsten Dilger (KD)

TRANSCRIPT

KD

Are you ready to get started?

MO

Yep, anytime.

KD

Alright. So, I'm just going to have you say your full name, your graduating class and what you're doing right now other than golfing.

MO

My name's Michael Steven Oleksyk. I am a physician who graduated from Wright State University School of Medicine, 1983. I'm currently on my third retirement, I am working part-time as a hospitalist in the emergency room at a large trauma center down in Fort Myers, called Gulf Coast Medical Center. A part of the Lee Health System. So, this is my version of retirement.

KD

Perfect. So, my 1st question is why did you decide to go Wright State for medical school?

MO

Multiple reasons. I went undergrad to Case Western Reserve University, because I'm from Cleveland, and that was going to be my top choice for a medical school. But when I interviewed there, it just didn't feel right. It was a- they were very rigid, it was a school that had been open over a 100 years and it was- they seemed very inflexible. The buildings weren't friendly, I mean, they looked concrete, et cetera. So, I crossed Case

off the list- plus it was a lot more expensive- then I looked at the other schools- Ohio State, Cincinnati, Toledo, Wright State. When I went to Wright State, it was a unique experience, the whole interview process, and the things that made a mark on me, like, one is something real weird. When I first got on the elevator, I noticed all the elevator buttons were low, and I recognized right away that that's because it was handicapped accessible. And where I was going to college at Case Western Reserve at that time- this was in 1982, I'm sorry, in 1978- Case was embroiled in a lawsuit where people were suing the university because they weren't handicap accessible, the buildings. I had done volunteer work in a hospital during my first year of college, back in 1975,76, and I was very familiar with the handicapped and the need for handicap accessible, and here I am, I'm going to a college where they're suing not to do it, and here I go to Wright state where it was like almost- it was anti-unhandicapped, meaning, you know, everything was so pro-handicapped, it was like, wow. I mean, I was impressed. The thing with the tunnels, the underground tunnels, all the buildings connected with underground tunnels and the fact being familiar with Ohio winters and the type of weather, the fact being that it was for handicapped, but also for non-handicapped people that you had the ability to get to classrooms, go building the building, without having to go outside and brave the elements, you know, if you're in a wheelchair, on crutches, et cetera. I've had multiple athletic injuries, I've been on crutches at times, had to use cane at times for short periods of time- not for a long period of time- and so, that was really, really impressive. Then the interview process, it wasn't just interviewing with staff people, but I interviewed with students, and I'll never forget my last interview, I don't know who the person was I interviewed, and it was at five PM, and I was in a hurry to get back to Cleveland because I had to work the next day. I had graduated a semester early, so I had to be at work at seven o'clock the next morning. I had a three-and-a-half-hour car ride ahead of me, the last interview was at five o'clock, and it was with a community person, which was the only place I interviewed where they had a community person interview you, and it was a really nice lady, and she has started the interview with a one hour interview, and the first question had to do with, you know, "Why do you want to be doctor? How long have you wanted this? What interests you in Wright State? And then she asked me, she said, "Okay, you've been here all day, you know, what have you liked about the interview process? What haven't you liked?" Which is like, wow, somebody actually really wants this feedback. And then she spent the next forty-five minutes asking me about myself, totally unrelated to medicine. "What kind of hobbies do you have? What are your goals in life? What's important to you?" And it was like- it came across as a very, very caring person who was interested in me as a person, not as a medical student, but me, as a person, and I thought, wow, I mean, what a nice diplomat for the university, and I thought, "Oh, heck", you know, so I came back and I said, I told my parents, I said, "This is where I want to go". And then I got my acceptance letter, and it's ironic. January 25th, I'll never forget January 25th, 1979. I said it was a Christmas

present one month late, and every January 25th I celebrate, and that's no bull, okay? And so, this year will be the, uh, 43rd celebration. And because it was like, for me, a dream come true. It's where I wanted to go. I was accepted and I was happy to go and never regretted it a single day. Never.

KD

That's so great. And so, I was going ask, like, was it hard to make that gamble to go to a pretty new medical school?

MO

Not at all, and I got to tell you why, and that's a great question. At the time, there were three new medical schools. There were three old ones and three new ones. The three old ones were Case Western Reserve, Ohio State, and Cincinnati. And Ohio State, I had tried to get in a year early, and I was the first alternate. I would have been able to graduate early from college and then go in, and I was first alternate. So, I was in the very first group they interviewed, actually, in September of my senior year, and I realized I didn't want to go there. They and Case and Cincinnati, they're good schools. I mean, they're excellent schools. Great reputations. But the attitude I got the whole place was, 'we have been here for 100 plus years, this is the way we do it and basically this is the way we do things.' And what I got from Wright State, and I got a little bit from Toledo- not as much from NEOUCOM, it was called NEOUCOM at the time- but mainly from Wright State was that, okay, we're new but we're also flexible. We want input from our students. We want- being new, you know, we've got some great, great professors, we've got great administrators, but we want to be better, and so we want feedback. And we know we're not going to do everything perfect, but, you know, how do we move forward? And so, it made it... you felt like you were almost- I don't want to say an equal, but you were on a more level ground. And so, I had no hesitation at all. None. Plus, it was accredited. Being accredited was huge, you know, and the fact being it wasn't like I was going to an out of country medical school, or a non-accredited medical school. At the time, we didn't have many non-accredited medical schools in the United States. But what we did have was a lot of non-accredited law schools in the United States, and I saw people who went to those law schools, and when they graduated they had difficulty getting licensed- let alone, jobs- because it was not accredited. Wright State was accredited, so I did not have that worry.

KD

And so, tell me about your experiences during your first year at Wright State? What was that like?

MO

Horrible. [*Kirsten laughs*] No, it was horrible. It was horrible. We had- well, it wasn't all horrible. I met a lot of wonderful people, we got to play a lot of sports, we became the first graduate school to win an intramural championship. I was with my football team, I was quarterback, we won the intramural football championship. We had some fabulous athletes, made some great friends. We had- on the negative side- we had a bad experience with our anatomy department, gross anatomy department. 41 out of 100 students got a D or an F in Gross Anatomy, okay? These were not dummies. These were not poor students. I mean, you're supposed to be among the top students. When 41 out of 100 gets a D or an F, it's hard to say it's the students, all the students, and so we filed formal complaints and eventually, the ironic thing is, the administration listened to us, and within two years that professor was voted the top teacher of the freshman class, okay? Went from being the worst to the best, and I truly believe we helped push that process because of the fact being that we were insistent that this was not right, that there was something wrong that needed to be looked into, and kudos to the administration, they did it. They listened to us. The rest of the year, I mean, we had a lot of information thrown at us. We had new... what do you call it, new facilities. Facilities that had not yet been built. So, we were working out a lot of limited areas, both the first and second year. Like, our pathology class the second year was at the VA, and they had not built the auditorium yet. So, we had it, part of the class was in a small lecture hall, and the rest of the class, 40+, had to sit in a room with a TV and watch lectures. So, you know, we had some bumps along the way there. But if I tossed out Gross Anatomy, I would say the 1st year was, it was challenging, because they did throw a lot of material at us. But the professors, other than that gross anatomy professor- I'll never forget him, that gross anatomy professor- all the other professors were kind, accessible, and really wanted to teach, really wanted to work with you. By the way, Kristen, you're going to hear... it's going to be very unfiltered what I tell you today.

KD

That's perfect. That's what I want.

MO

Yep.

KD

So, I just had an interview and I asked him how classes were and he goes, "Oh, I never went." And I was like, "You never went to class in medical school?" But, you know, to each their own. And so, well, going on from your 1st year, we're talking about the later years. How was it to be at a community medical school, instead of one that had its own hospital? Can we talk about the experiences within the other hospitals around Wright State?

MO

Yeah, I will tell you it was fantastic. When I finished my first year of medical school, out of 100 people, I was rated 81, okay? 81. When I graduated, I was 17, okay? Now, that's a pretty impressive jump, to go from 81st in the class to 17 of the top 20, and it was because it was a community-based program. What it allowed us to do was to- I think it made me a better doctor, and also made me a better person. Because I was not limited to one locale and one set of experiences. I was exposed to many different people, many different situations, many different communities, in many different states. Let me tell you that part. I was- my buddies laughed at me, at the beginning of- or at the end of your second year you get your third-year rotations, and back then they had a lottery. They gave you 100 points and you could choose what rotations you wanted to do, when you wanted to do them, but you get allotted so many points, and it was a lottery system. So, like, if most important thing is that you want to do obstetric gynecology at Miami Valley, you might give 80 points to that. But then your surgery rotation, pediatrics, internal medicine, you go wherever they had an opening. And I had done a lot of research, I've always been a forward thinker, I'm always thinking, you know... I serve as a coach and mentor nationally now, and I always tell people, you should have a ten-year-plan, and your ten-year-plan is where do you want to be in ten years? And then, okay, if that's where you want to be in ten years, in order to be there in ten years, where do you need to be in seven years? And if you want to get there in seven years, where do you have to be in five years? So, I've always thought ahead like that. So, midway through the second year, I started talking to the upperclassmen about where were the best places to do rotation. Where did you get to do the most, where did you have the best experiences, and where did you have lousy experiences? And so, I planned my third year accordingly when it came up for family practice or about the family medicine rotation, there was a doctor in Indiana. He was very... he was one of the original ones, his name was C.R Chambers. He was in Union City, Indiana, a good hour and a half, hour and forty-five minutes away, and he wanted medical students. He was a big participant with the medical school, he donated money, and he always wanted a student. And my family medicine rotation, he hadn't had a student in more than six months, and so that was a time when he wanted a student, and I got delegated to him. Everybody laughed at me. It was a tough rotation, because I had to live there. I had to come back for classes every Wednesday morning or Tuesday night, turn around and leave Wednesday evening to drive back and work Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday, Monday, because we worked weekends. It was a rough rotation, and I was upset. I tried to get out of it.

And they said, "Nope, you've got to do it". Okay, fine. It was the best rotation I had. The best. A matter of fact, to the degree that my fourth year for one of my electives, I rotated

with him again. Which was unheard of. But it was just such a unique, fascinating rotation because it was in a small rural community, this was a phenomenally trained doctor. He trained in Canada at McMaster, one of the top medical schools in North America, better than Harvard, Mayo, all these places. I mean, it was for three years it was rated number one. He did his residency in San Francisco. The guy was a phenomenal doctor. But he had done additional training so during the day, or in the mornings, he would either do surgery or he would give anesthesia for the other surgeons, and he had office space in and hospital space. So, he had no students, no residents, just me. So, I got to do everything. So, the experience it taught me, it taught me a lot. It taught me a lot of medical and clinical stuff. Taught me how to think, taught me good technical skills, but it also showed me what a small-town medicine was like, and so it exposed me something I never would have been exposed to. The other rotations I had, my top choice was- because I was interested in internal medicine- was I wanted to do internal medicine. That's what I thought I wanted for my career, and it ended up being my career.

Where was the best place? The VA. The VA. At the time, it was the third largest VA in the United States, 700+ beds. The hospital was old. It was ancient, and they were in the process of rebuilding the hospital while we were there. The rotation I had there was fantastic. It was fantastic. Nothing short of fantastic. I got to do so much. My training was so good that when I did fourth year rotations, like, at the Cleveland Clinic, they asked me to teach the interns how to put in central lines. I'm teaching interns how to do this, because I had done so many. I had done so many procedures. I had taken care of so many critical patients. Not with- not with a bunch of residents in that, it was me. Me with a resident overseeing, but that was me, not the intern, and so it was just a phenomenal experience. Rotations at Wright-Patt Air Force Base taught me about what the military was like. I did my surgery and my gynecology rotations there, and that was a different type of medicine. And then the traditional medicine, [at] Miami Valley I did obstetrics. I did... it's interesting, the only hospital I really didn't rotate through was Good Sam. I did the pediatrics, obviously, at the children's hospital, where I worked under the chairman of the department, the biggest SOB I've ever worked with in my life. But he was also the best teacher I ever had in my life. And I would tell you what, it was funny, because he would abuse physically, I mean, verbally abuse, et cetera, and one time he pulled me to the side, he said, "I see this is bothering you", and this was after a few weeks, and I said, "Well, yeah," I said, "it's hard to keep getting beat down." He goes, "Look," he said, "If I didn't think you were worth a damn, if I didn't think you had potential, I wouldn't say a word to you. I wouldn't waste my voice or your time", he said, and it was just like, wow, what a compliment. I'm getting reamed out because he thinks I'm good. Wow. It's just like, okay. So, it was going to all the different places. Every

experience was unique, and every one of them was just- I got something out of it. And so, I mean, I couldn't have been happier at the end of that time.

KD

So, do you think Wright State students have, like, a leg up from other colleges, because of that “community” hospital?

MO

I think not just the community hospital, but the fact being we can access so many different aspects of medical care. Too many people- I'm on staff at Florida State College of Medicine, and they have a somewhat similar model by the way, but there's is out of necessity, sort of like what Wright State was, but theirs is much broader, because it's statewide, not just a local wide. But the fact being that I was exposed to so many different hospital settings. I mean, like, you go to Kettering, we called it the country club, okay? So, you've got their private hospital- at the time it was a private hospital. First hospital in my life I ever saw that had carpeting. But a private hospital, you know, for the well-to-do. Then you had, like, Miami Valley, which was your major trauma center. Did a little bit at Good Sam, you know, that was the poor hospital. Had the VA, which was a- like, the old VA, the military. Saw Wright-Patt, which was active duty military. And then a world class children's hospital. I mean, I got to see so many different types of medicine, it not only exposed me to it, but also let me know what I liked, what I didn't like; what I was interested in doing, what I wasn't interested in doing. Because I see too many times where students, they come out and they either sign up for a residency or a job, and they've been so limited. They were only at one hospital in medical school, or in residency, and then they come out in private practice and see the real world and it isn't like what they thought. So, I truly believe it had me well prepared. I came out eyes open. And so, for that I'm forever grateful, I really am.

KD

And so, what was your match day like? Can we talk about that? I know it's completely different now, but how was your experience with match day?

MO

Well, I was- I had left Dayton. Because of me, they changed the rules. I had to pay for all my own college and medical school, because my dad worked in the steel mills, so I worked full time in college. I worked my first two years in medical school. And so, it came time for the fourth year, and at the time they didn't have a limit on how many out of town rotations you could do. So, I literally moved out of Dayton in October, and I did all the rest of my rotations out of town. I either did them in the Cleveland area, where I could live at home with my folks, I did the one in Indiana, I lived there because they had

an apartment for the student. In the Cleveland Clinic, they actually paid students, 500 dollars a month for a rotation, which back then was a lot of money, and then I did some in Akron, and Akron had a nurses dormitory with extra rooms where I could stay. I knew I wasn't going to do my residency in Dayton, because I wanted to be up closer to my family in Cleveland, Cleveland/Akron area, and so I had to come back. I was in the middle of my last rotation. I was doing ICU- Cleveland Metro Hospital, which was part of Case Western Reserve systems. So, I came back and I stayed with my old roommate, and yeah, we went in there on match day and there were four of us who ran together- we did everything together- and all four of us were internal medicine. We were in the auditorium, and when they announced and we opened it up, and we all got what we wanted, we pulled out... we had a cooler full of beer, and we pulled out cigars, and started smoking cigars and drinking beer right in the middle of the auditorium. So- which is actually the funny thing is I don't think many people were surprised, because we weren't exactly the conservative students. But it was a very, very satisfying day. It was. it was like, yeah, everything you had worked for, hoped for, and then all four of us got our top choices, you know, and that's like- and there's good competition for where we were going. All four of us went to different places. My roommate went to Riverside in Columbus, and another guy went to New Jersey, and so some tough programs. But, I mean, the fact all four of us got in where we wanted, you know, top choice, that was a very satisfying day. 23:35

KD

And so, on the subject of classmates, let's talk about what you guys did outside of classes and stuff. We talked a little bit at the beginning, but let's go more in detail about the social activities.

MO

This is unfiltered. Okay, played a lot of sports. We played a lot of sports. We had... our class was, athletic-wise, very well versed. We had I think six or seven of our students- we had 75 men, 25 women. We had the highest percentage of women up until that time, 25%. Of the 75 men, either six or seven of us played college basketball. We had a guy who was a punter from Notre Dame, college football. So, we had tennis players, but we had two that were real interesting. One was the guy whose name was right before mine, Steven Nowicki. Steve had an MFA, masters in fine arts. He was an actor, okay? We had another guy who had a bachelors in fine arts. I saw Steve. I mean, it was funny, because Steve and I would be grouped together during orientation, because N and then O, and then I come back and we'd come back at the end of the day, and my roommate and I put the TV on, and there was Steve doing car commercials on TV. It's like, what? We had Jim Augustine, who has turned into a phenomenal ER doc. Jim had, I think, a masters in accounting. You know, and we had pharmacists, we had just a variety of

backgrounds. So, we had people from all different backgrounds, which provided- it wasn't like everybody was a chemistry major type-deal. And so, therefore, that variety, it provided some unique social situations. We also, the vast majority of the class, liked to party, and so, you know, we drank, we smoked pot. I mean, we did. I mean, it was the 70s, I'm sorry, it was what it was, and that was over 85% of our class, you know? And I'm not saying to excess, but, I mean, we did stuff like that. We had get-togethers, group get-togethers after big exams. We would meet at one of the bars, we had Thursday nights where we go down to the Oregon District, I don't even know if that's still open. And, we had Christmas parties, I mean, we did stuff together. We were a very collegial class. I told you, I worked- I bartended actually- I was a bartender, I worked three nights a week- Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday night, 6:30 at night to 2:30 in the morning- at a bar off of Woodland, Woodland Park. So, once a month, a bunch of my buddies would come in and I served them beer all night and not charge them, you know, because I could. But, I mean, we had fun. Sometimes we'd go down to Cincinnati, and go watch a Reds game or we'd go to a concert. I remember a bunch of us went to Billy Joel, we drove over to Indianapolis saw Bruce Springsteen. It was a... we'd go over to Ohio State sometimes for football games. It was a... the thing was, you became, like, you became family because you were all going through the same thing. Now, we had a small percentage of our class was married. They participated in a lot of this stuff, maybe not to the same level, but they participated in most of the stuff. But the vast majority of our class were single, and I'll tell you the single ones, a good chunk, were not in relationships. So, your relationships were with your classmates. So, and we had common feelings, too. We had a common dislike for that anatomy professor, but we had a common love for some of our other professors, and we supported each other. I mean, you'd go to gross anatomy lab, you'd go at 10 at night to go back and look at the cadavers, and there'd be other students there. You had a question, you know, they come up, they'd help you, I mean, it was... one thing they stressed at the very beginning, the first day, the dean gave us a bunch of messages on the first day in the first hour, and I quote them to the medical students who work with me. And one of them is like, okay, the competition is over. You've gotten into medical school, you all got into medical school, and you got in this class because you've got the talent, you've got the ability. Now is where you've got to work together, and they really stressed that, you know, pushed us to work together. Not to compete, but to work together, and that's the way our class was. He also told us two other things that I've never forgotten. One, I don't care how good a doctor you are or you become, at some point in your life, you're going to make a mistake that's going to lead somebody's death, okay? "I want that to sink in", he said. You're going to make a mistake, you're going to make an error, you're going to miss a diagnosis, you're going to miss a clue, and somebody is going to die as a result. He said, "You can't let that define you". He said that you have to realize that medicine is not perfect. He said, you know, "You gotta learn from those mistakes". And

then the other thing he taught was never ever order a test unless you're prepared to act on the results, and that one I have drummed it in every student I've ever had. Don't order an EKG unless you're going to do something with the result. Don't order a blood sugar unless you're going to do something with the result. You don't order a test just to order a test. And that was in the first probably 30 minutes of our orientation. But the one he stressed the most was working together, and I thought our class did really, really good job espousing that. I mean, I don't know if they did any videos of our match day while we're in there, but people are getting- I mean, people coming up to you, hugging you, congratulating you for getting in, and I mean genuinely happy for each other, and it was a real camaraderie, it was a real fellowship and it was... it made you feel good. Made you feel good.

KD

And so, do you keep in touch with some of your classmates?

MO

Well, unfortunately, the one I was closest to died about 15 years ago of cancer. I had two roommates, one my first year and then he got married. I'm in contact with him about once every year or two years. And then my other roommate, the one who I spent the most time with, we're in contact with Christmas cards, et cetera, but we're so far apart that it's very difficult. We'll shoot each other an email or that, but it's been more difficult, mainly because it's ironic the four of us went to 4 different states. I came down to Florida, Rooney- the one who died- went to New Jersey. Bob went to North Carolina, and Dick went to Virginia. And so, it wasn't like... I know a lot of the students stayed around Dayton, and that made it easier- oh, and then I've got Dennis in Dayton that I'm still in contact with occasionally, he's an orthopedic doctor. But it's been hard, just because with the distance, but also if you start your career you're so busy, it's hard to- and back then we didn't have the Internet, don't forget. You know, we finished in '83. And so, you know, it made it tougher. It was either phone call or letters, and letters are tough. I mean, because it's time wise, et cetera, especially when you're in your residency or when you start your practice. But, especially when there's like a reunion or something like that, we'll reach out to each other, 'Hey, you going to the reunion', and da da da. But not on a regular basis, unfortunately.

KD

All right, and then my next question is, I don't know if you've kept up to date with the Boonshoft School of Medicine, but how do you think it's changed over the years?

MO

Well, I know that is changed in terms of curriculum in that. I'll reserve the right to make comments about that once I see how it goes. You know, we had the traditional- which is you had certain classes, boom, boom, boom, boom, first year, then class the second year, and now there's more integration, which to me makes more sense in terms of the overall curriculum. I am not as aware, I mean, I look at match day and see how the classes did, but I don't know enough. I mean, I donate money, but I don't know enough about all the ins and outs there to really make a comment. I'll tell you what, you know, being 950 miles away makes it real tough. I was up there, I'm national speaker, and I did a lecture probably four years ago up in Dayton, and I had two lectures, and I went after my morning lecture, I had a rental car, and I drove around to university, toured the university, and almost didn't recognize it. I saw the Fred E. White Center- Fred E. White Center, Fredrick White, I don't know if you still call it that- when it was first built. That was my fourth year, it was still under construction. We were doing some rotations there, like we did radiology in a room that was done, but the rest of the building wasn't done. And then seeing some of the newer buildings, and then I was touring, like, some of the main buildings I didn't recognize them, because they've been redone, et cetera. It looks more student-friendly, but again, you know, I don't have enough information in terms of, you know, what they're doing, how they're doing. So, I can't say anything else.

KD

That's a-okay. Do you have any other final comments before we close out of the interview? Anything else you want to say?

MO

Yeah, if I had to do it all over again, I wouldn't change a thing. It, um... I... because of my experience at Wright State, I not only got a phenomenal medical education, but I've reached heights in my career that I would never have dreamed I would have gone to. I had pictured myself when I was in high school wanting to be a doctor that I would work, you know, in a suburb of Cleveland, you know, in a private practice by myself, and then maybe patients in the hospital, and just have a nice long career that way. And I have done so much more than that. It's- what I've accomplished my career, it's stunning. I mean, I joined a large multi-specialty group, it was a 7th largest in the country in 1986 when I moved to Florida. I became the medical director there, 165 doctors. I retired from that. I continued to practice. In 2010, I took over a health care system. I was a senior vice president/chief medical officer for a large health care system, I did that for seven years. I still continued to work part-time as a doctor, retired from that, then I continued as a hospital and palliative care physician. I was a national- I was a physician coach and consultant for a Fortune 500 company, I did that for about ten years and retired from that, and now I work part time as a hospitalist and critical care doctor and palliative care physician in Fort Myers, Florida. Just because I love to work. I don't... I'm fortunate

I've had a good career. I don't have to work. I work because I love to, because I love practicing medicine. It's as much fun today as it was back when I was working with Dr. Chambers in Union City back in 1981, you know, or at the VA with the- I'll never forget this, here's the funny thing, I remember the people I work with. I can tell you the name of the resident, Dr. Chatterjee at the VA. The intern, Dewey Mays. I mean, those people have such impacts on me and helped me become a good doctor, but I think a better person. And also, and even like Dr. Hanes, that SOB pediatrician, drove me to do things I wouldn't have tried to do, because he had confidence in me. So, it wasn't just the education I got in terms of the book education, but I learned about life, I learned about me. And so, I have nothing, absolutely nothing negative to say about Wright State. It was just a, it was a blessing. God was looking out for me when he guided me there, and like I said, I haven't regretted a single moment of my life.

KD

That is so great. I love that. So-

MO

Well, it's true. It's true. It's not bull. I mean, you know, like I told you, I will give you an unfiltered thing. I told you things I didn't like, you know? But when you look at the grand scheme of things, what was it, probably 98, 99% positive? I mean, if it was 100% positive, you'd know I'm not telling the truth.

KD

For sure.

MO

Yup.

KD

You sprinkled in just enough negative, so I know it's genuine. *[laughs]*

MO

Well, but the thing is, if it was perfect, then it's not reality, you know? And so the fact being those opportunities- and I look at, you know, what other people who've gone to Wright State have accomplished. In my class, the guy who's probably closest to what I've accomplished, Jim Augustine, the ER doctor. I mean, he was the president of American College of Emergency Physicians, he was involved, he was on a task force when the COVID thing first started. I mean, we've got, you know... and so, I know the majority of my classmates have been very successful careers as physicians. Jim and I were able to- and by the way, he and I were both quarterbacks, and so we split the

team because we both wanted to be the starting quarterback for the intramural team. Because, I mean, you know, we're that kind of driven people, and I find it ironic that he and I have had somewhat similar career paths. So, and it was born there at Wright State. It really was. You know, one other thing that I'll leave you with. My training at Wright State was so good that when I went into a residency, I was ahead of the other interns. I was ahead of them in terms of experiences, in terms of knowledge, in terms of procedures, because Wright state offered me opportunities I would have gotten nowhere else, nowhere else. There was one thing you asked about community hospitals and the community things, Wright State didn't have fellowships back then. Do you know what a fellowship is?

KD

Not really. Yeah, keep-

MO

Yeah, okay. Okay, when you come out of medical school, you go to what's called residency. Your first-year residency is called internship, but the whole thing is called residency. When you come out, if you pass the test, you're board certified in a specialty, like, for example, internal medicine. Now, if you want to be a cardiologist or nephrologist, kidney specialist or pulmonologist, lung specialist, you do what's called a fellowship, which is additional training- one, two, three years- where all you do is that. So, you'd be certified internal medicine, but then fellowship trained in say cardiology or whatever. Wright State didn't have fellowships, so as a result you had fewer physicians in training above you as a medical student, which afforded you many more opportunities to do things. When I rotated my fourth year at, say, Cleveland Clinic, and I'm in the operating room- I did orthopedic sports medicine there- at the table, there was an attending physician, there was the fellow, there was the orthopedic resident, there was an intern, and there was me. So, guess what I got to do? I got to hold a retractor, and I couldn't even see what they were doing, okay? When I went, for example, to Union City, and they were fixing a broken hip, it was me, the surgeon, and the anesthesiologist. So, I wasn't just holding retractors. I was suturing, I was helping to flush the wound out, I was helping to pound the nails. I mean, basically you get the hands-on experience, and that was true, same thing at the VA. Same thing at Wright-Patt. So, when you have those opportunities, it isn't just reading the book and saying, okay, this is how you do it, you're getting hands on experience. So, when you get to the residency program, and I'm going against people from, say, who trained at Case Western Reserve or Ohio State, or West Virginia, where they had fellows, they had seen these things. I had done them, and I had done them so many times, it was second nature to me. And so, it gave me such an advantage in residency so that instead of focusing on how to learn to do these

things, I could focus on learning other things. And so, it was just... I mean, it just gave me such an advantage, and allowed me to accomplish a lot more. So.

KD

That's great. Yeah, and it's really funny you should mention Jim Augustine, because he was my first interview for this.

MO

Oh, really?

KD

Mm hmm. And his name keeps getting sprinkled in with the '83 class, especially. Especially about football, like, you and another person talked about him playing football, so I just think that's so funny that that was like one of the impacts, other than Jim's career.

MO

Well, it was funny, because that's how we first met. During orientation we had breaks, and I had a football in my car, he had a football in his car, and we'd start tossing the football. He'd come over to my apartment. I'd come over to his apartment, we'd throw the football, catch it, et cetera. When it came time to get the intramural team together, both of us, I mean, we were on the same- we had an awesome team, but you can't have two quarterbacks.

KD

Mm hmm.

MO

And both of us wanted to be quarterback, and so we decided that we had enough people to split the team in half.

KD

Mm Hmm.

MO

Unfortunately, his team finished second. So, *[laughs]* but again, the proud thing was that it was the first time. I mean, he was, I'll be honest with you, he's such a good guy, he was just proud of our team winning, because like I said, it was the first time a graduate school had won intramural championship, because the graduate students weren't supposed to be any good in sports, and here we were, like, we were damn good at

sports. And so, but again, Jim has been, I mean, in the field. It's funny, you Google our two names and you'll see pages and pages. But with Jim, especially with American College of Emergency Physicians and all the different things, I haven't been involved in the political stuff like him. I've been involved in more of the teaching, like I said, consulting, coaching, mentoring. That's something- and actually, I didn't even mention that part. I probably should have mentioned that. The folks I worked with at Wright State, so many of them- I mentioned, you know, the residency with Chatterjee and Dewey Mays, I mentioned Al Batata, who was a phenomenal pathology guy. Dave Garvey, micro-anatomy. Dave Garvey, James Scott, and Larry Ream, they were the three micro-anatomy professors. Why do I remember their names? I don't know. You know why I remember? Because they left such an impact. But they were such good teachers, but it wasn't just teaching medicine, it was teaching...there's a difference between teaching medicine and teaching how to be a doctor, and the folks at Wright State were very good at that. They were very good. Dr. Chambers in Union City, he was phenomenal. Herb Stelley, Herb Stelley was my preceptor my first year. Same thing, same thing. Teaching, and not just how to make a diagnosis, but how to be a doctor, and in that kind of coaching and mentoring, you don't get, I don't see it. Because like I said, I'm with Florida State, and I can see, you know, some of the people, and they just focus on, 'Okay, tell me about this disease state', and 'Okay, today we're going to work on...', and not about how to take care of the patient, not about how to listen to the patient. And these guys and ladies did, and that helped me and actually drove me in a lot of ways to where I got involved in coaching and mentoring, and I've done it nationally, in different organizations, some large organizations. I mean, like Duke, University North Carolina at Chapel Hill. I mean, I've gone to some major institutions, Kaiser in California, where I've worked with them. This little shit doctor from Wright State University is now teaching people at Duke, I mean, you know? Who'd have believed it, right? But it's the same thing with Jim. I mean, here he gets to the top of emergency medicine. Again, from little Wright State University. So, it's, I mean, it's amazing. 46:15

KD

And going here, because I'm from around the area, so Wright State never... like, it was just like a thing that was always there. But doing these interviews, I'm like, "Wow, Wright State dishes out some really great doctors who are really successful".

MO

I have to tell you a funny story. I was a keynote speaker at a big conference in Las Vegas in 2015, and so I was doing one of the major talks in the afternoon. The evening keynote speaker is a guy who may have heard of John Legend, and John- the singer, John Legend- and so, he and I got to spend quite a bit of time talking together.

I don't know if you're familiar with John Legend, I mean, he's a phenomenal singer, but I don't know if you know his background. John Legend grew up in Springfield, Ohio.

KD

I did not know that.

MO

He was there when I went to medical school. When he heard I went to Wright State, he goes, "Oh, my God! Wright State? My nephew went there. What a great school," His nephew was a business major. John Legend went to an Ivy League college- Penn, he went to Penn- he got his MBA, he was working on Wall Street, and he was singing clubs at night. Okay? John Legend, I mean, we're talking... here's this guy who has achieved so much in his life, you know, making zillions of dollars of money, but he did a talk on giving back. He was... I've done 1100 talks, 1100 presentations in my career, and I can tell you a good speaker. He is the best speaker I have ever seen. He spoke for an hour and ten minutes, never used or had a note, and never said the word "uh" once, okay? His talk was about giving back, the fact being that we're all blessed, no matter how bad we think we have it, we're all blessed in some way, and we have a duty to give back. And it was just I got to spend... he and I talked for probably 20 minutes, so, I got some pictures with him in that, but just a delightful human being. But in terms of- he knew Wright State right away. When I said Wright State, I mean, he got so excited when I said I was from Wright State And it was just it, was genuine, not like, you know, I mean, but, yeah. Little Wright State University.

KD

So, you met John Legend, and he knew exactly where you went to school. That is crazy to me.

MO

Oh, no, it's a... my career, and it started with Wright State, has been- actually, I can say it started in college at Case Western Reserve- but it has opened so many doors, and like I said, here I thought I was going to end up a doctor in a suburb, you know, in a small practice, et cetera, and the people I've met... okay, as a doctor, I don't know if you're familiar with Rick Scott, he was the former governor, he's a senator in Florida, he was the president of ACA. I was his personal guest at the Super Bowl in 1997. I mean, go figure, okay? It's the people I've gotten the opportunity to meet, presidents and things like that, from various activities I've been involved in. I've got multiple pictures with Mohammed Ali, and I got to spend time with him. And because of my career in the direction my career has taken me, and it's that stuff- and here's the funny thing; I didn't seek any of this out. You know, it's not like I went looking for these things.

It's when I was first asked to be the medical director at a large group, it was because they felt, you know, well trained, they said, "you're well trained, well respected, intelligent", they said, "but you've got the personality, too". You know, the self-confidence, not cockiness, but self-confidence. And the, "you do what's right". And, yeah, it's like, well, it's where I learned that. You know, that was one of the other things that the Dean told us the first day; "Do the right thing". He said, "Even if the right thing is not the popular thing, you do the right thing. You always do the right thing. Look out for the patient's best interest. If you look out for the patient's best interest, I don't care who you upset, you're doing the right thing". So, that's what I've always tried to focus on, what's right for the patient. You know, and so, I mean, it's been a good credo, but it also led to all these other things. And so, it's like what I tell my wife, I said, "It's a hell of a ride. It's been a hell of a ride". And she said, "Well, when are you going to stop doing it?" You know, I mentioned I've retired three times. Each time a retired, it was like, okay, she would say, "What are you going to do next?" I said, "I'll wait. God will point me in a direction", and every time he did. The last one was the most ironic. I worked my last shift in Pensacola as a hospitalist. It was during COVID. I was working in the ICU. I got back, I had to drive back to Fort Myers. I got back at 8:30 at night, and my wife said- and I was exhausted physically, mentally. It was just horrible, it was over Christmas, and new Year's. So, she said, "What are you going to do next?" She said, "Are you finally going to quit?" and I said, "I don't know. I'll wait. God will tell me". Less than 12 hours later, less than 12 hours later, I had two emails, one from the CEO and one from the COO of a large health care system down here and asked me to come to work for them. They had heard I retired from Pensacola, they knew me from my administrative role in the past, and asked me to come work. Less than 12 hours. I did not call them and ask them for a job. I mean, it's like, "Well, somebody's guiding you". So, I don't know when the rides going to be over, but I've sure enjoyed it. I sure did but.

KD

Yeah. For sure. All right, well, that's all the questions I have. Do you have any questions for me about this? About my program?

Mo

Yeah. What... now you're putting together... is this for the 50th anniversary, or what is this all going to be?

KD

Yes, so this is for the 50th anniversary, I'm working with the liaison from the Boonshoft School of Medicine to compile all this and use it for the eventual 50th anniversary, so right now I'm just interviewing, I have around 15 people I'm interviewing between the

classes '80 to '83, and doing what we just did, transcribing it, and then it will eventually go into the university archive.

MO

Oh, nice. Who else are you talking to in the class of '83, out of curiosity? Can you tell me?

KD

Um, so, I talked to Jim Augustine, I talked to Kris Brickman-

MO

Oh, I was gonna say, he's the guy. I was just gonna tell you when you were talking about different people in the class. He was a wrestler at Ohio State and majored in culinary arts.

KD

Really? Well, he had he told me all about his cooking class that he had.

MO

Oh my God. Let me tell you what he did, and I apologize because I forgot this. When we started our freshman year, he made it a point that once a week, he would cook a meal and he would invite five to eight people. And he would cook a meal and he made- the first time in my life I ever had baklava. And he did not go by buy baklava, he made it homemade with each layer, and his baklava was ten different layers. You know how much work that is? I found that out after the fact, because I've gotten into cooking. I mean, it was phenomenal. The guy was a phenomenal chef. But here he was, he was a wrestler, he went to Ohio State on a wrestling scholarship, and ended up majoring in culinary arts. Not exactly what you'd expect a wrestler to be majoring in.

KD

And not what you expect a doctor to be majoring in, but he is also very successful. Like, yeah, I was talking to his assistant to schedule this and he's working with Toledo, like, University of Toledo, and I was-

MO

Yeah.

KD

It was just impressive. I've mostly talked to the class of 83 at this moment. You guys are just phenomenal people.

MO

Yeah, we've done real well. I haven't- I haven't been able to follow Kris's career as closely, but I know he's accomplished a hell of a lot.

KD

Mm hmm.

MO

Now, who else, did you get anybody else from '83?

KD

Not in '83, no. Just you three.

MO

That's, um, you picked three interesting ones. I'll tell you.

KD

That is for sure, and that's what I'm finding out. You know, the people who are wanting to do these interviews, you know they have good stories, because they want their voices heard. So, I'm really excited. Especially, like, to get more into the first class.

MO

Yeah.

KD

I think that would be fun, but overall, I mean, my... I'm kind of like, I don't want to say the black sheep. But most of my family, the majority is, like, medical students. Like, my mom is a respiratory therapist, and my brother's going to be a physician's assistant-

MO

Okay.

KD

So, I kind of went, like, the academia, um, museums and archives is what my degree will be in.

MO

Okay.

KD

So, it kind of like meshes my two worlds, because I'm very familiar with, like, medicine and hospitals, and so doing it in this way I think is super cool for me.

MO

Oh, yeah. I'll tell you what, the ones I'd be interested in, I want to see the class at '80, because they were the trailblazers. I mean-

KD

Mm hmm.

MO

Yeah, see, when we got there in '83, we were the fourth class. So, the class of '80 was finishing up, so we had a little bit of interaction with them, but they were great resources for us. '82 was a great group. Who in '82 are you doing?

KD

I don't know, I can't... I haven't pulled up my list yet. There's... '83 has been the most responsive towards anything I'm doing, but hopefully I get some, like, '81, '82. So.

MO

Well, you got Gary, is it Gary LaCroix? He was the black student who... God, he was president of the medical society, I think he's active in government, what's his name? He's actually working for the university now, Gary... [*LeRoy*]

KD

That name sounds familiar, I feel like-

MO

I think it's La Croix, if I'm not mistaken. Another guy, John Dutro, he was a year ahead. He was good. Two years ahead was Sean, um, what was Sean's last name? He was very helpful to our class. He would come into the gross anatomy lab, as a third year, when he had a day off and just help. Like, what the hell you doing? I mean, enjoy your day off, because your third year is so tough, but he would come in help. I mean, it was... I mean, you don't see that, you just don't see that. And so, when somebody does that, it's like, wow, it leaves a real-

KD

Yeah, the community aspect is so huge to me during this project, because it's not just, like, you didn't just associate with the class of '83. Like, it was all four of these classes that you were interacting with.

MO

Yeah, and you know, when I told you- and I can't underestimate- one of the best decisions I made was when I went around halfway through my second year and started calling, making appointments, to meet with some of the students a year or two ahead of me to ask about where it's good places to do rotations. You know, because I wanted to make the rotations fulfilling for me. I really, although I was interested in internal medicine, I also wanted to have opportunities to see other areas, but I wanted to go places where I not only would see, but that I could do, and that I could have a good experience and, it was, turned out and, like I said, turned off phenomenal. I am so glad I did that. Because I had, you had six rotations your third year and all six were excellent. I mean, it couldn't have been better. Locations, as well as the people I worked with. I mean, I was very, very pleased. So, yeah. You know, Wright State, I'll always have a soft spot in my heart for Wright State. It's funny because, Case, where I went to undergrad, big school, you know, internationally known, and that was like, 'big deal'. Yeah, I went to college there and I got a couple degrees there. But Wright State, you know, that's my heart.

KD

Mm. Hmm. That's so good. And you have answered- I didn't even have to ask you all of the questions I had prepared, because you, like, hit it all.

MO

Okay, good. Well, go look at your list real quick if there's anything else, because I got a couple of minutes. So.

KD

No, I think we're all good. We hit everything I wanted to hit. So, we might be in contact again, I'm going keep preparing these interviews. You're more than welcome to review your interview before it gets sent out into the world. If there's anything like, you're like, 'Ooh, maybe I shouldn't say that', which I think your interview is fine, but that's up to you.

MO

Well, when I said 'shit', I shouldn't have said that.

KD

[Laughs] That's totally good.

MO

Yeah, and the thing about the gross anatomy professor? I don't care. I mean, because that was common knowledge in our class. I mean, it was. But talk about making lemonade out of lemons-

KD

Mm hmm.

MO

The university really made lemonade out of that. They really did. It was- yeah, our class suffered as a result of it, but I don't think there's a permanent harm. But what came out of it was good. That was good, and I'll tell you what else it did is it enhanced the reputation of the school, because I could tell subsequent students or interviewees that, 'Hey, look, you know, we did have some issues and we went to administration and guess what? Administration didn't say, "Hey, we've done it this way for one 100 years", you know? They said, 'Okay, let's look into it", and they did something. I mean, that just, I can't see that ever happening at Case Western Reserve or Ohio State. I just can't. Maybe it would, but I doubt it. I doubt it, especially not that promptly.

KD

Yeah, I think that is such a key point in, like, what makes Wright State different. Just, again, like, listening and being able to change because they're a new school.

MO

But it wasn't just that it was a new school. I think that was a big part, but I also think it was because it was community based. Being community based, instead of being university based, you know, that university where- when you think a university, you think of a rigid structure. With community, you think of something that's a little more- I don't want to say softer, but more malleable, more changeable, more flexible- flexible is the word I want, and, you know, wanting to get better. Wanting to get better, and you can't beat that. I mean, you got a place that wants to get better. It's like, you know, because if you don't, as time goes on, if you don't get better you're getting worse, because everybody else is getting better.

KD

Mm hmm.

MO

So, anyway, yeah, I'm very, very pleased. If I have a regret, it's that I haven't been as involved. but it's mainly because of distance. I mean, I'm never there, I don't have family there, I don't have anything. So, I've been back- since I graduated, I came back for a recruiting thing twice in the mid 80's when I was in residency, and I came back for a lecture in... what did I say, four or five years ago, and that's the only time since 1986 that I've been back. So, I'll make it back there sometime. I will.

KD

Yeah, eventually.

MO

Yeah, I don't know. Some of the reunions, it's been tough because we had things happen with some of the reunions that, like, I had the one I was really sad I missed was the 25th reunion, my mother-in-law died the weekend before, so, anyway, I couldn't go to that one. But subsequent ones I guess we've got coming up will our 40 year, which is next year, 40, so. That one I will definitely try to make, or at least one day, fly in for one day, or, you know, for one of the get togethers, just to say hello and to see people and see if I'm the only one who doesn't have any hair left. But, yeah, it'd be good to see those people again. You know what I really wish, I wish- but at 40 years it'd be real difficult- to see some of the old the professors and the old... you know, because most of them have died. Most of them died, Dr. Chambers, I followed with him a long time, and then he developed Alzheimer's and died. And I know that some of the others have died, I've seen it in the newsletters, and so never having had... I feel bad never having had the opportunity to go back and say thank you. Dr. Chambers I was able to do it, because I would call him and kept in contact with him. But in terms of some of the others, just to tell them thank you. You don't realize- it's sort of like the movie, It's a Wonderful Life. No, you don't realize the impact you have on people, and little things, things you said. I mean, John Gillen, when he got up there- and John's dead, but John was the dean, and- or not John Gillen, but Beljan, Dean Beljan. He was our dean, you know, he's dead, you know, but just that first 30-minute discussion, the comments he made that still resonate with me today, what is it, 44 years later. It's just amazing, but... oh, well.

KD

Oh, well.

MO

Well, Kirsten, it's been a pleasure. If you have any other questions, give me a holler, but I wish you the best. You take care, and I hope your career is rewarding as mine has been.

KD

I hope so, too. I really want to meet John Legend.

MO

I mean, you know, meeting, but not just meeting, but being able to spend time and talk to people like that. Like I said, Muhammad Ali, too. Among many, many, many others. A little guy from Wright State University, I mean, come on. Go figure.

KD

You know, it's just so great. It's so great that you can experience all of that.

MO

Yeah, and I'll give most- I won't give full credit, but I'll give the vast majority of credit to Wright State. Because you know what Wright State did, if I had to summarize? Wright State helped position me to follow a career that I never would have dreamed was possible.

KD

Yeah.

MO

And I mean that sincerely. I would never have imagined my career being anything like this. And, you know, the funny thing is?

KD

What?

MO

It's still not over.

KD

It's still not over, and maybe by your fourth retirement, but we'll see.

MO

Everybody keeps saying, 'When is your next retirement?', and I said, 'I keep doing things as long as it's fun.'

KD

Yeah.

MO

You know, as long as it's fun, and I'm still good at it. And so, when people said- because I just had my annual evaluation- and people said 'Oh, you're still great at it'. So, it's still fun, so it's a good combination. But when I'm either- when the skills start to slip or it's not fun, I'm done. I'm done. I've had a hell of a ride. Because if I think about it, I've spent more of my life as a doctor than not.

KD

Mm hmm.

MO

So, it really energizes me. It's... like I said, here I live in beautiful South Florida, it's going to be 74 today, if it wasn't for my back I'd have been out playing golf this morning with my buddies, and probably winning a little bit of money. I mean, life is good. So, but anyway. Well, listen, I won't keep you, I know you've got a lot of to do and I don't want to waste your weekend. So, but it's been a pleasure, Kirsten.

KD

Absolutely. Thank you so much for talking to me, and on short notice, too.

MO

Oh, my pleasure. Like I said, it worked out good, because this coming week is real hell, because I've got to work, and between work and then a golf tournament Tuesday, and people coming in from out of town from Wednesday evening through the weekend. So, this just worked out perfect. So, I'm glad it worked out for you

KD

Yeah, I'm glad, too. So, thank you so much. You'll be hearing from me, I'm sure, eventually. But until then-

MO

That's fine and stay warm, okay?

KD

I'll try. All right, see you later

MO

Bye-bye.