An Interview With

MRS. IOLA (HENRY) BOSWELL

March 8, 1979

Interviewed by

JOHN JONES

&

MARTHA MONAGHAN

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Interviewee: Iola (Mrs. Henry) Boswell
Interviewer: John Jones and Martha Monaghan

Title: An interview with Iola (Mrs. Henry) Boswell, March 8, 1979 / interviewed by John Jones and Martha Monaghan

JONES: This is John Jones with the Mississippi Department of Archives and History. I'm about to interview Mrs. Henry Boswell, with me is Mrs. Martha Monaghan, with the Mississippi Lung Association. We're at Mrs. Boswell's home on Cedar Hill Drive in Jackson. Mrs. Boswell can you give us some information about your background, where you were born?

BOSWELL: I was born in Oxford, Mississippi. My father was J. M. Saunders. He was a student at - one of the early students at Ole Miss, until his parents died and then he had to leave school and make a living for his two sisters. So we lived on a farm out from Oxford. We didn't have a school there. We had a, I guess, what you would call now, it would be a private school because it was a school connected with the church, the Hopewell Presbyterian Church. Of course my father was an elder and very active worker in that church. We had a little log schoolhouse there next to the church and all the neighborhood children, all the children that belonged in the church went there to school. Mrs. Flora McFarland who was one of the very finest people that ever lived, she was our teacher and took us all through as far as any of us could go. When we finished, we finished the course of study that would graduate us from high school, but you see it was not a high school, so we had no diploma, no graduation. I wanted to - my father wanted to put me in at that time, and I had to have some sort of high school background in order to enter I. I. & C. So Mrs. Flora taught me, she coached me all one summer and prepared me to enter I. I. & C. by examination. I think I was the only - I think I was the first person that ever entered by examination.

JONES: I. I. & C.?

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BOSWELL: It was Industrial Institute and College, what it was then. It's the Mississippi College University for Women now.

JONES: Ah, yes.

BOSWELL: But it was then Industrial Institute and College. So I went there in 19... let me see, 1907 I guess it was. And then I had a graduation in 1909. The last naughty class, no mind.

JONES: Could you tell us something about your father? He was a member of the state Legislature, wasn't he?

BOSWELL: Yes, yes he served two terms in the state Legislature and was very active in county politics, you might say, of Lafayette County. He held no office or anything, but he was an organizer. He went all over Lafayette County organizing Sunday Schools. His Sunday afternoons were spent visiting these schools and teaching classes. He was a very devout Christian and a very wonderful person, if I do say so.

JONES: What was his occupation?

BOSWELL: He was a farmer. He had a nice big farm there and had several tenants on it, and he always made it a rule he'd tell his tenants, he'd say, "All right when you come to work for me, I want you to leave it in better shape than when you came." So, that was a rule.

JONES: Yes.

BOSWELL: When my father died one of the old tenants, old nigger man came to the house wanted to speak to Miss Iola - that's my name - and I went out to speak to him and he says, "Miss Iola, Captain Jim sure was a christianized

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gentleman." So I've always treasured that remark. It was so thoroughly from his heart.

JONES: When did you meet Dr. Boswell?

BOSWELL: Well, I met him when I went to Laurel to teach. When I graduated from I. I. & C., Mr. Watkins, the superintendent of the schools in Laurel was hunting for teachers. So, by some chance, he seemed to feel like I would fill the bill. So I was engaged by him to teach in Laurel. I taught history in the fifth and sixth grades the first year and I taught on in one place and another whenever I was needed until I wound up teaching English in the high school. I taught there - oh, I don't know how many years. Mr. Charlie Neal was the principal of the school that I taught under. His son, Dr. Charles Neal, is a physician here in Jackson now. We often speak of those old days. So, I taught there until I met Dr. Boswell. Dr. Boswell, he was a young physician just starting his practice there and the Health Department called on him because they were having a diphtheria epidemic, and he had to go around examining children's throats in the school. He came to my class and the children teased me after, saying "He wasn't looking at my throat. He was looking at you." Well, of course that was just all fun, but that was where I met him, and we were in love from then on.

JONES: Were you married in Laurel?

BOSWELL: Married in 1910, and they had a rule that teachers in Laurel schools were not supposed to be married. So, our marriage was kept kind of a secret for a while. When they got in a tight for a teacher they called me to come back, so I did. We were married in Livingston, Alabama. We kept it as quiet as we could, and I went from there on to Chicago to the University of Chicago to take some

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special summer work. Then I came back from there we decided to tell my father about our wedding, before I came back down to live in Laurel. My husband had a difficult time because he had an illness that incapacitated him for a while. He took his work so hard. He was a surgeon, and he took that work so seriously, that he just wore himself out. So when he had this little breakdown, they gave him, they put him on the State Board of Health health campaign with hookworm disease. I was his microscopist during that time that he went all over the state testing children for hookworm disease. We spent several years doing that and then he was made the first full time county health officer, I believe in the state, when he was made county health officer in Prentiss County. We stayed there for three years, our first child was with us then, she was a baby and our second child was born in Booneville.

JONES: It is true that - was it around this time that Dr. Boswell borrowed $11,000 to go to El Paso to get treated for tuberculosis?

BOSWELL: Yes, yes, when I mentioned his breakdown that's what I was referring to because he developed, they saw that he had tuberculosis. So he went to El Paso and took the treatment out there and that's when he made the resolution that he was going to start the tuberculosis sanatorium in Mississippi if it was possible, and he did. Nobody ever worked any harder in getting it started than he did. Of course you know he just had a tiny little - the Legislature, they didn't think much about it so they didn't give him very much. Of course as he kept on and started the building that started the institution down there. Why, he had a wonderful way with people. He could make you understand something that nobody else could. I've laughed many times about how I - I was postmaster down there for 15 years, and the people would come through

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the hall going down to his office just leaning on somebody and weeping, "Oh, I've got TB. I just can't live long. This is the last of me." They'd go down there like that and maybe an hour later they'd come back out laughing and joking everything was just fine. I've seen that happen so many times down there. So he had a way - I've often said he could cuss you out and make you like it, or he could encourage you if you needed it.

JONES: What was your experience in El Paso like? Did you go out there with him?

BOSWELL: What?

JONES: What was your experience in El Paso like? Did you go with him?

BOSWELL: Well, I was at home. I was with my father. Now my step-mother died, just about the time that Doc had to go to El Paso or did go and she died with a baby in her arms, and that baby is Mrs. John Armstrong in Hazlehurst. Helen Saunders she was. So when my step-mother died, there was a six-month old baby to be taken care of. So that's where I went. That's where I stayed during that time that he was in El Paso, taking care of my little baby sister.

JONES: Yes, at the beginning of when Dr. Boswell went to the Sanatorium - I heard it, I've read that Governor Bilbo had a lot to do with the beginning of him getting the money.

BOSWELL: He did, he and Doc were good friends. Of course, I didn't always agree with Mr. Bilbo, but still we were good friends.

JONES: How did Dr. Boswell know Governor Bilbo?

BOSWELL: Well, I don't know, I just couldn't, I couldn't tell you that. I expect that some of the other members of the family could

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tell you about that better than I could, I was busy raising babies. So now Helen, my oldest daughter, she has all of this right at her fingertips. She has pictures, she has newspaper articles. She worked for the Daily News for a good many years. She can tell you more in five minutes than I can tell you in a month, because she remembers it all so well. She knows it. So, if you really want some more information, she's the one to go to. I've been trying to get her to write a story of her daddy's life. I just begged her to do it. She's quite a gifted writer, but I haven't so far gotten her to do it. She's too busy now keeping, running Dave - Dave, Dr. Dave Dear's office, her son's office, she keeps busy at that.

JONES: But have you always heard that Governor Bilbo did a lot towards the opening of the Sanatorium?

BOSWELL: He did. He was Doc's friend and stood by him right on the whole time. And he had some - he did some good fighting for it.

JONES: Yes, he was a fighter.

BOSWELL: Because I think he often said himself, he stumped the state from Possum Trot to Vinegar Bend. Well, he did and Doc did the same thing when he tried to establish the University Hospital here. He stumped the state from Possum Trot to Vinegar Bend, and was successful in getting that. He was, I expect, one of the key figures in establishing the University Hospital as a training school.

JONES: What do you remember of the early days before Doc got the million dollar, the two million dollar grant, from the Legislature from 1917 to 19...

BOSWELL: Well, he just struggled along. Of course, during the Depression, we couldn't even pay the nurses. We couldn't

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pay the help or anything. Wiley Keyes, a banker in Magee, was just wonderful in helping us out. He and Doc were good friends and they had the same birthday, by the way. They always played golf together on the 26th of March, on his birthday. He stood by us and helped us out. He was really a wonderful friend. It was a struggle there for the first few years. There were times when we weren't right certain where the next meal was coming from, but we made it all right.

JONES: Where did you live during those years?

BOSWELL: When we first went there, Doc went there in the early part of 1917. Well, I was still in Booneville and I came down in the beginning of 1918, and they were building the house for us then, a big old brown two-story house, that was the original home built, but they were in the process of building it. So, we stayed at the hotel in Magee for several months until they finished that house.

JONES: Dr. Boswell, I've read that he was always with a black man named Julius Buchanan.

BOSWELL: Oh yes, old Julius.

JONES: What can you tell us about Julius?

BOSWELL: Well, I can tell you a lot about Julius. He was not only Doc's right hand man, but he took care of my garden. Did everything around my place. I used to have such a time with him trying to get him to grow vegetables and flowers, but he couldn't. He was not very adaptable when it came to that. He was slow about learning, but he did the best he could. He really tried. Great big old thing, over six feet tall, as black as ... just couldn't be any blacker, shining black. He was out in the back yard one day cutting weeds and I had gone to a lot of trouble, I had taken the

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children and had gone walking in the woods around the Sanatorium, and I'd gotten a little Jack-in-the-Pulpit, a plant, a wild plant I found out in the woods. So, I brought it home and I set it out very carefully, and I was just so careful to put it where I thought it would be safe, where it would grow, and that rascal came along and cut weeds and whacked it down, and I caught him just as he made the whack that brought it down. And I was standing at the back door, I said, "Julius, you black rascal, won't you ever learn the difference between weeds and flowers?" And he just grinned from ear to ear and his old white teeth shining and he looked at my cook who was standing by there and he said, "Ain't Miss Iola pretty when she gets mad?" I'll never forget that because we all laughed about it. Didn't do any good.

JONES: Well, he and Dr. Boswell did most of the work in the early days.

BOSWELL: They did! Julius - he didn't hesitate to do anything. He would even change the bed pans and did all sorts of jobs, the most disagreeable jobs around the hospital. He always did it willingly and he tried to make friends with the patients and did - they all just thought the world of him. Of course, we didn't have but a very few patients then. Mrs..... - I can't think of name now, a dear little lady who was the first patient. She's dead now, but she lived for many long years. She'd come back in the spring celebration when we'd have the Henry Boswell Society, you know, old patients coming back. Just like coming back to a college. It's just more fun than anything. I can't call her name, just a minute, it'll come to me, but she lived out from Magee. She'd come to those meetings. She love to come. She loved being the first patient.

JONES: Well, Dr. Boswell would work right along side of Julius, wouldn't he?

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BOSWELL: Oh yes, oh yes.

JONES: Chopping wood and cooking and everything.

BOSWELL: Doc wouldn't hesitate putting his hand to anything. He was determined to get that thing going. His determination was remarkable. He accomplished more than anybody else could have done I think in the amount of time.

JONES: Do you recall when the First World War broke out, when Dr. Boswell tried to enlist in the Army Medical Core?

BOSWELL: I don't remember the circumstances about that, as I said I was too busy with babies at that time to remember what was going on. I know that he wanted to go. He wanted to be a part of it. Of course, he was connected with the railroad. He was a railroad surgeon for many years.

JONES: But he was never...he was rejected on basis of his tuberculosis.

BOSWELL: Yes, during the big, the flood, let's see, what year was it when we had the big Delta flood?

JONES: 1927.

BOSWELL: Yes, the flood. He spent days and nights and weeks up there helping out with that. Never knew when to expect him home because they used him to help keep things going during that flood.

JONES: He went to Greenville or just up into the Delta.

BOSWELL: Yes, I don't know where he made his headquarters particularly, but he was right in the middle of that flood area.

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JONES: Yes, well do you remember a patient at the Sanatorium named Rad Reed?

BOSWELL: Oh, yes! Rad Reed was one of the most remarkable patients we ever had. I have some letters from him. He would write me letters. "To our Dear Doctor's Beautiful Queen," and so forth. Just the most flowery thing you ever saw in your life. I got two or three of them stuck back somewhere that I prize, because Rad Reed was a rare kind. He was just a ray of sunshine down there, the whole time he was there. Doc depended on him to keep patients in a good frame of mind.

JONES: Did he have tuberculosis?

BOSWELL: Yes, and other troubles too. He had a lot of other troubles. I don't know how he managed to live as long as he did, but he was a wonderful guy.

JONES: Where was he from?

BOSWELL: His brother lives in Oxford, and I suppose Rad was, I guess he was an Oxford boy. I really don't know, I can't give you that information. I just don't know.

JONES: Do you remember his newspaper that he published?

BOSWELL: Oh, yes.

JONES: The Thermometer?

BOSWELL: The Sanitorium Pulse.

JONES: Oh, was it the Pulse?

BOSWELL: That was what we called it, The Sanatorium Pulse. I have a number of copies of that, and I expect there are a number

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of them also in the Archives down there. I'm sure there are. My daughter, Helen, has many copies of it. I even wrote an article or two for it one time.

JONES: What kind of things did he include in the paper?

BOSWELL: Well, just anything that was amusing, that would encourage and give you a lift, cause you to laugh. Rad Reed could find it somewhere. He was the most remarkable person I ever saw.

JONES: Was he a gifted writer?

BOSWELL: Yes, oh yes, he was. He was a wizard with words.

JONES: There were two papers that were published at the Sanatorium, one, the Pulse and the other, the Thermometer. Do you remember that one?

BOSWELL: I don't know about - I think they, I think Mrs. Alexander, the head nurse, I think she had something to do with that little paper that the patients, themselves, but I never had anything to do with that. I really don't know that much about it.

JONES: Tell us about Dr. Boswell's connection with the Preventorium.

BOSWELL: Well, that was something that I don't think he was ever just real enthusiastic about. He was anxious to do something for the children of TB patients, and he worked and helped to get the Preventorium established.
(PHONE RINGS - TAPE INTERRUPTION)
... I worked for two or three years with the auxillary of the Medical Association to get people interested in the Preventorium and that was our project for two or three years, for about three years was helping out in getting people

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interested in the Preventorium, providing games and all sorts of entertainment for the children. So many of the doctors' wives visited the Preventorium. It was a growing concern for a good many years. Mr. Robert Kennington, Sr., I went to see him and talked to him about the children. Most of them were children of poor families and didn't have much of ... they had nothing. So he donated a certain amount as long as he lived for the Preventorium. Of course, it serve its purpose just like the Sanatorium served its purpose. When they had to disban the Sanatorium and decided to give it up as an institution, the children laughed at me. They said, "Mother, you just act as if somebody died or something." She said, "Daddy did what he went there to do. He went there to cure tuberculosis in the state. Well, he pretty nearly did. There are very few cases of it in the state and there's no need for the Sanatorium any more. He did what he started out to do. So, what are you fussing about?" We're so glad that it has been put to such good use, what it's being used for now.

JONES: But the Preventorium was never one of Dr. Boswell's main concerns?

BOSWELL: Well, he was very interested in it. He was very careful to see that they had the proper person there in charge of it. Miss Effie Clark was there for, I guess, the longest of anybody. Then we had one lady from Jackson. Mrs... I can't think of her name now. She's dead now, but Mrs. Clark was the main one who ran the Preventorium, and made a very good, a fine, success of it, I think. She's retired now, living in Hattiesburg. I don't know what they're using it for, if anything or not now. I just don't know.

JONES: Haven't heard.

BOSWELL: Because I haven't kept up, you see I've been an invalid for

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several months and had to have this operation for my hip. See I'm walking with a plastic hip now. Just now getting to where I can walk. I've had to be a patient for a good long while.

JONES: When was the Preventorium started? Was it right at the first years of the Sanatorium?

BOSWELL: No, it was... Now that's something else my daughter could give you the figures on it exactly. I don't know when it was opened. I can no longer remember. I don't have a good memory as you'll soon find out.

JONES: I think it's a very good memory. Were the patients admitted to the Preventorium mostly children who were under-nourished or under-weight or not necessarily TB victims?

BOSWELL: And children who had probably been exposed to tuberculosis in their families. That was the idea, that they were to build up so that they would be able to resist it and wouldn't ever be a patient themselves, and that was the idea. They were taught to... and they were not petted or pampered in any way. They went with just as little clothing as they could because they wanted them to exercise and get used to the outdoors, because so many children who did come were pampered. Children who, oh, their parents had just babied them about everything and Doc wanted to get them out of that. That's not what they needed. They needed to learn how to meet the world and how to live in a physical way where they could stand the weather and were not subject to bad colds and things. They were not petted at all. They were taught how to look after themselves and to play games that would call for their own ingenuity. I think Mrs. Clark did a marvelous job with those children at the Preventorium. Taught them -- a lot of them came with bad habits and the way she would teach them not to, and now that's another thing if I had one of

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those old copies of the Sanatorium Pulse, I wrote a little article on Mrs. Brame. That's the lady whom I was trying to remember. She was good at teaching them how to overcome those bad habits they had. One little boy, I remember, he had a bad habit of sucking his two fingers. Well, she made him sit and suck those two fingers for a solid hour, and he never sucked them again, that cured him. She had a wonderful way of handling the children, about things like that. They were not babied, but they were taught to look out for themselves, stand on their own feet.

JONES: Well, a main feature in the rehabilitation program was recreation, wasn't it?

BOSWELL: Yes.

JONES: Getting outside...

BOSWELL: They spent most of their time outside. They had a lot of fun. They had the Medical Auxillary and other people to contribute the swings and all sorts of play things that were put out in the backyard and they could build, the little girls could build doll houses. Well, you'd see them out there and you'd think that's the happiest bunch of children you ever saw because they were just as happy as they could be.

MONAGHAN: Mrs. Boswell, was the main building built, was the first construction on the grounds?

BOSWELL: Yes, yes, that was well, of course, there was dining hall built. No, the first building, I believe, was one of the county places. I'm not sure if it was Hinds County or Lincoln County. I'm not sure, but there was a county building built before the main building was put up.

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MONAGAN: I wanted to ask you to tell the story of Dr. Boswell and his love of golf.

BOSWELL: Well, of course, that was a big joke. He would watch the boys playing golf and make fun of them all the time, following a little old ball around all over the place. Just little kids stuff, he'd tell them all that. They'd say, "All right, Doc, we're going to get you into it yet." They'd keep on begging him to come out and play a game and he'd just absolutely refuse to do it. Finally when Mike Connor was running for Governor, he was so fond of Mike Connor that he said, "Well, if Mike Connor is elected governor, I'll play golf with you." So he was, and he started then and was sold on it from then on. He never missed a chance to play golf. He loved it.

MONAGHAN: Was it true he put mercurochrome on the golf ball when it snowed?

BOSWELL: That was on March 26th when we had snow on the ground, and he and Wiley Keyes who had the same birthday. There was an agreement that Wiley Keyes' wife would have the golfers to supper one time, and I'd have them the next time. So that particular time it was my turn to have them for supper and there was snow on the ground, and they did, they painted their balls red so they could see them. They played golf right on with the snow on the ground. Of course, it wasn't a very deep snow but it was enough so that it was a little bit troublesome.

JONES: Well, he was quite a good golfer, wasn't he, Dr. Boswell?

BOSWELL: Yes, he was. For an amateur he did quite well. They have the Magee-Sanatorium Golf Club that put a plaque at his grave down there that you may have seen. It's in memory of him and I liked and appreciated that very much.

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JONES: Most of the accounts that I've run across have described the Sanatorium as being a really tranquil, home-like place.

BOSWELL: It was. The Jackson Daily News writer had an article not too long ago, That I don't have, but Helen has it. He called it the "Magic Mountain."

JONES: Right, Charles Gordon.

BOSWELL: Did you see that?

JONES: Yes.

BOSWELL: That was a very typical picture of the way patients felt about the Sanatorium. They felt like it was just like going back home, old home week at college.

JONES: Did you ever contribute in any way, I'm sure you did, to the gardens and everything. I've read about the beauty of the gardens.

BOSWELL Well, no, just to keep my home place up as well as I could, to keep it attractive. There were so many children. You see, there were a whole bunch of children on the grounds, children of employees. They and my children grew up together, fussed and fumed with each other, broke each other's arms and fell out of trees and things like that. So, I was a busy person all right, but I was just trying to keep the children going. I remember one Charles Emmit Walker. Dr. Walker, who is the assistant superintendent, and he and my oldest daughter -- they played together a lot. They were about the same age. He fell out of a chinaberry tree in my back yard one day and broke his arm. I was afraid his arm was broken. I sat him down on the back door steps and called for his mother who was a nurse at the Sanatorium at the time. Mrs. Walker came, and I was so excited. I was afraid he

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was hurt, I just didn't know how badly he was hurt or anything. I was pretty excited about it and I looked over the hill and there came Mrs. Walker just calmly walking along just as if nothing had happened. She was just coming to see what had happened. What's the trouble with Charles? She walked up and bent over and looked at his arm and felt it. She, herself, was a trained nurse. She says, "Well, he has broken his arm, but it can be fixed." So she took him in the car over and had his arm set. Just as calm as if she had come over to see about what kind of flowers that we had blooming that day. Bless her heart, she's dead now.

JONES: Did you feel at home at the Sanatorium?

BOSWELL: Yes, yes I did and when we built the new house after the old house had decided it was ready to fall down. We built a new house and I took a great deal of pleasure in helping to plan that. I enjoyed living in it very much. I understand that Dr. Arp has done it over. He and his wife have done it over and made it very attractive now. They brightened it up. The hall was really not too bright a colors, the ones that I put in it, but she has really brightened it up and made it a real lovely place,so they tell me. I haven't seen it yet.

JONES: Well, all the facilities on the Sanatorium grounds were top notch for their day.

BOSWELL: I think they were. Yes, they were.

JONES: Is that Dr. Boswell's influence?

BOSWELL: Yes, of course he wanted the best of everything for his patients.

JONES: For the most part he got it, right?

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BOSWELL: Yes, he did. It was remarkable how he got that million dollar appropriation. I've heard many comments on that from different people, Dr. Guy Campbell and Red Allred also, on how the Doc would go in and tell them what was needed down there. Says, "Now it's your hospital and if we're going to stamp out tuberculosis in this state and we've go to have money to do it." They would try to put him off, you know. He said, "All right, it's your institution if you're not going to support it, okay. If you're not, I'm through with it." So, out he would walk and, of course, they gave it to him, but that was the biggest appropriation that they ever made.

JONES: That was in 1920?

BOSWELL: Yes, I believe so, yes. Now, I'm not good on dates.

JONES: I believe it was.

BOSWELL: I think that it was about that time.

JONES: Well, he definitely had a charm over the Legislature.

BOSWELL: Yes, he made friends with them. He was a friendly person and he had a very keen rare wit. You know that helps a lot in making contacts with people. It's wonderful to be able to do that. He has a daughter that is very much like him, little Mrs. Tyson that works up in the University Hospital in the Eye Department. She is so much like Doc. You never know what she is going to say next, but it is always witty and cute. She is so much like him. My son is a good deal like him, too, always full of fun and saying funny things. We used to laugh at the table when the children were young, when they were in high school together. Henry would sit on one side of the table and Neil would sit on the other side and they were eternally throwing wisecracks at each other.

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They kept the whole family and their friends that were there amused with their conversation back and forth across the table. They were so full of fun.

JONES: Well, Dr. Boswell and others I'm sure, made such an atmosphere at the Sanatorium that many people just came and even if they were ready to go home, they just stayed there at the Sanatorium.

BOSWELL: They loved it, they really did. It was more like a college, a bunch of college students that all just loved each other and had the best time together because that was the atmosphere that Doc created there. I give him credit for that because he just made them all feel like this is your home now, as long as you have to stay here. You see, they had to stay a long time to start with before they got the antibiotics and surgery going. After that, they didn't have to stay there very long, but the first patients, for the first several years, they stayed there a long time. Sometimes it would be two and three years that they would have to stay there. So, it got to be home for them. They felt that way about it.

JONES: I read in an old newspaper clipping where Dr. Boswell had gone to talk to an Optimist Club meeting in Jackson and he said, "Gentlemen, don't take yourself too seriously. Try to visualize how well the world can get along without you." Do you feel like that statement really reflects a lot of Dr. Boswell's character?

BOSWELL: Yes, it was very typical. I think that I heard him say many times that the thing that kept him humble was the fact that he knew how well the world could get along without him. He really felt that way. He was a loner. He had no visions of importance as far as he, himself, was concerned.

JONES: I've never been able to understand what he did to further the

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fight agains tuberculosis. I mean, other than creating such an atmosphere down there. Could you tell us what he did medically?

BOSWELL: He engaged the very finest employee help that he could possibly find, I mean doctors. People on his staff were people who were expert. When it came to surgery, he got the finest surgeons that there were. Dr. Harder, who was a surgeon there for several years. He is now, my goodness, he's got a name that is way up in the lights, he's in Louisville, Kentucky now. I suppose he is one of the most famous surgeons there and he was with us for quite a while.
Dr. Al Meena was a surgeon for a while with us. He was able to command the finest of help. He had, his X-ray Department was excellent. H. B. Terry, Hollis Terry, he handled that for as long as Doc was there. He has just retired since Doc's death. He had a wonderful X-ray Department. All of that worked together. Now, I am going to suggest to both of you that you get Helen, corner her and talk to her or something because she can tell you so much more than I can. As I've said so much of my time was spent raising babies. I didn't have as much to do with the place as Helen did, besides she has a wonderful way of expressing herself. She is much more valuable than I am and she knows how to express things. I'm going to go run and check things in the kitchen a minute. You will have to excuse me for being slow. I have to move slowly. (Pause). How in the world he had time to think as much as he did about what the children were doing, but it beat anything in the world to me how he could handle those youngsters so much better than I could. I did for them and fed them and loved them and all that, but he knew how to train them better than I did. Now, of course, we had two girls. The first two were girls and then our son came along, then two more girls. They were just like all kids. They had their little love affairs. Oh, my, they would be so much in love. Doc, you would think that he paid no attention to them, but when

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ever one of those girls was interested in a boy, he went right straight and found out everything about that boy. He knew exactly what sort of kid he was, who his folks were and what sort of person he was. If he thought that they weren't the kind that he wanted his daughter to be interested in, he had the slickest way of ending it. Sometimes he would say, "Bring So-and-So out to dinner with us at such and such a time." You know that people will show up at our table that way what kind of person that they are. They will show up where they wouldn't otherwise. He could with just little hints and things he could turn them against a person that he knew was not worthy. My sister in Oxford after my father's death, well even before his death, for that matter, she was interested - they were living out from Oxford on the farm and she got interested in a preacher's son around there and he was just as sorry as he could be. He wasn't worth anything, but she was very much interested. I went to visit with them and saw the situation. I came back home and I said, "Doc, my sister is getting too much interested in that sorry preacher's son. I think that we ought to do something about it." He said, "All right." He handed me a bill and said to send her the money and come down here and visit us. So she did and he invited this boy to come and spend the weekend and eat at our table. I never heard of him anymore after that. That just wound it up completely. She saw him in the meteor of our family and saw what was going to happen. How he showed up, what he was, just by little things that he would say and do. So that was the end of that. So, he had that way of handling his children that I thought was remarkable.

JONES: Well, not only his children, but his patients too, right?

BOSWELL: Yes, yes, of course, that is where he learned it, was having patients because he knew how to handle them. I've seen a many of them go into his office weeping and wailing and come out laughing.

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JONES: He was said to be one of the "four-minutemen." I never had heard that before. Do you know what that was?

BOSWELL: I think that had something to do with the time that he helped out with the flood situation up in the Delta. I think it was. I know they called on him for, he spent two or three nights without sleep to get that thing going. I don't know whether that is it or not, but I rather think that is where that originated.

JONES: How long did he spend in the Delta during 1927, during the Flood?

BOSWELL: I don't know, but it seemed like to me an awful long time because I was home by myself with the babies. I just don't remember how long, but he made several trips up there and he would stay two or three days at a time when he went.

JONES: Was he in Greenville or up on the water or was he in Vicksburg helping with the masses of people?

BOSWELL: Well, I don't know. I think that he was all over. I think that he went to several different places. They had him organizing some way of handling the situation and I think that he was helping to do that. He just went one place to another.

JONES: Did he take his staff up there with him?

BOSWELL: No, no he didn't take his staff with him because they were needed to keep things going at home.

JONES: Well, tell me about the annual homecoming programs that you had there at the Sanatorium.

BOSWELL: That was the patients themselves. They organized that and called it the Henry Boswell Society, that's what they called

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it. They would have a certain little fee for membership, very small and usually Mrs. Butler or whoever his secretary was would send out notices that we were going to have this get-together of the Henry Boswell Society. So, they would come in and all the cooks and everybody in the kitchen would fix up a big meal and they would have a meeting in the chapel. They made a very formal thing out of it. The different patients would tell their experiences and how glad they were to get back home again. They just made a big to-do out of it. It was lots of fun for many years. Of course, it sort of died down after his death.

MONAGHAN: It would make him very happy to know that the Lung Association had honored him in the Thoracic Society with the Annual Dr. Henry Boswell Lecture.

BOSWELL: Well, fine, I think that's wonderful. It does me so much good. I told the children, I said, I don't think that I ever turn a corner in Jackson before I got sick with this hip business, I would walk so much, I would walk five or six miles and think nothing of it and I met people, some of them I never even knew their names, but we would stop and talk and I hardly ever turned a corner that I wouldn't meet somebody that used to be at the Sanatorium because there weren't very many families that were not represented one way or another. So, I would meet up with these. I went around the corner and down at the end of this street one day and this middle-aged man stopped me and wanted to know if I wasn't Mrs. Boswell. I said, "Yes." He said, "I thought your husband was one of the grandest men that ever lived." He would stand there and talk and talk and I said, "Well, tell me your name, I don't remember you." He said, "My name is Ball." I found out that he lived over there on that other hill. So it was just that way all the time. Every time, downtown, in the grocery store, it was just so frequent that I would meet up with people who remembered my husband. Last Sunday morning I was

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having lunch at Primos with Dr. and Mrs. Stauss, my son-in-law and Babs, and this man came up and he says, "Aren't you Mrs. Boswell?" I said "Yes." He said, "Well, my wife was sitting over there and she thought you were Mrs. Boswell." He said, "I'm Dr. McEachern and I thought your husband was the grandest man I ever knew." Oh, he just couldn't say enough about him. You know I appreciate that so much. It brings tears to my eyes, but it is remarkable how he is still remembered and loved.

JONES: He definitely is. Do you remember in 1950 when the Boswell Society presented him with a Cadillac?

BOSWELL: Oh, yes, I have several pictures of that. That was quite a.....They gave him the Cadillac and me the tea service.

JONES: Did he drive that Cadillac for many years?

BOSWELL: Oh, yes, he loved it. I didn't (drive it). I never did drive it myself and after his death I sold it. I felt like I could not keep it up.

JONES: Do you know what Dr. Boswell's report in 1948, he wrote a report on conditions at the mental hospital at Whitfield and his report was never made public at that time and it was mysterious?

BOSWELL: I don't know about that. Dr. "Jake" could tell you about it I'm sure, but I don't remember. I never have met Dr. "Jake" until the last year or two. I have learned to be very fond of him. He is very fond of Doc. They worked together on whatever. I don't know about that report. Why it was not published, maybe they thought it best not to.

JONES: Dr. Jacquith at Whitfield?

BOSWELL: Yes, yes. James Stokes who is business manager out there, he is a Magee boy, too, I suppose you know Magee is well

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represented up there. My friends and neighbors across the street there called the Nichols, she was Mae Louise Gill and he's Carey Nichols. They were, of course, born and raised in Magee and they are the sweetest neighbors. You know, Mr. Nichols every morning comes over and turns my driveway light off, picks up my paper and puts it at my back door every morning. I just think that's the sweetest thing. I can't ever think of enough to do to thank him as I would like to for it. It means a lot to me, especially since I've been crippled.

JONES: Do you remember Fred Sullens?

BOSWELL: Oh, yes.

JONES: Was he ever a tuberculosis patient?

BOSWELL: No, he wasn't a tuberculosis patient, but he came down there. He came down there just to stay awhile. I think to get off his whiskey was maybe one thing. He and Doc were great friends. They had a wonderful time together. I thought a lot of Fred, too. He was an interesting person. He would go walking sometimes in the woods with the children and me and gather berries and wild things, strawberries and things that we would find in the woods. He was a great nature lover. He asked me to write an article. I was telling him how I love some of the birds that we had, the orioles, especially. To me, that's one of the most unusual birds that I know of and they have such a peculiar song. It is a song that has sadness in it. He said, "Well, write that up and let me put it in the paper." So I did. I wrote a little paragraph about that long and he put it in the paper.

JONES: He was a real firecracker, wasn't he?

BOSWELL: Oh, he was a firecracker. You bet he was. Now, my daughter, Helen, worked with him. She was a reporter on the Daily News

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for a long time. He was editor. She thought a lot of him, too. He had the devil in him, all right, but he really was a remarkable person in a lot of ways. You couldn't help but like him.

JONES: You feel like that maybe he was down there to help his drinking?

BOSWELL Well, I think that was probably why Doc let him come down there. He thought he would dry him out. Maybe he could do him good. He thought a lot of Doc.

JONRD: Do you remember in April of 1957 the tornado that hit the Sanatorium? Were you still there?

BOSWELL: Yes, I do, yes. It just missed our house by an inch or so, but it didn't do a great deal of damage, but it could have. It swept through the, kind of through the center of the, just missed our house by a little distance.

JONES: Were you at home?

BOSWELL: Yes.

JONES: Was it in the daytime?

BOSWELL: Yes, it was early in the morning, it wasn't quite light. Yes, we heard it and saw what it did.

JONES: What did you do?

BOSWELL: I don't remember. I don't remember.

MONAGHAN: I believe someone said that it destroyed some of the beautiful pine trees.

BOSWELL: Yes, yes. Doc loved those pine trees as if they were

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people. It just broke his heart if anything happened to any of his pines, especially those over around the Chapel because those were the original pines. They were not young ones come up,and the ones that grew on the side of the lake - I'm trying to think of the distances - on the south end of the lake, no, the north end of the lake. Those were seedlings that he planted himself. He would get the seedling and he would go around, take a walk, stick a seed down, cover it with his foot and leave it there and they were the prettiest little grove of pines that you ever saw.

MONAGHAN: Did he build the lake or...?

BOSWELL: Yes, he did, he built the lake there and he selected the spot where he wanted his grave. We went walking there one Sunday afternoon and he said, "Now this is where I want to be buried." He had already made arrangements with the State Board of Health that he would be buried on the grounds, both of us would be. So he told me the very spot. He said, "Now this is where I want to be buried." He knew himself even then that he couldn't live too much longer. So we agreed on that was the place. You may have noticed that when I had his stone put up I had one made for me, too. So, it's there ready for me any time. They call that the 19th hole, the golf club does.

JONES: It seems that Dr. Boswell retired on December 1, 1957 and died December 17, 1957. At that time did he know that he was...

BOSWELL: Oh, yes, he had been a patient up here at the University Hospital. They couldn't operate. It was just inoperable, so he knew his time was very short so he asked to be taken back to Sanatorium. He wanted to die there. So he had his own nurses that he had trained right there with him. They took care of him right up to the last.

JONES: What did he die from?

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BOSWELL: Cancer, cancer of the lungs.

JONES: Well, following his death, how long did you stay at the Sanatorium?

BOSWELL: How long, what now?

JONES: How long did you stay at the Sanatorium?

BOSWELL: He died in December '57 and I left in February of '58. Dr. Watkins said to stay as long as I wanted to, but I couldn't. I didn't want to stay. So I came up here and my daughter, Helen, had gotten an apartment for me over on Greymont Avenue. She and Howard fixed it up for me and had it all so nice and pretty. I loved that little apartment, but I could not stand an apartment. I had just had room, space around me for too long. I was born and raised on a big farm where I had all the space in the world for everything, and then down at Sanatorium I had all that, you know, that I felt perfectly at home in and to have a little apartment, I felt like the walls were coming in on me. I stayed just as long as I could and I said, "Helen, honey, help me and let's find a little house somewhere. I'm not going to live with any of you girls. I'm not going to mess up any of your lives. I'm just not going to do it. If we can find a little house somewhere that I can afford, why that's what we'll do." So we hunted and hunted and finally I just almost gave it up and she called me one day and said, "Mother, there's a little house up on Cedar Hill that has just been put up for sale and I think that maybe it's about what you want." So we came and looked at it and I closed the deal that day. I've been here ever since.

MONAGHAN: In addition to all of your wonderful memories, do you have some special little momento from the Sanatorium that you treasure?

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BOSWELL: Well, of course I know that I guess that I have, but right at the moment... I have a picture in here that if I can lay my hand on it, I think that I can, that would be interesting because it shows Doc in the early days at the Sanatorium when they....Let's see if I can lay my hand on it. I have it right here. I've got so many pictures of the grandchildren. It would be just my luck now to have it misplaced. There it is. Now, that is in the very early days. That was before we had the grounds landscaped. That old jitney over there that he drove everywhere, but that is a very good likeness of him even though it is an old one. He didn't want pictures made. He tried every way he could to avoid having pictures made of himself, but somebody I think one of the patients snapped that.

JONES: Do you have anything else you want to ask? Mrs. Boswell, this is about all we're going to need to ask you today.

BOSWELL: All right. I don't think that I've done anything for you. I really don't feel, I knew that I was going to feel that way because it is a new experience for me entirely and I'm not good at telling things that have happened.

JONES: Don't feel that way. You were most helpful.

BOSWELL: Well, at any rate, I hope it has been helpful.

(End of Tape)

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