

OREGON HEALTH SCIENCES UNIVERSITY HISTORY PROGRAM

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW

WITH

*Warren Bishop, M.D.*

Interview conducted August 7, 1998

by

Sarah Porter and Juliana Cartwright

## SUMMARY

Dr. Warren G. Bishop embarked on his medical career in 1929 and has been serving the community ever since. In his sixty years of private practice in Medford, Oregon, Dr. Bishop delivered nearly 4,000 babies, a feat that has earned him a memorial doorway and labor room at the Rogue Valley Medical Center. He is also an ardent supporter of medical and nursing education, and has established several scholarship programs for students in southern Oregon and at OHSU.

The interview opens with Dr. Bishop describing his first encounter with Elizabeth Monninger, then Dean of the School of Nursing at Southern Oregon State College. When he learned that SOSOC had no scholarships for nursing students, Dr. Bishop immediately offered his help and began granting five \$1,000 scholarships in the fall of 1987. With his wife, Emily, Dr. Bishop expanded the program, and in the first ten years nearly \$100,000 was awarded to students seeking nursing degrees.

Dr. Bishop had earlier started a scholarship program for medical students, establishing it as a memorial to his late son Warren. Originally designed to help students from southern Oregon attend any medical school in the country, it has since been modified to send scholarship recipients to the OHSU School of Medicine. His son Lloyd, who also predeceased his father, has been memorialized in a second nursing scholarship at Southern Oregon University.

Throughout the interview, Dr. Bishop shares anecdotes from his life and career in medicine. He tells the romantic story of reconnecting with his fourth wife, Emily, sixty years after their first meeting. He details just a few of the countless positive encounters he has had with past scholarship recipients and with the now grown babies he delivered. In closing, he shares the story of why he went to college, illustrating his father's no-nonsense, Civil War veteran brand of practicality.

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Interview with Warren Bishop, M.D.  
Interviewed by Sarah Porter and Juliana Cartwright  
August 7, 1998  
Site: Medford, Oregon  
Begin Tape 1, Side 1

PORTER: [I am interviewing] Warren Bishop, and it is August 7th, 1998, and we are here in Medford, Oregon.

And I don't have to sound quite so formal. Tape recorders do that to me. I can just put it aside.

Anyway, we're just so incredibly grateful, as you know, about the scholarship that the Nursing School has been getting from you for a number of years, and we thought it might be really wonderful to have on record what your thinking was about giving nursing scholarships and how you got started at it, and how you've kept that interest going.

BISHOP: Well, I've forgotten what year it was that we thought we had a shortage of nurses here, and so I wanted to do something for the community or the hospital, so I went over to the Southern Oregon College and talked to the Dean of the Nursing School, and her name was Beth Monninger. And she was a very fine person, and I told her what I was interested in, and I asked her about the school, and scholarships. And she said, "We don't have any scholarships." And I said, "Would you like to have some? I would be glad to start a small number of scholarships for the nurses." So that was where I got started, and that was in about...

CARTWRIGHT: In the fall of 1987, I think.

BISHOP: And so I started by offering five scholarships of \$1,000 each. Then we had to work on how we'd select them and all; and we decided we'd have the applicants fill out a form, which was kind of a financial and also a scholastic record of each one. And we decided to interview them and determine what their motive is to be a nurse, and their finances particularly. So we put out on the bulletin board—I think it was that—for people needing scholarships, and so we got the records that way. Then we met them individually, and with the Dean, and I think with Dr. John Watson and Jan Woods, and we interviewed these individuals. Then we had a scoring system. So we started with five scholarships. And each year it's been building up ever since.

At the present time, I don't know how many scholarships, but you know?

CARTWRIGHT: I could find out, but I suspect it's around \$80,000 worth that you've

been giving out. That would have been—I imagine that was for the school year starting in the fall of 1988. So in about ten years there's been close to \$100,000.

BISHOP: It's been very interesting to meet these students and talk to them. They all have tremendous debts to get through school.

Then my wife, Emily Bishop died, and it was as a memorial to her that I got interested in this. I had previously become interested in the scholarships when my son was killed, who was twenty and was a pre-medical student. Because his life was cut short, I wanted to have a memorial to him, and I felt that scholarships for nurses would be something as a memorial to him, and which I'm very proud of.

At that time, when he was killed—I think it was about 1980; so, previous to the scholarships for nurses, I had started a memorial scholarship at medical school, two scholarships; there were two scholarships of \$5,000 each, and those students were picked very much like the students were picked for the nurses. But the medical students could go anywhere in the United States, to any medical school. And as a result, we have sent the medical students from this area to medical schools. We've had two students to Tulane University. We've had two students to Washington University at St. Louis, and a number of them to University of Washington. But most of them are from University of Oregon.

Shall I mention some of the requirements?

PORTER: Oh, yes. We're interested in nursing and medicine, the whole thing.

BISHOP: The medical scholarships were awarded on the same principle as the nurses. They were selected by members of the Jackson County Medical Society, and they were appointed very much the same.

[Tape stopped]

PORTER: I think that we can't assume that just because someone's father is a doctor that they necessarily will have the money.

BISHOP: But that's the way I got interested in scholarships.

PORTER: So it kind of spurred you on.

BISHOP: Yeah. And I had started the Warren H. Bishop scholarships in 1981, I believe it was, and they've been running for seventeen years. So it's been very gratifying to me that they've been—of the quality of student that we have from this area. One of the original qualifications was it had to be a student from this area, and later it was changed so they would have to be from University of Oregon. I think that's the way they are at the

present. But anyway, the medical students could go anywhere. It may still be, I'm not sure. But anyway, most of them are from Oregon. And a number of doctors' children have gotten medical scholarships. In fact, Dr. Robert Luther, who is a psychiatrist, two of his sons have gotten scholarships. They are outstanding young men, and I was very much interested because his first son has written to me a number of times and given me a report, and he is a psychiatrist in Portland. The other one, I don't know about him. And Dr. Trainer's son, who is now just starting in Medford, got a scholarship. And two girls, Dr. [Collegian's] daughter got a scholarship, and another doctor, I can't remember his name, she went to Tulane, and she got a scholarship. Dr. Mark Peterson of Medford got a scholarship, and Dr. [Morrissey's] son got a scholarship. So they are some I just remember that—and most of them went to the University of Oregon.

But that got me started on scholarships, and then I got so interested in scholarships, that's when I started on the nurses. At one time there were scholarships at the University of Oregon; and the nurses' scholarship at Portland is a memorial to my son Lloyd Bishop, and they have been transferred to Southern Oregon University. It's a memorial to him.

So I have two sons that I have memorials to.

CARTWRIGHT: And the Lloyd Bishop Scholarship is right now the only scholarship we have in the area...

BISHOP: I've tried to interest some of the other doctors in scholarships, but I don't know why they didn't get interested in scholarships because it's very gratifying, and you do something for the young, and you do something for the community by doing that.

PORTER: I was wondering about whether or not you had attempted to interest other physicians in these activities.

BISHOP: Yes. I got my wife Emily interested in going over to sit in and to help us select the students over at Southern Oregon University, and we had ten applicants, and that year I was just giving six scholarships, and there were four of these students that didn't get a scholarship. And on the way home, Emily said, "I can't stand it." [Laughter] And I said, "What can't you stand?" And she said, "You didn't give those other four students a scholarship." And she says, "I'm going to do it." And so I said, "I think that's great."

So she sent her check in for \$4,000, and it's been kind of a family affair as long as she lived. She was so interested in these kids that were applying, and she talked about them as "our students." That's how we felt. We felt so good that we had been able to do something for our community, and also for the medical students, too.

I have a patient that had been a former student teacher here, and I asked her, one day, something about her estate because I knew she had never been married. And she said, well,

she was leaving it to a hospital in some other city. And I said, “Well, why don’t you give scholarships for medical students or nurses?” And she said, “I think it might be a good idea.” So I wrote up the application, and we got an attorney and fixed our papers, and that is the way the Clasey Scholarships at the University of Oregon was formed, is because I talked to somebody. I don’t know how many—I know some years they gave four scholarships, and they were for \$4,000 each, and they are designated at University of Oregon.

And I also was consulted by Ms. [Otterdale] and her attorney when she was fixing up I don’t know what—anyway, I spent a whole afternoon explaining our system of scholarships to her attorney and her, and then it went through and she has done something about it because some of the local doctors were a director in her estate or something.

So I felt that I helped those scholarships.

PORTER: And you actually also had a chance to meet the medical student recipients?

BISHOP: Yeah. I don’t know how many are applying this fall for the medical scholarships. I don’t know; but anyway, they’ve run for sixteen, seventeen, eighteen years. They’re about \$1,000 each, and there’s two scholarships, as a memorial to Warren H. Bishop.

PORTER: And is that continued each year that they’re in medical school or is that one...

BISHOP: Well, I felt that a scholarship of \$5,000, fifteen years ago was a whole lot of money, and I felt that by doing that I could help a number of young doctors.

PORTER: So this year the scholarships for nurses have been awarded, and you’ve met the seniors that have received the scholarships?

BISHOP: Oh, yes.

CARTWRIGHT: In fact, some years the group that you give scholarships to takes you out to lunch regularly. That happens quite a bit.

BISHOP: And they gave me a birthday party on my 84th birthday, the students over at the University that I had given scholarships.

CARTWRIGHT: And you run into them now and then around town and in the hospital.

BISHOP: Quite often. I had some surgery for cancer over at the hospital, and when they took me into the operating room the nurse in charge came over and said, “You don’t remember me, do you? You gave me a scholarship in 1994.” Quite often nurses come up and

say, “You gave me a scholarship.” So I get some return.

PORTER: That assures good nursing care. In more ways than one. I think that the students receiving that money, it really does, not only relieve their economic problems, but the students that I’ve talked to, it makes them also feel recognized and like they’re worthy and worth it, and that aspect is really important to them.

BISHOP: Emily was so interested in the program that she and I together have left \$100,000 annuity over at Southern Oregon University. That will be activated at my death for scholarships for nursing students.

PORTER: That’s a wonderful legacy.

BISHOP: [Rustling papers] That, as of four years ago, was the statement, if you want it; it gives an impression.

CARTWRIGHT: [Very faint, reading from document] Right, two funds that southern Oregon medical students may receive scholarships: two \$5000 one-time only gifts; and the Clasey Fund, three of \$4000 for students attending OHSU [...] Total \$250,000 in nine years. Twelve out of the nineteen went to OHSU.

PORTER: It’s interesting that Graham McReynolds—you probably remember Graham?

BISHOP: Yes.

PORTER: It just struck him that many times people give back to the medical school that they attended, and he was interested in whether that was also part of your thinking?

BISHOP: I have given back to Roanoke College, where I took my pre-med work; I have given them \$50,000 for a scholarship for either a medical or a minister student. That was just very recently.

And this...

PORTER: Oh, this is in the *Nursing Progress*.

BISHOP: This was four years ago, and it says in the nine years I had given a quarter of a million dollars. Would you like to have a copy of that?

PORTER: That would be wonderful to have. This is a copy I can take?

BISHOP: Yeah, you can have that one.

PORTER: And is this something I can take? We have the *Nursing Progress*.

BISHOP: Yes, you have it. I don't know what the date is on that...

PORTER: Autumn, this is also 1994, fall of 1994.

BISHOP: And this year, I was given the Roanoke College medal, President's medal, from Roanoke College.

CARTWRIGHT: [Discussion regarding pictures] Oh, and that's from Oregon, the picture of you and [trust officer] Bob Diller. Isn't that a nice picture?

[End Tape 1, Side 1/Begin Tape 1, Side 2]

CARTWRIGHT: [Discussing pictures] That was such a fun time at your birthday. That's Lisa from the SOU Foundation.

BISHOP: That was my birthday last year.

CARTWRIGHT: And the students who had gotten scholarships, several of them brought their children.

BISHOP: And that's my girlfriend; we're just good companions. There are my three granddaughters. That's my great-grandson. Another one of the great-grandchildren.

PORTER: You look like you're right at home with them.

CARTWRIGHT: You know, the one thing I always think about Warren, is that when I used to visit you and Emily, the first thing Emily would say when I'd come into the apartment is, "Well, how are our students?" You could tell that she was just so interested in them and wanted to know how they were doing.

BISHOP: And she just couldn't stand it. She was my fourth wife.

CARTWRIGHT: But you knew her the longest.

BISHOP: Yes. She was my sweetheart when I was in medical school. Then I came West, and in the meantime I found somebody else. So I got married, and she married and had a family life. After sixty years, why, she and her husband came through about twenty-five years ago. And I knew she had a stepson over in Grants Pass, so I called him after my third wife had died, about a year later, and found out that she was a widow. And I asked her to come out, and so she came out for a ten-day stay, and we decided to get married. So six

months later we were married. After sixty years. And we had six years of absolutely wonderful living together.

PORTER: That's very romantic.

CARTWRIGHT: I meant to tell you, we have two applications for the Lloyd Bishop scholarship—that's the graduate one. I was going to bring them today, and the secretary was putting them in a folder, and I couldn't find them when we left. So we'll mail them to you. They're both real strong applicants that look real good. Anne Marie Day, who I think may have received a scholarship from you when she was going through the bachelor's program.

BISHOP: May have. I think so.

CARTWRIGHT: Does that name ring a bell?

BISHOP: Yeah.

CARTWRIGHT: And now she's in the graduate program. And the other is a young man, and I'm blocking on his name. But a local person. So we'll get them in the mail.

BISHOP: It's been kind of disappointing to me that other doctors have not—they serve on the local selection committee, Peterson and Dr. Bernard and—I'm so darn old I can't think.

PORTER: You are most impressive in your ability to think.

BISHOP: But anyway, the doctors here have been very nice to serve on these committees, on the Jackson County medical scholarship committee; they've been wonderful about serving on it. Oh, Dr. Mayer, Bill Mayer. That was one reason I practiced medicine so long, because I got so much interested in it, because of these scholarships.

PORTER: Well, I think that's a wonderful attitude, to have the desire to give back to the community and to stay involved with people's lives as they're going through school. It is kind of disappointing that the other doctors don't quite understand the value of that, maybe. Don't give up; we'll help you [laughter].

BISHOP: The other doctors are glad for their children to get the Bishop scholarships, anyway, but they select it because it's about outstanding students. I mean, they have to have a good scholastic standing in order to get these scholarships.

CARTWRIGHT: Dr. Bishop has given so much to the community; I'm just suddenly struck that periodically there will be an article in the paper about Dr. Bishop because he gives to a lot of causes. Dr. Bishop has a door dedicated to him in the hospital for how many

births? How many babies did you deliver in the valley?

BISHOP: Over 3,000.

PORTER: It's nice to have a door; I mean, it's so symbolic, an opening.

CARTWRIGHT: And you've also given to the little inn where families can stay.

PORTER: Ronald McDonald?

CARTWRIGHT: Well, it's not Ronald McDonald; but if they're from far away and their loved one is in the hospital for a while, there's like a little inn right across the street from the hospital. And then the college at Roanoke. There are so many separate ways he's helped people.

BISHOP: One of the rooms over at the hospital here, one of the labor rooms, is named for me.

PORTER: That's wonderful.

CARTWRIGHT: So, we know about each of those, but then you start to think of putting them all together, it's really quite wonderful.

PORTER: Compassionate, you know; it's really so compassionate. Because, you know, you can go into medicine or nursing just to earn money, but the drive to really help—that's what's really in evidence.

BISHOP: I've been selected as the Doctor of the Year of the State of Oregon; that was rather nice.

PORTER: Well, it's nice to know that people recognize the true value of what you're doing.

BISHOP: I don't give much to some of the programs for the community because I feel I've given something better, I've given nurses to take care of them. I mean, I help the nurses and I help the doctors. So there are two doctors here in practice right now that have gotten some of my scholarships.

PORTER: Well, I hope they get this conversation, through osmosis maybe [laughter], and they're consciences will start to get tweaked about returning the favor.

Well, that's quite a story. Very meaningful.

BISHOP: Well, I intended a scholarship over at the University, because the annuities don't go into effect until my death.

CARTWRIGHT: So he'll be taking care of people all along...

PORTER: It's a different way of "delivering" people, isn't it? Delivering them into nursing.

BISHOP: Last year Suzie and I were going in for dinner over in Ashland, and the waitress kept looking at me kind of funny. And she finally said, "If I hadn't known that Dr. Bishop died five years ago, I would say that you were Dr. Bishop." [Laughter] So I said, "Well, what's your name?" And she told me. So it happened that she was from a family that I had delivered four girls for, and each time I had told the father that, the best I could tell, that it would be a boy. And after the fourth girl was born, I said that the fifth was going to have to be. And he says, "You're such a big liar, I'm not going to try."

CARTWRIGHT: [Laughter] Well, I know that family, and those girls took great care of their father.

The other thing that happens a lot when we go out to eat is people will come up to Dr. Bishop and say, "Oh, Dr. Bishop, don't you remember me? You delivered me." That happens all the time.

PORTER: Like, "I haven't changed a bit."

BISHOP: Well, I tell them, I say, "Well, I don't recognize you with your clothes on." [Laughter]

PORTER: That story in your book about helping that woman with her fertility problems! That was quite funny.

BISHOP: Is it in my book, the reason I went to college?

PORTER: Jan described it a little bit, but you tell the story so much better.

BISHOP: Well, when I graduated from high school and I was discussing about going to college and all, but my dad had been very active and had served on the school board in the county for about forty years. My mother was a teacher and all, so that was my background; they were interested in education.

So I couldn't decide what school to go to or anything, and it was up in the air. And we raised a lot of pigs, and I was helping Dad feed the pigs, and he had a bucket of food, and he gave me the stick and said, "You keep these pigs back while I pour this in the trough."

And I swung at this pig and hit my dad right in the face. And I felt sure he'd just warm my pants good, but he looked at me kind of funny, and he said, "I think it's good for you to go to college because I hope they teach you the difference between my face and a pig's face." [Laughter]

PORTER: I think you must have your father's sense of humor.

BISHOP: My dad was a Confederate soldier. In fact, he was in the division that made the charge at Gettysburg. So he was 53 years old before he got married.

So my background was people who valued education.

PORTER: Well, I think it's only fair to tell you that my great-grandfather, Dr. Porter's dad, was from Kentucky, and he joined the Union Army because they gave him a better pair of shoes, is the way the story goes. [laughter] A little bidding war there.

Well, I know we've taken up enough of your time.

BISHOP: I have nothing but time anymore.

PORTER: I have a feeling you have lots of wonderful stories.

[End of Interview]

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