

OREGON HEALTH SCIENCES UNIVERSITY HISTORY PROGRAM

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW

WITH

*Betty Bergman*

Interview conducted August 14, 2002

by

Linda Weimer, Roger Klein, and Angela Kendrick

## SUMMARY

The interview opens with Betty Bergman giving a brief account of her early years, then moving on to describe the meeting between herself, a medical technologist, and Norman A. Bergman, a young internist, at the Michael Reese Hospital in Chicago. That meeting took place in 1951; by 1952, they were married and on their way to New York, where Dr. Bergman completed his residency at Presbyterian Hospital. Dr. Bergman, who grew up in the Pacific Northwest, was drawn to Presbyterian both by its high reputation and its distance from Portland, Oregon.

Betty describes life in New York; since house officers at that time were paid around \$2500 per year, she got a full-time position at a nearby doctor's office to supplement their income. In 1958, Norman and Betty moved to Salt Lake City, where Norman took the position as Chief of Anesthesia Service at the Veterans Administration Hospital. Betty talks about the colleagues in Utah who mentored Dr. Bergman, and about his early research interests. His interest in respiratory physiology took him as far as England, where Norman spent thirteen months working with Dr. John Nunn.

After several years in Utah, Norman decided he wanted to "come home" to the Pacific Northwest. Together, Betty and Dr. Roger Klein discuss Dr. Bergman's arrival at the University of Oregon Medical School, where he took on the role of Chair in the newly formed Department of Anesthesiology. While the job as Chair kept him quite busy, Norman was able to continue his research; Dr. Klein discusses some of the studies on which Dr. Bergman collaborated with Dr. Charles Waltemath. He also mentored departmental faculty, and Dr. Klein touches on one of his most notable protégés, Dr. Carol Hirshman.

After briefly mentioning her work with the Medical Faculty Auxiliary, Betty goes on to talk about the period after Dr. Bergman's retirement. She and Dr. Klein discuss Norman's growing interest in the history of anesthesiology. His research in this area culminated in the publication of his book, *The Genesis of surgical anesthesia*, which received laudatory reviews. For his work, Dr. Bergman was posthumously named the Year 2000 Laureate of the History of Anesthesia by the Wood Library-Museum.

Dr. Bergman had a history of health problems, and passed away in 1999 at the age of seventy-three. As the interview comes to a close, Betty, Dr. Klein, and Dr. Kendrick share their recollections about the impressive accomplishments, encyclopedic knowledge, and fine medical career of Dr. Bergman.

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Interview with Betty Bergman  
Interview by Linda Weimer, Roger Klein, and Angela Kendrick  
August 14, 2002  
Site: Anesthesiology conference room, OHSU  
Begin Tape 1, Side 1

WEIMER: This is an oral history interview of Betty Bergman, the wife of the late Dr. Norman Bergman who was former Chair of Anesthesiology at Oregon Health & Science University, and we are very honored to have you here. And with me today is Roger Klein, former faculty of the Department of Anesthesiology, and Angela Kendrick who is Assistant Professor of Anesthesiology.

I'd first like to get started by asking you, Betty, where you were born and raised.

BERGMAN: I was born in Chicago, Illinois and spent most of my school years in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and when I started training I came back to Chicago, and Michael Reese Hospital. And, that's where I met Doc Bergman.

WEIMER: I was going to ask when and where you met him. And was he—we're obviously going to get back to Norm—was he an intern at that time?

BERGMAN: He was an intern, yes. 1952.

WEIMER: And you were working there?

BERGMAN: I was a student.

WEIMER: Oh, you were a student.

BERGMAN: Yeah.

WEIMER: What were you studying?

BERGMAN: Med Tech.

WEIMER: Med Tech.

BERGMAN: Yeah.

WEIMER: Did you continue in that career?

BERGMAN: Briefly [laughter], after I graduated, until children came along.

WEIMER: But you got married when...

BERGMAN: We both finished up in June of 1952 and got married one day and headed off for New York for his residency the next.

WEIMER: So you didn't have much time in Chicago [laughter].

BERGMAN: [Laughter] No.

WEIMER: Tell me a little about your children.

BERGMAN: Well, we have two. The oldest is 48 now. He's a mechanical engineer, works for an engineering consulting firm here in Portland. And our daughter lives in Scottsdale, Arizona; she does medical transcription. She has two children; my son has three children.

WEIMER: Your life must be full with the grandkids and family.

BERGMAN: Oh, it is.

WEIMER: Why did you decide on medical technology?

BERGMAN: I thought of some medical field when I was about a sophomore in college, and I just didn't quite decide what I wanted to do. People tried to talk me into occupational therapy and that didn't sound all that great. And I've always liked chemistry and math, and at that time you had to do everything, you had no machines to stick things on and have the answers pop out at you. You had to do everything by hand. So that was the thing that intrigued me most, I think.

WEIMER: Did you find in that time era, it'd be after World War II...

BERGMAN: After World War II.

WEIMER: But, you know, a science field, were there a lot of women in that field?

BERGMAN: Probably not. For one thing, where I went to school, it was discouraged, because you had a lot of—this was an extension division of the University of Wisconsin—and you had a lot of GIs going to school and at one point they wouldn't let me take a class because they had too many premeds in the class. And so a friend and I, who were both in the med tech program, went down and had a debate with the Dean, I guess, at the time, and said, "You know, we need these credits just as much as the doctors do." So they broke down and let us in [laughter].

WEIMER: Well, that's good.

BERGMAN: Yeah.

WEIMER: You were at least a moment of enlightenment.

BERGMAN: Well, I don't know. They weren't too happy.

WEIMER: Was there anyone in your family that had a medical or science background that would lead you into that junction?

BERGMAN: No, not at all.

WEIMER: So what did you think of this Norman Bergman when you met him?

BERGMAN: Well, I won't mention... [laughter].

WEIMER: We want a rough outline. Where you were, was this in the hospital, in an encounter, or after-hours party?

BERGMAN: I met him in a bar, actually, in late 1951, didn't see him again for two months, and then went to a Christmas party with another intern and he happened to be there. But he was on call and I won't tell you what kind of shape he was in [laughter] during that party. But anyway, a week or so later he came around and wanted to take me to a New Year's Party and I said, "I can't, I've got other commitments," and a week later he came back and said, "Would you like to go to a movie?" And that kind of kicked it all off. From then on we saw each other. You couldn't avoid each other. Hadn't seen him for two months, but once we started going together I saw him everywhere.

WEIMER: Well, let's move on to Norman Bergman. Where was he born and raised?

BERGMAN: He was born in Seattle and spent his first nine years in a place called Snohomish outside of Seattle, and moved to Portland when he was nine.

WEIMER: So was a native of the Pacific Northwest. He grew up then in...

BERGMAN: In Portland. Spent all his school years, went through college, premed here—well, medical school, because he graduated; he's an alumnus of OHSU.

WEIMER: What was his family background? What did his parents do?

BERGMAN: His father had a store, a clothing store, and both of them worked in the clothing store and Norm wanted none of it. And evidently, very early on, he decided that he was going into medicine, and here again there was no one in the family that had gone into medicine.

WEIMER: That was what I was wondering. That's one of the questions we usually ask is, you know, what is that allure that finally gets you going.

BERGMAN: With some people it doesn't necessarily come from family ties, just on their own.

WEIMER: World War II. I know he went to service before medical school.

BERGMAN: Yeah, he went in to the service, I think it was about October of 1944. I know that he was on a boat to the invasion of Japan when the war ended, and then he spent his remaining time in the Philippines. And then he stayed in the inactive Reserves; and then in 1959 he went back into the active Reserves and he was in that for eleven years.

WEIMER: That's remarkable. I admire that type of commitment.

How did the war affect him, or did he talk about that?

BERGMAN: Well, I don't think it really affected him much because by the time he got over there the war was basically over, and I don't think he ever saw any fighting at all.

WEIMER: But it did interrupt his education?

BERGMAN: Well, yes. I think it interrupted his mother's plans more than it did his [laughter]. She wrote to President Roosevelt telling him why her son should not be drafted.

WEIMER: Oh really.

BERGMAN: Yeah. It was just like his mother.

WEIMER: Well, after that he went into specialized anesthesiology. Do you know why he wanted that specialty?

BERGMAN: Well, at first I think his interests lay in pediatrics. And then I guess, possibly up here when he got thrown into the care of children, he loved the children, the parents bothered him somewhat [laughter], and so somewhere along the line he decided to go into anesthesia.

WEIMER: After his internship you moved to New York, as you mentioned. What was that like? He was from the Pacific Northwest; you were from Chicago.

BERGMAN: Yeah, and I—neither one of us—well, no he had been East, but only to visit relatives; I had never been East and it was pretty hectic in the beginning: whole new surroundings for both of us.

KLEIN: Why did he choose Presbyterian as a residency place?

BERGMAN: Well, I really don't know and I don't even remember where else he applied. All I remember, I think I still have his letter of acceptance to Presbyterian, and I guess he just thought it would be a good place to—well, I'll tell you one reason: when he got out of medical school, when he graduated, he wanted to get out of Portland. He figured he'd stayed here long enough. So he wanted to see the rest of the country; so, that's why he picked Chicago and he picked New York and, as I say I don't recall where else he applied for residency, but he got accepted there.

KLEIN: Of course, this was one of the premier residencies in the country—

BERGMAN: It was at that time, yes.

KLEIN: Perhaps that was the reason he chose it. I just have a couple of other questions about earlier careers, earlier in life. He was always a musician?

BERGMAN: Mmm-hmm.

KLEIN: His mother insisted on him taking it up? Or did he just enjoy it? By himself?

BERGMAN: I think that they probably introduced him to music because they did love classical music, in particular, and I think probably, possibly at about the time—well, I don't know when he started the French horn, when he started taking lessons, but from the time that you were eligible for the youth symphony, he was in it.

KLEIN: In Portland?

BERGMAN: In Portland.

KLEIN: His Reed years: what was his reaction to Reed, since Reed was considered, has always been considered, some what of a...?

BERGMAN: Well you know, Norm was so straight-laced, so I never figured out how he fit in there, but his education was interrupted there because he went into the service, so there was two years—you know he went into Reed at 16.

KLEIN: I see.

BERGMAN: And then when he got drafted at 18, then came back, I guess he was about 20 or 21 and finished up.

KENDRICK: I was wondering about that, how old he was.

BERGMAN: Yeah.



KLEIN: So, he went to New York.

BERGMAN: Yes, he got to New York and then hated it after he got there—no, after six years he hated it.

WEIMER: Did you live on site? Did you live in the hospital housing?

BERGMAN: No, no. There weren't any accommodations available. You had to find your own residences. And we did look in New York and everything was so expensive and neither one of us had any money. So we ended up in Jersey because it was cheaper, in Englewood, which was across the river from George Washington Bridge. And so we find this apartment and I think within two or three days he started in at the hospital and I started looking for work [laughter], and was lucky enough to find a doctor's office a block away from where we lived, and got a job there. So, he had to—and that's one reason he got very tired of New York, was having to cross the bridge in the traffic.

KENDRICK: And do you remember how much house officers were paid at that time?

BERGMAN: Yeah, the first year he got \$2,500 and the second year was \$2,750 [laughter].

KENDRICK: So having you work was really an important thing.

BERGMAN: It was, yes. We wouldn't have survived if I hadn't, you know, come through, at least for most of that time anyway. Just between the two of us, you know, we didn't have—well, the thing was he was gone every third night, every third weekend. I sometimes had to work on weekends, so we kind of passed like ships in the night for awhile because we were both busy and we didn't have any money to spend anything on, and most of our friends, the friends that we met, didn't have any money. So you know, you went to someone's house, or every once in awhile you'd get out for an evening or something like that, but there wasn't a whole lot that we spent money on. So we got along fine after we both were getting some money.

WEIMER: Well after, I know you were there for a few years, four or five?

BERGMAN: Almost six.

WEIMER: Then there was the move to Utah. Tell me about that, or, why did he decide Utah?

BERGMAN: Well, I think he tried for Madison, Wisconsin at first, and I don't remember what the situation was, but whatever it was it didn't work out. And then he knew of a doctor that had been at Presbyterian who was in Utah, and so he contacted him, and he said, "Well there's an opening at the VA." And anyway, Norm applied for that

and got that position, which was Chief of the Veterans Administration Hospital, which didn't mean much because there were only two of them anyway [laughter].

KLEIN: Carter had gone to Utah—

BERGMAN: Yeah, Carter had gone to Utah.

KLEIN: —and had already taken over the chair at the university. He was the person who had asked Norm to come up, suggested—

BERGMAN: Well, whatever the arrangements. I don't really recall now how it worked out. We all enjoyed Utah very much.

WEIMER: That's a big change from New York, both geographically and socially, culturally.

BERGMAN: Well, you know, it wasn't culturally or socially, I don't think we had that much of a problem. I think Dr. Klein could fill you in on some of those things more than I could [laughter]. We just happened to live in an area—we built a home—and we happened to live in an area half a block a way from the ward, where it was all non-Mormons. Very strange.

WEIMER: And was it mostly people associated with the hospital or university?

BERGMAN: No, they were all different professions.

KLEIN: Back up another minute here, back to the residency period. You've told us what his time commitments were; did Norm begin to do research during residency?

BERGMAN: I think possibly he had a taste of it during residency because, you know, there was an awful lot of research going on at Presbyterian at the time. And then Dr. Papper asked him to stay on staff, then he really got into it, you know, after he finished residency and was on the staff. And there were a number of people that really helped him. I'm sure you know, are aware, of a lot of them.

KLEIN: Like?

BERGMAN: Like Ray Fink; Dr. Rackow; oh gosh, the [faculty member] in California, starts with an F. I can't remember his name. It'll come to me.

KLEIN: These were the people who got him going on his illustrious career?

BERGMAN: Yeah, they were—well, I mean, I think that they probably did clinical work, but that they also did a lot of research work. As you say, it was one of the premier departments in the country at the time.

KLEIN: What was his relationship with Carter? I mean did he, Dr. Ballinger, that is...

BERGMAN: Well, I think, I think that he always admired Carter and liked him, and I think their relationship was very good.

KLEIN: Did he ever recall any anecdotes about the residency itself during the times that he...

BERGMAN: [Pause] Well, I can't think of specific things.

KLEIN: I remember one. He told me that when he went there they were issued three endotracheal tubes of different sizes, and they were expected to return those at the end of residency.

BERGMAN: Used?

KLEIN: Yeah.

KENDRICK: Washed and drained, yeah.

KLEIN: Yeah, you'd put cuffs on separately, in a nasal speculum, that you stretched the cuffs and slipped them over the tube and they would frequently break, so then you'd get extra ones of those. But you don't recall any other humorous anecdotes?

BERGMAN: Well, he never liked to talk about it. Well, I can't even think of too many. He just didn't like to talk about it. So, you know, I can't supply much information from that aspect of it.

KENDRICK: And it also looks like the first trip that he had over to England was during your time in Utah.

BERGMAN: Yeah.

KENDRICK: What prompted that? Was it historical interest? Or physiology interest?

BERGMAN: No, not at that time. He was into respiratory physiology. And it just so happened he came across the work of Dr. John Nunn, an Englishman, at the Royal College of Surgeons, who was doing similar work, and he wrote to John. And John, I think, was a little uncertain with it, whether he wanted an American to come over and work with him because he never had any people that, I guess, apparently were that interested; but then again it was probably relatively new at the time, that part of research. And so anyway, John agreed to it and so Norm went over and we were over there for about, I think it was thirteen months. And he really enjoyed it. He had a wonderful time. Plus, the fact that John kind of opened up the door; and so, they had a doctor—the people

would come in for three months—they had one doctor from South Africa. A Russian came for three months. And they probably had one or two more who I don't recall. But Norm thoroughly enjoyed the experience and, I think, they accomplished quite a bit that year, from everything I've heard and read.

KENDRICK: And was he also doing clinical care during that year?

BERGMAN: They did some, but he didn't do much. They were limited. In fact, they didn't encourage any foreigner to come in and take over another doctor's work. They wanted to make sure that the person coming into the country had their own finances because they weren't going to pay anything, and I think it probably went that way for work too; they had limited exposure.

KENDRICK: And how did you finance that first year that you went? Had you been saving up?

BERGMAN: He was with the VA and so it came up as a sabbatical leave and he got a grant.

WEIMER: Did the whole family go over?

BERGMAN: Yes, yes.

WEIMER: Must have been exciting times.

BERGMAN: Yeah, it was. Our children were six and nine, so they had to go into school and the public schools over there are private, just reversed. We took our children to the government school; they would have taken the nine year old, but not the six year old because she couldn't read yet. So we decided this won't do. They wanted to put her in with the six-year-olds, and never having been to school, I thought, "This isn't such a good idea." So we started scouting around for a private school and we found one within walking distance, and so they both entered there and she got put back with the four-and-a-half-year-olds, but three months later she was up with her age group. And they had a good time; they enjoyed it.

WEIMER: Dr. Bergman became a professor at University of Utah. Then he moved to Oregon. We'd like to know, why? What was the enticement?

BERGMAN: The Northwest drew him back. I mean, I think he figured he'd seen enough of the United States, perhaps, and other parts of the world, and he wanted to come home; and this was home to him, as we would end up here every summer for a vacation. And, of course, his family was still here; almost all his family remained in the Northwest. Some moved on, but a lot—a great many of them didn't. And so he just wanted to come back.

WEIMER: Did he have ties to anyone here on faculty at OHSU?

BERGMAN: Dr. Haugen, who was the—

KLEIN: And me.

BERGMAN: And you [laughter]. Yes, yes. I keep forgetting that you were here first. You were here by several years, weren't you?

KLEIN: No, just one year.

BERGMAN: One year, is that all?

KLEIN: Yes, I had come. I had been in Utah from 1964 to... I took a sabbatical and took a fellowship in critical care in Pittsburgh. I came back and came to Oregon and was with Dr. Haugen for a year; and then when Dr. Haugen said that he was going to retire, I called Norm up and asked him if he was interested and he said he was.

BERGMAN: Yeah.

KLEIN: And the rest was history.

WEIMER: Was there an opening at that time? Were you required to do a recruitment, open it up, or could you just be appointed?

KLEIN: Yes, there were two; there was Norman—

BERGMAN: There was a what? A doctor from Wisconsin, from Madison.

KLEIN: From Madison.

BERGMAN: Bernardi? Was that his name?

KLEIN: No. At any rate, at that point in time, the department was still a division of surgery, so the plan was that the new chair would be a department—but actually, I believe, Norm was recruited specifically by, the department, the head of surgery, and I know that he must have had to interview with them and what not; and just exactly at what point the department was transferred I don't know. I think it was transferred when Norm arrived, I think that Haugen...

KENDRICK: Organized that transition.

KLEIN: Organized the transition and then when Norm came it was...

KENDRICK: A new department. A new chairman.

KLEIN: A new department, right.

WEIMER: What impact would that have on his time, becoming a chair of a department?

BERGMAN: It was time-consuming. I mean, he was generally at the hospital for ten or eleven hours. The thing was that he always read when he came home. He'd close himself off for an hour or two and read in the evenings because he wouldn't have the time to do it during the day. So, it was long hours.

KLEIN: How did he maintain his hobbies, his music hobbies, his woodworking hobbies...

BERGMAN: Well, music went when we moved back to Portland.

KLEIN: —making the television, his electronic interests?

BERGMAN: [Laughter] Oh yeah, well, after a while you change your interests. Well, basically on weekends he did, I think he did, you know, he kept busy with hospital activities during the week and then on the weekends he'd find some other things to do. But unfortunately, the music had to go when we left Salt Lake. He said, "I don't have the time." Also the Reserves; that was why he got out of the Reserves. He says, "I don't have time." So, it was more stressful.

WEIMER: Did the commitments to the university also extend to social commitments that were required of a chair?

BERGMAN: I would say yes; I don't know what transpired before we came here, but we did have social events every year.

KLEIN: Well, the department was relatively small—

BERGMAN: It was, yeah, there weren't many people even when Norm got here.

KLEIN: --So one could do a lot of entertaining and faculty group gatherings in homes and what not. In later years it became impossible, too many people.

KENDRICK: How much time was he still able to devote to his research when he became the chair?

BERGMAN: Well, I think research already kind of went by the wayside, too, to a certain extent. He certainly wasn't able to do what he had done in Utah.

KLEIN: No, but he was still quite active, and he worked with Dr. Waltemath.

BERGMAN: Yeah, that's true.

KLEIN: They did a number of studies. Norm's research for the most part was always clinical research. He was doing physiological stuff, but it was usually on humans, not so much on animals. And he would be off working, and a lot of the time Charlie was working with him. They did a number of studies, and his interests initially on [gas jasper] and the effects of anesthesia on oxygenation; and then he got a little bit more into the mechanics of respiration, effects of obesity, and things of this nature which, of course, are all in his cv, so we can refer to that later.

WEIMER: Was he doing a lot of teaching at this time?

KLEIN: I would say, yes. I think that Norm was always a very good lecturer. I mean, he just enjoyed his lectures. I think the wives of the faculty who would happen to be hearing one of his lectures, at meetings, things of this nature, always enjoyed it because he had a sense of humor that was kind of quiet and unassuming, but it was just—

KENDRICK: —Hit the mark—

KLEIN: [Laughter] —hit the mark, and he would just give lectures and they were always like he was telling stories or things of this nature. It was very easy to follow him, and he really enjoyed it. Like I say, I know that this was a common remark, my wife included, said that they really enjoyed listening to him, whereas most other medical lecturers, anesthesia lecturers, were pretty dry and boring.

WEIMER: How about mentoring students? Is that something that he had time for?

BERGMAN: I think that probably Roger has more information on subjects with the hospital.

KLEIN: He participated in the medical school lecture program. He delegated a fair amount of that. His means of administrating were pretty much hands off. I think he pretty much let the faculty do their own thing. He wasn't a person who was constantly looking over your shoulder. I think that the research that was being done, considering the amount of support that was available was actually quite good. Because, I say, he and Dr. Waltemath were quite productive, and I'm trying to think of—I did a little bit, not too much.

BERGMAN: What about Carol?

KLEIN: When he then got in the middle of his tenure here, Dr. Hershman and Dr. Casson came, and he actually mentored Dr. Hershman and she actually, probably, would be considered his most famous people, but she has gone on to be very productive. And she has given Norm credit for everything, you know—getting her started that is. There was work at that time with the Department of Pharmacology; and so I would say that he mentored faculty quite well, those who wanted to take an interest in research. He certainly let me have my way about doing critical care. He didn't interfere with my methods, and so he was quite encouraging and supportive.

WEIMER: As a wife of medical school faculty, were you involved—I know there was an auxiliary.

BERGMAN: There was. Yeah, I believe it may still be going on, I don't know. Yes, I was. For a number of years, until I got mad at them [laughter].

WEIMER: Can I ask why you got mad?

BERGMAN: Well, it was just that they were trying to organize a program to give tours to high school students that might be interested in the medical profession. And so I worked two years on lining up doctors and people to volunteer to take the students through to these various sectors—we had three sectors lined up for them to go to—and doctors involved would come and speak to the students. I had just gotten to the point where people were calling me volunteering their services, and we got a new president. Who was the one? I can't remember who it was now; he went to Jefferson after he left here... Well, anyway, he canceled. He says no. So that was it. I got mad. Two years I worked on this, and you come in and you just say no. And there wasn't any reason for it, because afterwards they set up a program where they paid people.

WEIMER: Did you find that most wives of medical faculty were involved with the auxiliary?

BERGMAN: There were a good number of them. I don't know what it's like now because I haven't been for years. Is Carol active any longer?

KLEIN: No.

WEIMER: I'm going to stop the tape here.

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

WEIMER: This is side two of tape one with our interview with Betty Bergman. I wanted to ask, we touched on it briefly: community activities of Norm. Obviously, he was involved with music until you moved to Oregon.

BERGMAN: Yeah.

WEIMER: He was involved with the Reserves until you moved to Oregon—it doesn't say too much for Oregon. But what other community activities?

BERGMAN: I don't know that he was really involved in a whole lot. He just spent so much time during the week, as I said, reading and working, and the weekends he more or less just wanted to find his own outlets, go out and make something in the garage, or bicycle, or do something like that. He just never got too involved with any activities. Basically, it was a lack of time.



WEIMER: When did retirement beckon for him?

BERGMAN: Well, I don't know whether he ever thought about retiring before sixty-five until they set some kind of program where they made it too good to turn down at sixty-two.

KLEIN: I think that Norm—one of the things he did was lead the department from a financially penurious state into one in which there were significant improvements in funds that were coming through private practice. He was instrumental, I think, in the School and helping that, at least from the Anesthesia Department; the Anesthesia Department generated a fair amount of funds which we were able to keep. And he also, with my help, set up a departmental “slush fund,” if you will, to channel some of that money into a research educational fund, which eventually then funded our research, to a significant extent—other than the grants, of course; and also for travel, which prior to that time was dependent upon minimal funds from the school itself. So, he did that. But, along with that money came the problem of increased demands for service; and so there were increasing numbers of operations, increasing amounts of time required to do the work. One thing that Norm chafed under was the fact the add-on list in the operating room got longer and longer, and he felt that surgeons ought to be able to schedule their operations a little better and that they wouldn't create the long hours of anesthesia. I think that he was an idealist at this part and he obviously was fighting a losing battle. So, I think this is one of the reasons why he stepped down.

BERGMAN: Well, I think he also had a change of what he wanted to do. Basically, he really got very interested in the history of anesthesia. And I'm trying to think back on when that actually started. It possibly started in '63-'64, when we were in England. We did do a lot of traveling around, and I'm sure he touched on the fringes of the history; and I don't know exactly when it developed, but it got to the point that he really wanted to do something else. And when this opportunity came here for him to retire at an earlier age he just said, “Yep, fine. That's what I'm going to do.” And then he basically devoted himself to the history of anesthesia, the research part of it.

KLEIN: He was for a few years—I don't know how many—let's see: he was chair from '71 and he retired in '89, so he actually remained on the faculty...

BERGMAN: He did, yes.

KLEIN: ...for another seven years.

BERGMAN: He did take—I think he worked it out with Dr. Stevens that he did have an extra day, and I'm not quite sure what he did on those extra days, but I suspect he was doing history research. The library was able and was very accommodating to him as far as getting materials. So, I mean, he really, he got so interested in that, that when the first opportunity came to leave he did.

WEIMER: I'd like to make a note that his book *The Genesis of Surgical Anesthesia* was very well received.

BERGMAN: Yes, I was amazed.

KENDRICK: You didn't know it would have such a wide audience [laughter]?

KLEIN: It was considered, I think, you know, the ultimate text, the beginnings of anesthesia, actually prior to the actual start of anesthesia. It's a large book and extremely well documented. I don't know how many references are in it.

BERGMAN: A lot that didn't go in there.

KENDRICK: And what have you done with those files? Have you given those to the Wood Museum?

BERGMAN: I sent most of the books that he had collected on history of anesthesia that had been written, to the Wood Library. I think I shipped off five or six boxes to them. And I do have copies of his manuscript; I kept everything. I have a lot of reprints and papers that he had written. But basically, you know—everybody's got a book in the family [laughter]. We've just about covered everyone, I think.

KLEIN: I think it would be nice to, if you at some point want to leave all his papers to a library here. I think that Angela and I will be trying to establish adding more and more information regarding our department, and I think they would be a very nice addition to whatever we are able to dig up.

BERGMAN: You know a lot of those things went on the computer, and I'm not sure—when I showed them to David the other day, because I was asking about all the disks, he said, "Well, these aren't any good anymore." And what he implied was that you couldn't use them any longer and I'm not sure whether that's accurate or not.

KLEIN: Because they're the large floppies? Are they the five and a half inch?

BERGMAN: Yeah, you know it was DOS, which was a whole different system. I'm just not quite sure what is available; I'll ask David again about it.

KLEIN: We have people here who might be able to restore—

KENDRICK: Yeah, retrieve it and transfer it into more of a modern format or something like that.

KLEIN: His being honored, being a Laureate of History of Anesthesia occurred posthumously; would you like to talk about that briefly? I have, by the way, which will be included in those papers, his program from that period of time, from that meeting, rather; and his being, I guess, nominated? Or, you're appointed.

BERGMAN: Well, you're nominated.

KLEIN: Invested.

BERGMAN: Invested, yeah. It was an investiture.

KLEIN: Vested as the Laureate posthumously.

BERGMAN: He knew about it though before he...

KLEIN: Right, he knew he was going to have it. Actually, it occurred a year before that he had been told.

BERGMAN: Yeah, I think he found out about two months before he died, something like that.

WEIMER: I wanted to ask if anybody had any other questions. I have one last one. And Betty, I want to give you an opportunity to add something if we failed to mention it.

BERGMAN: Well, I think you probably pretty well covered his career.

KLEIN: What about his interest in astronomy?

BERGMAN: Well, that developed after he retired, too. Yup, under the Arizona skies at night, he got out his telescope. It was gorgeous. I must admit, the sky was beautiful down there.

KENDRICK: And was his health always good until his final illness? Was he generally...

BERGMAN: Well, he had two bypass surgeries. He had two or three other surgeries, and he had prostate surgery. He had health problems. I mean, he recovered from most of them pretty well, even the second bypass. He recovered pretty well, but it was the other problem that developed afterwards. And that may have been his own fault, unfortunately.

KLEIN: Well he pictured himself as professorial with his pipe and...

BERGMAN: Yes, well.

KLEIN: He smoked up until...?

BERGMAN: Oh, but he quit twenty years before—

KLEIN: Twenty-four.

BERGMAN: Yeah, over twenty years, I think, before he died.

KLEIN: Yeah, well sometimes he was smoking here yet.

BERGMAN: Was he really?

KLEIN: Yeah.

BERGMAN: How late was that?

BERGMAN: Getting all his old secrets...

KLEIN: I would say mid-seventies probably.

EVERYONE: Twenty years.

BERGMAN: Because I know—I said, “Why don’t you quit smoking,” because by this time so many people *had* stopped, in the seventies. And he said, “When I have the first indication that I have a problem, I’ll quit.” So he had just come back from Arizona to, I think it was a Board—you know, the [questionnaire], the Board. And he was outside doing yard work and came in and said, “I don’t feel too well. I’m going to sit for few minutes.” And he sat for a few minutes and then he said, “I’ve got some pain in my chest.” And I said, “Fine. Get in the car. You’re going to the hospital.” And he said no, and I said yes and I won out. So on the way to the hospital I said, “You just realized, you quit smoking.” [Laughter] And he did. I think it was really hard for him after all those years.

KENDRICK: And, did that come during the time that he still had his professorship here?

BERGMAN: That was here. That was, it was about ’77 when that happened. Something like that.

KENDRICK: And was he instrumental in helping Dr. Stevens come here?

BERGMAN: I don’t know about the recruiting part of it. I really don’t. I’m not sure that—I don’t think he knew Dr. Stevens before he came.

KENDRICK: And again there was an interim, I believe, between Dr. Bergman and Dr. Stevens. Isn’t that the year that Dr. Branford served as interim chair?

KLEIN: Yes, about a year.

WEIMER: Looking back at Dr. Bergman’s career, what do you think he would have been the most proud of? And, what are you the most proud of?

BERGMAN: Well, I think all his accomplishments. The other thing was that I was impressed with, that I found out from Dr. Nunn, was that he had been given the Classic Citation award from the *British Journal of Anaesthesia* and supposedly he is the only American that has one. And this is from research done in 1963-64, which has been quoted so many times; they give it this special recognition. Then also, his accomplishments, and his book in particular; I thought, “Where’s he going with this?” and so when it was finished and everything, I was really quite astonished and quite proud that he had done all the work because it was a tremendous amount of work.

KLEIN: My final comment is that I think that Norm was probably the smartest man that I ever knew. He was a mathematician and he would sit when he was—

BERGMAN: Self-taught.

KLEIN: Self-taught and he would sit there and work out equations while he was between cases and things of this nature, he’d sit there playing with numbers. And one time, we had a Christmas party and we decided to play Trivial Pursuit, rotational Trivial Pursuit, and each person would be able to get their own score and then we’d rotate around people. Well, the obvious winner was Norm; I mean he had a heck of a lot more points than anybody else.

BERGMAN: He was full of trivia [laughter].

KLEIN: But he was a very knowledgeable man; I think he was the smartest man that I ever met. If you’d ask him a question, he knew the answer.

BERGMAN: He retained a lot of what he read, which a lot of us don’t.

KENDRICK: My first knowledge of Dr. Bergman came when I was going to make the move from internal medicine training into anesthesiology training and I was here in Portland over at Providence, and as I was explaining this new career plan to one of my teachers, Dr. Holdrick Camera, an endocrinologist there, he said, “Dr. Bergman saved my life.” And I said, “Oh really.” And he said, “Yes,” he said, “I was having some kind of operation”—I don’t remember the details—and he said, “They had some problem with my airway and Dr. Bergman came in and intubated me and saved my life.” And clearly that was his ultimate endorsement for what a fine physician Dr. Bergman was, and so, again, the first time I actually met him I had that comment running through my mind.

BERGMAN: Well, these are the kinds of things that I never heard about, unless they were from someone else.

WEIMER: Well, if that is it, I want to say thank you so very much. It’s been delightful.

BERGMAN: You’re quite welcome.

[End of Interview]

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