

University of Texas at San Antonio Archives and Special Collections

MS 317. Archives for Research on Women and Gender Oral History Project

Helen Cloud Austin Transcript, May 27, 1997

Helen Cloud Austin: Now this is the Myra Davis Hemmings Resource Center.

Tori Beckman-Wilson: O.K. And it's also the headquarters of your sorority.

HCA: Yes. The sorority sponsors. So we are part of the sorority, but the facility is the Myra Davis Hemmings Resource Center. And I have been a board member since inception, and chairman of the board since nineteen and eighty, nineteen nintey-one.

TBW: This is Tori Beckman-Wilson, I'm interviewing Helen Cloud Austin on March, excuse me, May twenty-seventh, nineteen ninety-seven. So, we were looking, is this the first application you submitted to the state hospital?

HCA: Uh-huh, Texas State Hospital.

TBW: O.K., that was nineteen sixty-two. Now did they, was this rule...

HCA: It was the policy of the state.

TBW: Of the state.

HCA: Of the whole state, that blacks could not be hired at that time. That was the policy.

TBW: Was that written down? Did you see it?

HCA: Yes, it was written down. And Miss Winegarten, she got it from someplace, but it's in her book. Uh-huh. I guess I was the first in the whole state, because, uh, they weren't hiring blacks at all. But I know I was the first for the San Antonio State Hospital, first black hired on professional staff.

TBW: But they would hire blacks to do things like janitorial work and things like that.

HCA: They had one or two. They had one or two.

TBW: Really, so just period, they didn't hire.

HCA: Uh-huh. It was the policy of the state that they would not hire blacks on the professional staff. And when I came here, I had my master's degree and had quite a bit of experience, because I finished Kent, the Raymond A. Kent School of Social Work in nineteen fifty-three and this was sixty-two. So I had worked in Chicago and Cincinnati before coming here.

TBW: Was the job in Cincinnati the first one you had after you graduated from Kent?

HCA: No, I worked in Cook County Hospital in Chicago, Illinois as my first job. At the psychopathic hospital.

TBW: And what years was that?

HCA: I went there in fifty-three and stayed 'til fifty-seven, and then I went to Illinois Children's Home and Aid, an adoption agency, and stayed for one year. And then I came to Cincinnati. And I think, probably fifty-nine, and stayed until we came here in sixty-two.

TBW: So can you tell me a little bit about that first job in the psychopathic hospital? Was that for adults?

HCA: Psychopathic hospital. For adults, uh-huh, which is a part of Cook County Hospital. And there, um, I was one of the many social workers because, uh, it was a good place for social workers to come and have their beginning training, in this huge hospital. Uh, so primarily, we were taking social history data, working with families and also with patients in getting them reunited and what not. But it was a general psychiatric hospital.

TBW: So how did the people end up in there?

HCA: Uh, O.K., well, they had psychiatric problems, and um, something that was keeping them from being able to function in the community. So they would get, um, papers on them and they would bring them out to the psychopathic hospital. And they would stay there for about three weeks and have a thorough examination, and then if they had not recovered enough to go back to the community, they would go to one of the other four outlying state hospitals.

TBW: So it was kind of like a triage thing you're doing there, checking them in and out and seeing if you can do anything immediately.

HCA: Uh-huh. That's right.

TBW: Is that tough work?

HCA: No. I've always enjoyed it. My whole experience really has been in these psychiatric hospitals, except for one brief year I was in um, adoption.

TBW: Right, and that was the job after the...

HCA: After the Cook County Hospital. Uh-huh. I worked there for one year, and then back to Cincinnati and was at Longview State Hospital, which is the largest state hospital in Ohio. It's located in Cincinnati.

TBW: So you had many years of experience before being employed here in San Antonio.

HCA: Three or four, yeah. But it was just a policy that, uh, they were not hiring blacks on professional staff.

TBW: Did you know that before you went and filled out the application, or did that just kind of take you by surprise?

HCA: Uh, well, we knew there had been a practice not to do it. But Mary Lawhorn (sp?) who was a director of social service at the hospital, encouraged me to come and make a trial test out of it.

TBW: Oh, I see, so you kind of knew what you were in for once you got started.

HCA: Uh-huh. Yeah. And then Henry B. Gonzales, you were reading my material, was really interested in really helping me, you know, to break some ground. So you just never know what you're going to have to come up against.

TBW: And it seems like it would take an incredible amount of courage to stand up in the face of something like that.

HCA: Uh-huh. Well, I stayed there for twenty-three years. For twenty-three years. In nineteen

seventy-six, I became Director of Social Service.

TBW: How ironic, but how perfect. Once you were turned away and now you're in charge. Were there many of the people still there that you had started with, or that you'd known for that long?

HCA: Uh, oh yes. Our social service department had a very low turnover. Very low turnover. And at that time, we had a number of patients, around three thousand, and it was just like a big family. Once you got in, and once they were able to accept you and you could accept them, but, uh, I was very well respected, and I respected everybody else. And I did quite a bit of work outside of the hospital, because we covered, at that time, thirty-three counties. So that went to Corpus Christi, back up to Wharton, over to Victoria and back to San Antonio, so it was a large area. So I really did quite a bit of work with Nueces County, that's Corpus Christi, to a less extent Victoria.

TBW: So did you have to, did you physically travel down there? And what kinds of things did you do while you were there?

HCA: Uh, one of the things—I'm going to let you take that and read it—one of the things that we did was try to work with existing agencies there, and that was the Metro Health Association in Corpus Christi at that time. And the superintendent, Doctor Otera (sp?) wrote a letter asking—well, I think that I had already made a contact and I was going—but Doctor Otera, the head of our hospital, was instrumental in writing, letting them know how much they appreciated, we appreciated my coming into the community, and the first time I went, I think they set up around thirteen agencies and they had a luncheon and I was able to speak with the people, telling them about the need as far as communication and for them to come and visit the patients at the hospital. Because, at that time, some of the patients had not seen their families since they had been here, you know. And they had no idea how they were existing or anything. So we set up two programs, and one was SASH mobile.

TBW: O.K., I saw that, that's s-a-s-h.

HCA: Uh-huh, and that meant that once every three months, family members or any other person who

wanted to come, knew the patient, could come up on Greyhound bus and the cost was six dollars, round trip. And, uh, if they had it, that was fine, but if not, the Metro Association in Corpus Christi picked up the tab. So, they had some nice outings up here, and was able to visit with the patients and once they saw them in a different light, it made it real nice. And then the other program we had was Splash for SASH. And we would go down annually, on the beach, and you'd be surprised at how much families enjoyed coming out, eating, swimming...

TBW: Oh, you'd bring patients and their families for a trip to the beach?

HCA: Yeah. The patients from the hospital and the families from the community. So we would meet there. The Metro Association and all the agencies, HEB and what not, which furnished the food, and it was a real nice gathering.

TBW: And did you help institute this? Were you the first person? Your idea?

HCA: Yeah, it was my brainchild.

TBW: How wonderful, and what year was that?

HCA: Nineteen sixty-eight, I think that was the first. And we'd go down every year and it was a big thing.

TBW: Well, I'm sure people looked forward to it.

HCA: Yeah, they sure did look forward to it. So that was another program. And then the other program that we started with Corpus was bringing the judges and their people up to the hospital. And they were able to visit with our legal people and all the papers, you know, they were able to talk about the need for this and the need for that. But the idea of bringing the judges in and giving them an idea of what happens, what happens to the patient while they're here.

TBW: The judges who would decide that the patients would be assigned to that hospital in the first place?

HCA: Mm-hmm.

TBW: So you give the people who make those decisions—were a lot of people committed without, or were they sent there by judges a lot?

HCA: Mm-hmm, you have to be committed. You have to be committed to this hospital.

TBW: Oh, so this isn't a voluntary...

HCA: Yeah, it was by commitment, all of them came there. So it gave them an idea of where the patients were coming and then what to expect while they were here, and then they would return home. And another thing that they did as a result of their coming was to set all the patients up with social workers from the hospital. And this was a humane thing, because just like here and a lot of the other places, they would wait until they got a carload and bring all the patients up at one time. But the system we had from Corpus Christi, every Thursday, and this is still in process, all the people who need to come to the hospital are brought up by social workers. And this is good for their recovery, because they know they're not going to be stuck up here, they know that once they got well, Abraham will be here to get them. He's the person who started it. So, that was real therapeutic.

TBW: That seems like a real, and I don't know that much about the history of psychiatric treatment in the U.S., but it seems to me that it was in the probably early sixties that the whole attitude kind of changed a bit. Did you notice that?

HCA: Yeah. Different, uh, modalities for treatment was changing at that time. Because I came along, they were doing lobotomies and they're doing shock treatment, and even after I first went to the hospital I think for about five years, they were doing shock treatment.

TBW: This one?

HCA: At SASH. But now, no more. But the patients, having to undergo that, they just dreaded coming to the hospital. But after they were able to get on medication and get some therapy, group as well as individual, it really made a difference. And what we always try to do is get the patient to get some insight as to why it was necessary for them to come back to the hospital. Some of them would

forget the things that they could do in order not to have to come back.

TBW: And that was the job of the social worker, was to get them back into...

HCA: What we were saying was, you have some reason to come to the hospital. No one just doesn't pick you up and bring you. Your behavior brings you to the hospital. So we wanted them to come up with some idea of if they knew they were getting sick again, what could they do to prevent it? If it was teenage children, how do you work with them if not for them to get on your nerves, or whatever. If it was a spousal situation, what can you do not to trigger, you know, some insight therapy. I think we were very good on that.

TBW: And just the whole idea of taking people, getting them together with their families, out in public, in society. That seems like a real break from the past, kind of looking at mental patients as if they were contagious or something.

HCA: That's right. You got to educate the community. You got to educate the community. It just happened that we wanted to go over there with this halfway house program, you know the people in that community, they just couldn't tolerate it. But once we got there, and we always said, we're going to put the cream of the crop over there, we're not going to put these guys going to get in trouble, but at the same time, it was a matter of educating.

TBW: So you worked hard at educating the community as well as the people at the hospital. That must have been a lot of work.

HCA: Yeah. And when I first went, it was three thousand some patients. And of course, everyone had been there for a long time, staff and patients. And some of the patients was smarter than the staff. And the staff really didn't want to give up those patients to go to community, they would do anything to camouflage some of them leaving, you know. They'd say, "Oh, Miss Austin, Miss Austin..." you know. I'd say, "Now they'll do better in the community, they're doing better, let's just let them go." Well, it was a matter, really of educating them.

TBW: I suppose you would get attached. So you had a lot of different kinds of experiences before you came to San Antonio. And, as you said, you moved here because your husband moved here.

HCA: Was transferred to Kelly Air Force Base.

TBW: Where was he before that?

HCA: He was at Wright-Patterson Field in Dayton, Ohio. And I was working at Longview State Hospital in Cincinnati.

TBW: So everything was working well, and life was good and then you moved to San Antonio.

HCA: Yeah. Didn't no one ever tell me I would be going to San Antonio, out of my comfort zone, so to speak.

TBW: So here you are, still. And you went to apply, now did they take your application? Did they just say, "Thank you for your application," or did they say anything?

HCA: No, they took my application, they took it. But the personnel man was a Mister Knocker (sp?), and he was very nice. Personnel was on the second floor, and he was, he just took me by the arm and said, [low voice] "Miss Austin, now at this time, we're just not hiring, not at this time." And then they went on to have an incident at the hospital, and a Doctor E.E. Bennett (sp?) was the superintendent at that time, and, but he was fired by central office. Now for what reason, I don't know. And I was working at the Protestant Children's Home at that time, here in San Antonio. Because I got a job, it wasn't that, but I just couldn't get a job in the field that I liked and was really trained for, psychiatric social worker. But anyway, Doctor Bennett, God bless his heart, came out there and applied for a job at the Protestant Children's Home, and there I was, standing up looking at him. [laughs] So anyway, he was a very reknowned doctor. I think, from his reputation, but something happened with central office and he was fired, so he and his wife, I think, went to New Orleans. But you never know who is going to be looking at you. And if I hadn't been qualified, I wouldn't [unintelligible], so that wasn't his fault, that was just the state policy.

TBW: And so did you hear back? That obviously wasn't the end of it, because you ended up getting hired. How did you go about testing and trying to get your foot in the door?

HCA: O.K. Henry B. Gonzalez, and Paul Thompson, he used to write this column in the Express. I got all that information, but anyway, I wrote to Paul Thompson, and then Paul Thompson wrote to Doctor Bennett. And Doctor Bennett came out with a little saying that, uh, there might be some repercussions if blacks had to work with the patients. And then he also said that they were just getting Latin American workers there, four years before that time, but they were attending, they were on lower level, you know. But he just thought it wouldn't work out. So I proceeded to write him a letter. [laughs] Telling him about my experiences and that it would work out. But it wasn't Doctor Bennett, I never want to place it on him, it was just a policy of the state. But I do think Henry B. Gonzalez had more to do with it than anybody else.

TBW: With removing that policy. How was it removed? Was it done through the legislature?

HCA: Yes, I think it was done through central office, I don't think it was a legislative thing, I think it was just done through central office.

TBW: And that was in?

HCA: Nineteen sixty five. I went to work there February eighth, nineteen sixty-five. I applied in nineteen sixty-two.

TBW: O.K., so it was three years.

HCA: Three years.

TBW: How did that, how did that make you feel? I can't, I'm having a hard time imagining...

HCA: Well, I think it was one of those things, course you had to be prepared for, moving in and being the first in so many situations. And I had been the first at University of Louisville, and I had been a first in a number of situations, so you know, you just have to kind of spare your time, knowing that it's going to happen, but when. So I went to work at the tuberculosis control board downtown and then I

went to work out at Protestant Children's Home. And I didn't feel badly about it, because there was always something going on. But I think if I'd been dependent on just going there, and not going somewhere else, it would have been a much worse feeling. But I guess I just always lived in hope, and knew where I was going. And Doctor Otero, O-t-e-r-o—you will see a letter in there from him—but he came to work in November, he was Cuban. And then in February, he told them to go upstairs and look in the files and see if he had any black professionals. So Mister A.C. Cardenas did that and brought my application down to him, that's why I know they took the application, and then he had the secretaries to call me two or three times, but I liked my job at Protestant Children's Home, I really did. And I just didn't want to make the move then, so they called me three times. And then the fourth time was on Tuesday afternoon. And Doctor Otero came on the phone and said, "Miss Austin, you got to make up your mind." And I said, "Alright Doctor Otero, I have to go home and talk it over with my husband, and if I decide, I'll call you." So, that's how it happened.

TBW: That must have been a real good feeling, when you got that call. [pause in tape]

TBW: Now you said, you mentioned another first at the University of Kentucky?

HCA: University of Louisville. I was the second black to go to the Kent School of Social Work, the second black. And let's see, what else was I a first in?

TBW: What year was that? That you went to social work school?

HCA: Social work school? Fifty-one to fifty-three. Fifty-one to fifty-three.

TBW: And that was before Brown versus the Board of Education. Was that a public school or a private institution?

HCA: University of Louisville is private, pretty much private. But Louisville, I must say, is a very progressive town. In nineteen fifty-one, they integrated high schools. It came out on the radio that they were going to integrate. And they required all the black teachers to go to the University of Indiana, if they didn't come up to standards, so to speak. So Louisville is very progressive. And when

I was doing my internship up to Louisville General Hospital, they integrated overnight. We left one night and came back the next day, and they had colored female surgery, colored female medical and all of that, but they changed those beds around overnight, yes, just like that.

TBW: Well, it just shows how much people really can accomplish, if everybody just gets with it and does it.

HCA: Yeah, in the schools, it really worked out quite well.

TBW: That's great, and there wasn't any trouble, or nobody having a real problem?

HCA: No riots or anything.

TBW: That's wonderful.

HCA: And that's Louisville.

TBW: Unfortunately, the only ones we ever hear about are the ones where there was trouble. Well, that's wonderful. So you grew up in Kentucky.

HCA: I grew up, I was born in Harlan, Kentucky. And then when I finished high school, then my parents and I—and my brother was already in Louisville—we came to Louisville, and that's where I stayed.

TBW: And started university there. What made you decide to be a social worker?

HCA: That's really interesting. Growing up in this little small town, the tradition had been that you would come to Frankfort, which was Kentucky State, get your teacher's certificate, go back home, marry and just get lost, so to speak. But I said, "No, I'm not going to do that." So I came to Louisville and worked at the YWCA as Y teen director and then the idea came up for me to go to the school of social work. It was talked about in the community and so I said, "I want to go." So I told my father that I wanted to go, and some of his friends said, "Well, she'll never make any money in social work." That's the view about social workers, you know, kind of being drab and not any potential. So anyway, that's how I got into social work, isn't that something?

TBW: Good thing you didn't listen.

HCA: They said, "She's not going to make any money." They didn't know anything about social workers.

TBW: That's a long road, a lot of education. It's just amazing, the difference in fourteen years' time, between the time you got the job and you were named Chief. Now what were steps in between? How did you work your way up to that position?

HCA: O.K., well, I just took on my position, working on the wards with the patients, with the families and apparently had some pretty good skills. Because you must realize, that when I went to work at the hospital, there was only probably two people with a master's degree in social work. The others call themselves social workers, but they didn't have the training. I think that's one of the bad things, a lot of people call themselves social workers, but you got to look back and see what their background, what their training, what their degrees are in, you know. Just like a lot of people could call themselves nurses, you know, but what kind of nurse?

TBW: Yes, LVN, RN or what?

HCA: So the same with social work. So when I went there, I had some skills and having worked in the field, so I was willing to try a lot of things, just kind of experimenting. And the community was my big forte, yeah. That's where I really became known.

TBW: That's great.

HCA: And then another thing that helped in selection for the uh, Social Worker of the Year was I had our patients to vote, along with personnel. And a lot of personnel said, "Miss Austin, we never knew what it took to vote." Yeah. So we had a big voter registration there. And you see, when you go into the hospital, according to your commitment, and a lot of them come in on voluntary or ninety day commitment, and you don't lose your civil rights. You do not lose your civil rights.

TBW: On the short term commitment.

HCA: On the short term commitment. So you can sign any kind of paper, you know, just like you and I, and certain people can vote.

TBW: Anything longer than ninety days that situation changes?

HCA: It goes over to involuntary, involuntary. And then you do lose your rights. Well, see how many patients was there that was able to vote? And we took them over to McCreless [a nearby shopping mall]. Oh my. [laughs]

TBW: And how did that go?

HCA: Beautiful, beautiful. No problem. Sometimes you got to hit them on the hand a little, “Act right, act right.” No, it was no problem, they were very nice.

TBW: When did you start doing that?

HCA: The voting registration? The year is in my papers, I saw it last night. I think it was probably the eighty election, I think it was the eighty election.

TBW: So it wasn't that long ago, and nobody had thought to even...

HCA: To do anything like that. And I was really glad about the staff, you know. And this is what you usually get on the ward, people like that. And some of the other people who just really hadn't given much thought to voting, you know, some of the professionals. But some of the attendants they came up and personally thanked me for allowing them to go along and get the experience. First time voting.

TBW: Do you think, do you think that kind of indicates the difference between someone who really hasn't had any training in social work and someone who has, is being able to consider different options, being able to think about different alternatives. Because it sounds like you probably surprised people quite a bit with some of your ideas.

HCA: Yeah, innovative ideas.

TBW: Yeah.

HCA: So it did. And people were cooperative, anything that Helen would bring up, [laughs] they would, not bragging, but it was always something with a lot of enthusiasm.

TBW: All it takes is one person. Well, it sounds like you were right in the frontrunners here in San Antonio in that change in the way now patients are treated.

HCA: I would say so, because the people were just out there, and of course, there wasn't any blacks included, wasn't any community work.

TBW: Wasn't any blacks included on the staff, or the patients?

HCA: They didn't bring patients, black patients into the hospital until nineteen sixty-four.

TBW: Where did they go?

HCA: Austin.

TBW: They had to go all the way to Austin?

HCA: Had to go all the way to Austin. And this was a big thing with Hattie Briscoe. Hattie Briscoe, our sorority had the national meeting at Palmer House in Chicago, and that was nineteen sixty. And they had a workshop on mental health, and Hattie Briscoe was there. Of course, she was telling me about what happens to the patients here, I think she just had an experience the night before she came to Chicago and it was fresh on her mind. And she was saying that this lady, we knew she was sick and she was in need of treatment. But they were going to keep her there in jail until they got a carload and then they took them to Austin State Hospital.

TBW: Kept them in jail, until they had enough to make it worth the drive.

HCA: That was true. And of course, we're all running behind Hattie, of course, she's very dramatic and said, "No, no, no, you can do this, you can do that." So she came back and talked to a Doctor Bambase (sp?) and I think things kind of got to rolling there. So there's a number of factors, you know, when you put it all together. But anyway, Hattie was [end of side one] [side two] And then, when my husband came in, they were closing Wright-Patterson field out, as far as electronics was concerned, he

said, "We can go four other places," but he mentioned San Antonio. So I said, "Now, I know Hattie Briscoe, and I know the Alamo," but that was all I knew about San Antonio in coming to, in making the decision to come here, in addition to my parents living, then, in Louisville, so it was closer than any other place that we could have gone. I came here and that's what was going on.

TBW: So did you find, you felt rewarded at the end of your work to get that policy lifted.

HCA: Mm-hmm. Yeah, I think it was real good. And in addition to that, uh, we were able to encourage eighteen people to return to the school of social work. Wharton (sp?) School to get their master's degree. Now there was another big plus, and I'm real proud of it. Because some of the kids, they would just work on and on and on, but unless you got your degree, you cannot do too much in social work, now. Now.

TBW: How about with a bachelor's degree? Is that limiting?

HCA: Yeah, you get a BSW now, a bachelor's in social work.

TBW: But that's still going to keep you at a lower level.

HCA: Yeah, because most ads now, most advertisements are asking for a master's level social worker. But at that particular time, some of them really fought it, because they just didn't see the need to go back, you know, to school. And their one cry was, "Well, I'm doing the same thing everybody else is doing." And I said, "Yes, you're doing it, but you're doing it without credentials." And eighteen were able to go back and get their social work degree, and that process is still going on today.

TBW: That's wonderful. Do you go back to the hospital very often, and see people?

HCA: Oh yeah. When I first left hospital, I had been working with the volunteer department—and I have a lot of material on that—so I kept in contact and I became chairman of the volunteer department, so that kept me involved.

TBW: You have not slowed down a bit, have you?

HCA: I have not slowed down.

TBW: Ten years after retirement, sounds like you're as busy as ever.

HCA: Yeah. And I was chairman of the volunteer department, I think, for about four years. And I don't go with them now, but I do go back to the meetings and they give me awards and still. [laughs] I got all that—so maybe it's good for us to talk, maybe it will have a little more meaning to it.

TBW: So we, you got on in sixty-five, you were working your way up and you instituted all these innovative programs on the way, surprising people and impressing people, and now in nineteen eighty-four was it? You got the big award, social worker of the year. How did that come about? And were you surprised?

HCA: Well, I was surprised when I got national. I sure was. I came in one day from lunch, and Mister Collins, Mister Collins is still living, he was a teacher at the Wharton (sp?) School and he was working with national some way, and he says, "Helen are you sitting down?" And I said, "Yes, Mister Collins," 'cause I ran in to get the phone. And he said, "You have just been named the National Social Worker of the Year." Isn't that something? But, yeah, I was real surprised about that. But before that time, you will see from the material, I was the Social Worker of San Antonio, and the Social Worker for the state and then national.

TBW: So you get nominated locally and you just get kind of continually nominated again.

HCA: Yeah. And I was the first Texan to get all three. The first Texan, you'll read it. I'm so glad we're having this chance to have you read this material it will come back to you.

TBW: That is an amazing career.

HCA: Yeah. It really is incredible. And I'd like to say that my coming to San Antonio opened up new territories for me. Because in Cincinnati, fine, you know, I had a prestigious job and what not, but I don't think I would have had the opportunities to really explore and make things happen.

TBW: That's true, and I think some people might look at your experience when you first got here as just the worst possible thing, the door slammed in your face, and what can you do?

HCA: What can you do? That's right. But bloom where you are. I gave a talk on that at my church, bloom where you are, you know, don't sit back and don't hold back, because God has a plan for you. And what if I had really just stopped. I can't get a job in this place, but I got two jobs and didn't want to go when finally, Doctor Otero came on the line and said, "Miss Austin, you must give an answer." Yes, we talked about that.

TBW: I'll call you in a couple days.

HCA: Yeah, but I called him.

TBW: O.K., so you told me about Cook County, the first, your first job. Now what about Longview?

HCA: O.K., when I went to Longview, I worked on the inpatient section. Once again working on the ward with the patient and families.

TBW: Voluntary? Involuntary? Both?

HCA: Mm-hmm. Both, right. And then the opening came for director of outpatient, that is discharging patients out into the community and what not. So I became director of outpatient department, and that was a first for blacks, because you had to have a lot of community involvement. And then we were getting patients out into nursing homes, and for blacks to go and negotiate and do all those things, it really made a difference. But Doctor Fuess, F-u-e-s-s, would call me, and say, "Miss Austin, we got to go, we got to go," so I was the one who was kind of the mediator. And did a lot of good things.

TBW: Was there ever any kind of resistance or any problem that you ever faced when dealing with people?

HCA: No. The only thing that I ever had a little repercussion, I never will forget it, we used to have the white coats when I was doing my intern at the local general hospital. And I went on the ward one day, and this was a very poor white man, I knew him. And he came over and said very loudly, "Gal, what time is it?" And he just kind of stunned me. Everybody just stopped to see what my reaction was

going to be. His name was Mister Bauer (sp?), and I said, "Mister Bauer, it is three twenty," you know, we just kind of dropped it like that. That was only time I ever [laughs]. I'm sure a lot of times they would want to say things, or do things, but I think it's just the way that you respect them and they respect you. And I did a lot of things for the patients and the families, you know, out of compassion. Some things had never been done before.

TBW: That seems like a constant theme through your whole career, is that you wanted to help the patients and their families, and you wanted to help integrate them back into the community. Which is new stuff in the fifties. Warehousing, wasn't that the way to deal with those patients?

HCA: Yeah. Just like when I went to the hospital, there were three thousand patients, and now I think there is around a thousand patients out there. But I must say that they have community clinics, just like the MHMR center here in San Antonio, and Corpus Christi has one and Victoria. But we at the hospital had to work with them in order to make, you know, their experience back in the community very meaningful. And we helped them to hire staff, and indicate what kind of staff was needed in working with patients and was kind of a forerunner for them, so to speak, in these communities. Yeah, you'll read about that. And I'm so glad, like I say, to have this opportunity to talk with you, 'cause I want you to take some of this material.

TBW: I'm looking forward to reading in depth.

HCA: Yeah. Where it says the doctor was saying that he thought he feared for me, moving to San Antonio. [Referring to a personal letter from a former supervisor at Longview Hospital.]

TBW: Yeah, I was kind of surprised by how open he was about that.

HCA: Oh, yes, he was a good man. A good man, oh. And he said, "Helen, you and your husband"—I'll never forget it. His background was that he was raised in an orphanage. In Oregon, I think, and he really had that tender touch. And he would tell us about how scarce food was and on Thursdays, he always fasted, in order to give other people his food, and what not. That was one of his

things that he did. So anyway, he was a good person, so read that with interest.

TBW: Good thing you didn't bother you. Were you nervous at all, were you apprehensive at all when you started at San Antonio State Hospital?

HCA: No. I really wasn't, it was just one of those things. I guess what I thought was, I paid the price, I'm here. But people looked at you, and you just changed some policies as you went along, even in personnel. And I remember, one man, he used to come around the table and get paid and everybody was standing in line, of course I was making quite a bit more than any of them were making, and this man says, "Miss Austin, you get so much money, what do you do with it?" I said, "Well, you know the food costs the same for me as it does for you." So you always had to have something to say in order not to put them down, you know.

TBW: Right, it seems like that would take an extraordinary amount of restraint. Did you ever, I mean, was it ever, immediately wanted to respond with anger? Ever?

HCA: No, you really got to take it in stride, and I think one of my sayings my mother used to have was consider the source. Consider the source, you know. So I couldn't look down on people, I could not look down on people, just let them have their ventilation, because you have to know who you are. You got to know who you are, and if you have your roots, you might grow this way, you might grow that way, but you're not going to fall down. No. And I had a pretty nice car, everybody come around to see me, I had a nineteen fifty-seven Chrysler, you know, one of the newer cars, and when I would pull up, you know—and I think what you have to say, you've got to have your own self-esteem. Know who you are.

TBW: And that's what got you through.

HCA: Uh-huh, and I would touch. Touch is another thing that really gets people.

TBW: That's important, it means that you're really there.

HCA: Yeah. I do a lot of touching and lot of eye to eye. And all of those things are things that just

really ingratiate people to you.

TBW: So how could anybody give you a bad time after they got to know you? You've been so many, you've had so many just incredible firsts, you've been a pioneer in so many different ways, and to maintain an attitude such as yours is incredible.

HCA: I think you really have to—but my mother was a community person, and you'll read in the paper where she used to do a lot of volunteer community work, and my first encounter with psychiatric patients was at the hospital in Louisville, Kentucky. And she used to go out on the hottest days and take ice cream and cake down to the black patients. And they looked forward to her coming. And then she had a clothing room in our house, for people that needed clothing. And then at Thanksgiving and Christmas she would take a sixteen-ounce can of peaches and a cake and serve a thousand people. She could do so much with food.

TBW: Yes, what a wonderful example.

HCA: Yeah, so I had that background.

TBW: So what did your mother do?

HCA: My mother was a cateress. And if I had been interested in catering work, we could have had one of largest catering businesses in Louisville, because she was good with meats and cakes. And people used to come to the house and get what they wanted. Lady Baltimore cakes. Now when back when I was a child, she was getting six dollars for a Lady Baltimore cake.

TBW: Lady Baltimore cakes. Now what are those?

HCA: Lady Baltimore cakes, they are white cakes, with white icing and then the icing had nuts, raisins and dates. And they were real good cakes, she was noted for her cakes. And her meats, her jam cakes and just any speciality like that. She was a good cateress.

TBW: And you could have jumped in there, had you been interested.

HCA: Had I been interested. You know what my daddy said, he said, "Helen if you don't get an

education, you're going to starve yourself to death." Now I can cook, and I know how to cook and I know how to flavor things, but I don't know, I just never did. But I was the only person who could work with my mother. People like that, I guess just that artist, you know, they can't have everybody around them. But I knew what to hand her and when, you know, and all of those kinds of things.

TBW: As well as when to go away.

HCA: Yeah. That's right. And when I was in Chicago, I used to go home every Christmas, and I remember one Christmas she had made twenty-three jam cakes. Now you never hear of jam cakes anymore, but she had made twenty-three jam cakes. And I got in there and we really worked together.

TBW: Those aren't the rolled up ones, are they?

HCA: No. These are jam, you put jam in the batter, you put blackberry jam in the batter. And they call them jam cakes.

TBW: Like, just stir it in.

HCA: Yeah, in the batter. It's a good cake, you don't hear of it anymore. Yeah, Lady Baltimores and jam cakes, those were the big cakes back then, because people didn't like fruitcake. They would rather have jam cakes. And I like jam cakes better than fruitcakes.

TBW: That sounds like a fun atmosphere to grow up in. And I think what you decided to do with your life is kind of an extension of the same thing. She fed people physically, and you're feeding their minds. It's not that different.

HCA: That's right. And I'm glad that I didn't—you know you look back over your life and sometimes you say, "Why didn't I do that, why didn't I do that?" But I came to here and Missus Fields had a friend in Houston and she had a big catering business in Houston. But you should have seen her legs, oh. Just really bursted and everything from walking and everything. She really had a big business and she had people who waited, you know, waiters and waitresses for her, big business in Houston. But, I said, "Lord, that's why you didn't want me to do that." Because I could have taken

that, what mama did and just really gone to town. But it just didn't interest me.

TBW: Well, we're glad you didn't.

HCA: Yeah.

TBW: I keep looking over this and noticing...

HCA: Well, if you want to turn that thing off, I can give you some materials. [pause in tape]

TBW: So they put the patients in tubs of cold water when they were disruptive.

HCA: yes.

TBW: And what did they hope to do, shock them into silence?

HCA: Calm them down. Calm them down.

TBW: Did it work?

HCA: Yeah, it worked. That was the mode of treatment back in those days. But you see, now they give them a shot with a needle and it calms them down.

TBW: How much difference is that, do you think, in your opinion?

HCA: Altogether different.

TBW: It just seems, it seems a lot more...

HCA: Humane, yeah.

TBW: I mean you squirt dogs with cold water when they're acting up.

HCA: Yeah. That's right. You know, I'm so sorry that the conservation society didn't save this building.

TBW: Why didn't they?

HCA: I don't know. There was talk about it, but this was history. And this was the main building, looked like a college town coming up through there.

TBW: Yeah, that's a pretty building.

HCA: Social services over here, psychology over there, and the superintendent was over here. Isn't

that something? I turned to Mister Knocker (sp?) the director of personnel, he was on the second floor. Yes, that was the building I went to. And they tore it down just about fifteen years ago. But the conservation society really should have preserved that building.

TBW: I wonder why they didn't do that? I'm surprised. Now where exactly is this? This is on the south west side?

HCA: I don't know. You know where McCreless is? McCreless shopping center? It's right down the street from there. Close in to town, which is unusual.

TBW: Well, it probably wasn't at one time, when they built it.

HCA: It wasn't, it wasn't.

TBW: That was probably way out there.

HCA: Well, you know where McCreless is, it's just about four minutes from McCreless. And when I first went there, they just had one entrance, and that was South Presa. But now it's open on New Braunfels.

TBW: So this whole building is gone now?

HCA: Mm-hmm. Well, the whole building, see this building [pointing to a photograph]. Yeah, see this building? Well, it stopped right there.

TBW: Oh, I see.

HCA: Yeah, it stopped right there. And in the back of this building, independent of it, was the beauty shop and barber shop. It was independent of this building. But isn't it beautiful?

TBW: Yes, it is, it really is. That's also a large piece of land.

HCA: Mm-hmm.

TBW: Is it still that open and the, probably houses around there, I would imagine.

HCA: No, it's fenced off. But now, they have put the state school on part of the land. The state school, and of course, they always had a tuberculosis building out there, a facility. It's on Military

Drive, it faces Military Drive. O.K. Inside, see [leafing through photo album]. So they've torn down all those old buildings and now it's very modern. Oh, this is where they kept the, let's see, three five and eight, the disturbed men for the most part. On the third in building eight. No, the disturbed ones were on the eighth floor, and when they begin to get better, they'd bring them down, and bring them down. So it was three, five and eight. Now I worked on all those wards.

TBW: Did you really? That was my next question. Did you work with men, primarily, or did you work with women, too?

HCA: Both. Yes.

TBW: Were people assigned to one or the other? Or you just kind went back and forth?

HCA: Just kind of went back and forth.

TBW: Would you be assigned to like the most, the people with the most severe problems, or you worked with everyone?

HCA: All of them.

TBW: So you had varied experience the whole time you were there.

HCA: Yeah, all levels.

TBW: Sounds like a good place to get your feet wet in the profession.

HCA: Mm-hmm. Well, Cook County, I really got...

TBW: Oh, no, not you, I meant others.

HCA: It is, it is. And we always say, if you've worked at the hospital, San Antonio State Hospital, any profession, any discipline, you know, you can work anyplace. And see, this is where they started tearing it down [referring to photo album].

TBW: Did you take these pictures?

HCA: No, the hospital took them. And if anybody retired back then, they gave us a book, so this was a book.

TBW: That's nice, but it's sad that that building's gone.

HCA: Yeah, San Antonio State Hospital, Helen Austin [reading off the front of the book]. So, I have all these pictures. Oh, this is All Faith Chapel. All Faith Chapel, mm-hmm. Robertos, I don't know if you know them or not, but they have a, what kind of shelter do they have? They sell food, party food. Robertos. Well, anyway, the mother, was interested in having this chapel here.

TBW: Really? And you said All Faiths Chapel. So everybody went. Did you encourage people to go to church?

HCA: Oh yeah. That's a big thing out there. I wish they would really go out there and capture every Sunday, all the wards go to church and we emphasize. And the attendants and everybody, they get them dressed and go to church, just like they're in town. And they have Catholic, Protestant and, let's see, Jewish, uh-huh, the Jewish Rabbi comes out. It's a big thing.

TBW: Well, it's another, just another step, it seems like to go back to life as everybody else.

HCA: That's right, it's just normal. And you'd be surprised. You see, some people are, when they start getting sick, well then one of the things that happens, they get hang-ups on religion, you know. So if they can go to church, out there, and then get some insight and some idea of why they're thinking the way they are, well, then it helps them. And this is my staff [referring to another photograph]. This was my staff. Thirty three. This one went back to school, she went back to school, he went back to school, Mister Cardenas went back to school. He's dead now, he went back to school, went back to school, she was from University of Michigan, she already had her degree. This girl would not go back to school, he would not go back to school and they have suffered.

TBW: Why wouldn't they, even with your encouragement, why wouldn't they?

HCA: It was just something that they completely resisted. Completely resisted. Yeah, he went back to school and now he's the head of the patients, the chronic patients, the very abusive patients. And his brother is not on here. John Waters went back to school. All of them, you know, went back and got

their degree.

TBW: And you gave them a lot of encouragement?

HCA: A lot of encouragement. And then made it possible. We would double up and work in their places when they were away studying, and they got eight hours a week to go back to the Wharton (sp?) School. Eight hours a week.

TBW: That's great.

HCA: So we would double up. I would go up there and work for them, and everybody did. Yeah, those two, that's me, that's my secretary. O.K., those—isn't that something? I had forgotten they were in here. And, let's see, this is when I was retiring, this is my husband [another photograph]. When I was retiring, it was a party. And then this was when I was in Washington [another photograph] getting the Social Work honor. See, National Association of Social Workers? And that was me talking [laughs]. Isn't that something? Now this is history, isn't it?

TBW: Did you ever think anything like that would ever happen to you?

HCA: No. And that's why I say, you can't resist things, because if I had stayed in Cincinnati, I'm sure I would have stayed on that level. I wouldn't have been able to be as creative and to do things like I've done here in San Antonio.

TBW: It just kind of forced you on to that next level.

HCA: Yeah. Isn't that interesting. Oh, and here's Henry B. Gonzalez [another photograph] and the morning I got my award. He was there in the audience, he was right down there. And the Texas congregation was seated there, and they started singing, "The Eyes of Texas are Upon You." And then he had his secretary bring us to his office and then he took us to eat. Henry B. Gonzalez. And then this is Corte Mills (sp?), he was chairman of the MHMR Texas Board. He came especially, and they had a party for me. Isn't that something, see? O.K., this is our sorority.

TBW: Now, Miss Briscoe is a member of this sorority, too.

HCA: Yes, she's a Delta.

TBW: For life, she said, for the rest of her days.

HCA: Oh, yeah. Lifetime commitment.

TBW: Well, this sorority really means—I've seen, I never belonged when I was in college, but it seems like the tie to this sorority is so much deeper than usual, than the people I've known. Why is that?

HCA: Well, I think back in our days, all we could do, pretty much, was done through the sororities. You know, we didn't have other businesses, women, you know, they weren't popular in the cooperative world, so to speak. So we did everything through our sororities, and it was just one of those things where you got to give back, or pay back to your sorority what they'd meant to you. Now this, this last summer—it gives you a chance to really express yourself and to do things, you know, that you want to do. Just like we got this house, here, and it's open to the community. You know, it's not our house, we have our meetings here, but this is a community project. And last year, in Orlando, Florida, we had our national meeting. And we went back and these are the fifty-year women. Fifty years, isn't that something? [points to a picture] Now who is that? [laughs] Fifty years. And Hattie has been in for fifty years, but she didn't go to the convention, she didn't follow through with some of her paperwork. But there were three of us who got the fifty—and these are women from all over the United States.

TBW: I'm seeing, doctor, doctor, doctor, this is a very impressive group of women.

HCA: Yeah, and I'm going to let you take these. I just want you to read as much as you can, you know, after talking here. Now, my sister-in-law was the eighth national president, Elsie Austin, and she was there. See, honoring sorors with fifty-plus years of service, nineteen seventeen to nineteen forty-six.

TBW: Service. Is it referred to that way now? With women joining sororities for the first time, do you serve your sorority, or is that an old idea?

HCA: It's a public service organization. And now, when you come in, when you make an application to become a Delta, you would have had to do some community work. So we're telling all these young people to do as much community work as you can, and that will really have a bearing on your being able to get into sorority. Church work, yes, but more importantly, work in the community where you're helping people.

TBW: As a group, or individuals or both?

HCA: Individuals, group, whatever.

TBW: Now what kind of community work have you done? What are you most proud of?

HCA: O.K., the work I usually do is with senior citizens. Now right now, in my church, which you'll read, [end of tape one] [beginning of tape two] ...at United Methodist Church. And I started a senior citizen ministry there. It's volunteer work, I don't get any pay for it [laughs], but we do a lot of good things for senior citizens there, kind of a resource. And when anyone has a problem in the community, they can always bring it to us, senior citizens, and we'll take care of it, so to speak. And there was one problem that came up, oh, two or three months ago. And the people who live in this housing facility for the elderly, on Sunday mornings, they could not stand on the inside waiting for a bus to take them to church, because the staff was not there. And they didn't want them to have to be responsible for, I guess, closing the door and things like that. But more importantly, when it was raining or cold or anything, those people had to stand outside and wait for the bus. So we interceded, and now those people are not only waiting on the inside, but they're getting coffee and orange juice. [laughs]

TBW: That's a deal.

HCA: So it's just, just things like that. It seems like it could be difficult, but we always find it could happen.

TBW: And that's probably made such a difference in those people's lives. So you've been doing community service as well as paying close attention to your career all these years.

HCA: Yeah.

TBW: Now, some people now would say, I think, “Well, I’m too busy, I don’t have the time.” Do you think that washes?

HCA: No, you know, you always have to take time to give to people. And I’m on several boards, I’m on the K.C. Family Agency board, and I’m still on the Halfway House board and in fact, I’m supposed to go to a meeting today at noon, but I’m not going to be able to get there. But, and I kind of serve on a consulting basis, you know, with a lot of people. Girl called me the other night, and we were talking about her social life, and I just cautioned her, I said, “You know, don’t get involved, don’t get involved. The man is telling you that he has someone else, and that he needs this girl and what not.” And I said, “Why would you...” “Oh, I just like him.” I said, “Well, it’s alright to like anybody, but you don’t need to get emotionally involved with him, because, you know, he hasn’t made a commitment to you.” So then when we got through talking, she said, “O.K., send me the bill.” [laughs] So, I don’t like to do things that hurriedly on the phone, because sometimes you got to let people work through their feelings, but with her, I said, “Karen, you know I don’t like to do this, because it’s too hurriedly, but I can see you get too involved, and he’ll hurt you.” So, I want you to take this. These are—oh, this lady is from San Antonio, Missus Morris. Mm-hmm, and see, she was initiated in Harvard, in nineteen twenty-five. Oh, this is my sister-in-law, Elsie Austin. And in nineteen twenty-eight, and she was going, she was the eighth national president and she was with us this summer in Orlando.

TBW: So when is the next one?

HCA: The next one going to be next year, it’s going to be in New Orleans.

TBW: Are you going?

HCA: [laughs] Oh, yeah. I’ll be there, hopefully, God willing. Anyway, these are fifty-plus years.

TBW: And everybody still seems—listening to Hattie talk about the sorority and what a role it’s played in her life, it’s just incredible devotion.

HCA: Yes, it's a devotion. And, of course, everybody—now Hattie, you know, she ran away—I don't want to take up too much time—she ran away from home and had nobody to look forward to and they came and befriended her, because she didn't even have a dress to wear to the May Week, you know. I didn't have that kind of problem, but when I went into Delta, my mother and father both said, "Don't take fame from Delta, take fame to Delta." And as I was telling the other day, everywhere I've gone, everybody knew that Helen Austin was a Delta. 'Cause my husband's mother was a Delta, Flossie (sp?) was a Delta.

TBW: Now, when was it started?

HCA: Nineteen thirteen.

TBW: So when was your mother-in-law in, if you're, let's see, your sister-in-law was nineteen twenty-five, right?

HCA: And then, her mother came in later. She came in later, after Elsie was in there.

TBW: Oh, I see. So you can join later, after you're out of university, I see.

HCA: Yes, graduates. We take in graduates here. People who were in school and for some reason, some good reason, that they couldn't go in at that time and then a lot of the schools did not have sororities on the campus. So it had to be reason like that that they didn't participate. But it's much better when you can go in on the undergraduate, I mean, it really gives you a boost, and when I was on campus, all the Deltas, everything that came up, any dance, any kind of function, we just had a blanket ticket. The Deltas went.

TBW: It also gave you a built-in group of people to be with. How nice.

HCA: And just like when I came to San Antonio, as I said, we didn't know anyone, but Joyce Sewell (sp?), she's another person you might be writing about, she was a principal here for a long time, but anyway, Joyce was president, and someone took me to Joyce's house, she lived right next to the Carver at that time, that house has been torn down. From there, everybody went to the meetings and then

everybody knew each other...

TBW: Great. So it was also an opportunity as an adult, as a professional woman, to meet...

HCA: Other Deltas, right. People you have something in common with. Because we have a five-point project, and it's national, so it comes all the way down to the chapters. Rich, isn't it?

TBW: Yes, it is. You know, the one thing I'm curious about is, thinking about your experience getting on at the hospital and having to go through all that heartbreak at starting here, being the first, what kind of advice would you give young women who are thinking about going into your line of work, or any other, and how to become such a well-rounded, successful person such as yourself?

HCA: Well, I tell everyone to be consistent, continue, don't give up and be persistent. Now you don't always have to confront someone and be out front, you know, I'm going to do this and carrying those placards and things like that. You see, no one ever knew I was trying to get into the state hospital but Henry B. Gonzalez and then when I wrote the letter to Paul Thompson. I have all that for you, and et cetera. So, you know, I could have gone out there and carried a flag, carried posters and what have you, but once again, be consistent, and I was. And be persistent. Knowing that you are going to, it's going to happen, if it's made for you.

TBW: And education seems like it's absolutely changed your life.

HCA: Yeah, you got to have an education. And credentials. Credentials are so important. And you just got to—those kids on the picture, some of them are so—and right now, one girl has a good job out in the community, going all the way down to Hondo and all around, but see, she wouldn't have had that if she hadn't gone back to school. And they were bright kids. There's no doubt about it, but they just hadn't been given that push.

TBW: Do you think that's happening a lot, with younger people now? I think a lot of them are bright, but for some reason, they're deciding to go somewhere else than...

HCA: That's right, rather than going on. And I tell everybody, be careful what you get your degrees

in. A lot of these kids now are taking marriage counseling and those kinds of things, but once you leave San Antonio, other states don't recognize it. Get your degree in social work, and that's a license. That's a license to do anything. I can do marriage counseling, I can do family therapy, I can do anything, because I have my license to do it. But just don't go into that narrow field of marriage counseling or counseling. Saint Mary's has that program, and I think Our Lady of the Lake has one, but don't narrow yourself down.

TBW: Well, that seems to be a general trend in nearly every field of study. You don't just become an accountant, you become a business legal accountant, and that's all. And doctors do that, too.

HCA: You got to, you just can't narrow yourself down like that.

TBW: Perhaps you should save that for later.

HCA: Yeah. And it's real interesting, and I just can't—in all my talks I talk about being consistent and persistent.

TBW: The two things that will get you through.

HCA: If you're prepared otherwise. I don't believe in appointing and putting people out there if they're not prepared, you know, you're equipping them. But if you got your feet on the ground and can deliver, you can get where you want to go. Just like the, those men, I never will forget it, told my daddy, "Well, she'll never be able to earn a living." [laughs]

TBW: That's what people say about me, wanting to be a teacher.

HCA: Uh-huh. But I never wanted to teach. I have a lot of family back in those days, they would go through Kentucky State and go back. And I would say, "Oh, my Lord, I never want to do that," I think I talked to myself. So I came to Louisville and was able to start off with the YWCA.

TBW: Was it seen as kind of unusual that you would be married and continue with your career?

HCA: No, because I had a career before I married. Yeah, I got married later, but I had my career.

And that's when I left Chicago and came back to Cincinnati. My husband is a very considerate person,

and of course, his mother and his sister had always come from that background, been pretty progressive. So I had—I didn't have to knock him on the head. [laughs]

TBW: Many of the teachers had to quit, though, did they not? Didn't they have to quit when they got married?

HCA: Yes, that's right. And that happened when I was a child, if you were married, you couldn't teach. Now, that was back in the forties, in Harlan. Isn't that something?

TBW: I just can't understand how that would affect your ability to teach?

HCA: But that was true. I didn't understand that, either, but that was true. I think probably, a little later on, before I left my school, because, Doctor Puram (sp?), his wife came. He was married, but in the beginning, no. And then, you might want to look here, I was the first, or one of the first to go into the Hall of Fame here in San Antonio. Have you heard of the Hall of Fame?

TBW: Oh, absolutely.

HCA: O.K., O.K. Now, they took in fifty and that was uh, the core group, and now they're taking in twelve each year. But I was one of the ones to go in.

TBW: In the core group? Really?

HCA: The core group. The core group. In nineteen eighty-five, the first one. That was the first one, into the Hall of Fame.

TBW: That was the year after you won the national award?

HCA: Mm-hmm. Yeah, right during that time. And then the next year, I was in Leadership Texas class of eighty-five. So you'll see this on here.

TBW: I know that organization.

HCA: You know, they just had a meeting here last Friday a week ago, down at the Menger. It was very good, the kids came from all over. And the class I was in, eighty-five, I think there were six of us there. So I got that experience traveling those six cities throughout Texas and learning about

resources, and they came here to San Antonio. And Henry Cisneros, oh, they just ate him alive, as a speaker. But, and then Clyde, what's his name, Clyde uh, the pianist?

TBW: Oh, Van Cliburn?

HCA: Yeah, yeah. O.K., he's from Fort Worth, and the time we visited up there, he was there for a concert and we sat right on the first three rows, were the people from the Hall of Fame, and then following his concert, we all went backstage and met him. That was really interesting. Just read that. [referring to a stack of papers.]

TBW: And you're still just being awarded and recognized for all your work. Retirement. I don't think so.

HCA: Yeah, you'll see in there a picture of me that says, Helen Austin retiring, with a question mark.

TBW: Yes, I can see why.

HCA: Well, it's just one of those things, you know, you just have to keep going, don't you?

TBW: Absolutely. And I think that's where maybe some people lose their way, they just don't.

HCA: I was seventy-two on April the second. No, May the second. I was seventy-two. Isn't that something?

TBW: Happy belated birthday.

HCA: And I still work pretty much with my church in all the capacities, too. But not as much as I used to.

TBW: So you're still involved with the Halfway House, still involved with the seniors group at your church that solves problems for other people in the community, and what else is there?

HCA: Uh, K.C., that's for HEC, they just take care of extended foster care children. It's heavily endowed. And then my sorority here, and I'm chairman of the board, but I'm giving it up within the next two months, but that has taken a lot of my time since nineteen ninety.

TBW: I imagine so. As active as everybody is in this group...

HCA: Yeah. We have been able to maintain and do quite a bit.

TBW: This is such a lovely house. Well, is there anything we didn't mention that you wanted to talk about that I didn't hit?

HCA: And I've been on the Hogg Foundation Advisory Committee for Mental Health in, which was a very good experience. You know the Hogg Foundation?

TBW: No.

HCA: In Texas. O.K. Hogg, he was one of the, what is Bush? Bush is governor. O.K. Hogg was one of the governors of Texas and back in those days, he was kind of controversial. But he had a daughter named, I don't know what her name was, but it was Hogg, H-o-g-g and that's how it got started. And there is a big foundation, so they have the Hogg Foundation in Austin. And they do quite a bit for mental health.

TBW: Really? Is that because one of their family members was...

HCA: I don't know whether she—but I think it was somebody in the family. I think it was. But anyway, they have diverted a lot of money into...

TBW: Wonderful. So you've been on the board of that foundation?

HCA: Yes, the Hogg Foundation. And I tell you, someone else that I had a good relationship with was Missus Butt, H.E. Butt. And she really gave quite a bit to mental health and she traveled all over.

TBW: Really? How did you meet her?

HCA: Through her coming to the hospital. And of course, she was on the board and when I would go to meetings, I always went to the board meetings. Then we would see each other and what not. And when I retired, she sent me the biggest orchid you ever seen. Missus Butt did, B-u-t-t. You want to cut that off and then I will get some [pause in tape]