

Dr. Julius Conner, Polk County

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Interviewee: Julius Conner, M.D.

Interviewer: Kate Scott

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Run Time: Approximately 60M



Cassette

Biographical Data Form

Oral History Release

Photograph (1)

Transcript

In the wake of the great depression, Eleanor and Fred Conner moved from Mississippi to Omaha in search of better employment opportunities. Fred was able to take part in the WPA government programs where he learned the cement finishing trade. During the war, he traveled throughout the Midwest working his trade in the construction of bomber plants. His son, Julius, was born in Omaha on May 27, 1934 and graduated from Central High School in 1950. He attended the University of Omaha - known today as the University of Nebraska at Omaha. Upon graduation from medical school in 1957, he accepted an internship with Mercy Hospital in Des Moines. Dr. Conner decided to take a residency in pediatrics. "I met a lot of pediatricians in Des Moines," said Dr. Conner, "and they offered a residency program at Blank Hospital, so it made it very convenient to go from Mercy to Blank." As a young resident, Dr. Conner worked at the Younkers Rehabilitation Center and in pediatrics at Blank Memorial Children's Hospital from 1958-1960. "I did not get to Des Moines until 1957," recalled Dr. Conner, "but I heard about the stories from 1952, and I was involved in the last epidemic that occurred in Iowa which was in 1959... The Younkers Memorial Rehabilitation Center was not completed but they quickly put together space on the sixth floor for the polio epidemic... I recall in the evenings, as a resident making rounds, you would hear the iron lungs making their respiratory sounds throughout the whole floor. You would see family members, concerned family members there, pretty much around the clock." Dr. Conner later went on to serve as Director of Polk County Public Health from 1965 until 2000.