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**E. Charlton Prather:** Okay. Well, Mr. John Dame, coming from a—really, a public health family—a Florida public health family. On behalf of the University of South Florida’s Library system and the School of Public Health, I say welcome and we’re glad to have you here. Your dad, Dr. John Dame—no, Dr. George Dame. Help me, doctor.

**John Dame:** Right. I’m John.

CP: You’re John.

JD: My dad was George. (JD and CP laugh)

CP: Dr. George Dame is probably one of the—well, the most outstanding personalities of Florida public health history, after you leave Dr. Porter.<sup>1</sup> We know that he’s kind of the—we like to think of him as the father of local public health programming in Florida. We’re aware that he’s passed on, but he leaves a large legacy for Florida public health.

And for all of us still living who remember him, including you, we love him. We just love your dad and I was privileged to know him, which you may not know, but I was privileged to know him. And for you to come today and to share with us, your dad, is just greatly appreciated, and thank you for being here. Now, talk some.

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Doctor Joseph Yates Porter [1847-1927] was instrumental in establishing hospitals during a yellow fever crisis and he became Florida’s first state health officer.

JD: Well, I certainly appreciate the opportunity to be here. It's a great honor to me and my family, and being here today, I consider, to talk about my dad, as one of the greatest honors I've ever had.

CP: Oh. (CP laughs) That's good. That's good John. Thanks.

JD: After I—you had contacted me and let me know what was going on, and I had begun to organize some materials that would help to augment our oral history interview today.

CP: Good. Use them. Use them.

JD: The way that I worked it out, every now and then I'll refer to these notes.

CP: Oh, good. Good.

JD: It's a typical Dame situation here that I organize these notes in such a way as to hold up the highest traditions of public health.

CP: Good. I noticed there you speak to George Alva Dame, MD, FACPM, that's the—stands for a Fellow of the American Academy of Preventative Medicine [American College of Preventative Medicine].

JD: That's correct.

CP: Your dad, I think, was the first president?

JD: He's credited with being the founder and first president of that organization.

CP: Of the national organization of physicians devoted to public health and preventive medicine.

JD: That's right.

CP: It's a very prestigious organization today. And if you don't belong—if you're in public health practice, if you don't belong to the FACPM, you're a little bit suspect.

JD: That's the granddaddy of the pedigree that you must have.

CP: Yes, yes. And your dad was the, well, the base organizer and was the first president of that national organization.

JD: That's correct. And during our interview, I'll go into some detail on that.

CP: All right.

JD: There are three main things I'd like to present about him.

CP: Please.

JD: Characteristically, that are outstanding in public health.

CP: Good.

JD: I'll just name them, and during this interview, we'll go into some more detail.

CP: More detail. All right, please.

JD: But he was—is credited with being the founder and first president of the American College of Preventative Medicine.

CP: Yes.

JD: Of which anyone, belonging to that, is a fellow. So, that is the FACPM. Then secondly, well, he is—he was the first director of communicable disease for the state.

CP: Yes.

JD: Under the old State Board of Health, during his last year in office, during his first go around, he had been a district health officer for four years; then he had made a study of the workings of what he proposed as the county health unit or health departments.

And based on his studies and so forth, during that time, he is credited with being the inventor or originator of what we now call the county health department system or county health unit. This term is misunderstood by many, because the original concept was that several health departments could constitute a health unit.

CP: Yes?

JD: In other words, you could have Hamilton, Columbia, and Gilchrest Counties each have their own health department, but the three of them constituted a health unit. And this was misunderstood when HRS [Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services] was invented.

CP: Yes, it surely was.

JD: They—the misunderstanding was that each county health department was a health unit.

CP: Independent. Stood on its own feet.

JD: And this misunderstanding—misconception existed throughout the history of the Florida Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services. It was not until the Florida Department of Health came into existence January 1, 1997 that the true meaning of the county health department was reconstituted.

CP: All right, all right. And you're beginning to feel it, out there in the—out there in the field?

JD: Exactly.

CP: In the county health department?

JD: Exactly.

CP: All right, good.

JD: Now, the third thing that I alluded to slightly there, during dad's five years in office from 1917 to 1922, during that last year they formed a Bureau of Communicable Disease, of which he was the director.

CP: All right.

JD: So, he's credited with being what you would call now, probably, a state epidemiologist.

CP: Yes, he would be. He would be.

JD: But I bring these three things out, Dr. Prather, at the beginning here, sort—sort of as a —

CP: That's our agenda.

JD: —a framework, you know?

CP: All right.

JD: We can lay on other things.

CP: Okay. Well, let's start with the FACPM, the academy of preventative medicine.

JD: Right.

CP: Yeah. That was your first item, was it not?

JD: In my little booklet here, well, I've got some very good information about that.

CP: Great. And you're going to leave that for our—for the library shelving?

JD: This booklet, in there, well, I credit you and my county health officer for letting me come, I just had a little introduction there. (CP laughs) But I thank the University of South Florida School of Public Health and Dr. Prather, and Daniel O. Haight, MD, director of the Polk County Health Department for this opportunity to participate in this project.

CP: We're complimented. I am so glad that you were willing because your dad needs to be part of this. Now, we're complimented that you'd write—I haven't seen one of those letters before.

JD: You all will excuse me if I fumble through, you know—

CP: No, that's—we expect you to do that. We expect you to do that. That's a very nice little book you've got.

JD: I will allude to Angus Laird, you may recall?

CP: Yes, I know Angus Laird.

JD: At this time, I will go into that about the founding of the college.

CP: Please do. Please do. Great! And if you want to read us something from there, do it.

JD: Well, okie-dokie.

CP: That is an impressive book that you've put together. And you only brought one copy, didn't you?

JD: I have others that I've run off.

CP: I want to get me, personally, a copy. (JD laughs) And I'll have it made here—me a personal copy, because that one goes to the library and Jane will carry it off and I'll never get to see it again until I can pick it up on the international web—the super information highway.

JD: Oh, this is the newsletter of the American College of Preventive Medicine of April 1961.

CP: Yes?

JD: Dr. George A. Dame recalls the founding of the college. So, my dad wrote this article in 1961, "Genesis of the American College of Preventive Medicine." And he goes into some detail of explaining the background of this.

CP: Yes? There's some points you want to highlight?

JD: First off was this list of people attending the original meeting. I don't know whether you recognize any of those as Joseph M. Bistowich, for instance.

CP: Elam Cato.<sup>2</sup>

JD: Elam Cato.

CP: Who was health officer in Dade County. Frank Chappell, health officer in Hillsborough County.

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<sup>2</sup>Turner Elam Cato MD, MPH [1903-1967] was a former director of the Dade County Department of Public Health.



JD: Ben Freeman—Freedman, Frank M. Hall, T. Paul Haney, [Dr.] Albert V. Hardy, Andrew Hedmeg—he was the state health officer for Louisiana.

CP: Yes.

JD: Lorenzo L. Parks.

CP: He was—he was with the state board of health.

JD: Wilson T. Sowder.

CP: With the state board of health.

JD: Waldo L. Treuting. He was the Director of the School of Public Health at Tulane.

CP: Oh, that's right.

JD: Ben Wyman, the—at this organizational meeting, officers were elected as follows: George A. Dame, MD, president. J.W.R. Norton, president elect. Ben Wyman, first vice president. Thomas Seller, second vice president. George A. Denison III, vice president. T. Paul Haney, secretary. John J. Wright, treasurer.

CP: (CP makes noise) That is—I've never seen that.

JD: This was at a meeting of public health personnel in Ann Arbor, Michigan, where most of the directors of local health services were present. So at that time, a lot of these people were involved in the local health service.

CP: Yes.

JD: County health departments and similar organizations.

CP: Yes, yes. That's where public health was being done, it was at the local level; it's never done in a state office.

JD: After the specialty board had certified an encouraging number of diplomats, the North Carolina Academy of Preventive Medicine in Public Health, on March 15, 1951 and soon afterwards, on June 19, 1951, the Florida Academy of Preventive Medicine was established. Others were soon in process of being set up. So, with a group of diplomats, you may form a college.

CP: Yes, yes. A state college.

JD: In other words, those diplomats are the specialties.

CP: Yes.

JD: And the significance of what was going on here is that, in public health, a specialty board was organized. And they—with diplomats—and a college was set up. You might have a college of neurosurgeons, for instance.

CP: That's correct. And a college of internists, college of cardiologists—

JD: Right, and—

CP: College of pediatricians, obstetricians, and a college of preventive medicine public health types.

JD: And of major significance here is that public health preventive medicine became one of these specialty colleges.

CP: Yes, yes, duly recognized as an area of specialized practice of medicine. That's what that academy epitomized.

JD: Thus, the American College of Preventive Medicine was founded.

CP: Yes. (JD and CP laugh) I love it.

JD: This article here now was—my dad was 90 years old when he wrote this.

CP: Really?

JD: “The First President Reminisces.”

CP: Oh.

JD: And, as a footnote, it references Dr. Dame’s report, “Genesis of the American College of Preventive Medicine”, appeared in the April 1961 newsletter. But he does review this [reading]: “The position of scientific eminence enjoyed by the American College of Preventive Medicine in its 18<sup>th</sup> year, is most gratifying to me. I will be 90 in January, have practiced medicine since 1904, and consider my role in founding the college and as first president, the highlights of my career in preventive medicine and public health. For many years, I planned with colleagues for the establishment of the college. The organizational meeting, April 21, 1954, in Saint Petersburg, was attended by diplomats of the American Board of Preventive Medicine from nearly every state. Dedicated men have worked tirelessly since to bring to the college the prestige it enjoys today.

I could not accept Dr. Richardson’s invitation to attend the past presidents breakfast in Minneapolis, but was delighted that my son, George M. Dame, MD, director of the Pinellas County Health Department in Saint Petersburg could represent me. He joins in my wish to my old friends and to the college for continued success.”

CP: Those are touching words. Yeah, they are. And I can appreciate that. Great, great.

JD: And he really knew how to say things.

CP: Yeah, he obviously did, because he established the county public health system. Namely, its—we credit him with convincing most of the boards of the county commissioners in Florida to establish a county board of health. I mean, a county health unit. So, he was—he knew how to talk.

JD: That's right.

CP: Um-hm.

JD: What I'd like to do, if it's all right with you, is the certain excerpts by people like Hampton Dunn and Angus Laird—

CP: Proceed.

JD: Just like to—

CP: Proceed, please.

JD: Elucidate, you know? (CP laughs) And augment.

CP: Elucidate and augment, okay. Yeah, go right ahead.

JD: And occasionally, well, I may choke up a little bit.

CP: That's okay. We'll help you through that because you're talking about your dad. You know, I hope some day, one of my kids will choke up when they're talking about me. I think they're only choke will be how glad we are, not weren't, you know?

JD: Right now, well, we're going into the—Dr. Hardy and May Pynchon's monogram *Milestones*—well, *Millstones and Milestones*.

CP: Yes.

JD: Doctor Hardy knew how to put things well too. (JD and CP laugh)

CP: Yes, he did.

JD: He was a Canadian by birth.

CP: Yes.

JD: And for many years, was director of the laboratory.

CP: Yes.

JD: For a while, when Dr. Sowder left, he was the state health officer.

CP: That's right, for a period of two years—about 18 months.

JD: Something like that. But he and May Pynchon put this—this is the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Florida's public health in the Florida State Board of Health, this is monogram number seven.

CP: All right, published by the state board of health, a history.

JD: This came out in 1964.

CP: All right, yes. I remember that document.

JD: Chapter five is “An Era of Retarded Growth, 1917-1920—’32”. And during that time, well, my dad was there for five years, then he returned to practice.

CP: Oh, he did?

JD: Back in Inverness.

CP: I didn't know he went back into practice.

JD: From 1922 to 1940, he was general practice in Citrus County—Inverness.

CP: I'm sure I knew that, but I don't like to remember that part because he's so much a part of public health.

JD: Alludes here to Taylor County.

CP: Yes, that's Perry.

JD: Right. "Taylor County had awakened to the value of good health through the impressive results from its mosquito control program campaign. It now wished to further improve the health of the county by ridding it of hookworm."

CP: Ah, yes. All right.

JD: "Citizen cooperation was said to be exceptionally good. Dr. George A. Dame, district health officer at the time, and later director of the Bureau of Local Health Services, reported that 544 sanitary privies were constructed in Taylor County during the campaign. (JD and CP laugh)

This was a tremendous building program for that sparsely populated area. An educational campaign paralleled construction." And I'm presenting this to show what was some real public health work back then.

CP: Yeah, even constructing privies.

JD: (JD laughs) At all levels, well, environmental health was considered an essential factor.

CP: Yes, yes, yes, yes.

JD: A considerable reduction in hookworm was noted two years later. A comparable study revealed a reduction of 46.6%. From using those—

CP: Wow. That is impressive. And your dad was kind of the big shot in charge of all that, at the time.

JD: He was the district health officer for that district.

CP: Yes, and thus, the work was done under his auspices and his guidance.

JD: He was four years travelling throughout the area as a district health officer. “County Health Units”, chapters eight of the monogram, “A bureau of communicable disease and health units was established in 1921 with Dr. George Dame as director.

He had already had four years’ service as a district health officer. In consultation with Dr. Farrell, it was agreed that Dr. Dame, in association with his staff position from the International Health Board, would visit county health units in several states and therefore evolve a plan for Florida.

A detailed report was presented to the state board of health and adopted. The report outlined the organization and program of a unit, staffing requirements and a plan for cooperative support. Even though, since that time, there have been long experiences in public health and great advances in the medical sciences, the plan is then conceived as the basic program of operation of county health units now in effect.

The report indicated that the minimum personnel would be a physician health officer, giving full time to his duties, a nurse, a sanitary inspector, and an office assistant.” But some of those names have changed or evolved.

CP: Names have changed, but that’s still the basic requirement. Yes, yes, yes.

JD: Even today, and the county health department is often blessed and augmented by personnel such as health educators, you know, or the WIC [Women, Infants, and Children] Program and nutritionists.

CP: But we can get along—we can do good public health without them.

JD: It gets back to those four.

CP: Yes, it does.

JD: That's the basic team and Florida Statute 154 was the basic enabling act that set this up.

CP: It's my impression that your dad wrote that bill that was passed—

JD: That's correct.

CP: —by the 1930 legislator—legislature.

JD: That's true. And some of the aspects of that, the basic law itself, the enabling act, creating public health units and departments that, as I understand it, well, Taylor County was the first.

CP: Yes. Yeah, it was the first one for the county commission and the board of health—the board, to enter into a mutual agreement that they would each provide money for the operation of a public health presence. Our first county health unit under the Chapter 154 was Taylor—

JD: Taylor County.

CP: Taylor County.

JD: Perry.

CP: Yeah, that's it. That's interesting to me.

JD: Got a little town called Foley.

CP: Yep.



JD: Outside of there, and that name came from Foley Brothers Lumber Company.

CP: Was your dad involved with that?

JD: Not directly. All of my wife's people were, though. (JD and CP laugh) So, there's a connection, you know?

CP: Oh, I'll have to tell you that I have a cousin that was a shift supervisor at Foley Lumber for many years. So, you and I are Floridians going back and we can tie ourselves together there.

JD: And my wife's uncle was supervisor. Hay was his last name. H-A-Y.

CP: Oh. But going back to your dad, though—

JD: They were the sawmill people, some of them.

CP: Yeah. But I don't want to talk about sawmills today, though. (JD laughs) I want to talk about your dad and public health.

JD: Right, right. (CP and JD laughs) So, let me tell you all this, now—or, us—tell us —“The early '20s were lean years for public health in Florida. Despite this, vigorous efforts were made to establish some county health units.

As a beginning in Palm Beach and Polk Counties, it was in 1921 that a state administration had been elected on the promise to reduce state millage. The legislature did so by one-quarter mill all from the state board of health.”

CP: Yes.

JD: [reading]“This was not the real intention of the legislators, but resulted from some political chicanery, developed to divert public health officials from pressing for measures they wished enacted. It was several legislative sessions later before the lost funds were restored.

So, for lack of funds, plans for establishment of county health units were temporarily abandoned. Doctor Dame left the board of health in 1922 to reenter private practice. He returned in 1941, after an interval of 19 years, which included a term as senator in the state legislature.

In 1944, he was again director of the Bureau of County Health Units, then renamed the Bureau of Local Health Service. His early plans and dreams had become a practical possibility.”

So, that’s still going on today. “Taylor County, after experiencing the effects of programs for the control of malaria and hookworm disease, was the first to organize a county health unit. It began to function on September 1, 1930. The Leon County Health Unit was organized as of January 3, 1931, followed 14 months later by Escambia County.” There’s something from Angus Laird I’d like to quote.

CP: Oh, please do, please do. Tell us who Angus Laird was, though, for the record.

JD: Angus Laird was a college professor. He taught things like political science, primarily, and other administrative types of activities.

CP: Yes, yes. But he went on to become a politician.

JD: And—

CP: An elected official.

JD: At one time, he—at a certain stage there—he was appointed as the first director of the Florida Merit System.

CP: Yes.

JD: In order to receive federal funding, states were required to have some type of a career service plan or merit system. So, he was selected and appointed as the first director of the Florida Merit System.<sup>3</sup>

CP: Ah, all right. Where he continued to serve, you know, until relatively recent times.

JD: That's right. Until it was absorbed, you know, and renamed as—it is now called the Florida Department of Management.

CP: Oh, yes.

JD: That would be the modern counterpart of it. He wrote a book that was in two volumes, and he called that, *As I—Like I Saw It*.

CP: Yes.

JD: Not *As*, but *Like I Saw It*. So, I have that listed here, among the bibliography, *Like I Saw It, Part II: The Merit System Years*, Angus McKenzie Laird, 1983.

CP: Um-hm.

JD: And that is an autobiography.

CP: Oh, it is?

JD: The *Part I* was *The University Years*.

CP: Yes?

JD: *Part II, The Merit System Years*.

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<sup>3</sup>The Florida Merit System is a process enacted in 1976 in which vacant positions in the Florida Supreme Court or a district court of appeals are filled by popular vote in a general election.

CP: Ah, yes, okay. And on page 38 he talks about your dad!

JD: Exactly.

CP: All right. (JD and CP laugh)

JD: [reading] “A great influence in the development of a state-wide system was the fortunate appointment by Dr. Hanson<sup>4</sup> of a new director of the local health service. I was not privy to the appointment; actually, I was concerned about it when I heard someone describe the appointee as ‘just a politician.’”

CP: As what?

JD: “Just a politician.”

CP: Okay.

JD: There is a technical error in this I’ll bring out too. “Indeed, Dr. George A. Dame was something of a politician. He was a Georgia cracker who thought he was above that designation, but didn’t disown it.” (JD and CP laugh) “He had served briefly on the state staff before Governor Katz replaced him. As explained elsewhere, he had been a country doctor in Hernando County.” Well, that’s a technical error; it was Citrus County.

CP: Ah, okay, yes.

JD: But Angus Laird didn’t know my dad back in those days, when he was practicing medicine. He came to know him when he was working with him at the state level there.

CP: Yes, yes, of course.

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<sup>4</sup>Dr. Henry Hanson [1877-1954] was the Florida State Health Officer from 1929-1935 and 1942-1945. He is credited with many accomplishments during his career, but is primarily known for the eradication of bubonic plague in Pieta, Peru in 1920 and the development of the Florida mosquito control program. Dr. Hanson retired in 1945. The Jacksonville, Florida State Board of Health Laboratory building is named “The Henry Hanson Building” in his honor.

JD: But this came about confusion, because my dad represented the old ninth senatorial district as a state senator.

CP: Yes.

JD: And that was Citrus and Hernando County. So, that was just—I guess he just got the two counties confused. “He served two terms in the state senate, an unusual distinction for a medical doctor then and today. State health officer Pickett, poor man, had tried to improve his image by the appointment of a doctor resident from another state as director of local health services.

A man who met all the requirements of the personality cult but knew little or nothing about the structure of the health organization, and less about communicable diseases. He gave me the impression to standing off and remarking, ‘See how handsome I am.’” (JD and CP laugh)

“His chief contribution was persuading retired general practitioners from his native state of Michigan to come to Florida to fill vacancies in local county health departments. They were failures, as I could relate. The handsome director fell out with Dr. Pickett when he conspired with Dr. Hatch.” Now, I can say all this because I’m quoting.

CP: Of course. You’re reading—

JD: Angus Laird wrote this.

CP: Yeah, you’re reading to us.

JD: And he knew what he was talking about. “The ex-Children’s Bureau employee referred to elsewhere to use special federal funds to raise the salaries for himself and other bureau directors while neglecting the purpose of the grant. Dr. Pickett may not have known much about public health administration, but he was an honest man and had a zeal for improving health in Florida.

He may have been the one to persuade Dr. Dame to leave his home in Brooksville—” another technical error, it’s Inverness, county seat of Citrus County.

CP: Yes.

JD: [reading]“—persuade Dr. Dame to leave his home in Brooksville,” which is actually was Inverness, “and move to crowded Jacksonville. Although I have given the credit to Dr. Hanson, no one knows now. Dr. Dame was a rare individual, and even outside the field of medicine and public health, he had virtues that appeal to me.

He had been the spokesman for the Florida Medical Association while in the Senate—the State Senate, and private physicians knew and respected him for it. He had been a country doctor and a rural health officer. He had the knack—a special technique of his—of making members of county boards of commissioners feel he might have delivered them in a log cabin home when they were born.

From his own personal observation, Dr. Dame had the ability to convince local commissioners, after 15 minutes, to remove a local health officer or discipline a recalcitrant nurse or sanitarian. Then increase the appropriation for the health unit.

He had faults, as I well knew, but he did more to rid our state of hookworm, pellagra<sup>5</sup>, malaria, and other common diseases than any other man. I gave credit to him, and will name a building for him in fantasy.” This section over here, well, I’d like to quote.

CP: Please do. This is—you’re in charge, and I’m finding all of this fascinating, John. Read on.

JD: “Sometime in the early 1950s, national health authorities begin to refer to Florida as having the best public health organization in the country. State Health Officer Wilson T. Sowder, mentioned elsewhere, deserves much of the credit.

And in fantasy, I will name a building for him, along with buildings for Dr. Porter, Dr. Hanson, Dr. Frank Hall, and Dr. George A. Dame. They deserve such recognition much more than some whose names are perpetrated on official buildings throughout the state.

CP: I love it.

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Pellagra is a disease caused by a deficiency in the vitamin niacin.

JD: Angus goes into a lot of detail with quotations, you know, and stories in here about the nurses, sanitarians as well.

CP: He does? But what got him interested in public health? Do you know? Why was Angus especially interested in public health? I know he and Dr. Sowder had a close relationship.

JD: I think it was that my dad had a lot to do with it.

CP: Just taught him some stuff.

JD: And under the federal guidelines, as we mentioned a while ago, we had to have a career service or merit system to qualify for federal funds. So, as I recall it, dad was instrumental or played a role in—

CP: Developing that system.

JD: —having the state board of health go under the merit system.

CP: Oh, all right. Yes, yes.

JD: So, he was actually a very close friend of Angus. Both of them were closely connected, and I knew him real well.

CP: Yes, yes.

JD: He convinced me that I should go to Stetson University instead of Gainesville or Tallahassee. And I don't know if he was right; maybe he was wrong. (JD and CP laugh)

CP: No, now, Stetson's a good university. It used to be, in my opinion, better than it is now, but it's a good university. My son's a graduate of there. I have to say that.

JD: And me too.

CP: I know, yeah.

JD: But my dad was born in Homerville, Georgia; and he practiced medicine in Inverness until 1940, at which time he became director of the Bureau of Local Health Services in Jacksonville. I have a lot of stories that my dad told me about some of his early years. He had graduated in medicine from Emory University.

CP: Yes. I wanted to ask that.

JD: Where doctors were not held in the same esteem in those days. There's a lot of people were suspicious of doctors—medical doctors.

CP: Yes, yes they were.

JD: Some of his early days was—after graduating from medical school—was spent with a medicine show, like a sideshow, you know.

CP: Oh, really?

JD: Where they would do all kind of tricks.

CP: Sell the colored water?

JD: Make drugs. And, of course, Dad was a pharmacist as well as an MD.

CP: Yes, yes.

JD: So, they would do all kinds of tricks there for the public, you know, actually receive donations for it. So, that was probably some of his first practice, was in the area of Hudson and Aripeka. I believe that's in Pasco County.



CP: Really? Yeah, Hudson is in Pasco.

JD: And Aripeka.

CP: And Aripeka.

JD: But that was his first days of practicing medicine with a—with a—

CP: What years, John?

JD: This would have been starting in early part of 1904 or along in there. Then, that same year, well, he was—someone, I don't know how it came about, convinced him to move to Inverness, Citrus County.

CP: And set up an office.

JD: So, he started the practice of medicine and opened a drugstore even there. That, as far as I know, that drugstore is still operating under another name. It was the Inverness Pharmacy, and as far as I know, it's still going.

CP: Yeah, yeah. Well, I'll have to look and see the next time I'm through Inverness. I'll stop in and pay homage.

JD: There's—there's pictures of it in here, I think. Let's see. Hampton Dunn, I have a picture. We're now to referring to Hampton Dunn. We jump over.

CP: Okay. And tell us who Hampton Dunn is.

JD: Hampton Dunn was from—started out, he was born in Floral City, Florida, which is five miles south of Inverness. He and his family resided there, and he was started out delivering newspapers for what was known as the *Tampa Daily Times*.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>The *Tampa Daily Times* was a newspaper that started in 1893 and ran until it was bought out by *The Tampa Tribune* in 1958.

CP: All right.

JD: He worked up in the organization, stayed with it until he actually was the editor for that newspaper.

CP: Oh, really? Fascinating.

JD: And he wrote a number of books. There's a history of Florida that he's written; I think it's some seven or eight books, different county histories. And one of them that he wrote was called *Back Home: A History of Citrus County*.

CP: And there's the Citrus County Courthouse right there in the middle of the picture.

JD: Then here's Hall's Drugs, which was later named for the Inverness Pharmacy, which my dad started; and he and Frank Hall were partners at this drugstore right here on Main Street.

CP: Is this public health Frank Hall, Gainesville?

JD: No relation that I know of.

CP: Okay.

JD: Frank and Basil, as I remember, were brothers. Both were county health officers.

CP: Yes, yes.

JD: Basil was over in Lake County and Frank in Gainesville.

CP: Up in Gainesville.

JD: —Alachua. Across the street was the Rexall drugstore, competition, free enterprise. There's an A&P store, but that's the old courthouse, which still stands.

CP: Yeah, it does.

JD: That's there today.

CP: I was trying to see a date. I don't see a date on that anywhere, where it was—when it was published.

JD: That's a—

CP: *A History of Citrus County*.

JD: Yeah, *Back Home*, 1976.

CP: Okay. All right. *Back Home*, '76.

JD: And that was a—

CP: Yeah, let her see another picture of it. Hold it up square for the camera, and she'll just get a little picture of it.

JD: That was part of the bicentennial for Citrus County.

CP: Oh, that publication.

JD: Publishing this book.

CP: Very good. Just a little picture of the book, advertising—do a little advertising for the book.

JD: One reason that I did it this way is there were so many of these books, I couldn't bring them all.

CP: Oh, yeah. And you've excerpted it. That's good. But I noticed you have—that you've listed a proper bibliography.

JD: That's right.

CP: —for any of us who want to look up the details. All right.

JD: Will you—(JD laughs)

CP: Yeah, yeah, she's got it.

JD: I've been up all up in there. As a boy, I was raised in this county.

CP: Yes. Now, you weren't supposed to be up in the clock tower before now.

JD: Me and my brother George have been up there many times. This was an autographed edition.

CP: Oh, great. Yes. And that's to your dad or to you?

JD: That was to me, in this case. My dad had his own—my mother's dad had passed on by this time. He passed away in 1973.

CP: Oh, yes.

JD: But this is quoting from—"One of the nicest things that happened to Inverness was the arrival of Dr. George A. Dame."

CP: Oh, you're reading to us under that picture.

JD: Yeah.

CP: Oh, all right.

JD: See that? "One of the nicest things that happened to Inverness was the arrival of Dr. George A. Dame, who came here from Georgia in 1904 and practiced several decades. This portrait was made in 1906."

CP: Wow! He's a young feller.

JD: And I brought along a larger blowup of that. I don't know where—

CP: We might care to see it. You got your hand right over his picture for him here, John.  
(JD laughs) (inaudible) All right.

JD: That's my dad standing here by this buggy, too.

CP: Fascinating. And that's out of the same book?

JD: Out of *A History of Citrus County*.

CP: Yeah. That is great. He had his own horse and buggy to get around in, obviously.

JD: Oh, this—and this picture says, "The country doctor, Dr. George A. Dame, is standing beside this wagon with two unidentified occupants on Main Street in Inverness. Doctor Dame made house calls over the county in a rig like this. He practiced in Inverness until 1940, and then was with the State Board of Health. He died in 1973 at the age of 91." And J. H. D. that furnished these pictures, is me.

CP: Oh, it is? (JD and CP laugh) Oh, great.

JD: But that picture of him there, let's see, is this same picture here.

CP: Hold that up where the camera, okay. Yeah, he's a nice looking young man.

JD: That was taken in 1906. Let's see, he was born in 1882. So, what—he was about 28.

CP: Yeah. He's a nice looking young feller. You hadn't come along then.

JD: No.

CP: No?

JD: No. (JD and CP laugh) My brother and I—George, my brother, was born in 1924.

CP: Yeah.

JD: And I was born in '27.

CP: Yes.

JD: I was 70 years old last January.

CP: Well, don't tell anybody, they'll never know it. (JD laughs) You don't act like it either. And you're still working full time, I know that.

JD: That's right. I've been 42 years now with the Polk County Health Department. I asked Dr. Haight if it was all right to do this. I sent him a copy with your letter with this. "With your approval, I would be glad to participate in this project." [He answered], "Yes, please do."

CP: Oh, good, good. I would hope—if he'd have said no, I'd have hoped you would've called me.

JD: I'm officially covered now, see I'm on duty over here. (CP laughs)

CP: Good, good, good, good, good.

JD: I'd like to go back to Hampton Dunn. That's Judge E. C. May, there.

CP: You've made quite a nice selection of stuff here, John.

JD: You'll excuse me if I jump around a little bit here.

CP: No, you aren't jumping; you're talking about your dad.

JD: "Inverness was just a small country village." This was written in 1976, now.

CP: Okay.

JD: [reading]"Inverness was just a small country village 37 years ago, when Dr. George A. Dame opened a little drugstore in one of the old buildings opposite where the county jail now stands. That building later burned along with others in the same block. The business became known as the Inverness Company in 1909, and has since operated under the same name.

An obituary on Dr. Dame, when he died at the age of 91 in August 1973, showed that he was graduated from Emory University School of Medicine<sup>7</sup> in 1904, and that he came to Inverness to practice. Whatever date he came, Dr. Dame became one of Citrus County's most respected and most beloved citizens.

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<sup>7</sup>Emory University was founded in 1836 yet the Emory University School of Medicine would not exist until 1915. The obituary is most likely referring to either Atlanta Medical College or Southern Medical College, two of the three colleges that would merge to create Emory University School of Medicine. The third college was the Atlanta School of Medicine but it was not founded until 1905.

Born in 1882, he was native of Homerville, Georgia and practiced in Inverness until 1940, when he became the state director of field services for the state bureau of health in Jacksonville. He retired in 1958 and moved to Lake Alfred in 1967. He died August the 3rd, 1973 in the Winter Haven Hospital, following a lengthy period of declining health.

Doctor Dame became the founder of the American College of Preventive Medicine in Jacksonville, in addition to being founder of the American Association of Public Health Physicians. He held memberships in the Florida Public Health Association—of which he was past president—The Fellow of American Institute of Pediatrics, and the Florida Medical Association.

For years—For a few years, Dr. Dame’s brother, Dr. Leland Dame [1887-1972], was associated and practiced with him in Inverness. Both of them are past presidents of the Florida Public Health Association.”

CP: Yes, yes.

JD: Uncle Leland served as president in 1943.

CP: Yes.

JD: And my dad served in 1946.

CP: Where was Leland? Was—he’s now in public health, obviously.

JD: He was a—

CP: Was he a health officer somewhere?

JD: Yes. He started—after he left practicing with my dad. He later went to Palm Beach County, where there was—in those days—regions. A regional public health area there.

CP: Yes, yes, yes.



JD: And he was a regional public health director. Then, he was the—all this is back in the '30s.

CP: Yes.

JD: Uncle Leland was the county health officer for Highlands County Health Department. Then Seminole County. Then—you'll be thrilled at this—Hamilton County.

CP: Yes! I'm very thrilled at that!

JD: Then in 1940, well, he was the county health officer for Hamilton County Health Department.

CP: I'm sorry I don't have a mental picture of him. But he wasn't there full time. He probably came out of Lake City, and was responsible for a number of other counties too.

JD: In the office that I visited there—that health department—it was a unit right there on that main street next door to the picture show.

CP: I remember where it was located, and prior to 1940, I have a good mental picture of the health department, yes.

JD: I think it was immediately adjacent on the west side of the movie theater.

CP: That is correct. Where there had previously been an embalming parlor—funeral director had been in that same building. And I remember my parents—my dad had a barbershop directly across the street. This is not my day for talking, but thank you for those memories, John.

JD: I couldn't resist Hamilton County. (CP laughs) I think there were several of you dignitaries from there, like Les High.

CP: Yes. Yes, Les High. You know him, too?

JD: Remember him well. He was from Jasper.

CP: Yes, he was.

JD: Marvin Rodgers.

CP: Yes, he is. He's still there. He retired recently, as you know.

JD: That's right. Dad, now, he served as genealogist for the Georgia chapter of the Sons of the American Revolution.

CP: He did?

JD: The Georgia chapter. (JD and CP laugh)

CP: Yeah, I hear that.

JD: He was the son of the late senator—State Senator George Melancthon Dame and Lennie Hargraves Dame of Homerville. On May 14, 1907, he married Rita De Muro at Inverness.

***Tape 1 ends; Tape 2 begins.***

CP: So, he arrived in Inverness a single man?

JD: That's right.

CP: Oh, and he got one of them natives.

JD: And he met my mother, who was 16 years old, and the family would not allow them to get married until she turned 17.

CP: (CP laughs) Okay.

JD: They didn't want any child brides, you know, so, had to be 17.

CP: (CP laughs) All right.

JD: Dr. Dame founded, promoted, and served as first president of the Dame Family Association of America; which annually meets on Labor Day at historical Prospect Primitive Baptist Church near Homerville. He had long held the honorary title, Chief of the Clan. And that Prospect Primitive, that's the foot—foot-washing kind.

CP: Yes.

JD: The hard shell church. (CP laughs) And that's where the Dame family has a family reunion every Labor Day.

CP: Do you go to the reunions?

JD: Every time.

CP: Oh, you're all—oh, man!

JD: I've never missed but once.

CP: That's great!

JD: I wouldn't miss it for the world.

CP: You keep up with all your relatives that way.

JD: Like all that singing and preaching.

CP: Yes?

JD: Praying and you've never seen such food as those ladies fix up and bring along.

CP: I think it'd be kind of nice to attend that.

JD: Dinner on the ground.

CP: Um-hm!

JD: You know there's a Prospect Church down in Hamilton County.

CP: Yes, I've been there a lot, lot, lot.

JD: That's out on the banks of the Alapaha?

CP: That is correct. You do—you know about your way around there, don't you?

JD: Yeah. Well, I had family. My dad's—on his mother's side—he was a Hargraves descendent.

CP: Okay.

JD: And John C. Hargraves married Parthena Morgan, who was from Hamilton County.

CP: Okay, I don't know my genealogy quite that well.

JD: John C. Hargraves was my maternal grandmother's father. But he was a veteran of the Confederate army—fought for the South.

CP: Well, I would hope so.

JD: And fought against the Yankees.

CP: I would hope so.

JD: Dr. Dame's—let's see—Dr. Dame was an active Episcopalian. See, us Episcopalians get out there with these hard shelled Primitive Baptist church and fit right in. No one would ever know the difference. (CP laughs)

The Dames' had two sons, John H. Dame of Lake Alfred and Dr. George M. Dame of St. Petersburg. Mourning his death, the *Clinch County News* noted that Dr. Dame was considered by many to be one of the most outstanding native sons that Clinch County has ever produced.

CP: Wow.

JD: He certainly was one of Citrus County's most outstanding citizens. So you see, there's people like Hampton Dunn and others have made this easy for me.

CP: (CP laughs) Oh, I see what you're doing. Well, you're doing well, and it's totally acceptable that you use those written words. We're getting a picture of your dad that I'm appreciating. So, keep on.

JD: Now, this picture here says "The Handsome Family of County Judge George W. De Muro. Rita, standing, married Dr. George A. Dame." And that's Raymond, Mrs. De Muro (inaudible). My mother's mother and dad and brother, and that's my mom there.

CP: Put it around where the camera can get a—get a picture of it. And she's about 14 there.

JD: I believe so. But Judge De Muro, that's in that picture, was born in Cárdenas, Cuba.

CP: Oh.

JD: And he came to this country in 1869.

CP: Whoo!

JD: When he was four years old. Yep. He married—

CP: Yeah, he's your granddad.

JD: Josephine Savary, who's a native of Selma, Alabama, and her father was—was fought in the Confederate army.

CP: Really?

JD: But they married and had three children, my mother being one of them.

CP: Yes, and apparently the oldest.

JD: That's right. And of course, as I mentioned a while ago, my grandmother would not allow her to be married until she had grown up.

CP: From 16 to 17.

JD: Right.

CP: Yeah. And your dad was 10 or 12 years her elder.

JD: That's right. Eight—eight years, I believe, exactly.

CP: Oh, eight years. Okay.

JD: But they had pretty strict rules back then about what families and people did and so forth. It—

CP: I don't think it'd be as bad if we had strict rules today, John.

JD: That's right. Children behaved more or less, you know, and did what they were told to do.

CP: Well, it was better than being—rolling around on the ground because you misbehaved—in my family.

JD: This was a couple of more pictures of the family that my dad married into. It's a family portrait here of Judge and Mrs. George W. De Muro and daughter, Rita. Mrs. George A. Dame, who lives in Winter Haven. Mom is now deceased. That's my mother—

CP: And she is six or seven.

JD: Taken in 1892, and she was born in 1890—let's see, in 1889. So—

CP: Turn it around a little bit, where the camera can get a picture of your young mother.

JD: She was three years old in that picture. Born 1889 and died in 1979. She was just short of being 90 years old. So I've got a chance.

CP: You've got some good genes.

JD: My dad was almost 92 and mom was almost 90.

CP: So, you better start taking care of yourself.

JD: I've been thinking about that. (JD and CP laugh) Try to be—set an example for public health.

CP: Yes.

JD: That was one of my dad's favorite sayings. Yes, he believed that all of us in public health should set a good example.

CP: Oh, I totally agree with that.

JD: On diet, exercise, things of that nature.

CP: Yes.

JD: And he practiced that.

CP: I think he did. I think he did. I didn't know him as well as I wanted to, because he retired from '57 or '58, and I came to the state board of health in '70—in '52. And I didn't get around him as much as I wish I could have, now, in retrospect.

JD: You were around there a long time, though.

CP: Yes. Yeah, I was, to be so young.

JD: Right. You carry yours very well. (JD and CP laugh) Pardon me for a moment while I —

CP: You're doing good.

JD: —thumb through here. There's a few things of—I guess everything here's of a personal nature.

CP: That's what it's supposed to be. We're talking about your dad, and you can't talk about him other than being personal, can you?

JD: That's right.



CP: Yeah.

JD: His civic interests—because he was a—as we mentioned, genealogist for the Georgia chapter of the Sons of the American Revolution.<sup>8</sup> And his civic interests also included—he was past president of both the Inverness and Fernandina Kiwanis Clubs.

CP: He was?

JD: Fernandina's now known as Fernandina Beach.

CP: Oh.

JD: That came about because after World War II, “the beach incorporated,” they called themselves. Fernandina Beach, so Fernandina later on convinced them that we should merge. So, Fernandina Beach said yes, on one condition: the city be called “Fernandina Beach.” So, since along about 1950, that's—

CP: That's true.

JD: Outside of St. Augustine, that's probably Florida's oldest city.

CP: That's correct.

JD: Dates way back.

CP: Yeah. Did y'all live there? How is it your dad was a member of the Kiwanis—

JD: Well—

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<sup>8</sup>National Society of the Sons of the American Revolution is a fraternal organization and a “lineage” society. Members of SAR are composed of men who have traced their family tree back to a point of having an ancestor who supported the cause of American independence during the years 1774-1783. SAR was founded in 1889.

CP: Did you all live there when you lived in—he lived in Jacksonville a lot.

JD: When we left Inverness in 1940, well, Dad became the county health officer for the Nassau-Baker County Health Unit.

CP: Oh, okay.

JD: Included the Nassau County Health Department.

CP: Yes.

JD: And the Baker County Health Department. So, he held that position until about 1943.

CP: Okay.

JD: When Dr. Hanson selected him to come over and be the director of the Bureau of Local Health Service.

CP: Yes, yes, okay.

JD: And there was a Dr. John McClane succeeded him with the Nassau-Baker Health Unit.

CP: Okay. I didn't know him.

JD: But he was an active Episcopalian, served on the vestry of both St. Margaret's Church in Inverness and St. Peter's Church in Fernandina. But it's one of these situations where that it seemed like everywhere he went he was a leader.

CP: Yes, he was. That comes with his genes, you know, he couldn't help that; that's just the way it was.

JD: Think so. (JD and CP laugh) His people had been like that. His dad, up there in Georgia.

CP: Yes, yes. His dad was a senator—your granddad. What else did he do? Where was his livelihood?

JD: Well, he was a farmer and merchant.

CP: Oh.

JD: He ran what's known as Dames Brothers store.

CP: Okay.

JD: Along with his brother, John Thigpen Dame in Homerville. He was owner, publisher of the *Clinch County News*, which is still going. (CP laughs) My dad and all of his brothers worked on that newspaper back when they were growing up.

CP: Well, great! Yes.

JD: He was a printer's devil and everything else. And my grandfather, he—I guess, the way they liked to say it up there, he was in the mercantile business. You didn't run a store; you were in the mercantile business. They had a way of saying things back then, you know, that seemed to carry a whole lot more meaning—the flowery or whatever, you know?

CP: Yeah, I like it. I like it.

JD: In that part of Georgia, you know, if you embezzled money or something, well, you left town between suns—that's the way they would put it on the tombstone.

CP: Left them between the suns. Yeah.

JD: And other such—other such terminology as that, very rich, you know, in definition and meaning. But my grandfather was a—he was state senator, represented Clinch County, Georgia in Atlanta. Those two pictures, well, I've got them in here, which is to be donated to the—I think you got that a while ago.

CP: No, she didn't either.

JD: Didn't get this one?

CP: Hold up the original for our camera. But we'll—I've got it.

JD: One—one thing that should be explained, too, about that is these three men—I don't know.

CP: Let's name them.

JD: It should not be limited to them, you know, but that—those are among—

CP: Now, hold her still, and I'm going to point up who they are. You got the picture? This is Dr. Dame sitting. Now, the other is Dr. Joe Bistowich, who was the long-time director of the Leon County Health Department; Dr. Cato, who was long-time director of the Dade County Department of Health; and Dr. Carl Brumback, the long-time director of the Palm Beach County Health Department. And that's a picture, I'm guessing, that was taken probably in the early '50s.

JD: Nineteen fifty-five.

CP: Nineteen fifty-five.

JD: That was at Florida Public Health Association annual meeting at the Daytona Plaza Hotel.

CP: What—what was the occasion? Let me hold it. What was the occasion of having these pictures made—this picture made?

JD: They—they were all, of course, county health officers and my dad was their immediate supervisor.

CP: Yes.

JD: So, I think it was only that they just happened to be together talking, you know, and fraternizing and posed for an official photograph.

CP: Now that is neat. And I appreciate seeing that photograph. Both of your dad at the time—and that's the way I remember him, by the way.

JD: Doctor Carl is the only one left. Well, now, I don't know of Dr. Joe; he may still be going.

CP: I think he is.

JD: You know he went up to Nashville.

CP: That's right. He's recently retired from Nashville, but I think he still owns land in—down on the coast, south of Tallahassee. I think he still does.

JD: But all of these people have very distinct personalities.

CP: And distinctive public health careers.

JD: Right.

CP: Distinctive. Let us see the other picture of your dad up there, John.

JD: This one here?

CP: Yeah. Hold that one up for the camera.

JD: The quotation there is from Hampton Dunn.

CP: Yeah, read that to us.

JD: “Still handsome and vigorous, Dr. George A. Dame was photographed when he retired from medical work in 1958.” He died in 1973. When Inverness celebrated completion of its new city hall in July 1962, he was the dedicatory speaker, and the reason that he was is my dad served on the city council for 23 years.

CP: Oh, he did? Really?

JD: Of Inverness.

CP: And he made the dedication address? That’s marvelous.

JD: He was one of the oldest, if not the oldest, living former city council members.

CP: Hm. Now, I’m curious, why did he choose to come to Inverness in nineteen—in the nineteens?<sup>9</sup> That was hardly more than a wilderness outpost.

JD: That’s right. And that’s—that’s the question that I can’t answer. I don’t remember him ever telling me that.

CP: Why he chose that. You said he started kind of over in Hudson, over on the coast. But Hudson was just a jumping off place until the 1970’s.

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<sup>9</sup>Doctor George A. Dame moved to Inverness in 1904.

JD: Now, this does come back to me. Doctor Hendry convinced him to come over there and to go into practice with him.

CP: Okay.

JD: That's the way—

CP: Here's this young, single physician kind of floundering around.

JD: And there was this older doctor that had an established practice. Dr. Hendry, as I recall, convinced him to come over and go into practice at—he was about ready to retire, so he turned his practice over to dad.

CP: Over to this young, unmarried physician. Who's brand new out of medical school.

JD: That's right, and worked in the medicine show.

CP: Yeah. And so, you were—you were—you is, let's see, you was about 40—you was about 15, 17 years old when you all moved from Inverness. So, you can remember some good memories.

JD: That's right, I was just almost 14 when we moved to Fernandina.

CP: Okay. So, you have good memories of that. Did your dad do a general practice? Did he deliver babies? Did general surgery?

JD: That's right.

CP: Minor—general minor surgery. Which it was better to do it there than to send the patient somewhere out of Inverness.

JD: Yeah.

CP: It'd been a mess, some of the acute appendicitis, for example, to where Tampa would have been the most likely place.

JD: The nearest hospital from Inverness was the Monroe Memorial Hospital in Ocala.

CP: Ocala, yeah.

JD: Which was, in those days, was about 35 miles.

CP: Over State Road 200.

JD: My dad, being a physician, well, he wanted me to be born—and my brother—with the best medical facilities available.

CP: I would hope so.

JD: So, George, my brother and I both were born in that Monroe Memorial Hospital.

CP: Did your mother go over—no, in the '20s, that wasn't much of a problem. But I could imagine in the teens [1910-1920], probably a patient would go over long about the time she was due and wait for labor to come on. Your mother might've waited for labor before she jumped in the Model T and took off.

JD: That's true, yeah.

CP: She could've done that when you and George came along. Well, if you'd—if you could pinpoint a highlight of your dad's career, what would you consider it? Other than having you and George.

JD: I think that if he were sitting here with us and asked—if he were asked that question, well, I think that he would say that founding the college—

CP: Oh, he would?



JD: The American College of Preventative Medicine.

CP: That is notable. That is notable.

JD: And then he would—I know I’d want to say that formulating the plan for founding county health departments would be a notable thing that he would consider a significant thing.

CP: I would hope he’d say that because it’s still the scheme whereby we work. You know, and that was done in 1930, and it’s the model for the nation, the details of that cooperative relationship between county and state government.

And most folks—. When I was with the state health department, we had a lot of visitors who came from all over the world—asked how, “How do you get this cooperation between local government and state government to a common purpose? How come you aren’t fighting all the time?” Your dad worked out that scheme.

JD: That’s right.

CP: And it was a check and a balance of combining our monies and holding equal accountability, equal accountability for program success or failure. You know, county couldn’t say, “Well, it’s the state’s fault,” and the state can’t say, “It’s the county’s fault”, because we have an equal accountability. That’s so well done—

JD: That partnership.

CP: —in that law that your dad—that your dad wrote, you know? And it’s difficult to duplicate.

JD: Another part of it—aspect that was of extreme significance back then was the budgetary formulas for financing.

CP: Yeah, that was in the original bill, too. And rarely activated, as you know; it's been rarely used, but it's there. A number of counties did, number of counties did, but a great majority have never used that funding formula.

JD: Of course, it set it up on a sliding scale, you know?

CP: Yep.

JD: The original enabling act, Florida Statute 154, read like this: it says that, "Should a county board of commissioners wish to establish a county health unit, they may do so by entering and having a memorandum of understanding," as it was called.

CP: That's right.

JD: Now called a core contract.

CP: That's right.

JD: In those days, it was a memorandum of understanding, and it definitely established what the board of county commissioners would have as a millage rate to establish the county health unit. In other words, out of the mills, what portion of that ad valorem taxation would go towards the county health department.

CP: Yes. That's still on the books, I think. Isn't that still there?

JD: It still is.

CP: Yeah. But it's got that "may" in there. You know, and I think that's the beauty of it. And I want to think our memorandum of understanding works a sight better than our core contract of today.

JD: And it—in those days, you know, and up until—for instance, when dad retired, well you had to—part of his job was to personally go talk to county commissioners.

CP: Yes. Your dad did. Reading the old annual reports, you know, on the Bureau of Local Health Services that your dad wrote, it reads—just reads so much fun that he met with such and such commissions, and this was the problem. And he names commissioners names in our annual reports that voted against him. (JD and CP laugh)

JD: It seemed like most of them knew him.

CP: I think they did.

JD: Out of the 67 counties, well, he actually personally knew a large number—a significant number of those commissioners, and, for instance, he was no stranger; if he went to Taylor County to talk to them about increasing their millage rate, so that they could hire some more nurses or another sanitarian. He knew how to deal with them.

CP: He surely did. And he has not been duplicated. He has not been replaced, as far as I'm concerned.

JD: That's—that's true.

CP: Yeah.

JD: And during the period that the Florida Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services was in existence with this concept of a relationship with boards of county commissioners, was lost almost completely.

CP: Yes, it was.

JD: Fact is, I contribute or attribute the decline of HRS to comparable situations like that. In other words, as you could see the decline of this relationship in public health, then you could compare that to other sections of the agency.

CP: Yes, you could. It was thing of trying to centralize control. Centralized control; we got all the answers, and you just do what we tell you to do.

JD: That was it. It was a notable experiment that had not been field tested or—

CP: Ah, we got to spend a lot of tax dollars that way, though. You know, it was a very expensive experiment, too.

JD: Oftentimes, you know, in science, one of the basic principles is that you test things in the laboratory—you prove it. You've got to have a hypothesis.

CP: Yes.

JD: You must test—

CP: You need some data.

JD: I'm just simply alluding to this, then I'll leave that. But the plan was never tested, in advance, before it was implemented.

CP: —at great expense. Let me ask you, John, being the son of such a famous person in Florida and Georgia, now, what's your attitude? Speak to being the son of such a person.

JD: Well, I'm—I feel very proud.

CP: Right.

JD: In other words, I grew up in an atmosphere, you know, of where I could look up to my dad and family. And part of my life is I've tried to be a credit to our family.

CP: Yes. You have been. I will report to everybody that's listening, you've been a credit to your family, yes.

JD: I've done those things that I thought was right, and stuck with it pretty well.

CP: Yes, you have. And I've enjoyed knowing you over all these years. You—you've always been in public health, in my mind. You've always been here.

JD: It's sort of like people in the army that go through different generations. An army brat, so to speak.

CP: Yes, yes.

JD: I'm a public health brat. (JD and CP laugh) Second generation and it's—as we mentioned earlier, well, I am from a public health family. My dad, of course, we've been speaking about; and his brother, uncle Leland, had a long and illustrious career in public health as a county health officer and a leader in public health.

CP: Yes, yes.

JD: And my brother George was county health officer over a period of years in seven or eight different county health departments.

CP: Yes, his whole career was dedicated to public health also.

JD: He started out with Hamilton, Taylor, and Gilchrist Health Unit. Then he went to Manatee, he was county health officer there. He was county health officer for Pinellas County Health Department.

CP: Yes, many years.

JD: Then his last go around, where he actually retired, was for Marion County in Ocala.

CP: Yes, that's right. But he went through Polk too. Wasn't he a health officer in Polk a while?

JD: No, never there.

CP: Oh, okay. Yeah. All right. I remember him in Hamilton; that was during my interim years, but he wasn't there real long.

JD: That's where he started off. Let's see, that would've been in 1960. But I have, over the years, tried to live up to the ideals that they instilled in me, you know?

CP: That they instilled in you, yeah.

JD: Naturally, a lot of this stuff is very much ingrained in me. There is a passage I'd like to quote from him.

CP: Please do.

JD: It's very brief, but it's important.

CP: Please do.

JD: This would be from the *Florida Journal of Environmental Health*.

CP: Oh, okay.

JD: And it's where I was actually interviewed, but it's the portions about my dad that I'd just like to allude to.

CP: Go ahead.

JD: In March of this year, Paul Fell, who is a historian with the Florida Environmental Health Association, had interviewed me like we're being interviewed now.

CP: Oh. Yes, yes, okay.

JD: It was not a videotape, but it was—

CP: It's about your dad or about your career?

JD: Well, this was about me.

CP: Okay.

JD: And, in there, well, there's these passages about my dad.

CP: Oh, that you had to say. Read them to us.

JD: This the FEHA, Florida Environmental Health Association historian, Paul Fell, interviewing me. "Didn't you play a part in the forming of FEHA, or at that time, the Florida Association of Sanitarians? John: That's correct. I was present at the Florida Public Health Association annual meeting October 23 to 25, 1947, when our sanitation section voted to form the Florida Association of Sanitarians on October 23, 1947.

I was 20 years old at the time and attended that organizational meeting with my dad, Dr. George A. Dame. Who, at that time was the director of the Bureau of Local Health Services of the Florida State Board of Health." My dad was a champion and supporter of sanitarians and attended and participated in their meetings and activities as time allowed.

George, as he was called by everyone, my brother George M. Dame and my dad's brother, Leland Dame, MD, were all county health officers and retired from the state as such. Even Fleming C. Dame Jr. [1889-1965], who was the FEHA president in 1963-64, was my first cousin. Throughout the system, though, my dad was known as "the grand old man of public health."

CP: He still is.

JD: And he was called "Dr. George."

CP: Correct. Even I called him "Dr. George."

JD: It didn't seem to matter where or what the occasion, he was—you seldom, except for official documents and so forth—he was called “Dr. George.”

CP: Yeah. Yes, socially and in one-to-one, he was “Dr. George.” Yeah.

JD: If it was official stuff, it was “Dr. George A. Dame.” You know? I just wanted to mention a few other things. There's so many things that dad was involved in and even in working this up, this little booklet; I had to do a lot of editing.

CP: Well, that's okay.

JD: But I did include these items, you know, some 12 to 14 different things.

CP: A whole page of bibliography on George Alva Dame.

JD: And some of it is a family history, which one of his favorite subjects—you know, hobbies, was genealogy.

CP: Yes, yes. Well, after all, he was president, or secretary of the Georgia Society.

JD: That's it exactly.

CP: And you're going to leave all that with us?

JD: That's—that's for you.

CP: That's for us. And I think I'm going to try to get me a personal photocopy made of all that, though. Would that be all right for me to have in my personals?

JD: I'll—I'll send one to you.



CP: I'll get a copy of that, too.

JD: This is the *Story of Florida* by W. T. Cash [1878-1951], state librarian, Volume 3, 1938.

CP: The American Historical Society.

JD: And I've included that, because as far back as 1938, dad was written up in the *Story of Florida*. W. T. Cash was the state librarian, and the whole thing is in four volumes. But this spells out a lot of what he did, his background and so forth.

CP: Yeah, but he had hardly got started in 1938. That's impressive.

JD: That's right. (JD laughs) That's why I included it.

CP: Read that highlight.

JD: "As one of the prominent and progressive citizens of Inverness, Dr. Dame has contributed substantially to its welfare. For a number of years, he served as president of the city council.

In 1936, he was elected as the Florida State Senate from the Ninth District, comprising Citrus and Hernando Counties. At the opening of the 1937 session, he was appointed chairman of the public health committee." One of his main hobbies, also, was his work in the Masonic Order.

CP: Yes.

JD: The Free and Accepted Masons.

CP: Yes, yes.

JD: And that's why I've included this picture: him in his full regalia.

CP: Ah, yes. Let's—hold that up for the camera, if we could do that. Do you know what year that was made? I don't see a name on it, but—

JD: Let's—I can—

CP: He's still a young man here.

JD: That's right.

CP: Yeah.

JD: I believe this was in the years of approximately about 1930.

CP: Okay.

JD: But he was the grand high priest for the York Rite Masons, the Knights Templars.

CP: Yes, yes, yes. I'm not a mason, but I'm familiar with some of those terms.

JD: One other thing that—how we doing on time?

CP: You're doing very fine. You're doing very fine.

JD: I saw Dr. [Carl] Brumback<sup>10</sup> not too long ago.

CP: Good. Good. Dr. Brumback sat in that identical chair where you're sitting right now.

JD: Is that right?

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<sup>10</sup>Dr. Carl Brumback [1914-2012] was Florida's first public health doctor. An interview with Dr. Carl Brumback is available in the USF College of Public Health Oral History Project collection.

CP: Um-hm.

JD: He's certainly a fine person.

CP: Yeah, we had a happy time. While you're looking for that, let me ask you, how did you get interested in public health? Other than that's—that was the only thing you were supposed to do, coming out of that family.

JD: Well, I'd gone through different aspects of life, like, I served a couple of tours in the army. And I guess that last time that I came out, that was after the Korean War.

CP: Yes?

JD: Well, I—I'd looked at all this over, and I figured it was time that I got into something similar to what I heard Jeff Ragan<sup>11</sup> quoting, to select a type of work that has fringe benefits—

CP: And a future.

JD: A retirement.

CP: Yes, yes.

JD: And pleasant work that you like to do. So, I just started out like that.

CP: Great.

JD: I love my work. Right now—

CP: That's obvious. You're still—you been there, you told me, 44 years, 42 years?

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Jeff Ragan is the longtime director of the environmental health program in Manatee County. His interview is available in the USF College of Public Health Oral History Project collection.

JD: That's right. October the 1<sup>st</sup> will be 42 actual years.

CP: At the Polk County Health Department.

JD: My entire career has been there in public health. I've been the environmental administrator for the last 10 years.

CP: Yes.

JD: I was the assistant to Don Honeycutt<sup>12</sup> for 15 years.

CP: Yes, yes. Well, Mr. George Dame, let me, on behalf of the University of South Florida's Library System and the College of Public Health just thank you sincerely for coming and sharing your dad for future students of Florida history. Dr. George Dame is one of the pillars of Florida history, and I thank you for sharing him with us on such a great day. And John, we thank you sincerely.

JD: Dr. Prather, I thank you for allowing me to be here.

CP: It wouldn't have been complete.

JD: It's certainly a personal honor to meet, to be able to do this.

CP: Oh, it's fun, and it's just great. Yeah. And I'm Skeeter Prather. Thank you.

***End of Interview***

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<sup>12</sup>No additional information available.