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Interview with Rudy Canzater

Rudy Canzater

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**LOUISE PETTUS ARCHIVES AND SPECIAL COLLECTIONS
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT**

**Interview #321
CANZATER, Rudy**

CANZATER, Rudy

Head of the Physical Education department (high school) and coach of girls' volleyball and track teams, exhibition president of the James R. Clark Memorial Sickle Cell Foundation

Interviewed: June 12, 1984

Interviewer: Michael Cooke

Index by: Alyssa Jones

Length: 24 minutes, 56 seconds

Abstract: In her June 1984 interview with Michael Cooke, Rudy Canzater described her work with the James R. Clark Memorial Sickle Cell Foundation. Canzater covered topics of sickle cell anemia, the various foundations in South Carolina, the Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC), and the Crippled Children's Clinic. This interview was conducted for inclusion into the Louise Pettus Archives and Special Collections Oral History Program.

Keywords: Sickle cell anemia, James R. Clark Memorial Sick Cell Foundation, Crippled Children's Clinic, fundraising, "sicklers", I. S. Leevy Johnson, Columbia Area Sickle Cell Anemia Foundation

Interview Session (June 12, 1984): Digital File

Time Keywords

00:00:00 *Start of Interview*/Interviewer's Introduction

00:00:11 *Question:* Can you give a brief biographical sketch of your life? *Answer:* RC was born July 15, 1939, raised in Columbia, SC. She was a graduate of Allen University and received her Master's degree from North Carolina State University.

00:00:37 *Question:* What fields? *Answer:* Physical Education.

00:00:40 *Question:* Both degrees? *Answer:* Yes.

00:00:42 *Question:* What's your present position now? *Answer:* Head of the Physical Education department at a high school where she also coached girls' volleyball and track.

- 00:00:54 *Question:* When did you become interested in sickle cell? What led you to get involved in the James R. Clark Memorial Sickle Cell Foundation (originally Columbia Area Sickle Cell Anemia Foundation)? *Answer:* RC had one child who was diagnosed with sickle cell anemia. Dr. Clark and RC grew up together and when he returned to Columbia from California, he was interested in sickle cell anemia. When Dr. Clark found out that RC's daughter had sickle cell anemia, he asked her to help him create a foundation.
- 00:01:45 *Question:* What positions have you held in the foundation through the years, especially during the 1970s? *Answer:* RC was the first secretary, the second vice president, and the third president of the organization. She was then serving as the exhibition president.
- 00:02:11 *Question:* How did this foundation help you and your child? *Answer:* RC said the organization helped her a lot because she at first knew nothing about the disease. When the foundation was developed therapy groups for the parents, it gave her emotional support.
- 00:02:52 *Question:* How has the foundation changed its role over the years? What were some of the original goals of the foundation? *Answer:* The original goals were to develop and implement educational programs, screen for sickle cell anemia, and to counsel those with the sickle cell trait and anemia. The foundation still had the same goals at the time of the interview.
- 00:03:40 *Question:* How did the foundation publicize the problem of sickle cell to the community of Columbia? *Answer:* RC said they publicized in various ways. They went to churches, schools, contacted radio stations, and put up flyers.
- 00:04:04 *Question:* Did you receive any support from the civil authorities in the area? Did the municipal government come to your assistance? *Answer:* No, the only support the foundation received in the beginning was from a Shriner's Group, fraternities and sororities—
- 00:04:32 *Question:* Are we talking about Black sororities and fraternities? *Answer:* Yes, all Black organizations—
- 00:04:36 *Question:* Are we talking about White fraternities and sororities? *Answer:* No. RC repeated that there were only Black sororities and fraternities giving them aid in the beginning. RC was explaining more, but MC cut her off again.
- 00:04:41 *Question:* What universities? *Answer:* Benedict and Allen. The foundation also received money from churches.

- 00:05:04 *Question:* Were the activities of the foundation restricted to Columbia or was there any outreach beyond the city of Columbia? *Answer:* No it was strictly Columbia based.
- 00:05:16 *Question:* And when did the foundation reach past the city limits of Columbia? *Answer:* Around 1977 or '78 and that was when the National Association for Sickle Cell Disease was admitted to the combined federal campaign. In order to be part of that, the state association had to be a member, which allowed the local chapter to become affiliated with the federal campaign. The federal campaign included all of the Midlands. The foundation had to reach out to the communities of the Midlands in order to be supported by the federal campaign.
- 00:06:51 *Question:* What about the state of South Carolina? When did the state become conscious of the problem of sickle cell? *Answer:* The state was conscious of it in '72, there was a group of people who gathered together to tell DHEC that there was a problem and that the state should do something about it.
- 00:07:37 *Question:* Were they very enthusiastic about it? *Answer:* RC said that the foundation wasn't working with that group. The group and DHEC worked with an organization in Charleston.
- 00:08:00 *Question:* What about the role of legislature? *Answer:* I. S. Leevy Johnson helped write the sickle cell bill and got it passed for \$150,000.00. The money went to DHEC and it was subcontracted out to the organization in Charleston.
- 00:08:31 *Question:* How did you approach representative Leevy? Or did he approach you? *Answer:* The group of women, along with Dr. Clark approached him about writing the bill.
- 00:08:54 *Question:* Do you recall some of the people who made up this delegation of petitioners? *Answer:* No.
- 00:09:05 *Question:* Were you one of them? *Answer:* No.
- 00:09:32 *Question:* Do you know of the people of DHEC who may have been part of the delegation? *Answer:* No.
- 00:09:44 *Question:* In the '70s, did you notice any changes in philosophy in the foundation or in the attitude of DHEC? *Answer:* Yes, they eventually had a liaison between the foundation and DHEC. DHEC hired Brenda Stone, who coordinated the sickle cell clinic.
- 00:10:49 *Question:* When did that happen? *Answer:* Probably around '78.

- 00:10:59 *Question:* You're talking about very late. *Answer:* Right, it wasn't right away.
- 00:11:06 *Question:* How did they have a sickle cell coordinator? Is there still a sickle cell coordinator? *Answer:* It started out with Stone just being the coordinator, and then the next year they added a couple of disease to her workload. Finally, it became a children's clinic under Crippled Children. Stone was over the whole thing, so she could not devote all of her time to sickle cell. The clinic was no longer there and moved to Richland Memorial Hospital. Stone decided to go back to school, so, no; they no longer had a coordinator for that in the last year and a half. It was no longer a sickle cell clinic, but instead a Crippled Children's clinic and it was once a month that they saw sickle cell children.
- 00:12:08 *Question:* Do you see any problem with the administration of DHEC as far as dealing with the sickle cell problem? Has their commitment changed over the years? *Answer:* RC said their commitment had changed and that DHEC was less committed than previous years. Sickle cell was at the bottom of the priority list for DHEC.
- 00:12:34 *Question:* When was that perceptible? *Answer:* In that last couple of years, but a few months before the interview, RC received a letter informing her that sickle was a low priority for DHEC.
- 00:12:49 *Question:* Why do you think that's the case? *Answer:* RC did not know what DHEC's reasons were, but she did mention that DHEC was a political organization.
- 00:13:27 *Question:* What about the commitment of the state as a whole to sickle cell? *Answer:* RC talked about how it was low priority for the state and it was left up to private organizations to change things.
- 00:14:18 *Question:* During the '70s, did the foundation receive any outside support? *Answer:* No, not anything other than the combined federal campaign. As far as receiving grants or state aid, no.
- 00:14:40 *Question:* Does it look like the foundation may receive support in the future? *Answer:* Possibly, in October of 1982, the foundation applied and received a federal grant for two years.
- 00:15:20 *Question:* Since the state has diminished its efforts in regards to sickle cell, has the foundation taken on more responsibilities to meet that vacuum? *Answer:* Yes, in order to receive the federal grant, they formed a state organization and the state was then divided into four areas. The James R. Clark organization covered 17 counties and the Spartanburg and Charleston organizations covered the rest of the state.

- 00:16:08 *Question:* In the initial stages of the existence of the foundation, did you have any professional or fulltime staff? *Answer:* No, at the beginning, it was strictly all volunteers. They volunteered on nights and weekends.
- 00:16:45 *Question:* How would you characterize your membership? As far as educational and occupational status? *Answer:* RC said it was a wide range; there were doctors, teachers, the self-employed, “sicklers”, and many others.
- 00:17:18 *Question:* A number of sickle cell community organizations became defunct. Why did this foundation survive while so many others failed? *Answer:* RC did not know why the other organizations failed, but thought the James R. Clark foundation survived because its members were committed to sickle cell work.
- 00:18:36 *Question:* Since you primarily are a volunteer organization, how have you maintained this organization without a great deal of funding? *Answer:* RC said the foundation was better off that way. The foundation took part in fundraisers of all kinds, but that the community had also been very good to the foundation by making contributions.
- 00:19:25 *Question:* Before you had a state system where you had specific areas, was there ever cooperation between the organizations? *Answer:* RC said there were some that cooperated with each other, but it varied.
- 00:20:38 *Question:* It wasn’t just helping people who have sickle cell, but also telling people who are interested in sickle cell how to get started. *Answer:* Yes. At first they were just for the Columbia area, but they would go wherever they were called.
- 00:21:15 *Question:* Were there any other groups that you recall that you were able to show how to get off the ground with their organization? *Answer:* There was a group in Chester and one in Sumter.
- 00:21:36 *Question:* Who were some of the individuals you worked with when you were talking about Sumter and Chester? *Answer:* RC couldn’t really remember names of people.
- 00:22:20 *Question:* What are some of the activities of the foundation now? Is it a continuity of what you started in the 1970s or has the role of the organization changed? *Answer:* The foundation still had the same goals, but they added services. Patient transportation, prescription pickup, and other aid for the sickle cell patients were added.
- 00:23:38 *Question:* What about the community businessmen? Have they been supportive? What about the pharmacists? Do they recognize that people with sickle cell have

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crises that require a lot of expenses to cope with their medical ailment? *Answer:* RC was sure the pharmacists recognized it, but the foundation had not really explored getting discounts on prescriptions, but it had been discussed.

00:24:27 *Question:* Any other things that I left out or that you want to add? *Answer:* No.

00:24:56 *End of interview*