

# PERRY EDWARD GROSS, MD: a conversation with the editor

Perry Edward Gross, MD, and William Clifford Roberts, MD

Perry Edward Gross (*Figure 1*) was born and raised in Jeanette, Pennsylvania. He attended the University of Pittsburgh in 1943 and 1944 before being drafted into the army. While in the army, Dr. Gross served in Japan the year after World War II ended. Thereafter, he returned to his studies for a year at the University of Pittsburgh before entering the Chicago Medical School in 1947. During his college years he played on the tennis team, sang in the Heinz Chapel Choir, and worked on the staff of the newspaper (*The Pitt News*) and the yearbook (*The Owl*). He was a member of the honorary biological science fraternity, Nu Sigma Sigma, and the honorary activities fraternity, the Druids. Dr. Gross did his internship at Cook County Hospital in Chicago.

Late in 1952 he came to Dallas, Texas, to start a family practice. During his 55 years of practice, Dr. Gross became a beloved physician. He joined the staffs of Baylor University Medical Center (BUMC) and St. Paul Hospital at that time and became St. Paul's chief of general practice in 1954. He retained that post through 1978. He also held significant roles at BUMC, where he was chief of the Department of Family Practice from 1974 through 2007 and at one time or another served on several medical committees, which included the executive committee and the credentials committee. In addition, he was chairman of the medical board. In 2005, the Perry E. Gross, MD, Chair of Family Medicine was established at BUMC in his honor. For the past 10 years, Dr. Gross was a clinical professor in the Department of Family Practice at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical School at Dallas, and the Perry E. Gross, MD, Distinguished Chair of Family Practice was established there in 1998. Mr. and Mrs. Milledge A. Hart III honored Dr. Gross by establishing both of these endowed chairs.



Figure 1. Dr. Perry Gross during the interview.



Figure 2. As a toddler.

Throughout his career in Dallas, Dr. Gross has been active in the American Academy of Family Physicians and the Texas Academy of Family Physicians, serving on several committees as well as presiding as president of the Dallas Academy of Family Physicians.

Dr. Gross has always been a very active member of the Dallas community. He has presented a series of lectures at Southern Methodist University on such topics as suicide, human sexuality, crisis intervention, biomedical ethics, contraception, dying, and divorce. He has also been active in several Jewish organizations in the city, including Jewish Family Service, Jewish Welfare Federation, Temple Emanu-El, Planned Parenthood, and the Suicide and Crisis Center. He chaired the Health Advisory Council and the Health Benefit Subcommittee of the Dallas Independent School District, served on the advisory board of VITAS Hospice, and served as president and held other offices of Phi Delta Epsilon International Medical Fraternity.

He and his lovely wife, Harriet Florence Bernstein, are the proud parents of three living offspring and five grandchildren. It was an honor to talk to this wonderful man.

**William Clifford Roberts, MD (hereafter, Roberts):** *Dr. Gross, I appreciate your willingness to talk to me and therefore to the readers of BUMC Proceedings. To start, could you describe your early life, your parents, your siblings, and the atmosphere of your childhood?*



Figure 3. Parents Abraham and Esther Gross.

From the Department of Family Medicine (Gross) and the Baylor Heart and Vascular Institute (Roberts), Baylor University Medical Center, Dallas, Texas.

**Corresponding author:** Perry E. Gross, MD, Baylor Health Care System Foundation, 3500 Gaston Avenue, Dallas, Texas 75246 (e-mail: PerryG@BaylorHealth.edu).



**Figure 4.** With sisters Ruth and Rosalind.

**Perry Edward Gross, MD (hereafter, Gross):** I was born on January 19, 1926 (Figure 2). My parents were Abraham and Esther Gross (Figure 3). I was the oldest of three children. My sister Ruth is 4 years younger, and my sister Rosalind is 6 years younger than I (Figures 4 and 5). I grew up in Jeannette, Pennsylvania, principally a factory town of 10,000 people. It was a center for glassmaking. The town had all of the essentials to make glass, with large deposits of

coal nearby together with silicon. The town was named after Jeannette McKee, the wife of the founder of one of the larger glass factories in Jeannette.

My earliest recollections are happy ones. I was fortunate that my parents, though struggling through the Depression, were very much in love with each other, and that love was reflected in the upbeat personalities of their children. Where we grew up, everyone was poor. My earliest memory was living in a frame row house across the street from a very small playground.

My sisters have very little recollection of our first house. We moved to a large brick house when I was in fourth grade. My mother fell in love with it the day she saw it, and it became the centerpiece of her life. My father was a man of very few words. He was literally taken from school when he finished the eighth grade. His father put him to work in the glass factory so he could help support his siblings. My father worked in the glass factory for a number of years and then went into business with his brothers-in-law. They opened two grocery stores where my father worked until he retired. During the Depression, the entire family worked long hours at the grocery stores. In later years, my father was in the bowling business.

When I was drafted into the service, I was sent to Fort Bragg, North Carolina, for basic training. I became a radio operator in the artillery. The sky at Fort Bragg was clear and beautiful. The sky around Jeannette and Pittsburgh was always full of smoke and soot from the factories and trains. When I arrived at Fort Bragg, I thought I had died and gone to heaven. The countryside also was beautiful. Many of the other drafted men were always complaining. I thought there must be something wrong with me because I was so happy there.

Looking back over my life, I have been constantly busy. I've not stopped from the time I was a child working in the grocery stores, going to school, and playing tennis, which was my passion at that time. I lettered in tennis and made the high school team even though I had never had a tennis lesson. I was a fairly good athlete in most sports. I even went out for the high school football team, with the linemen weighing 220 to



**Figure 5.** Esther and Abraham Gross with Ruth, Perry, and Rosalind.

240 pounds. I weighed 118 pounds! When my father heard that I had joined the football team, it was the only time I saw him really angry. He literally picked me up and said, "Are you crazy? You just don't do things like that. Learn to take care of yourself and don't back down, but that's no way to compete." I know now that he was absolutely right. I also played in the school orchestra and played in music competitions.

**Roberts:** *What was your father's full name?*

**Gross:** Abraham Gross.

**Roberts:** *He was born when?*

**Gross:** He was born in Austria-Hungary and died in Florida at age 59. His family had a history of high cholesterol levels and early heart disease. My dad had diabetes mellitus from the time he was 19 or 20 years old. He had atherosclerotic coronary heart disease and died suddenly of a myocardial infarction while in the hospital. He had gone into renal failure. In his last years, we sent him for long periods to Miami, Florida, which he loved. One of my classmates was a nephrologist in Miami at Mount Sinai Hospital. He helped care for my father. Dad's brother Simon and Simon's family made my parents very welcome and comfortable in Miami. Dad had a younger brother who died of a hypertensive crisis when only 39 years old; two other brothers had heart attacks, one at age 42 and the other at 50, and both were invalids from then on. There is high cholesterol on my mother's side too. I have been on a statin since lovastatin was first approved in 1987, and I've not missed a dose!

**Roberts:** *What was your mother's maiden name?*

**Gross:** Esther Gold. My mother was 17 or 18 years old when she came to the United States from Czechoslovakia with her two younger brothers. Her father, Morris Gold, had arrived earlier; he believed that Austria and Czechoslovakia were never going to be good for the Jewish people. That move was for the best. Although Grandfather Gold read the Talmud and other Jewish books, he was not formally educated. He loved to pray and was Orthodox. My mother, who never went to school in the USA, passed her fourth-grade equivalency test when she came to this country. She was very intelligent. Mother could read very well, but she couldn't spell. When I was away in the service, she wrote to me. Her writing was very expressive, but the spelling was phonetic.

**Roberts:** *Did she speak English?*

**Gross:** Yes, very well. She had an extensive vocabulary.

**Roberts:** *Did she speak it when she arrived in the USA?*

**Gross:** That I don't know. By the time I was born she spoke English fluently.

**Roberts:** *Did she continue to live in Jeannette?*

**Gross:** No. My older sister married and moved to New Kensington, Pennsylvania. Then my younger sister married and moved to Uniontown, Pennsylvania. After my father's death, Mother went to live with my sisters, Ruth and Rosalind. She spent most of her time in Uniontown and New Kensington and some time in Dallas. She died in Pennsylvania at age 92. She had heavy calcific deposits in her coronary arteries, which were visible on routine x-ray. She was active, however, every day of her life to the very end and retained a remarkable memory.

**Roberts:** *What is your sister Ruth's full name?*

**Gross:** Ruth Lenore Silverman.

**Roberts:** *What about Rosalind?*

**Gross:** Rosalind Ann Radman.

**Roberts:** *When were they born?*

**Gross:** Ruth was born in 1930, and Rosalind, in 1932.

**Roberts:** *Are they both living?*

**Gross:** Yes.

**Roberts:** *What was your early home like?*

**Gross:** The early one was a humble abode but it was spotless inside. My mother treasured everything that she ever bought, so our living room and dining room were beautifully maintained. She was a wonderful housekeeper, and cleanliness was very high on the docket for all of us. My dad would say that he could not afford a lot, but his family would always eat well. And we did. My mother was a good cook—not as good as my wife, but good. In those early days during the Depression, hoboes used to come by seeking food. It was a common sight. My mother never turned anyone away. They knocked on the front door, and she would have a place ready for them on the back porch. They could sit there and eat.

Mother always had an uplifting attitude. The weather could be cloudy, gray, rainy, and cold. Sometimes in the morning I would feel down. She'd look at me and say, "Make the corners of your mouth go up. You will find that when you smile you will start to feel better because it does something to your whole body." We grew up in that positive atmosphere.

My mother and father had a love affair, and it persisted. They talked about everything. There was a little staircase right off the kitchen that went up to the second floor. Off the landing there was a small flight of stairs to either side—one side was my parents' bedroom and the other side was my bedroom. When I knew they were having a big talk, I would sneak down and sit on the step and listen to their conversation. Once I dozed off and fell down the steps, landing practically at their feet. After that, my dad would make sure that I wasn't there to listen. It was a good home. My sisters and I benefited from the emotional stability of the home. Despite all the other things that were going on around us, it was a haven.

**Roberts:** *Was dinner at night a big deal at your house? Did your father get home for dinner?*

**Gross:** My father kept the stores open until 6:00 PM, and my mother served dinner when he got home, about 6:30 PM. Lowell Thomas, the news commentator, came on at 6:45 PM, and my father never missed that radio program. Lowell Thomas was his hero. My father would say that Lowell Thomas wouldn't

broadcast the news if he didn't have proof. We could talk before and after the Lowell Thomas program and tell everything about our school day, but we could not talk during the program. We had dinner in our kitchen at a large table. The dining room was for holidays and guests. We would place our report cards in the kitchen beside the stove. Dad would pick them up, look them over, and put them back down.

**Roberts:** *Did he make any comments to you?*

**Gross:** Only one time. I had made straight A's except for one B+. When he looked at my report card, his expression never changed; he put it down and turned on the radio. I asked him why he didn't say anything about my report card. He said, "What do you want me to say? You made a B."

**Roberts:** *How old were you when you moved to the new house?*

**Gross:** Age 9 and in the fourth grade. There wasn't a kindergarten in small towns in those days.

**Roberts:** *You started first grade at age 5?*

**Gross:** Yes. My mother said there was no point in my sitting around the house. She thought I was big enough to go to school. I don't know how she got me in, but it's on my record that I started at age 5.

**Roberts:** *What was the new home like?*

**Gross:** My mother wanted to move because she felt the old house was too close to the factories to raise children in that area. The new house was really special. It was perched on a hilly corner with a low stone wall around the front. There was a large porch facing both streets. My mother loved it.

**Roberts:** *Did you have a room of your own? Your sisters roomed together?*

**Gross:** Yes. My sisters had a large room, and my parents had their room. There was a smaller room for my bachelor maternal uncle, Harry Gold. He lived with us when I was growing up. He was a good person and very nice. He helped us through some difficult times. He was the only person who ever made the high school varsity basketball team who was 5'5" or less in height. He was very quick and wiry. He worked in the town's only bowling alley, for Nick Lampropoulos. My uncle was so fast at setting up the pins that he could work two or three lanes by himself. Nick grew to trust him, and when Nick grew older, he gave my uncle part of the bowling alley and eventually sold him the whole business. When my father retired from the grocery store, Uncle Harry arranged for my father to buy the bowling alley from him.

**Roberts:** *How big was your extended family in Jeannette? How many siblings did your mother have?*

**Gross:** My mother had two siblings: Harry, the bachelor who lived with us, and Henry, who had two exceptionally bright children, Phillip and David.

**Roberts:** *Did your father have siblings?*

**Gross:** Yes, seven, and they all had families.

**Roberts:** *They stayed in that area?*

**Gross:** Yes. At one time there was a Gross in every grade in each school in the whole school system. I always felt very close to my mother's side of the family but to only a few people on my father's side of the family. My father had two brothers that

he was very close to: Hyman, who died young, and Simon. Hyman, after going to Canada to be a fur trapper, finally settled in New Hampshire. He married, had five children, and owned a couple of clothing stores. Simon, who periodically sought my dad's advice, also had a small business. After he married, he moved to Florida, raised his family, and did well in the laundry and drycleaning business.

**Roberts:** *Would you all get together on holidays?*

**Gross:** Yes. My mother insisted on it. She always said, "There is no substitute for family, even if they are difficult."

**Roberts:** *How did your mother and father meet?*

**Gross:** My father was working in the glass factory and my mother's father had opened a little produce stand on the main street of town. My dad would visit her. She was very attractive, with auburn hair and blue eyes. They obviously fell in love, got married, and had a lifetime love affair. It was great growing up in a warm, loving atmosphere.

**Roberts:** *Are your sisters' marriages happy?*

**Gross:** Yes. They are both married, and each has two children, a son and a daughter.

**Roberts:** *You mentioned Jeannette had about 10,000 inhabitants. How large was the Jewish community?*

**Gross:** About 30 families.

**Roberts:** *Did you feel discrimination growing up there?*

**Gross:** Yes, in certain areas. I was cornered in the schoolyard once by three or four kids because I was Jewish. I was beaten, but not badly. Luckily, I was able to break away. Whenever I went anywhere afterwards I carried a couple of really good stones in my pocket because I was never, ever going to be trapped again with no way to fight back.

**Roberts:** *You mentioned you played an instrument. What instrument did you play?*

**Gross:** The violin. The state of Pennsylvania divided the schools into four sections; each section had its own youth symphony. The school music directors would send their best students to the sectional 3-day tryouts where good conductors and teachers rated the players. Of 30 violinists at the tryouts, five or six would be picked to play in the state youth symphony orchestra. I was picked for the state orchestra from ninth grade on.

**Roberts:** *Who got you interested in music and the violin?*

**Gross:** My mother. My father was neutral, but he wanted his children to do well in anything they did. My father was a very physically strong man and a very good man. Although not educated, he was bright.

**Roberts:** *In high school, how much did you practice the violin each day?*

**Gross:** I tried to practice 30 minutes a day. The violin came easily for me. Once I learned the basics, I could play most anything that I had to play in the orchestra. I stopped playing briefly in the eighth grade. When I got into the ninth grade and the first competition came, the director of the high school orchestra renewed my interest in music. (I'm glad that he did because it has stayed with me all my life.) The first year I competed in the regionals I didn't feel as if I was anywhere close to being able to compete in the first violin section. I tried out for

the second violin section and made state. The next year I went back to the first violin section and competed there successfully. I was somewhere in the top 15 in the state.

**Roberts:** *How did you take up tennis?*

**Gross:** I saw the old tennis stars play in the movies and somehow it seemed like a sport that I would like. The only tennis courts in town were at the McKee Glassworks, which had two clay courts. The male workers in long white trousers and short-sleeved white shirts would play tennis at noon during workdays. There was never anybody on the courts after 4:00 PM, so a friend and I would sneak underneath the outside wall and play. No one ever stopped us. We played every day. Then an asphalt court opened up at Mount Odin Park about 5 miles from town. When we got older, we would drive there and play nearly all day Sundays.

**Roberts:** *How many matches did you play each year on the high school tennis team?*

**Gross:** Six to eight.

**Roberts:** *Other than tennis and orchestra, what other activities did you participate in during high school?*

**Gross:** I was in the choir, which I loved. I was involved in any activity that involved music. I was too busy working to participate in other activities.

**Roberts:** *How far was the grocery store from your house?*

**Gross:** It was a 10- to 15-minute walk. Everything was close in that little town.

**Roberts:** *You walked to school?*

**Gross:** Yes.

**Roberts:** *You worked every day?*

**Gross:** Every afternoon and all day Saturdays.

**Roberts:** *Did your mother work in the stores?*

**Gross:** No. She took care of the house, my father, and the children. She did a very good job.

**Roberts:** *Your father and his two brothers-in-law owned the stores. Did they work with him?*

**Gross:** One brother-in-law was quite elderly. He was married to my dad's oldest sister. He was a "hanger-on." The amount of work he could do was limited, although he would come in every day. The other brother-in-law worked at the other store. Both of my father's sisters were difficult. My mother was so different from that side of the family. It was a very uncomfortable situation.

**Roberts:** *Did World War II start while you were in high school?*

**Gross:** Yes, when I was a junior. Suddenly, our lives changed. We had a victory garden, and I arose at 5:00 or 6:00 AM to tend the garden and then go to school. A law was passed saying that students could leave high school without graduating and go to college. If they successfully completed two college semesters, they would automatically receive a high school diploma. Our high school was unusually deficient. There was no chemistry because there was no one to teach it. Physics, which was mandatory by state law, consisted of the instructor reading the book in class! I had one good teacher in high school, Ms. Barley, who taught Latin. She never smiled, which was understandable considering how disengaged the students were. I knew instinctively

that she liked me because I worked a bit, and few of the other students did. I was not a particularly good student, but I learned enough words in Latin to do well. The state required us to take a standardized Latin exam. I spent about 10 days studying for it and did well on the examination. She was pleased.

I was fortunate to get into college very quickly. I went through five quarters by the time I was 18, finishing 2 years of college before being drafted.

**Roberts:** *What college was it?*

**Gross:** The University of Pittsburgh. That was one of the few schools I could attend because I had to stay within 35 miles of my draft board. I caught the 6:12 AM train from home to the East Liberty station. Then six to eight of us would pile into a cab and go to the university. I could make my 8:00 AM class without a problem.

**Roberts:** *Which train did you take home?*

**Gross:** It was the 6:00 PM train out of the East Liberty station. A group of us always went together because taxis were expensive.

**Roberts:** *How big was the University of Pittsburgh in 1942 when you enrolled?*

**Gross:** Probably 4000 to 5000 undergraduate students.

**Roberts:** *Do you remember how much the tuition was?*

**Gross:** Yes. My dad never paid me for working in our stores but was determined to educate his children. He had said that the one thing he was going to do was see that his three children got educated. He told me not to worry about the tuition because he would make certain that it would be covered. The tuition was about \$10 to \$20 per credit. Total tuition for the year was around \$110 to \$140.

**Roberts:** *How many students were in your high school?*

**Gross:** My high school class had 343 students in it.

**Roberts:** *What was your class standing when you left high school?*

**Gross:** I ended up about 12th to 20th in my class.

**Roberts:** *Were studies easy for you, or did you have to work at it?*

**Gross:** I never took a book home. The only books that I ever took home were from the library. When I studied years later, I found that my most productive hours were from 8:30 PM to 2:30 AM. From 11:00 PM there were times of almost total recall.

**Roberts:** *Do you read fast?*

**Gross:** Not terribly fast but I savor what I read. I love the way words fit together, how phrases round out, how writers express themselves. In Jeannette, I went to the library when I was just 6 or 7 years old and started reading the Tom Swift series, which I loved. I told the librarian one day that I couldn't reach one of Swift's books. She said, "You can't read Tom Swift. You are not old enough to read that." She wouldn't get the book for me. I had to wait until someone taller came by to get three or four books of the series. I would hide them behind books on the lower shelves so that I could reach them myself.

**Roberts:** *You made mostly A's at the University of Pittsburgh?*

**Gross:** Yes. The professor of inorganic chemistry, Dr. Abraham Robinson, was outstanding. He was a tall, slender man, not given to smile, very sardonic in his delivery, but brilliant. He would go through inorganic chemistry on a platform with a large table where

he did all the experiments. He had the habit of poking his tongue into his cheek when he talked. He took my breath away, as I had never heard anybody lecture like that in my life.

I spoke with him for the first time during the second semester after I had conversed with a friend's brother who was getting his master's degree in metallurgy. At that time we were studying the composition of steel and how the early German vessels were superior to those of other countries. My friend's brother explained to me how each country made steel differently. This explanation differed from the textbook, and that differed from Dr. Robinson's presentation. After class one day I told Dr. Robinson that I did not understand the differences. He listened to the whole story and said, "Gross, come with me to the blackboard." He explained the whole thing—the differences between the way the British, Americans, and Germans made steel and why one was much better than the other. Needless to say, he made it crystal clear. His claim to fame was being able to put two metals together and create an electrical field—thermocoupling. He had a thermocoupler in his office that was at least 30 feet long. I understood all his explanations and immediately sat down and wrote them all down so I wouldn't forget.

Then, we got into electronic equations. On the blackboard Dr. Robinson showed how to do them. The book was confusing, but if you listened to him there wasn't an electronic equation that you couldn't solve. He was that good. The only one I ever heard lecture as clearly as that man was Donald Seldin, MD, at Southwestern Medical School.

After 3 years of service, I decided I wanted to study medicine. Letters of recommendation from science professors were required. I went to Dr. Robinson's office; I had not seen him for 3 years. He rushed in to pick up his notes for his 9:00 AM lecture and glanced up at me and said, "Gross, you are here for a letter of recommendation for medical school? Just leave the information and I'll take care of it. Bye." That was it. The fact that he remembered me after 3 years was like someone giving me a medal!

**Roberts:** *What activities did you participate in at the University of Pittsburgh?*

**Gross:** I played on the tennis team and sang in the Heinz Chapel Choir. Making music was fun in that environment. I also did some writing for the yearbook and sold ads for the *Pitt News*. I had a nice circle of friends. Everything was so accelerated because of the war.

One day I was told that a medical aptitude test was being given that very day. When I inquired, an older student said that it was a test to get into medical school, and those who did well on it usually got in. I hadn't thought seriously about a medical career at that point but nevertheless took the test. In those days, the MCAT consisted of reading a medical case, which was returned, and then completing a questionnaire. I thought it was an exciting kind of test to take. I'd never taken one like that before. I read the paper thoroughly, memorized certain numbers that seemed important to me, and answered the questions. I hoped I had done well on the test.

When I went off to the service, I had completely forgotten about having taken the MCAT, although I had applied to a couple of medical schools. I had finished basic training and

infantry school when I received a letter from home saying that I had been accepted into Case Western Reserve Medical School. I was 20 years old. My acceptance was based on the test that I had taken before going into the service. I had been assigned to an infantry company commanded by a captain (a ranger) who had just come back from combat in the islands. His sergeant, who had also seen combat, was a real terror. He went strictly by the books. When I got the medical school acceptance letter, the sergeant said he'd never heard of anything like that, tore up the letter, and threw it away. I didn't know that letter would have given me the right to go to medical school at that time. I was supposed to be transferred into the A12 program and go to medical school. I didn't have any idea that I had those rights. I never thought about it again until after I came back from the service.

**Roberts:** *Did you have a choice of which branch of service you wanted to go into?*

**Gross:** Yes. I chose the army over the other branches.

**Roberts:** *You joined the army in July 1944?*

**Gross:** Yes.

**Roberts:** *In the army, you were stationed initially at Fort Bragg?*

**Gross:** Yes, for basic training. Then I went to Fort Benning, Georgia, for infantry officer candidate school. From there I went to Camp Croft, South Carolina, with about 20 others, and we were told that most of us would be shipping out for a combat zone in about 30 days. About 10% would be retained to train recruits. (It was then that I received the letter from Case Western Medical School that was torn up by the sergeant.)

I went out that first morning to observe training on the M1 rifle: how to break the rifle down, how to put it together again, how to use the clips, etc. Unexpectedly, I was ordered by an officer to the lecture platform to instruct 800 men about the rifle. The officer may have placed me in this unfamiliar situation to increase his chances of remaining stateside. I told him that I had never taught a class like this. I was given a book and told to read instructions from it. After a while, a car with a general's flag on it pulled up. One of the general's staff walked up to the platform with a note: "Continue. You are doing an excellent job." He got my name and sent me a commendation from the camp's general. That episode kept me at beautiful Camp Croft training troops for 7 months, and I loved it. The officer who placed me in this position was shipped out in 2 weeks.

Later, I was one of 12 officers sent to Camp Stoneman, in California, north of San Francisco. Each officer was assigned 200 recruits who had just finished basic training. During the next 2 weeks of training, each officer selected all the noncommissioned officers from the 200 men in their respective companies. We were to take them overseas into the combat zone. At the end of the 2 weeks we all got on the *Ernie Pyle*, a troop paddle steamer, which carried us through the bay onto the troop ship. We left San Francisco at night, and all the lights of the city were off.

**Roberts:** *This was when?*

**Gross:** In 1945. The war ended 2 days before we were to land in Okinawa. As a consequence, we were sent to the Tokyo-Yokohama area. Our troop ship was the first to arrive for the

armed occupation. A tugboat guided us through the harbor, which was heavily mined. It took 4 tedious hours to go through the minefield—a distance of less than half a mile. That was the beginning of my year in Japan.

**Roberts:** *What did you do in Japan?*

**Gross:** I was a platoon commander (and later a company commander) assigned to the 27th Infantry Division with the responsibility of patrolling the west coast of Japan out of Niigata. We were stationed at Muramatsu, an abandoned Japanese army base. It was always cold and miserable, with storms from Siberia coming down over the Sea of Japan. I was almost court marshaled there. We received an order that all doors should open outward. (The Japanese had built the barracks with the doors opening inward.) My company commander, a first lieutenant, gave me the order to see that the doors were changed. I said, "You know very well that there is no way they can change all those doors without literally freezing." He said we had to do it. The next thing I knew he made out court martial papers and gave them to the major who was the head of the battalion. At lunch that day, the major looked at me and commented, "Gross, you are not eating very well today." I answered, "Well, I have a problem," and he said he knew about it. He had the court martial papers in front of him. He asked, "If I told you I tore those papers up, do you think you could eat?" I told him, "Yes." He gave me the torn papers and said he could never court martial anyone over that stupid order. As long as we did our job, he was perfectly happy.

After 5 months at Muramatsu, I was transferred to the 1st Calvary division, 7th squadron (the "Gary Owen" squadron) in Tokyo, where I spent the next 7 months. I was assigned to the Imperial Palace, which had been leveled by our bombs. Emperor Hirohito was living in the gardener's house inside its gates. The only two cars that could go into those gates, which were manned by Japanese imperial marines, under our guidance, were General MacArthur's and mine. I had to make sure that Emperor Hirohito's place, the palace guards, and each of the four main entrances to the Imperial Palace were taken care of. A trooper from my company and a British soldier from one of the outstanding British companies manned the guard posts. There was always a throng of people watching at the four gates to the palace. Every half hour the guards would come to attention, leave their guard house, stride to the middle of the entrance way, salute each other, exchange rifles, turn around, and stride back. It was repeatedly shown on Movietone News.

**Roberts:** *How did you like Tokyo?*

**Gross:** I enjoyed it. I was very busy with the troops. I used to listen to the imperial touring music group inside the palace walls. General Eisenhower came over to review the troops once. On that particular Sunday we got the message that the review would be at 10:00 AM. We all lined up, marched in front of the reviewing stand, and stood at attention. General MacArthur gave the microphone to General Eisenhower, who said, "Gentlemen, thank God the war is over. I humbly apologize to every one of you for being out on this field on a Sunday. [His plane had been delayed by weather for the traditional Saturday review.] For those of you who love to go to church, I doubly

apologize. This Sunday review should never happen in peace time." General MacArthur, who was standing beside Ike, got red in the face. I thought he was going to have apoplexy. General Eisenhower then said that by the time we got back to our barracks, we would find a resolution stating that Monday would be an open holiday for everybody. It was all the men could do to keep from cheering because General MacArthur wasn't really that beloved. General Eisenhower just had that touch!

**Roberts:** *Did you have any conversations with General MacArthur?*

**Gross:** No, but I almost walked into his office by mistake my first day in Tokyo.

**Roberts:** *When you returned to the USA, you were released from the army?*

**Gross:** Correct. If I had re-enlisted, I would have been promoted to captain. Had I re-enlisted, however, I would have been in the Korean War immediately. I didn't, of course, know that at the time. I was angry because of the way we were treated when returning from overseas.

**Roberts:** *What happened?*

**Gross:** We landed in Portland, Oregon. The first 3 days I was back it never stopped raining. The clouds were very low. We were put on a train where I had time to think. By the time I got back to Fort Meade, Maryland, where I had been inducted, I had made up my mind that I was not going to have anything else to do with the service. That was the end of my military career! I had two offers that would have changed my life. One would have been to stay in as a captain and be assigned to another unit. The other was to run the Fuji View Hotel located at the base of Mount Fujiyama. I had gone there and really loved it. When I was getting ready to come home, I was offered the hotel manager position. They wanted somebody who had had officers' training and administrative ability. I would have had a civil service rating equivalent to that of a captain.

**Roberts:** *The hotel was owned by the USA?*

**Gross:** Yes. The USA took it over for officers' rest and relaxation. Had I accepted that offer, I would have probably ended up working in the hotel business.

**Roberts:** *After leaving the service, what happened?*

**Gross:** I went back to college for two semesters and during that period applied to medical school.

**Roberts:** *Which medical schools did you apply to?*

**Gross:** I applied to the University of Pittsburgh medical school. It was close to home and a good school. The dean of the medical school chose the class. Unfortunately, he did not favor Jewish students. During my interview with him, he looked at me and commented, "There isn't a hospital in Jeannette, and they could use some doctors there." I said that I was aware of that. He observed that I had fine grades and nice recommendation letters. When turning another page of my file, he noted that I had belonged to a Jewish fraternity (Phi Epsilon Pi) before I went into the service. He immediately closed my file and said, "You sang in the Heinz Chapel Choir." He didn't know that they had any Jews in that choir. I told him there had been several. He asked, "You are Jewish?" I answered, "Yes." Then he replied, "We'll call you" and closed my file. That was the end of it. Had I not expected some-

thing bad, it would have been worse, but expecting it helped. The dean also hated African Americans. My lab partner in advanced physiology was a very dark-skinned African American man and an excellent student. His father was a minister and his mother taught in college. After his interview he was so angry he found it difficult to contain himself. That dean was disgraceful!

I had an older cousin who had gone to Northwestern Medical School, and he encouraged me to apply to Chicago Medical School. He said that he had taken courses from its dean, Dr. John Sheinen, a brilliant anatomist who had formed this new medical school and had recruited outstanding faculty for every department. I was interviewed and accepted. It was a good experience. The Chicago Medical School was across the street from Cook County Hospital and just down the block from the University of Illinois Medical School. It was a great environment to learn medicine. Our school required 5 years of coursework within 4 years of study. There was only one summer vacation during the 4 years of school.

**Roberts:** *How many medical students were in your class?*

**Gross:** There were 65, but only 40 graduated. I was impressed with the intensity of the curriculum. There was no question that everyone was there to learn. Of the 65 I was the third youngest in the class even though I had been in the service.

**Roberts:** *How old were you when you entered medical school?*

**Gross:** Twenty-one. Dr. Sheinen believed that everyone who went through this medical school was going to be a star. When we applied for internships or residencies at Cook County, it was all on exam. He expected all who applied to be accepted.

**Roberts:** *Purely a meritorious system!*

**Gross:** Strictly. I didn't have any trouble with that.

**Roberts:** *Did any faculty in medical school have a particular influence on you?*

**Gross:** I was particularly influenced by Dr. Peter Gaberman, a practicing physician who taught a great deal. He taught thoroughly and in depth, and he took meticulous care of patients. His manner drew people out. He said that if you cannot create an atmosphere that allows people to talk to you, you'll never be a good doctor. I followed him at every opportunity. I was with him for 2 months. At 8:00 AM, a group of four students had coffee with him and then would make rounds on his patients and our assigned patients. We would then have a working lunch together. The next 3 or 4 hours were spent evaluating our patients. Between 4:00 and 5:00 PM we would meet with Dr. Gaberman and review our work. This would sometimes last as late as 9:00 PM. It was all very intense, but what a wonderful way to learn how to take care of patients.

**Roberts:** *As you were going through medical school and rotating through internal medicine, surgery, obstetrics-gynecology, etc., did you decide fairly quickly which of these arenas you wanted to spend your medical career in? Was that decision easy or difficult for you?*

**Gross:** It was both easy and difficult because I loved all the rotations. In pediatrics I saw as many as 50 to 90 patients a day with the interns and residents. I had one rotation on orthopedic pediatrics and loved that. Surgery was challenging. In obstetrics we averaged five to ten deliveries a day. (In my private practice, I delivered babies for the first 20 or 25 years.)

In medicine, I thought there wasn't enough emphasis on the family. In surgery, the surgeon was finished with the patient upon discharge. In internal medicine, the internist took care of the father's heart attack, but the mother and children were suffering just as much, and no one paid much attention to them. I became acutely aware of that because Dr. Gaberman always took the family into consideration. He and I used to talk about the doctors also taking care of the rest of the family. He was a purist and traditionalist in medicine.



**Figure 6.** With Harriet at his Aunt Esther's wedding, 1944.

The grand rounds at Cook County included some of the best minds from the medical schools of the University of Chicago, Loyola, University of Illinois, and Northwestern University, as well as the Chicago Medical School. When Peter Gaberman gave grand rounds, the students close to him would look up references for him to help prepare the case. We learned that there was nothing minor. Everything was major, but one had to separate the things that are most major from those less major.

When I went into practice, it was with the idea that I was going to do family medicine. Two years after I went into practice, the Academy of Family Medicine formed. I was active in that organization from the beginning.

**Roberts:** *You got married after your junior year in medical school. You were 24 at that time?*

**Gross:** Yes.

**Roberts:** *How did you meet Harriet?*

**Gross:** I came home after finishing officers' candidate school. At that time, I had some rather morbid thoughts about going into combat and what was going to happen to me. I had a week before I was to report to Camp Croft, South Carolina. Some friends from school heard that I was home. They came to Jeannette and asked that I spend the day at the University of Pittsburgh with them. We went to the school's coffee shop, called "the Tuck Shop," and I saw a girl sitting near Betty Shore, a friend from my statistics class. (That class was needed for students going into education, and that was my backup curriculum if I didn't get into medical school.) Sitting near Betty was my future wife, a vision, Harriet Bernstein, who was devastatingly gorgeous, with dark curly hair and a big smile. I asked my friend Herb about her. He said that she was a girl whom he had wanted me to meet. After meeting her, all I could do was look at her. I was swept off my feet.

Later that day I drove her to her aunt's house in my Uncle Harry's old black Hudson. I asked her for a date the next night.



**Figure 7.** With Harriet after he returned from the service.

She said she already had a date. Crestfallen, I pleaded that I would probably be overseas in combat within the month. She felt guilty because she had never broken a date before. The next night, my father's youngest sister, Esther, was married in Jeannette's new little synagogue. I took Harriet to the wedding (*Figure 6*) and then to Pittsburgh to a party that one of our classmates was giving. I was so exhausted from lack of sleep that I momentarily dozed. The car went off the road and was suspended on the guardrail of the streetcar tracks. When the car hit the guard rail, I woke up. I said to Harriet, "Don't move!" We were balanced on the guardrail, and any change towards the driver's side would have plunged the car into the tracks 4 feet below. An 18-wheeler truck behind us saw what had happened and stopped to help. When the driver looked in the car and saw Harriet and me, he said, "Lieutenant, I'm 4F and cannot serve, but I can help someone who needs help! Slide out carefully, and I will take care of your car." That man was a lifesaver. We got out of the car. He backed his 18-wheeler up, put a chain on my car, lifted the car, and got it onto the roadway. Then he tested the car to see that it was running. He said, "Get going. God bless you. I'm glad I was here to help you." We went to our party, and that was our first date. We have been in love ever since.

**Roberts:** *You saw her that night and two or three other times before you had to leave?*

**Gross:** Yes, I saw her twice more before leaving. We wrote to each other while I was overseas. Harriet stayed at the University of Pittsburgh, graduated, and then stayed to earn her MBA in merchandising and personnel at the Katz Business School. She had just started at the university at age 16 when I met her. When I came back from the service, we were both juniors (*Figure 7*). I finished two semesters and then was off to medical school. Armed with her MBA, Harriet came to Chicago and worked as an assistant buyer at Carson Pirie Scott, one of the big department stores. We married between my junior and senior years in medical school. I thought if we married in Chicago some of my extended family wouldn't come, but they all showed up. We were married at the Blackstone Hotel the weekend after President Truman had been there.

Then we had a week's honeymoon, which was a disaster. We went to the Dells, a resort in the Wisconsin lake country. We drove from Chicago to Milwaukee on our honeymoon night

and then to the Dells the next day. When we came down for breakfast the first morning many older married couples were there. One couple, who looked as if they had been married for several years, had really just married the night before. He and I played tennis for about 3 hours and our wives took a bike trip in that blazing sun during that time. Harriet was sunburned so badly that she blistered and blistered. Every day thereafter I went into Baraboo, Wisconsin, a little town near the resort, to buy everything that had ever been used for sunburn. Needless to say, it was a most unusual honeymoon.

**Roberts:** *You decided to do a rotating internship with the intention of going into family practice after that? How did your internship work out?*

**Gross:** It was a great year.

**Roberts:** *What was a rotating internship like at that time?*

**Gross:** I spent 3 months in internal medicine, 3 months in general surgery, 3 months in obstetrics-gynecology, 2 months in pediatrics, and 1 month in orthopedics. The training was excellent.

After internship at Cook County Hospital, I did not want to stay in Chicago. If I had come back to the Pittsburgh area, I would not have been able to join the staff of a major hospital because I was Jewish. Residency training would have been necessary to even be considered for privileges.

**Roberts:** *During this time, you decided to come to Dallas?*

**Gross:** Yes. My wife, Harriet, has been a tremendous support for me all these years. She told me that wherever I wanted to go was where we would go. We decided to look at Dallas, Denver, and San Diego because we heard there were some open hospital staffs in very good hospitals. We had heard a great deal about Dallas from Dallasites visiting Waterloo, Iowa, where Harriet's parents lived. They told me about Baylor Hospital in Dallas. We came to Dallas after my internship at Cook County Hospital.

Phi Delta Epsilon, a medical fraternity, came to our school in my junior year, and I represented our chapter in my senior year at the annual meeting at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel in New York. The head of the fraternity alumni in Dallas was Alfred Harris, MD, a brilliant internist who was the chief of medicine at Baylor Hospital. (The faculty club at Southwestern Medical School is called the Alfred Harris Faculty Club.) In Dallas, I talked with him for about 1½ hours. He told me: "There is only one thing that matters, and that is how well you practice medicine and how sincere you are in your practice. If you really take care of patients and you concentrate on those patients and you see to it that they get what they need, then nothing will ever stop you. Baylor is a wonderful environment." Al Harris told me I could be my own person, but I had to commit myself to practicing good medicine. "If you practice that kind of medicine, you could open up next door to me and you would do fine." I told Harriet that I had never heard that degree of enthusiasm tempered with understanding. Other doctors in the community weren't quite as forthcoming. Dr. Harris wasn't worried about competition or finances. His only concern was taking care of patients properly. I patterned my thinking and approach to practicing medicine on his principles.

**Roberts:** *Did you come to Dallas immediately after finishing the internship?*

**Gross:** No, after internship Harriet and I went to Europe for 3 months. While Harriet was working at Carson Pirie Scott, we had enough money to get by on her salary. (I brought home about \$15 or \$20 a month.) One of my medical school classmates, Joe Kahn, introduced us to his brother-in-law, Leonard Schneider, who started the Boulevard Employment Agency. He initially hired two women, one of whom, Lynn Davis, was a fireball. One night Joe Kahn and I were studying at his home and Leonard came over to visit and met Harriet. He convinced Harriet to quit her department store job and work for him. Harriet did. She started by calling employers to try to get listings of employment opportunities. If a fellow worker placed that applicant in the job, Harriet would get 30% of the agency's fee. Obtaining the job opportunity and placing the applicant would mean 40% of the agency's fee. For the first 3 months, Harriet did not have a cent of salary. Then the checks increased, and we saved for our European trip.

Harriet came home one day and said that Lynn had invited us to her apartment for a cocktail party and dinner. Lynn served lobster diablo, and it was sensational. Later that evening, Harriet fell asleep on the couch, and Lynn and I stayed up having a nightcap and talking. Lynn thought Harriet was fantastic. After Lynn, Harriet was the number two earner among the office's 30 employees. Harriet and Lynn became fast friends. After Lynn married she opened up her own agency and tried to entice Harriet to join her. It was tempting, but it would have meant staying in Chicago. I had job offers in Chicago and other cities, but I didn't like the circumstances or the hospitals that I would have had to use. As much as Harriet enjoyed what she did, she has been at my side all the time, helping with our major decisions and setting the tone for our marriage, our eventual family, and my career.

We went to Europe on the *Queen Mary* and returned on the *Queen Elizabeth*. In Europe we traveled third class, bought food from the vendors, and had a wonderful time. We stayed in Paris, Rome, Venice, and Taormina, Sicily. After returning to the USA, we went to Dallas and I had the interview with Dr. Alfred Harris.

**Roberts:** *When was that?*

**Gross:** In October 1952. I started practice on November 10, 1952.

**Roberts:** *Where did you set up office?*

**Gross:** In South Dallas on Forest Avenue. At that time, Forest Avenue and South Dallas were sought-after locations for offices. Two years later things changed. A realtor went to all the owners on those blocks of beautiful homes on South Boulevard and told them that some outside interests had bought houses in the middle of each block and were going to turn them into boarding houses. (That man was found shot to death in his office on Forest Avenue about a year later.) I had started there with Jacob Robbins, MD, and we practiced together for about 2½ years. Then I went into solo practice near Baylor Hospital in the Doctor's Building at 3707 Gaston Avenue (now a parking lot). The new office had 675 square feet and five chairs in the waiting room. I had two small examining rooms. The office opened on a Saturday

morning, and the examining rooms were not ready! There was a serious concern as to how my solo practice would survive, but there were about 20 patients waiting that morning. From then on, I never looked back.

**Roberts:** *During those first years, you delivered babies. Did you do any surgery?*

**Gross:** I did dilation and curettages and tonsillectomies. I never wanted to go into an abdomen because of potential complications that could arise from relatively “simple” procedures, like appendicitis.

**Roberts:** *Which hospital did you use initially in Dallas?*

**Gross:** When I went into practice, St. Paul Hospital was on the corner of Hall and San Jacinto. I became chief of general practice there. Over half of the staff at that time were general practitioners.

**Roberts:** *When St. Paul moved to Harry Hines, you focused entirely on Baylor Hospital?*

**Gross:** Yes. Baylor Hospital soon afterwards started a department of family medicine. One of Boone Powell Sr.’s good friends, Dr. E. R. Cox, became chief of family medicine, and he and I became good friends.

**Roberts:** *Did you stay in solo practice?*

**Gross:** Yes.

**Roberts:** *After you had been in practice 10 or 15 years, what was your day-to-day life like?*

**Gross:** I would get up between 6:00 and 6:30 AM, drive to the hospital, and make rounds. I would get to my office between 9:00 to 9:30 AM and would stay there until 5:30 to 6:00 PM and then I’d go back to the hospital, make rounds, and get home between 7:00 and 8:00 PM, except for the nights that I delivered a baby or had an emergency. Physicians took care of their own emergency cases during those years.

**Roberts:** *How many patients would you usually have in the hospital?*

**Gross:** I averaged four to eight patients.

**Roberts:** *You were doing how many deliveries?*

**Gross:** Approximately one a week.

**Roberts:** *You were always on call?*

**Gross:** Yes.

**Roberts:** *Who covered for you for vacations?*

**Gross:** I usually had one obstetrician and one or two doctors who did general medicine, and I would leave them a list of consultants I used. It took 5 to 8 years to develop a group of consultants that shared my views and feelings about patient care. My consultants were a never-ending source of medical expertise, help, support, and backup in every area of medicine. That group made my life in medicine fulfilling.

**Roberts:** *When you would get home about 7:00 PM, your family would wait to eat dinner with you? What did you do in the evenings for the most part?*

**Gross:** Yes, we always had dinner together. Harriet and I would talk for a while to catch up on what was going on with the children. I usually ended my day reading. If I had things to look up medically, I did that. I always had a book going.

**Roberts:** *Was it fiction or nonfiction?*



Figure 8. Son Robert Gross with his wife, Maya.

**Gross:** Fiction. Always the good writers. I found that there were only two ways that I could turn off my mind medically. One was to go to a movie. My weeks were intense with medicine so that when the children were old enough, Harriet and I would go to the movies on Wednesday night. On Thursdays, I worked half a day and played tennis in the afternoon. We would do something else Thursday evening. I was so fatigued by Wednesday night that unless I cleared my mind, I really didn’t enjoy Thursday. Those Wednesday night movies and our discussions afterwards would refresh me. The other refresher was a good book.

**Roberts:** *Do you have a lot of books in your home?*

**Gross:** Yes, lots of books stacked all over the place—in my study and sunroom particularly.

**Roberts:** *What is your house like? Where do you live?*

**Gross:** We have lived on Beverly Drive for about 50 years. It’s an old two-story house. After opening the front door, there are winding stairs to the left of the foyer and a living room to the right. Our dining room adjoins the living room. My wife has an interest in antiques. Harriet would find a piece of furniture, examine it carefully, research its background—and then we would discuss it before purchase.

**Roberts:** *Both of you would decide on pieces?*

**Gross:** Yes, but her taste is far superior to mine. She understood how the piece was made and she would explain that to me. I have learned a great deal from her over the years. Everything in the house has been put together piece by piece.

**Roberts:** *You have three children?*

**Gross:** Yes.

**Roberts:** *What are their names?*

**Gross:** My oldest, Robert David, was born in 1953. He went to Southwestern Medical School and is a pediatric ophthalmologist. His wife, Maya, is a vice president with American Airlines (Figure 8). Her father, Jordan, is a retired professor from the University of Indiana Law School. Robert and Maya, who live near us, have one boy, Perry Jordan (Figure 9).

**Roberts:** *Your second child?*

**Gross:** The second son is Jonathan Stuart, who was born in 1959. His wife is Leah. She formerly practiced law but now is a homemaker. They have two children: Elizabeth, 13, and



**Figure 9.** With Maya and his grandson, Perry Jordan.



**Figure 11.** Daughter Jane with her husband, Burton Manne, and their 8-month-old twins, Richard and Emma.



**Figure 10.** Son Jonathan with his wife, Leah, and their children, Elizabeth, 13, and Benjamin, 11.



**Figure 12.** Perry and Harriet with the twins.

Benjamin, 11 (*Figure 10*). They live in Houston. Jonathan is a geophysicist and went to the University of Chicago.

**Roberts:** *And your third child?*

**Gross:** Jane Perry Gross was born in 1960. Jane is married to Burton Manne, and they are the proud parents of 8-month-old twins, Richard Joseph and Emma Rose (*Figures 11 and 12*). They live in Houston not far from her brother, Jonathan.

**Roberts:** *Did Jane work at one time?*

**Gross:** After graduating from Tulane University, she was employed by Glazer's Wholesale Distributing Company, the largest family-owned distributor of spirits and wine in Texas, Oklahoma, Louisiana, and New Mexico. She has become a wine expert. She worked for American Wine for a couple of years and then became a representative for Sigel's in Dallas. She had

many of their major accounts—The Mansion, the Crescent, Bob's Steakhouse, Del Frisco's, etc. After she married and moved to Houston, she went back to Glazer's and is now a district manager for them.

**Roberts:** *I assume you had vacations during all those years you were in practice. How much time did you generally take off each year?*

**Gross:** On occasion, we took long weekends in Galveston, Houston, or other nearby places. When my mother and sisters lived in Pennsylvania, we would go there for 3 to 5 days for a family reunion. Otherwise, we didn't do a lot of traveling.

**Roberts:** *When did you retire from practice?*

**Gross:** December 31, 2007.

**Roberts:** *At that time you were how old?*

**Gross:** I turned 82 in January 2008.

**Roberts:** *You've been a nonpracticing physician for nearly 3 months. How has it been? Did you make the right decision?*

**Gross:** I made the right decision. I did agonize over the decision because I loved practicing. My adjustment has been good because I took Rowland Robinson's offer and joined the Baylor Health Care System Foundation. I had a really wonderful

55 years. When practicing, I rarely went to bed at night when I wasn't working through a problem with a patient in mind. I would mull these things over and invariably I would come to a conclusion somewhere during the night and then fall asleep and sleep soundly. I miss terribly not having that now.

**Roberts:** *You miss the daily challenge?*

**Gross:** Yes, the daily problem of evaluating a patient fully. Some letters I have received from former patients since retiring almost move me to tears. My patients understood that I listened to them or sought out that extra care for them.

**Roberts:** *You've got good ears for listening and a great capacity for friendship. It sounds like you and your wife have a lot of friends. Do you entertain much in your home?*

**Gross:** We do have quite a few friends. We don't entertain much now. We did more when we were younger.

**Roberts:** *Do you go out to dinner more now?*

**Gross:** Yes. We like to go to dinner at Parigi's and then attend the symphony.

**Roberts:** *Are you planning to travel more now?*

**Gross:** Yes. After our children were married, we started to travel more. Our favorite cities are New York, London, and Paris. I wish I could return to Tokyo. I have never been back. When in Tokyo I had a houseboy, a very bright-eyed Japanese youngster aged 12 or 13 at the time. He learned English very quickly. I hired him to take care of my little house. Each company commander had a house across the street from the main barracks. Unfortunately, I lost his address so have been unable to contact him all these years. When I boarded the ship to return to the USA I saw him on the shore with his head buried in his arms, and he was sobbing away.

**Roberts:** *If you had gone into business, you would have been a chief executive officer. Do you ever regret that you didn't specialize more?*

**Gross:** No, I never did. I never stopped studying or taking courses. I liked the variety, and I have delved into some specialty areas.

**Roberts:** *After you gave up obstetrics and surgeries, you essentially were a general internist?*

**Gross:** A general internist who saw the whole family.

**Roberts:** *You were an internist of children and adults. Did you see newborns?*

**Gross:** I did, but not in the hospital. Dr. Shirley Coln, who worked in the hospital and nurseries, would see all my newborns.

**Roberts:** *Do you still play the violin?*

**Gross:** My arthritis has prevented me from playing. I tried it a couple of months ago and it was just too painful.

**Roberts:** *What kind of arthritis do you have?*

**Gross:** I have far advanced osteoarthritis in my hands and wrists. My first metacarpal has degenerated bilaterally, and as a result it makes it difficult to play. My tennis game has also suffered, but I still play.

**Roberts:** *What about your hips and knees?*

**Gross:** My hips don't bother me much. My knees at times give me a little trouble.

**Roberts:** *What do you plan to do for the next 25 years?*

**Gross:** I would like to continue to live the life that I am living right now. I would like to spend more time with my children, travel, and do what Harriet would like to do for a change. Harriet has been supportive of everything I've ever done. She has stood by me during all of these events. We had twins that she carried to term and then both died. Despite the inevitable tragedies of life, we have been blessed.

**Roberts:** *Is there alcohol in your home? Do you have a drink every night?*

**Gross:** Yes, I have a little drink of scotch in the evening, but not every night.

**Roberts:** *Was there alcohol in your home growing up?*

**Gross:** Yes, but my dad had maybe two or three drinks a year, and my mother did not drink alcohol at all.

**Roberts:** *Did you go to synagogue as a child?*

**Gross:** Yes.

**Roberts:** *What about now?*

**Gross:** We attend services and think the ethical part of religion is important. Nominally, I am Jewish and I try simply to live an ethical life.

**Roberts:** *Other than your arthritis, is your health pretty good?*

**Gross:** I had a terrifying episode about 4 years ago. I developed atrial fibrillation superimposed on a stenotic aortic valve. Because of inability to control the atrial fibrillation, each episode of which was exhausting to me, in June 2004 I had aortic valve replacement combined with the maze procedure and coronary artery bypass surgery. After a very complicated 3-week postoperative course including pulmonary emboli, pacemaker insertion for bradycardia, and rewiring of my sternum for multiple fractures that occurred secondary to a severe postoperative cough, I recovered and did well.

**Roberts:** *Could you discuss your community activities through the years?*

**Gross:** One was the formation of the Suicide and Crisis Center. As president of Jewish Family Service and member of its board of directors for many years and in conjunction with the city's fire and police departments, we formed this center. It was an exciting time. I felt it was a real advance for the whole community, and I think it has done a good job over the years. Once the center was started, members of the board of directors gave courses on suicide and medical ethics at Southern Methodist University. As president of Jewish Family Service, I automatically was on the board of the Jewish Federation and, later, on the board of Temple Emanu-el and Planned Parenthood. I was involved with these endeavors for years.

Another rather unique involvement was with Mary Calderone's Sexuality Education and Information Council of the United States (SEICUS). I was on their board for about 5 years. I was interested in the fact that nobody was discussing human sexuality in practical terms. Although we had the problems evolving from sexually transmitted diseases, there was little means to reach out and teach our medical staff. I put together a course on human sexuality and taught it at the medical school. Whenever the physiology course reached the subject of human sexuality, Professor Robert Moss invited me to do the series on human sexuality.

**Roberts:** *Your activities at BUMC were also extensive?*

**Gross:** I was active at the St. Paul Hospital from 1954 to 1978. I served as chief of family practice and also on their credentials, executive, and graduate training committees. At BUMC I chaired the medical board in 1985 and was vice chair in 1981 and 1984. I also served on the medical board screening and credentials committees and as chief of addictionology and chief of family practice. I was active in the American Medical Association and American Academy of Family Practice. I was on the latter's committee for scientific programs from 1991 to 2001.

**Roberts:** *Of all the things you have done, which ones are you most proud of?*

**Gross:** Although lecturing and teaching have given me much satisfaction, I am most proud of the fact that I was able to help people in my practice for so many years. I've always felt

that taking care of patients on a one-to-one basis is a sacred trust. Where else does one really entrust one's life, one's feelings, one's problems? As a physician, you have the key, and that is the greatest satisfaction I've had. The personal one-on-one relationships with my patients, the enduring love of my wife, and the challenge of children and grandchildren have made my life uniquely rewarding. Nothing else is terribly important.

**Roberts:** *How many patients did you see in your practice?*

**Gross:** It's never been put to numbers. Before my heart surgery, I saw approximately 12 to 20 patients per day. After my heart surgery, I never went back full time. I saw anywhere from 5 to 8 patients a day most of the time. I never rushed patients.

**Roberts:** *You know a lot of people in this town.*

**Gross:** It has been a whirlwind, but it's been a good life.

**Roberts:** *Dr. Gross, thank you for pouring your soul out here.*