**The Road to Pharmacy for Charles Longinotti** (transcribed from his hand written document)

Was born August 7, 1918 in San Jose at 889 Plummer Avenue. Had 2 older brothers and

a sister. At the age of 5, I injured my left eye from a fall that limited sight in that eye.

Work force included harvesting and nurturing the fruit trees on the farm. For pay I

received lodging, food, and clothing, love and tender care. I was allowed to take music

lessons while in grammar school and played in the grammar and high school bands. In

high school I played in a so-called “dance band.”

Scholastically I was an average student with As and Bs as grades. I enjoyed geography,

math, music, Latin and German, chemistry, physiology and botany. In fact, I enjoyed

going to school. Was involved in student activities, i.e., president or vice president of

home room classes. Did not participate in sports because of my size and involvement in

music. Graduated from grammar school, junior high school, and finally high school in

1936.

I went to San Jose State College and took the basic classes so as to matriculate to a

university. Doing so saved room and board expenses for my folks. During this time my

older brother had gone to the University of California Pharmacy School and graduated in

1937. This was the first time that pharmacy was thought of as my profession. I

envisioned the two brothers owning a pharmacy together. Up until that time I rarely

patronized a pharmacy if at all.

I was fortunate to have a goal in mind as I entered college. While at San Jose State I quit

music to devote full attention to school classes. During that time I never worked in a

pharmacy but I helped on the farm during harvesting. Then came the big transition of

going out of town to a university in a big city – San Francisco. A little farm boy in a big

city!! I was enrolled in a 4-year pharmacy course, which was the last of the three year

courses. So we had a few 4-year students with the balance 3 years totaling about 40

students in my class.

My transition from a small school to a large school and its surroundings was a bit

overwhelming. Plus the fact that everything revolved around pharmacy - even the two

students who lived in the house with me had been working in a pharmacy for 2-3 years in

their hometown. So here I had never been in a pharmacy to speak of. I was totally lost.

But time and persistence prevailed and I got into the flow of it. I found out that some of

the students in my Bacteriology and Pharmacology class were med students and they

didn’t fare much better than the pharmacy students.

In my senior year I lived with two students from San Jose. We would go to a lecture

class, take notes as fast as we could, come back to our rooms and compare notes of the

three of us and fill in the voids or make corrections if needed. This was very helpful as

the profs would write these formulas on the board then erase them as soon as they were

finished, then go on to another formula. As a result my report cards were “elevated” with

mostly As and Bs.

After graduation in 1940 I still did not have enough outside working hours to permit me

to take the Pharmacy Board exam. I applied for a pharmacy internship which was offered

by the school for the first time. I was accepted and I worked at the U.C. Hospital for one

year. There were four of us in this program which gave us room and board free plus $50

every six months as a stipend. As a junior and senior in school I finally worked part time

in a community pharmacy giving me my first experience in a pharmacy. I also worked in

the school’s manufacturing class for time credit. There we took care of the x-ray

solutions for the department. We had a tablet and capsule machine and made up liquids

such as cough syrups, laxatives, etc. I finally had sufficient hours to take the Pharmacy

Board exam in July 1946. I passed on my first try, which was quite exciting.

A classmate of my brother who had purchased a community store near Nob Hill indicated

that he needed a pharmacist at his store in the avenues of San Francisco. I applied and

was accepted. I worked there for about a year. I wanted to get back to San Jose so I

applied for a pharmacist opening at the Owl Drug Company in San Jose. I was accepted.

Through all this, I kept learning more and more of pharmacy. I kept thinking of my

original goal of working with my brother in a store in San Jose. By this time my brother

had purchased this store in San Francisco plus married a San Francisco girl. So that goal

was put on hold.

Then of course came World War II. I was drafted in November 1942. I had worked for Owl Drug Company for ten months. I believe that being a pharmacist would have exempted me in going into the service, but I decided against that. I was sent to Monterey induction center for induction requirements. At the induction center in San Francisco I met a classmate who was working in the X-ray department. He

suggested that I request duty at the induction center as they were in need of medical service men. As a result my orders were to go to 444 Market Street, San Francisco after boot camp in Monterey. In June 1942 I had married my high school sweetheart, Eleanor Walchar. She had a teacher’s credential so was teaching in Morgan Hill. We had an apartment in San Jose on South Fifth Street. I commuted on weekends to San Jose.

I was a private first class, making $37 a month. After about two years the WACs took

over the induction center, and I was sent to Fort Warren, Wyoming, for main boot camp

training. I was then assigned to a Graves Registration Company. At that time the name

had little or no meaning. I found out later in Okinawa. But first we left Fort Warren in

November. My first experience in a troop train to Fort ? near Seattle, Washington. After

loading up with gear, we left Washington for Hawaii.

My first glimpse of Diamond Head. We arrived there seven days before my daughter

Marilyn was born on December 13, 1944. I was very disappointed that I didn’t go to the

hospital in Fort Warren when I was scheduled to. I probably could have witnessed my

daughter being born. I received a telegram December 15 th indicating mother and daughter

were born fine. I remember crying while reading it. Throughout the tour we kept in touch

at least once a week by mail.

This ended the exciting part of my call to arms. After a month or so we shipped off to ???

That’s right. The top brass did not divulge our destination. After 10-12 days on a huge

troop ship we arrived in the Bay of Leyte, although there were a few pockets of enemy

here and there, most of the island had been secured. We were not permitted to see

different areas at anytime. We landed on the island by jumping in waist-high beach water

and wading to shore. For me it was scary as we did not know if the island was secured or

not at that time. The officers did not know or did not tell us.

After three-four weeks, the mapping up of the area had been completed so we began to

prepare to leave. But where to? We waterproofed all the vehicles and equipment. This

time we settled down to hurry up and wait. That lasted about two weeks. Finally orders

came to move in. Still did not know where to. After six days on board a small troop ship

sleeping on the metal deck, we arrived on Okinawa. Now we were in the middle of

WAR. This was it!!! We came in on the second wave of personnel on small motorboats.

We still had to jump in the waist high water and wade in to the beach as there were no

docks. This was Inchon Bay. While anchored in the bay we witnessed two Kama Kazi

planes coming down on nearby ships, none with a direct hit. I was so elated to get off that

ship. We were trucked to an area adjacent to Kadena Airport, which had been secured by

the Marines.

We set up camp by digging our foxholes and slit trenches. This is where we found out

what our tour of duty was – burying the dead. However, we did not set up a cemetery at

that time. So for a week or more we did quartermaster duty – filling gas cans with gas

from nearby ships – stacking food cartons, etc. Finally an area was selected for a

cemetery. We set up camp and prepared to process the unfortunate men that did not make

it. My task was to identify the soldiers by taking finger prints – teeth charts if needed –

personal effects – then wrapped them up in a shelter half after which they were placed in

a plot dug by men of our company. A cross with their names on it was placed on the

grave. At this time I was appointed company bugler to play revelry and taps every day. I

lost the duty later when I wasn’t aware that I was to blow taps for 2 officers (one female)

being buried.

At times it was scary as the Japanese dropped several bombs nearby. It all ended when

the Japanese surrendered on June 21, 1945. It took forever to come home. They used a

point system, so it wasn’t until December 1 st that I boarded a ship for home. Took 19

days to get to Portland, USA Terrible weather – five appendices on ship. From Portland

we came to San Francisco. What excitement coming through the Golden Gate and under

the Bridge. We were bused to a discharging facility just north of Sacramento. In five

days I was out!!! Whew!!! I was bussed back to San Francisco where I met Eleanor.

What a reunion!!! We had dinner at one of the hotels and came on home to our apartment

on South Fifth Street, San Jose.

I found a job at College Pharmacy (Mickey Ehrs was owner) in Santa Clara. I worked

there almost one year. Then I was told about a store in San Jose that was for sale.

Morehead Fleming Drug Company. I did not do any research on it. I felt that because it

had been a business since 1900 or so it was a good store. So after talking to my brother

John, my dad, and my father-in-law, Charles Walchar, I went to 1 st National Bank to

borrow the money. To show you how naïve I was, I did not ask for an inventory of the

store. I paid $30,000 for it. Far too much. My first day as owner of Morehead-Fleming

Drug Company was June 1 st , 1948. I believe I took in $78 for the day. You can say I

struggled for eight years. I changed the décor of the store and made it self-service. Even

stocked veterinary supplies. I made it because in those 8 years I had a house built and

another child. But thanks God for my dad and father-in-law who helped out financially.

After spending almost every Sunday looking for a spot to move the store I found a place

on Almaden Road and Koch Lane owned by Peter LaBarbera. He had just finished

building a small shopping center in a rapidly developing area. I closed Morehead Fleming

four days before Thanksgiving Day in November 1956. I opened Almaden Pharmacy the

fourth day after Thanksgiving. I was filling Rx even before being ready for the public.

Before moving from downtown to Willow Glen-Almaden area I had boxed up a good

amount of old chemicals – drug – herbs- and anything that was antiquated – some of

which dated back to the early 1900s. So before moving I stored all those boxes in my

dad’s barn and in my garage.

I did not retrieve them until I sold the store in 1974 and lost my wife, Eleanor, in 1975. I sold my house on Lennon Way and moved to Almaden area at 115 Calle Ventura. Meantime I opened a prescription only store Westwood Prescriptions, which I sold in 1976. I had opened Community Clinic Pharmacy in the Santa Teresa Medical Building. We had 62 doctors in the building so I was kept busy.

Between all of this I finally retrieved these stored boxes of antiques and moved them to

my garage on Calle Ventura. So in my spare time I segregated the chemicals from the

tablets from the liquids from the powders from the ointments from herbs and from

whatever else. I took inventory of the bottles and all else that could be inventoried such

as glassware, scales, tablet machines, suppository machines, etc. All the tablets, capsules,

liquids, ointments, powders, chemicals, herbs, glassware, scales, and the entire items in

the boxes were all purchased prior to 1956 except for several articles. I did not put any of

those articles in the boxes in stock at Almaden Pharmacy to be sold. So that at this date in

time, (March 14, 2003) those articles are at the least 47 years old or more.

I shall now describe some of the articles:

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An extensive list…. (the full list is not included here)

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Along with a capsule machine, suppository machine, scales, etc. the above items are

stored in approximately 95 file boxes.

Continuing my road to pharmacy, I was told by a salesman I was the first pharmacy in

Santa Clara County to have a computer set-up. We were on line with a company from

Dallas who was popular in Texas not otherwise. As a result we had numerous days of

down-time. When the fee for services reached $2000 a month, we decided to go alone.

We bought an IBM typewriter that utilized chips so we had several options to

programming. The day of typing all directions manually was over plus the downtime.

Later on we installed a computer with a program downloaded to handle all types of Rxs.

We schooled two clerks to do the computers, which allowed the pharmacist to do the

filling of Rx and consulting the patients. The techs had arrived. This was in the 1980s.

Kaiser had purchased the hospital building and several other medical buildings in the

complex and rumor was that the building I was in was being purchased sometime by

Kaiser. So after 34 years of being self-employed I felt it was time to retire. Besides I had

remarried in 1979 and I wanted to travel some. So in 1986 I sold the pharmacy.

In retrospect you might say I lucked out as Kaiser did purchase this building in 1981 and

began placing Kaiser MDs in the building. So during that period of five years, Rx volume

was gradually decreasing and the private MDs were moving out being replaced by Kaiser

MDs.

For 3-4 years we traveled extensively by motor home going cross country twice and up

and down the California coast line. I yearned to get back into pharmacy. I renewed my

license when due and worked part-tine for Near Pharmacy, Leiters Pharmacy, Cambrian

Pharmacy, San Jose State Pharmacy, Rite Aid Pharmacy and Costco Pharmacy. This was

over a period of ten years or so. It was interesting and educational to practice in so many

different environments. I made it a point to practice in the different pharmacies to learn

another side of pharmacy.

It was interesting to see how rapid changes took place. First most pharmacies had

computers. Second that brought on the Techs. Third and the most involved was the rise of

generic companies. Back then we only knew names of brands. Generic names were rarely

mentioned in literature or ads. The same with listing the use of a drug. That was a no-no.

Today if you don’t know the generic name as well as the brand name, it can be

embarrassing. And we are now mandated to discuss the use of a drug with the patient. To

add more confusion, generic companies are putting their own brand name on their

products. So that in the past twenty years or so, we had an influx of new drugs with generic

designations as well as brand designations, both from the brand manufacturers and the

generic ones.

For one who has practiced 62 years except for a four-year period in the 1980s, it is most

difficult to maintain a level of knowledge commensurate with the duty of consulting the

patient in a timely fashion. With the practice of pharmacy involving the stem-cell theory,

the genome theory, and the rapid introduction of new entities, the current pharmacist

must educate himself or herself to a point where they will be chosen to assist in the

development of new entities and be called upon for advice and direction by colleagues in

the medical environment. Pharmacy as it is today will eventually fade away; and that

makes me feel that the best is yet to come in pharmacy.

I will close by saying that even with the ups and downs that I have experienced in

pharmacy, I have enjoyed practicing and meeting the public. It has provided a decent

livelihood and good health knowing that I may have saved someone’s life practicing

pharmacy.