

## John Bonica remembers seeing patients in medical school

*Oral History Interview with John J. Bonica*, 9-12 March 1993 (Ms. Coll. no. 127.7), John C. Liebeskind History of Pain Collection, History & Special Collections Division, Louise M. Darling Biomedical Library, University of California, Los Angeles

### Tape 2, Side 1 — Transcript pages 41-42

JOHN BONICA: Then the third year [of medical school], you know, things slack up. It's clinical. I loved to see patients.

JOHN LIEBESKIND: So that was your first experience seeing patients. I mean, you were -- that must have been amazing for you.

JOHN BONICA: And, you know [voice cracking], when I approach a patient, I like to touch --

LIEBESKIND: Yeah. Put your hands on the patient.

JOHN BONICA: [voice cracking] And I feel emotional.

LIEBESKIND: Yeah. That began at that time, did it?

JOHN BONICA: Oh, yeah. You know, I would take care. I remember I used to give open-drop ether to ladies who were going to have a baby, and an old Irish obstetrician used to -- I got, during the last year, I got an externship, so I could live in a hospital. And I did everything like an intern. And I had a couple friends who were interns -- [coughs] this damned thing bothers me, that I break up.

LIEBESKIND: Hey, it's being true to your nature.

JOHN BONICA: Anyway, I would touch the lady's face and talk in her ear, and almost fell in love with the lady to make her feel quiet, relaxed. And I see guys in medicine -- You know, Emma told you that every time she goes to the cardiologist, I go out crying.

LIEBESKIND: This guy's so good, he reminds you of yourself!

JOHN BONICA: Absolutely.

LIEBESKIND: [he laughs]

JOHN BONICA: [voice cracking] He hugs Emma.

LIEBESKIND: Yeah. He's a human being. Well, it's so rare today, isn't it? Did you learn that? Did someone tell you that, or that was just in your nature to be that way?

JOHN BONICA: No. Just came.

LIEBESKIND: Just came, and it was part of your nature.

JOHN BONICA: And I remember, as an intern, I would always be [going the] extra mile. If I -- I wouldn't leave the patient unless his condition -- until I was satisfied that I couldn't do any more.

# # #