

Interview of Dr. Kimble Love by Kate Medley, camera by April Grayson

Kate Medley: Dr. Kimble Love at his office in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, on March 25, 2006.

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KM: Ok, Dr. Love, so start by just telling me you were at Millsaps in what years, and then you went on to UMC.

Dr. Kimble Love: I graduated from Millsaps in '59 and went to the University in '59 and graduated from University Medical Center in '63, 1963, and then was in residency from 1963 through '68. Excuse me, '66. Then went in the Navy from '66 to '68.

KM: Ok. And your residency was in pediatrics.

KL: Pediatrics.

KM: And were you hired by Dr. Batson?

KL: I, of course, I attended medical school, and yes, through meeting Dr. Batson, he accepted my application for a pediatric residency. We did not at that time have "matching programs" as they are, as there are now. At least if they did, we weren't aware of them, and you had to do your own application, and if the hospital needed you or wanted you, they took you.

KM: So it was just like applying for a job essentially.

KL: I—almost, yeah.

KM: Ok. And tell me a little bit about—first tell me a little bit about the racial dynamics in Jackson at the time.

KL: Well, being at Millsaps at that time, and also at University in internship and residency, all I remember is we knew, I knew the racial unrest was going on, I know there were Freedom Rides, I know there were demonstrations, but we were—I was—actually working so hard that I did not become involved in any of these things. It was almost, it was almost as if it did not exist except in the newspaper and on the, on the news and that sort of thing because you worked real hard and you slept real hard, and you had time to work again. (2:10) And this was especially, especially true during the residency years of '63 through '66. We were short of interns, we were short of residents. Nobody really wanted to come to Mississippi, at least it seemed that way, to get their training. Not because the training wasn't there but because of the publicity of the racial unrest that was going on. And we were working with a very undersized, undergraduate staff. And we really did not get involved in a great deal of the problems that were going on at that time. And being in a pediatric residency, our obligation to the emergency room was primarily the care of children. We did not get involved in any racial incidences. I personally do not remember the pediatric ward—we only had one ward at that time for pediatrics—as

ever being segregated. The children were together. The nursery, as I remember it, was only one nursery—there was no segregation in the nursery. Babies were babies, and they were put where they were supposed to be. All of this under the leadership of Dr. Batson.

Now the *rest* of the university at that time—and I don't remember which year it changed—there was segregation. On surgery, on medicine. I don't think there was on obstetrics, but—ignoring the recovery room and things like that—but there was, there were separate floors for medicine patients and surgical patients. And what year that ended, I do not remember. (3:52)

KM: Do you have any sense of, was that a decision that Dr. Batson made? To not segregate the pediatric ward, or do you—

KL: I think it was just a matter of that's the way the university was built, and psychiatry was on one end of that wing, and we were on the other wing, and if you were a child you went there, it didn't matter what color you were, and I don't remember any objections to that, from anybody.

KM: At the time, there weren't any black doctors or residents.

KL: None that I remember. I remember Chinese, Formosan, and I think Indian, but I do not remember any black doctors, at all, period. None in the medical school classes, certainly, and no residents or interns.

KM: And then Dr. Batson admitted Dr. Shirley in 1966 [unintelligible].

KL: '65 or '66, I don't know. I was toward the end of my residency, so. I think it was, I think it was '65, I'm not sure.

KM: Can you tell me a little bit about your first encounter with either Dr. Shirley or hearing that Dr. Shirley was coming on board?

KL: Well, as stated, as I stated, most of this civil rights unrest was a terrible thing, but at the same time, we were so busy taking care of sick people, and we as a group of residents and interns—at least I—didn't get involved in it, and as I said, it was, it was just almost like something you heard in the news, and it was happening all just a very few blocks from you. I do remember Dr. Batson calling me down to his office. I was either senior resident or chief resident, and telling me he had had an application from a physician from Vicksburg who was in general practice, and he wanted to know what I thought about hiring this physician, and this physician was Dr. Aaron Shirley. As I remember it, he was a family practitioner or general practitioner at the time from Vicksburg, Mississippi. I don't know where his home was. And when Dr. Batson, I said, I said, "That sounds fine to me." And as you know I said a while ago we were working with such a short supply of physicians, and taking call, we were taking call to the point that even the fully active staff was having to help us with night call and weekend call to take care of the patient load because we did not have the interns and residents. And I really think when Dr. Batson

told me that Dr. Shirley wanted to come, and that he was—I think he said black physician—and he said, “Does this bother you?” I said, “No, sir. When are you going to put him on the call schedule?” (7:00) And that’s all I remember that was said about it. It made no difference to me. It made no difference to the rest of the residents, that I know of. And as far as I know, Dr. Shirley kept a lot of things to himself, whether he ever—I don’t think he had any major problems. He may have, but if he did, he was, he was man enough to keep them to himself, and he always had the ability, to me, to take care of patients, and if he didn’t understand something, he never felt bad about asking about it. So I have nothing but fond memories of him. Never had any problems as far as I know. Now he may have had some problems, but he didn’t, he didn’t share them with me; if he did, I don’t remember. (7:41)

KM: (to April Grayson, operating the camera) Are there other things that you want to cover?

April Grayson: If you could address your answer to Kate, but do you have any sort of anecdotes about your time in serving with Dr. Shirley?

KL: I really don’t because we, we really worked so hard, all I remember is night call and working. There was very little time for socialization. We may have had a few departmental parties, but if we did, I don’t remember much about them. And then when I left, we maintained no real relationship or talking back and forth. But that was not just Dr. Shirley. None of us, none of us in those three or four or five, six years in there maintained close social relationships. But it was nothing to do with race, it was just the way things were.

KM: And one last question. Dr. Shirley remembered when he first got there, there were separate cafeterias facilities, or separate rooms where black people and white people, I guess primarily people that worked at the hospital, maybe patients also, would—

KL: Well, I mentioned the segregation on the medicine and surgery floors. I—and there may have been separate restrooms. I don’t remember a separate cafeteria. I, I really honestly do not, but I, I did not pay attention to things like that. Maybe I wasn’t sensitive enough, but I don’t remember that. It probably was true, but I don’t remember it.

KM: I think that’s about it. [unintelligible]

AG: Do you have any personal stories about Dr. Batson?

KL: Well, Dr. Batson is one of my favorite people of all time. He was an, he was an excellent teacher. He related well to people. He (laughs) was probably the most difficult man to have your, as you’re attending on the ward because he was always full of questions, and you better be ready. He had one of the best lectures on jaundice—in fact that was his sub-interest, was the liver and whatnot—and I didn’t plagiarize, but I used that lecture a lot when I first went into practice all over the Delta to medical societies and

whatnot. When I intern—I went to Millsaps, and I interned at, went to medical school at University of Mississippi, I interned and residence at University of Mississippi, and then I went into the Navy, and I was associated with physicians from Harvard, New York, Arkansas, Tennessee, Texas, and my residency was just as good, if not better, than theirs. I was, I was just as ready as they were, if not more so, to do what was needed. So that's my Dr. Batson story.

AG: Great. That was wonderful.

END INTERVIEW. (11:04)