

HISTORY OF THE
U. S. FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION

Interview between:

Dorothy H. Koegler

Retired Director

Public Inquiry Office

and

Fred L. Lofsvold

U. S. Food and Drug Administration

Fort Lauderdale, Florida

February 4, 1980

INTRODUCTION

This is a transcription of a taped interview, one of a series conducted by Robert G. Porter and Fred L. Lofsvold, retired employees of the U. S. Food and Drug Administration. The interviews were held with retired F.D.A. employees whose recollections may serve to enrich the written record. It is hoped that these narratives of things past will serve as source material for present and future researchers; that the stories of important accomplishments, interesting events, and distinguished leaders will find a place in training and orientation of new employees, and may be useful to enhance the morale of the organization; and finally, that they will be of value to Dr. James Harvey Young in the writing of the history of the Food and Drug Administration.

The tapes and transcriptions will become a part of the collection of the National Library of Medicine and copies of the transcriptions will be placed in the Library of Emory University.



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE
PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE
FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION

TAPE INDEX SHEET

CASSETTE NUMBER(S) 1

GENERAL TOPIC OF INTERVIEW: History of the Food & Drug Administration

DATE: 2/4/80 PLACE: Fort Lauderdale, Florida LENGTH: 23 minutes

INTERVIEWEE

INTERVIEWER

NAME: DOROTHY H. KOEGLER NAME: Fred L. Lofsvold

ADDRESS: [REDACTED] ADDRESS: U.S. Food & Drug Administration
[REDACTED] Denver, Colorado

FDA SERVICE DATES: FROM 1941 TO 1968 RETIRED? Yes

TITLE: Director, Public Inquiry Office
(If retired, title of last FDA position)

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This recording is being made at the residence of Miss Dorothy Koegler, a retired employee of the Food and Drug Administration in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. The date is February 4, 1980. My name is Fred Lofsvold.

Lofsvold: Miss Koegler, would you briefly describe your career with the Food and Drug Administration?

Koegler: Yes, I'll be glad to. I joined Food and Drug in San Francisco in 1941 when John L. Harvey was the Chief of the Western District. I was there for about 8 months when Mr. Harvey asked if I would like to go to Portland, Oregon, where there was a sub-station. I was glad to go to Portland, where I was the entire "clerical staff" for the chemists and inspectors in the old Custom house. I arrived in Portland shortly before Pearl Harbor Day. Of course, I wanted to get into the action. I first thought of going to Hawaii, but I ended up going to Alaska with Civil Aeronautics, and I was there from 1943 to 1945. At the end of 1945 I decided to come back to the States and I applied for a job with Food and Drug and found one in Washington where I reported at the beginning of 1946. At that time, Dr. Dunbar was the Commissioner and Charles Crawford was the Deputy Commissioner. I was put in the Commissioner's office and after a short time became

secretary to Mr. Crawford. When Mr. Crawford became Commissioner, I went with Malcolm Stephens who was an Associate Commissioner and I was his secretary until about 1957 when I went into the Consumer Inquiries Branch and stayed there until my retirement in 1968.

Lofsvold: Can you tell me something about the office of the Commissioner in those days when you first got there? How many people and what the functions were?

Koegler: Yes. The immediate Commissioner's office as far as the secretarial help went - Marie Ramsey was the head of the office, Sally Fisher was seizure clerk and Dr. Dunbar's secretary and Elizabeth Kelly and I shared general stenographic duties. I believe Elizabeth worked more with Dr. Elliot, whose office was on the other side of Dr. Dunbar. He was very much concerned with the regulatory actions. So far as I remember all the Seizure actions went through the Commissioner's office. Dr. Elliot's staff at that time, I believe, consisted of Ken Kirk, Ralph Kneeland and Alexander Murray. Kirk was mainly concerned with foods and Kneeland dealt with nutritional supplements of all kinds, animal and human. Mr. Murray was the drug authority. He knew the U.S.P. backwards and forwards. Not to mention the National Formulary. Various people were associated with Mr. Murray

from time to time --some people whose names I don't remember. I don't think there were ever more than a couple.

Lofsvold: During that period, all of the legal actions generated by the Agency came through the immediate office of the Commissioner and were handled by this small staff.

Koegler: Yes. I would say so.

Lofsvold: What can you tell me about Dr. Dunbar at that particular time that you knew him?

Koegler: Well, there was certainly nothing very frightening about him. I remember I always had sort of an uncontrollable urge to pat him because he was so small. And I remember that one of the first times I went in to take dictation from him he asked me if I minded a pipe, and before I could say anything he said, "It doesn't matter if you do." So I told him I had a lot of pipe-smoking brothers and it didn't bother me, even though he really didn't care. He had a garden he was very proud of. He brought us tomatoes and peppers and he would leave the stems on the tomatoes and punch holes in the others, which always irritated me. He was very warm, a very nice man, with a good sense of humor. One day the door of his office burst open and he stuck his head out and said, "Who has the morning paper? I haven't read 'Terry and the

Pirates' yet." His office had a door into our room and one into the hall. He was forever going out his rear door and we'd be looking for him and, of course, his office would be empty. We finally did get him to slam the door when he left so we'd have some general idea.

Lofsvold: How about Mr. Crawford?

Koegler: Well, he always struck me as being brilliant and an idealist. Not impractical, but I think he expected a great deal more than people might live up to. That's sort of an odd way of putting it, but he really believed wholeheartedly in the goodness of people and their good motives. He was fond of saying something that, since I've been thinking about it, strikes me as a little peculiar -- of course, he meant it in the right way -- which was that the food plant should be as clean as your own kitchen. And I, myself, would rather have them cleaner than some kitchens that I know. But, I knew what he meant. He didn't tell me a great deal about his affairs, but I think his father was perhaps a veterinarian or even a general practitioner in the Oklahoma Territory where he was brought up. Coming from that area he had a decided fondness for hot peppers and, Ramon Davila, who was in, I think Personnel, used to periodically go back to Mexico and New Mexico and he would bring Charlie the

hottest peppers he could find.

At first he seemed to be rather aloof, but actually he was a very warm person and a gentleman, very courtly and kind to everyone. I'm sure that at times he must have been upset at things that went on, but he was always very calm and I never saw him lose his temper. I think he might just possibly have gotten a little quieter when things were going awry. Mr. Crawford was personally involved in developing policy and regulations and soon after I got to Washington and started to work for him he was writing the Antibiotic Regulations. And he was very enthused about the antibiotics and the part they were going to play in the drug field. He also was preparing something on insulin. I don't recall much about that. I think it was typical of Dr. Dunbar and Mr. Crawford to do something that hurt me at the time, but I soon came to realize was in my best interests. When Mr. Crawford succeeded Dr. Dunbar as Commissioner I expected to go with him as his secretary. But, he took Dr. Dunbar's secretary, Mrs. Fisher, as his secretary. And he carefully explained to me that Dr. Dunbar had asked him to do that. And, knowing Mr. Crawford, I wouldn't have expected him to do anything else.

Lofsvold: At that point then you became secretary to

Mr. Stephens?

Koegler: Yes, that's right. He was in charge of regulatory matters that I was familiar with in working in the Commissioner's office all that time. And Kirk and Kneeland and the old gang all reported to Steve and we had the Seizure Clerk in our office. I thoroughly enjoyed working for Steve. He was a little bit, just a little bit, in the Mr. Crawford mold -- only more outgoing. And he was certainly very good with all his dealings with the staff and with industry representatives and with the "Hill". Any contacts he had he handled very well and was a thoroughly likeable man from Arkansas.

Lofsvold: Then you went from Malcolm Stephens' office to the Consumer Inquiry Section?

Koegler: Yes. Larry Trawick called me in one day and asked if I would be interested in changing jobs and just answering consumer mail. I was sort of appalled at the idea. Up until then all the men who were in the regulatory end answered consumer letters. Looking back, it was a good idea to relieve them of the routine inquiries. Of course we used their source material, but it cut down a great deal on the volume of mail they had to handle. In the beginning, I was doing it alone. And then we expanded to two and three and I think there got to be four or

more in the section. Every letter was individually answered. Of course we had the good material that had been generated for years by the Food and Drug men handling seizures along with everything else, but there was always something new coming up. And also, things were never forgotten. Periodically, a Midnight or Prevention or some scurrilous journal would pick up something that had happened many years ago and run it as though it had happened last week. The National Enquirer was another one. Very carefully avoiding dates as to when a certain seizure had taken place. And then we would immediately get a big input from consumers who were convinced that it had just happened. One of the things I remember especially was the flour bleach that caused running fits in dogs -- Agene. I imagine they're still getting letters about Agene. Ice cream was another thing that inspired an awful lot of letters. These would come in in stacks and of course you knew the origin (a health food outfit) but every one had to be answered. It wasn't like now when they just type up one copy and run it off, just type in a new name and address. We had to do every one of them. And also, people would write to their Congressmen and, of course, that got preferred attention. Even if it was a high-school kid writing a term paper. One thing I

especially remember was a letter from a child who was writing a term paper on the B vitamins, and wanted us, of course, to write the paper. So, the girl who was working with me then asked me what to tell the child and I just said, "Tell him to look in the library." not meaning it; and she wrote the letter and said it and we got a terrific blast from the Congressman's office. Of course, the kid immediately wrote to his Congressman and then we had to go to our nutrition division and have them draw us up a whole prospectus on B vitamins, which took pages and pages and the child probably didn't understand half of it. But that wasn't the rule, fortunately. Not everything was cut and dried. We didn't always have an answer in our files. So I had a lot of contacts with the Bureau of Medicine, all the different divisions -- Microbiology, Nutrition -- I got to know all those people very well. We also had a lot of contacts with Commerce, Treasury, Public Health, Federal Trade, the Post Office, the Department of Agriculture Department and Food and Drug, having at one time been in Agriculture took a lot of their standards of operating from Agriculture and they were still writing the same kinds of letters and doing the same thing we did, so they were always good about taking anything off our hands

--anything to do with their work. All the government agencies were so cooperative. I wonder if they still are.

And about this time Ted Cron came in with Dr. Goddard, who was the new Commissioner, and Mr. Cron was very interested in getting away from the long letters we'd been writing and taking up so much time for each letter that he devised a system of cards with brief, sometimes too brief, paragraphs relating to a particular subject. And, of course, very few consumers ever stuck to one subject. Chances were they'd cover anywhere up to 10 different complaints they had and this, of course, took a great many cards and they didn't always hang together very well and make sense. So they would just simply generate another letter.

About this time the Freedom of Information Act was signed and Mr. Cron was very interested in being among the first agencies to open up a special Information Office. So I moved down to the first floor of the HEW Building with a nice big room and a receptionist and a lot of files and a xerox machine and we opened for business for all the law students especially and young lawyers and industry representatives and anyone who thought they could find some grist in our files. And I stayed there until I retired, thankfully, in 1968. Of course, when the Freedom

of Information Act was signed, we all were very curious and rather fearful of what it might entail because of trade secrets and so on. Fortunately, the legal profession didn't have any more idea about the ramifications than we had, so when people would come to us, if we denied a request, in the beginning at least, there wasn't any great furor. The things I had in the office were mostly statements of policy and our Notices of Judgment, things that had been widely disseminated all along. And if we had a request for something in the nature of a seizure action that hadn't been printed or if the person wanted more details than we had, that was referred. Usually, I would talk with the General Counsel's office, but sometimes our own people who were in the regulatory end could steer me as to whether we should release it or not. But I do know that we did turn down, I would say, the majority of requests for anything but routine information in the beginning.

Lofsvold: This is the end of the recording.