

INTERVIEWER: So Mr. Govern tell me what these are?

GOVERN: These are some certificates.

INTERVIEWER: Well just tell me about these things here on the right.

GOVERN: Alright, on top there, those are my certificates from church, **San Francisco de Asis**, there's 3 different things up there from the same church. And then there's my license as a clinical technician [1967] right there. And over there's when I what I first accepted on the jubilados as pension. Then here's a certificate of honor from the **Beacher's Musico** [1905]. And this is **Club Altamira** [1994] honored me for father of the year in 1994, which is there. And this is another certificate from church, San Francisco de Asis. And this is a diploma de honor from the Caja de Seguro Social. And this is a certificate of honor of in 1962 of 25 year service. And also this is what was given to me too from this company here, United Fruit company. And this is a certificate of honor from Bocas Del Torro [1903], Province de Bocas. And this is some functions attended at Kwanzaa. You know about Keanzaa no? And this is a baseball affair, celebrated a in different provience about Companata Nacional, and there's much more of that.

En el año 1945 cuando llevaron el equipo de Bocas del Torro para El lugar del campeonato nacional, aquí en Panamá, le pedieron la primera vez en cuarenta y cinco. Aquí estoy yo acá, cuando llevo el equipo, acá.

Y esto es cuando estuvieron en Costa Rica, el cuestión de béisbol también estoy yo con ah, padrina. En Costa Rica. Esto es importante, deber que tienen todo esas exámenes aquí.

Este barco se llama **Carnival Fascination**, a carnival ship. This is el Barco. Sharon Govern, entonces, esto era una visita con ellos. Entonces, aquí, esta **Caguali**, el esta en Ecuador ahora, en la fuerza área. Caguali Govern. Este es de Carmela y Alonzo. Es su papa y su mama. Entonces acá es Carmela, esta en Alemania en la fuerza armada en la fuerza área. Ese es **Yamiela**, Ya? Entonces, acá viene **Niela**, esta en Los Estados Unidos también, ella estuvo en India también, en un estudio. Esto acá, que vive el la casa de **Miguel Angelo**, y sy esposa, Daisy de Johnson. Aqui estoy yo, aca.

(Speaking in Spanish up to 17:32)

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Interviewer [Ifeoma Nwankwo], Ed Govern

INTERVIEWER: So Mr. Govern tell us about your place of birth and what was going on there when you were growing up?

GOVERN: Well I was born in the Province of Bocas del Torro, Republico de Panamá. And I grow up between the capitol of **Cabecra**, Bocas Del Torro, Isla Colon. But finally, my mother moved me to Almirante, so I grow up in Almirante. While in Almirante I went to school in Colon, Porvidence school en **Cabecra**, secondary on.

INTERVIEWER: Okay start from the beginning.

GOVERN: My previous time, I worked in a hospital which was then owned by the United Fruit Company, which was then transferred to the Caja de Seguro Social, of the Panamá government. And then I was transferred from there, the Panamá government to Panamá. Then I worked here in Panamá in Seguro Social in different places. The last place I worked was over here in **Parte Leqoria Limon**, and I was retired then, from here. I had work all together, fifty seven years. Thirty seven years in Bocas and 17 years here with the Seguro Social. And from then, I made my home here.

Well, I know should have I mention this before and I got married in Bocas del Torro, and of all my children them was born there. And then afterward my two first sons I sent them for the betterment of the their language to Chiriqui, I had them in turn, to Franklin and Limon, for a couple of years. And then after I moved the whole family from there over here. Because first I was in private school, I was attending private school in Bocas del Torro. And a Catholic private school and then after I was in Panamá a year. And there were many different schools I went to in Panamá, national institute, and there was another school there in Boscote, secondary education anyway they go a year. And from there they went on, two of them went on to university studies. Then for myself personally I worked all these years, I've been retired and haven't worked since anymore and this home here, and I live here.

I used to, before I, got pension and made this home here, I just walked from here over there, close by. And since I retired, over 15 years already since I've been retired. And I have these 6 children, 4 boys, 2 girls, and then from there here come uh 15, 18 grandchildren and then 12, now 13 grandchildren in all because, Nilka ayer nacio otro nino, ayer, yesterday another on. So that's thirteen another grandchild of mine which is expected to come, so that'll be 14, but right now I have 13 grandchildren.

INTERVIEWER: So tell me about your schooling, what do you remember about school?

GOVERN: My primary schooling was over in Bocas so between Bocas del Torro, primary and secondary in Bocas, and Colon, I personally to be frank, I'm much more a self made person and I always have to give God thanks for that. Because I, always never continue street, one before I go to another. Anyway I started working in hospital, my father died when I was 14 years of age so I had to work. I started working in a hospital and after I started to work there I decided. I said I would like to, I never had educational background as my father, cause he died when I was very young, I wasn't able to achieve what he had. But I said anyway, with the help of God, all that I had been put through, all depends on my ambition and my private efforts. So by the bless of God I went through private studies. And I still have lot of textbooks that I have inside.

Then I started working in the hospital. I always said I would like to sit in that chair of my father's, because my father was a pharmacist. He was in charge of the pharmacy in the hospital. I said I would like to sit there one of these fine days. And then afterwards the doctor was in charge of it. And as a matter of fact I was so loving and caring for them, everybody both nurses, doctors, everybody. And I tell the superintendent, the director of the hospital, I said I would like to go in to work as a messenger boy in the hospital or a, what they call a porter or assistant in the attending ward. I said I would like master some one of these officials, whether pharmacists or the laboratory, or nursing or something like that. And the doctor specialist was a German doctor, he took me to the laboratory and tell the man that was in charge of the laboratory that I seemed to be very ambitious and he was interested in me and I had enough, ah, sufficient education background. And with that I'd be able to go through with their help. So I started to practice there with them in the laboratory with their work.

And at the same time then now, I get so much noise about how my father's was working in the pharmacy. I said remember when I was a young I saw my father sitting in this chair here and I would like to sit there too. He said well, maybe after all the preparation and the academy. Anyway, they put me to assist the pharmacist there, pharmacist assistant. I worked between there and the laboratory and the ward, I utilitated them. But I remember when an American, a white nurse, a matron, recommend me; she said you seem to be very interested in our courses don't you. Only you no, compliste

secondary education but I can see that you'll be able to do this because aprende, you went forth in education I noticed. So she recommended to me, she said I can show you some textbook. I remember the first one was named Materia Medica. I started to get that and she said use this book and review the study guide and you'll be able to get through.

Anyway I got older, and in the second world war in 1940, they had a hard time to get a pharmacist to cover the position. And the superintendent said to him, no, there's a lot of old timers in the hospital. Even some that don't have the sufficient background and so on, and know should about medical. And we need someone temporarily until we can get a graduate pharmacist to take care of the pharmacy. He said who would you recommend then? And he tell, the doctor, he said look, it's unbelievable, but this young man you see assisting me in here, he would be able to. And he said what? He said what about all those elder man that has so many years, he's just a young boy. Oh I was around 17, 18 years at that time. And these men are now 40, 43. I work in the ward and see them sometimes. And he said look that's true, but this young man you see here he's very qualified.

I never forgot one day while I was in the pharmacy working, the same man had said to me, yeah, you have a textbook and read to me, now. You read that you have so many grams, read it to me, tell me what to do now. You can go ahead and mix this and when you get through after a certain amount of time mix with you can, call me, and let me know what is it. So I'd be doing that. So one day in question when he sent me to make a special ointment, I don't know whether it was some special treatment for vaginal purposes, he said listen I wait long enough and I don't see how come why you take so long doing that? You always get through early and call me, how come you're still not done with this one. And I say ok well I'm almost done. And he look and say, well, this is perfect! How come you didn't ask me what to put in here? You didn't ask me what to put in that, how you get it to come like this? And I tell him, and he said, well how you know about the proportion? And I say, well I used to live next to the hospital in Almirante, I say, give me a chance. And I rushed home and I go and get the book. And went and showed him the material, and he said oh you is really, really an intelligent boy so far. And look at that, look, you have to leave this book with me because I me' self want to find out certain things from that! This book is more modern. And then from there, like that, I was able to take care of, I was in charge of the pharmacy for 5 years in the second world war until they could get a pharmacist

name Mr. Tom.

Alright, knowing that, at the time the same gentleman Mr. Sheppard, he apologized to me, he said listen, I forget, but I remember I told you one day that you're not going to come in here and pick this thing up like that. I've been to school for a number of years. And he said look, so I have to apologize to you my son, your, God blessed you and you are really doing alright. The laboratory was the same thing too. I work in there one day, the gentleman that was in charge there one day he have to go and make some kind of inspectance. And I tell him when he come back he find that I had some placas to prepare, so when he come back and find that I have that all ready and prepared, he said oh, but your supposed to go and find some other solutions. And I said yes I did that. He said and now your going to show me how you do this. And I show him and he said well, my God look at this. He say okay, alright, and from there I keep on going and then the company now, send me here not to Santo Thomas Panamá Hospital for training in the laboratory. And I did the practical training with them. And they had me go to **Gorgas**, in the research laboraroty, with Doctor Johnson he sent me there to do research work with them too, because they always used to be workin in the laboratory and I used to be there assisting them.

And then at the **Gorgas** in the Canal Zone with the United States Government at that time, all there with those doctors, I got training there with them too. And there was a gentleman there now, that got sick in the laboratory, and they recommended that I was capable of so I was in charge of laboratory and the pharmacy. And finally when the Seguro Social took charge of the hospital now, and and the company became Seguro Social, that's why they gave me the diploma of honor, diploma de honor. That's when Dr. Abadia was the doctor of medicine then of Seguros hospital, and they had me come over to take over. And they decided then to bring me to Panamá here. And from every year on I was working there until I retired both places. And a lot of post-mortum performed, yes, opened the brain here. I'll never forget the pathologist who used to come to the laboratory and say Mr. Gobern, alli en la morga hay un cuerpo de fular de numero tal y tal, vaya y saca del morgue y quiere que saca todos los organos que estan adentro y cuando esta lista me llame. And I, hice todo. And when they get through, and before they close up, the doctor would say well, it's all yours, close up! And they gone. And me alone would be in there with the body. And then I started to check the **vasa** [splein], the pancreas, the Corazon, "ayy, que trabaja aqui? El cerebro, oooh! Y aqui par alas

mujeres aqui pasa el otro, ahhh, si! And I studied all that there. Each day, after they get through I'd do my checking and all that is what put me through, so far I left with that.

After that the time come I was here and then I went, the time come now for I used to have private, here in Panamá, I used to have meetings and so forth for scientific, what do you call, seminars. And they always would choose a representative from each department to go and right here, right here, there's a list from all the times they ask me to come. And I'd go, anyway, I was able to do that until I was tired. After 35, 37, fifty four years all together, then I was retired. And now all those [points to the honors on the wall] I was able to get but I wasn't able to get it until I was able to pass an examination, before I was able to get them. And then the last one that I was able to get was from the Seguro Social, it was a diploma de honor, there. And after the license, it says to practice medicine.

Thank God I've been though all right, and I was able to raise my 6 children and my 18 grandchildren and my great grand. And when they took sickly, when I was back home with my wife and my children, I used to treat them myself too. Ah, and not only that. When I was back in Bocas I even worked as a medico auxiliary en las fincas cuando no habia nadie, que hace falta de medico. Cuando me nesecita algo, me mandaron como medico, temporalmente alli. And then I treat patients, I used to prescribed for patients. Cosas que yo no me podia hacer me entaron para el hospital, what I couldn't handle I'd bring him to the hospital, call the ambulance and bring them. So my, my what they call it? 90 odd years, well you don't say 90 you subtract the 15, 18 years from that, I spend all my whole time with this. And I have a book, lots of textbooks, but most of it is in English, cause in those years, I remember I used to ask the doctor, a medical staff que viene por aqui en Panamá; He said "sabe una cosa, usted yo se habla muy bien el espanol por esto que me esta hablando en espanol pero, yo no se nada de ingles, hablame in ingles no hablame en espanol," 35:57 - 39:04 *speaking Spanish*).

INTERVIEWER: Mr. Gobern, so you used to work for the United Food Company?

GOBERN: Hmm hmm.

INTERVIEWER: Tell me how you came to work for them and what working there was like?

GOBERN: Well, it's something that after my father died, you know way back,

I wanted to come work there. Yeah some doctors and they went and tell 'em about, they needed someone a young man to work as an orderly, that's when someone that know, some of my father colleagues that's still at the hospital tell them about me. And so one day while I was there, around that time I was 15 or 16 years old, my father died when I was 14. They tell them about me so they kinda remember I was one day sitting outside in front of, front of the home, in the teresa, with one of my little brothers, and I was playing **draught**, you know, checkers no? There was a car that passed, they stopped the car and there was a doctor in the car. And called and I said who? And he said the young man did call you, and then they called me and I walked up to them, and they say to me, you would like to work in the hospital, right? Yeah. So anyway, they say alright there's a position there you can come and work as an orderly, we would like, but anyway I went and I enrolled and I started to work as a orderly in the hospital. And so I started there, then one of those days, as I told you before I was just interested and sneaky and I did not want to remain as orderly. And when they sent me to, to assist the pharmacist, I was in there asking him questions and so he said to me, listen, don't think you are going to come in and pick this up you know, I went to school for this. I told you before about that story and like that, and just like that, I started there, and I continued to work.

And after working my wife, we was in love with each other. Children we used to live very nearby and we used to go all about. You know, because we lived in Almirante, the village was in [Almirante]. And we used to go to school together, primary school and so we weren't like boyfriend and girlfriend and when she grow up of the age, she went to Jamaica to school, she was there for 7 years and when she came back, in 7 years she came back, I was still there, I was still there. And the day when she was expected, her mother, well when I was around 15 years old, 15-16 years old, I was selling chances and her mother used to buy from me. Her mother, said to me you know something? Your friend is coming in today from Jamaica, coming back today. And I said 7 years, say yes, coming back home now, I say yes. So one Sunday morning, I think I can remember, but a Sunday morning, at that time we didn't have a airplane service, back in Bocas. We hae it now but we didn't have it back then. So, she said we're coming in on the ship named the **Santa Marta** coming in on a ship. Cause she was already in Colon and she leave Colon and she's supposed to be arriving today is Sunday. I said yes so I stopped sell chance right away and I went down to the water, I went onto the pier, I went to the pier and look and wait when the ship coming in. The ship come

in and dock up into to port. And I see her walking and when I look she was walking, she came down and I said hello. And her father said hey you don't remember your friend? Talking about Eddie you know, you don't know Eddie? So I said to her your talking about 7 years. And the father said it no mind, she should remember who you are. And she look and she say, ok, I'll see you again, and she gone.

And that same day, I remember I told you I stopped sellin' the chances. That same Sunday I was living in a place in a village called **One Mile**, and I got to walk past them to go to where my mother is living now, my mother is living now by a church. So I start to visit my mother more often now, (*laughs*). So one day in question, I pass and my mother said wait, by the way, how come now, you always want to ask for she and you pass the street and never stop? I said well no, she's here now? Her father said sure, she's your friend, you always ask me first, no problem. Okay so I said fine, so I pass and, I said I'd see her again too (*laughs*). Anyway from then I start to visit, start to visit more often and I decided to stop by my mother now and then and mother would give us food, something to eat or drink and she'd be there. We'd be talking, talking about school. And so while our days was like that, every evening I would go for a visit and so, I said to her, no, she said to me, you really love me? I said what you mean, we always, from children days, you know. She said you really like to be my husband then? And I said what you talking about? I said alright, we'll see how that work out. And then she said you would have to write my mother a letter or something. And when I get my answer I was accepted, and I had freedom to visit. I started to leave the house to visit her.

I'll never forget one night in question when I was there to visit her, a group of fellas one guy brought a guitar to serenade her, some snacks to eat and drinks, biscuits and so forth. And I tell her ok you have visitors I'll go, and she said hold it man, you have to stay, they'll go (*laughs*). So, they leave then and I remained there with her and so forth. Cause since I wrote the letter and since I got approval I was there until we decided to plan for this wedding. I never forget the, you know where, **Minister Alfonz [Iframe]**? You know it was he who married us and so on and so it happened that from there we got married and then we started, all these children that we have around us. And after 50 years, we'd been married 50 years, she got sick, a condition something and she died 15 years ago now she died. So we have 6 children, 4 boys and 2 girls and 18 great grand and 13 grand, expecting one more, come on the way, and we have his niece, Zandra's sister. That's the story

of all my family. My father died when I was only 14 years old.

INTERVIEWER: Tell us that story about the baseball.

GOBERN: Oh. Well I, back in Bocas, they have in Panamá, started around 1942 or 43, I think it was. I noticed about this, national championship of baseball, of all the provinces, the 9 provinces they meet play baseball. Some of them still going on up to today, no? The 9 provinces are the teams that played and Bocas had never participated, it had only been the first few years. And I said to myself, but wait, we can play baseball too here. And a few other companions of mine and the company in Bogota, said we would train a team here in Bocas to go and participate in the national championship in Panamá, which I'm sure that was the first time we went there. And so say so done, they went to go and talk with some government officials, to invest it, and they take it up with the national institute I think in Panamá. No at the university, I think it was.

Anyway at the, the chief of the educational department, a very physical, was Roy I think was his name, and they take it up with him and they sent out a director to train the team. Which his name was Reveles, from Colon, Isla Colon, Almirante, in Almirante is where in those days it was me personal who started the whole affair. The director helped, and come from the first year and the play year was in 1945 which I show you that picture, the first picture. And almost win out become the champion from there it started and every year after that we went to play in Costa Rica, because Costa Rica is very close to Bocas del Torro. There was team that came from Almirante to Bocas to play, and I got to know a lot of officials in Los Santos, in that area, in Colon, we used to play different provinces until I got occupied in my job and having children, and I leave it up and I back out then.

[End of Audio]
