

Gibson Gayle, JD, talks about MD Anderson History and Leaders

Mr. Gayle was an attorney with Fulbright, Crooker, Freeman and Bates, the law firm that administered the funds left by Monroe Dunaway Anderson. Mr. Gayle served as a Board Member of the MD Anderson Foundation for over thirty years. In an interview conducted in 2012, Mr. Gayle tells about the funding of the Texas Medical Center and the new cancer center that would bear Monroe Dunway Anderson's name.

The Origins of the Texas Medical Center and a New Cancer Center

The MD Anderson Foundation established the Texas Medical Center. Mr. Anderson was a partner at Anderson, Clayton and Co., which for many years, beginning about 1910, was the dominant cotton owning, trading, transporting cotton company in the world. He was one of the original partners. In 1936, he contacted Freeman and Bates. He was a bachelor. He tried to marry his high school sweetheart back in Jackson, Tennessee, but she chose another man, and that made him a rather broken-hearted individual, so he never married. But Monroe Anderson contacted Freeman and Bates and said, "I want to set up a foundation to try to give back to the country that has been so good to me." This was 1936.

Three years later, Mr. Anderson passed away, and Freeman and Bates were trying to come up with something that would really interest them and would carry out his wishes at the same time. Then in 1941 the Texas Legislature passed a statute creating the first cancer hospital in Texas.

A member of the legislature had just lost two family members to cancer. He personally was interested in cancer as a disease, and word was spreading out all over the world as to the deaths caused by cancer and the lack of medical ability to cope with that. It was the legislator that introduced the bill that wound up being the impetus for Freeman and Bates to decide that that would be a great start for a medical center, to have a cancer center right in the middle.

The problem was, the state did not have the money to create that cancer hospital. Well, Freeman and Bates had been looking at 134 acres of land out from downtown Houston; it really was out in the country. It was in the vicinity of Rice Institute, as it was then known. The only structure on this 134 acres was the old Hermann Hospital. The rest of the 134 acres, in all honesty, was populated by hunters who were looking for game to kill, so it was really out in the country and of course, to Freeman and Bates, it was a good size for a medical center.

So they proposed to the governor and the president of the University of Texas, that if this new cancer center were to be put in the medical center they were negotiating with the city of Houston to acquire, and if the name MD Anderson were to be put on this cancer facility in perpetuity, then they would come up with whatever money would be needed to finish the project. They also would guarantee a 20-acre location out of the 134 acres they were to acquire to create this medical center.

About this Content

This interview clip was taken from an in-depth interview conducted for the Making Cancer History Voices Oral History Project. This ongoing project currently contains almost 400 interview hours with MD Anderson institution builders.

The transcript has been edited from the original.

The content is available for all uses.

To explore the full interview go to: not yet available online. For further information, please contact Javier Garza, details below.

About the speaker:

At the time of his interview in 2012, Attorney Gibson Gayle had been a member of the Board of the MD Anderson Foundation since 1980 and served as board President since 1993. Prior to his retirement in 1992, he was a senior partner in the Houston law firm of Fulbright & Jaworski, which handled the creation of the MD Anderson Foundation.

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To request an uncompressed audio file, photographs, or for information about the interview and photo collections, contact: Javier Garza, MSIS, jjgarza@mdanderson.org