

One Man Act

(Doctor Romeo Richmond Root)

(In a warm kind voice) When I was a young man, my parents moved from Pentwater, Michigan to Tempe, Arizona. (Presses his lips before speaking) My mother's name was Sara, and my father was a watchmaker...his name was Jesse. He opened up a jewelry store and a drug store. (Sniffs and pulls his pants up with one hand to adjust them) I worked as a drug clerk. (Big sigh) I saved all my money for a medical education. (Parts his lips slightly to bite the bottom for a moment) I started in Arizona. Then I moved to attend the University of California in San Francisco. I was there four years by the ocean's bay. (Winks) Then I transferred to finished my last year in the University of Illinois, Chicago. Yes. I was thirty two when I graduated. (Looks humbly) As Doctor of Medicine. (Glances shyly to see who admires him)

(Marries, and the birth of first child)

(Takes a breath) Of course, except for a big side step. (Touches his heart) To marry a school teacher. (Announces sweetly) Lulu Wingar. (Inhales deeply) LuLu, was my kind, and beautiful wife. (Nods in disbelief) Even though I was the oldest of four brothers, Lulu chose me. (Beams joyfully) A year after we were married, our first daughter, Lucia Gladys, was born. It was April 20th, 1904.

(Moves to Corona)

I was out of medical school back in 1906. But after four years I decided to move my practice and family from Tempe, Arizona. (Fondly) I remember how I became part of the Southland, and it was due to the allures of Corona's thriving community. (Tender pause) When my life started here. (Raises up both arms) It was full of citrus growers, downtown long wooden sidewalks, and tall A frame store front buildings. (Smiles) I saw great promises here as a country doctor.

(Doctor in Corona)

It was rough at first. There were no hospitals in town. (Shook his head) I peddled around in my vest, and brown trousers on a bicycle to make house calls. (Grabbed his head) There were only dirt roads, and was it ever dusty when the North winds blew. (Chuckles) I delivered babies on used kitchen table tops. (Drowsy memory) I offered farmers an office hour every night to come into town for medical care. (Excited) My sacrifices eventually paid off the more out-of-town country calls I made. My business grew, and I needed to rent a horse and carriage from the local livery stable, a block away from where I lived.

(Another birth)

A year later, my second daughter, Margaret was born. In the Christmas month of 1907. (Shook his head) And in no time she was six years old. (Tilts his head down to think) We lived on the south west corner of Ninth and Ramone in town. And its location worked well as we were near everything that invariably was a block in walking distance. The school for the children; a library to read books in, and the women's club my wife attended. My practice was near the center of town, and was also two to three blocks afar.

(First Roaster car)

(Rolled his eyes) Oh except...for when I terrified the neighborhood when I purchased my first Roadster in 1909, a Maxwell, the steering wheel was on the right. Ahooga! It sounded after I gave a squeeze to my horn's black rubber bulb to make it sound. Oh what mud I sometimes dealt with after it rained, and I had to crank my car up to start whenever I needed to make house calls. I never drove before, and I jerked through the country side when I made my doctor calls to those in need. And at dusk I had to stop off by the sides of the road to light the headlights. But my wife made up for it, because she looked good next to me. Dressed in her attractive ladies motor dust coat. Her hat tied down by a large veil on the top of her head. (His eyelids droopy) A very elegant lady she was.

(Trips)

Our forms of entertainment came from church and the school functions, which were mainly for the children. (Places his hands in his pockets) Aside from the miles and miles of long horse and buggy trips out in the unblemished country side, or by way of bountiful wildflower fields in the spring. If we went towards the beach, the girls would be in their smart black stocking swimming costumes. But these kind of family outings were rare for us, because it was hard for me to find time to join them due to being a doctor. But not to worry, our good neighbors, the Patton Family, included my family in their regular recreational outings. This was always appreciated. Especially by my adventurous girls.

(Second Roadster bought)

In 1912, I moved my medical office to 812 Main Street, and a year later I bought my second Roadster car in 1913, a Studebaker. It was an absolute privilege to have a fancy gasoline automobile!

(Track Doctor)

Anyway. In the same year. Something even bigger happened. (Puts on a stethoscope around his neck) I became a Track Race doctor for the famous first International Corona Races, and I can assure you everywhere in the world these races were the biggest news at the time. The promoters employed carpenters to put up temporary grand stands for those who paid to see the race, and they were erected by the sides of the wide road in the center of town. On Eight street the fire department was turned into a temporary hospital in preparations to be used during the races. There was a lot of anticipation before they started, and quite the talk per our local newspaper. Yes. We were pretty special. (Proud stance) Altogether the prize was ten thousand dollars.

(First Corona Race, 1913)

(Eyes full of shine) We drew in several legendary car race drivers who entered either the thirty-seven lap, ninety-one lap, or one hundred and nine lap. Like Earl Cooper, Barney Oldfield, and Eddie Rickenbacker to name a few. Eddie Rickenbacker later went to become a World War One hero flying ace, and Barney Oldfield, afterward a famous barnstormer. (Eyes the sky) Eddie performed on the canvass wings of planes while they flew. (Looks back down) Anyway, The Free For all Race had the most laps and was the fiercest. Everyone wanted to win first place! Things were exhilarating! (Whistles) Oh yes...the chap, Earl Cooper, was the one to win the Free For All, that day.

(Race challenges)

However, problems arose in the first race after people voiced their complaints about the smell's of the engine's exhaust, debris from the cars, or the dirt kicked up, the deadly fast speeds, or loud noises they made early in the mornings. Patience further wore thin when the local citizens awoke in fright from the engines loud noises. There was always someone young or old who seemed angry about something. (Frowns) Not one person in the Corona Racing Association escaped, and I imagine they were accused many times they did not take these concerns into serious considerations. (Reflective mumble) Hard to believe. (Shrugs his shoulders up)

(Onward to another Corona Race)

But I am glad to say success did arise out of that first race, and soon I heard about plans, and a date for the second race was set...gobble...gobble. (Snickers) The next year on Thanksgiving day. I saw workers busy enhancing Grand Boulevard to make a better crown road for the race laps to run in better. It was completely paved in asphalt in its anticipation. Some people had a fever to have a repeat, and everything was made possible thanks to advanced ticket sales. And of course, I was asked to be a Race Track doctor a second time. (Gloating) If I do say so myself, I was pretty good when I provided the crowd and drivers with good medical assistance. Mainly cuts, and burns from the spectator's horse play, over excited, and machinist who injured themselves when they worked on those hot engines. (Roars like a race car)

(2nd Corona Race, 1914)

Things were getting more serious. I was briefed about new safety measures, and I was sure glad to have them as thousands came. A five foot fence was built as a barrier on the Grand Boulevard race tract, and it was a sight to see bridges over our streets to keep people from stepping in front of the race cars. I guess you'll always have a lose walnut in the crowd. (Chortle) It was a nice sunny day regardless of the flying car wheels. Anyhow, the chap, Eddie Pullen won due to his thirty horsepower fast Mercer, it could go a hundred miles an hour. Oddly the Association skipped the next year, and I suspected it was because of rumors I heard about their bad finances, but an announcement was made it would be in the year after.

(Third Corona Race deaths)

And again in 1916 I was asked to be a Race Tract doctor for a third time. But little did the Association know what a big mistake it was when they moved the race from the Fall to Spring. But this time the Association would not be able to escape what was to happen. What sheer utter calamity! When three men were killed! (Sad) William, the security guard who lived in Corona stood in the crowd when a French Peugeot careened off the track and struck him dead. Killed also was the driver Bob Burman, and his mechanic Eric. What a mangled mess I saw. I heard the people call it the Burman's tragic accident, and these horrific deaths further left a bad taste for the newcomers who came. The Coronans were extremely outraged when the race kept on going. There was no going back this time they morned as Eddie O'Donnel took first place in his Iowa almost all hand built