

BMC 4

Interviewee: Frances Klutts

Interviewer: Alan Bliss

B: Where were you born?

K: **16 Megdale Terrace, Middlesburg, Yorkshire, England.**

B: When?

K: April 14, 1908.

B: Who were your parents please?

K: Frances and **Elizabeth Reynolds.**

B: And your father was a stone mason I understand, was that right?

K: That's right.

B: Now having been born in England, you moved pretty early to the United States, is that right?

K: That's right.

B: At what age?

K: Four.

B: At the age of four. Where in the United States did you move to?

K: Troy, New York.

B: Okay. Was it Troy because that's where your father had found employment as a stone mason?

K: I'm not sure, but it must have been where he had employment.

B: Because he was working there, I guess.

K: Oh yes.

B: Is that where you grew up through all your youth?

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K: Yes, I went to grammar school and high school [there].

B: And you finished high school in Troy right?

K: Yes, in Troy.

B: Now let me ask, did you have siblings? Brothers and sisters?

K: I had two brothers: **Vernon**, who went to **Pratt**, and **Charlie**; he never went to college.

B: All of you went through grammar school and high school there in Troy, New York?

K: Right.

B: You moved from Troy, New York, after high school, and where did you move to?

K: Florida, St. Petersburg.

B: St. Petersburg, Florida; why was that?

K: Because of the boom and my father was a bricklayer and a builder.

B: You're referring to the Florida real estate boom of the 1920s.

K: Yeah.

B: There was lots of construction going on.

K: Right.

B: Once you were in St. Petersburg, I understand from my notes that you made a decision to go to nursing school, but I'm curious about this, when was it, do you think, that you decided you wanted to become a nurse? Had that already been part of your thinking before this?

K: Well, I didn't want to be a waitress, and my father couldn't afford to send me to college. That's why I think we decided, my mother and I decided, that that was

the thing for me to do.

B: Okay. When you were younger, still in grammar school or high school, what ideas did you have for yourself about what you'd be when you grew up?

K: I took the commercial course, I remember, because my father was going to be a contractor and he thought it would be good for me to learn how to [do that]. I guess that is what I did in high school.

B: The commercial course meaning business skills?

K: Typing and calculation and things like that, yeah.

B: So he had the idea, and you did too, that maybe you might work with him in business. Having decided then that you would not go to college, apparently you had decided also that you were not going to work in business with your father and you decided on nursing school. You were in St. Petersburg already and there was a nursing school in St. Petersburg: [the] Mound Park School of Nursing. You applied for entry, was it hard to get in?

K: No. Phoebe Daley was our . . . I think they were glad to have us.

B: You mentioned a name.

K: Phoebe Daily, she was the superintendent.

B: P-h-o-e-b-e?

K: Yeah, Daily

B: D-a-i-l-y?

K: No, I'm not sure. D-a-i-l-y. Yes, I've got it written down. Then after she left, May Meeks was our superintendent, and then Ms. Kupitz, **Ms. Streeter**, and **Ms. Hoben** were our instructors.

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B: Okay. Meeks is M-e-e-k-s?

K: Yes.

B: We'll get to the spellings of the other names later.

K: That's May Meeks there and that's **Hoben**.

B: Mrs. Klutts is pointing, as we're recording this, to an illustration of the members of the class that she was a part of at Mound Park School of Nursing. It is a class shot in which Mrs. Klutts appears also. So your recollection is that they were interested in getting people to come to nursing school. Was there a shortage of nurses then?

K: I wouldn't say so, but I think there was a little bit. Maybe because they could only get six; there's only six of us in my class.

B: In your cohort.

K: We went in and trained together.

B: How many classes a year did they start? Just one class a year starting through?

K: Oh yes, because see, some of these girls here . . .

B: Mrs. Klutts is pointing again to the photograph.

K: They were in their third year, some of them in their second year, and some in the first year, and then the beginners, the six months without the caps.

B: Okay. Mrs. Klutts is showing me an illustration of her class with some nursing students wearing caps and some not, and the explanation is you don't get to wear a cap until a certain point.

K: Six months.

B: Six months. During that first six months not only do you not get to wear a cap,

but what else is true? Are you on some sort of probationary status?

K: Yes.

B: I see.

K: You have to take your exams; you have to pass your exams.

B: Written exams?

K: Yeah.

B: Were there lots of classes to take?

K: Well, we went to breakfast and then we went on the floor, then [at] about nine o'clock we left until ten or ten-thirty or eleven o'clock and went to class. Then we went back to help serve and we worked in the afternoon.

_____ in the middle of the afternoon for a couple of hours we'd have to go take classes over at the nursing home from the doctors and from the head nurses.

B: Now when you refer to the nursing home, what's that?

K: The nursing home where we lived; I told you.

B: Well, we don't have that on the tape yet though. What's the name of that?

K: It's the **Roser Home**; it was a nursing home.

B: **Roser Park** [in St. Petersburg, Florida]?

K: Yeah.

B: So you lived there and not at your parents' home.

K: Oh no, you moved in when you joined. You stayed there for three years; you lived there, and so do the head nurses. Everybody lived there.

B: Oh, even people who were regular duty nurses at the hospital?

K: Yes, it was three stories. Most of these people would be there in the nursing home.

B: Now that would only apply to unmarried nurses. If a nurse was married she would live . .

K: She would live somewhere else, but I think every one of these [nurses were single]; all the students were single, and some of the graduates. I know May Meeks was single, and Phoebe Daily was single; I don't know about the rest of them.

B: Were there rules about living at the home?

K: Oh yeah.

B: What sort of rules do you remember?

K: We had to get permission to leave. We couldn't go out every night in the week. We had to stay in and we had to get permission to go out. We could get our afternoons off and go and do things—like I said, we could go to the pool or we could go shopping or we could go to our family—but we weren't supposed to go off campus in our uniforms. We couldn't go off of the block in our uniforms.

B: Okay. Did you eat all your meals there at the home?

K: Oh yeah, we lived right there.

B: Did you have to pay them for housing and board?

K: No.

B: That was part of the deal?

K: That was part [of it].

B: Can you describe your uniforms that you had to wear?

K: Well, I've got them right here.

B: Well, we can't see that on the tape though, if you can tell us a little bit about it.

K: They were blue dresses, short -leeved, and then we had white aprons and bibs.

B: What about shoes?

K: Our black shoes were flat shoes with one strap. We were wore white hose with garters.

B: Could you wear jewelry?

K: No, no jewelry, no makeup. We could wear our watch, that's all. No makeup.

B: Okay, a wrist watch would be what you would wear.

K: Yeah, no jewelry.

B: Not even any rings?

K: Now that I'm not sure.

B: And once you had passed your probationary period, were you required to wear the cap?

K: Yes, you had to wear your cap.

B: What was the cap like?

K: We wore the plain white one for the first year, then we got the stripe on it.

B: You've mentioned a couple of your fellow students and the nursing supervisors; who did the teaching? Who trained you as you were a nursing student? Were there senior nurses who were responsible for that?

K: They were the registered [nurses]. The one who taught us in the operating room was a specialist, **Hoben**; she was in charge of the operating room. Then I think

Kupitz was in charge of the nursery. Each head nurse had a department that they took care of, and then some of them had to work the night shift. The hospital ran twenty-four hours; some of them had to work at night after we learned what we were supposed to learn.

B: Were there three shifts?

K: No, as I remember, I think we only had two shifts back then, seven [o'clock] to seven [o'clock].

B: Whew, that's a long day.

K: But we had to take out for classes in the afternoon and in the morning too.

B: Would a regular duty nurse work twelve hours on as well?

K: Oh, I think so. The graduates, I think, did.

B: It wasn't until later that they went to three shifts, I guess.

K: I don't remember us having that much [person] help. You know what I mean? You see, this was the entire class and employees, the students and the graduates, and it was for twenty-four hours.

B: That's spreading people pretty thin. You mentioned that there was a graduate nurse in charge of each department, and you've mentioned so far the operating room and the nursery. What other departments were there?

K: The OB, you know, the delivery of babies. Then there was one that was always in charge of the emergency rooms when we had anything come in. Then of course, we had to learn about all the linens and everything, we had to take care of it. That's what I would call maid's work now, but we had to take care of putting the linens away and giving out the linens and cleaning the bed pans.

B: Was there a separate department or a separate nursing staff to take care of any isolation areas? I guess if I should also ask if there were isolation wards or an isolation ward in the hospital.

K: The only one I remember [was] the men's gonorrhea or the venereal diseases. That's the only thing I remember.

B: There was no seclusion for people who were tubercular?

K: No, I don't think we had [that]; I don't remember any tubercular people.

B: Okay. What were the serious diseases that people had when they showed up at Mound Park.

K: You know, I hate to say it, but we had an awful lot of ruptured appendix.

B: And you would get them after the appendix had ruptured I guess.

K: Yeah.

B: That can be bad.

K: It was just general [stuff]. My husband's brother died from appendicitis; it killed the whole family. We didn't have any TB. We had some accident people and things like that. You know, fractures and cuts and everything that came into the emergency room, but I don't remember [much] outside of just general [problems].

B: What could you do for a patient with a ruptured appendix by the time they got to the hospital with that condition?

K: They had to go to surgery; everybody had to.

B: I guess it was common for infection to set in.

K: Yeah, but see, that was before they had penicillin and all these drugs and

everything.

B: What could you use for an antibiotic in those times? Was there anything that you would use to treat someone in that situation? Just clean the surgical site and change the dressings I guess. Well, when you were going through nursing school, did they try to expose you to a wide variety of the practice of medicine and healthcare? Did you attend births, deliveries?

K: Oh yes, lots. [laughing]

B: Lots of those.

K: Lots of deliveries, yes. [There were] more deliveries than accidents or operations I think.

B: That's a good thing, that keeps the odds up. How about operations? The sort of thing where you did have to participate in a surgical procedure other than a delivery; did you attend those?

K: We had to watch the operations until we learned how to scrub and how to drape the patients and how to put the instruments out and things like that. We had to make sure everything was accounted for. Then we ran the sterilizers, the autoclaves, because all the drapes and everything that were on the patient all came in a bundle and they were all sterilized. When we had a patient they came out of the bundle and were spread out, and we had to make sure everything was [there]. It's just part of nursing [laughing]. All of this is just general nursing, learning to be a nurse.

B: Did you go through any other medical training as far as studying things to do with the human anatomy or studying anything else?

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K: We had to study anatomy, sure.

B: Textbook anatomy, right?

K: Yeah.

B: How about things such as biology or chemistry? You took classes in those as well?

K: Yeah.

B: Did I understand that you witnessed an autopsy?

K: Yes, we did.

B: Where did that happen?

K: At the **Palms Funeral Home**. As I remember it was something to do with a police investigation or something, but I know we all had to go and watch the autopsy.

B: Was that difficult?

K: Well, I think it was difficult for all of us to see, [as] young as we were, for the first time.

B: Did the whole class go at once?

K: No, all of my class went. I don't remember how many went, but there were quite a few there, I remember.

B: Who performed the autopsy?

K: I don't know, it seems like it was **Dr. Griffin**. I think **Dr. Griffin** was the one who did it.

B: Did he make a special effort to talk about what he was doing and sort of illustrate

why? So it was a good opportunity to learn anatomy then, I guess, to a certain extent, right?

K: Yeah.

B: Now I understand the **Florence Crittenden Home** was operating in St. Petersburg at the time; the young women who would give birth would do so at Mound Park, I guess, when their time came to deliver. But you had opportunities to visit the **Florence Crittenden Home** in the meantime.

K: Yes. I'll tell you, we used to get milk from some of the young women in order to feed some of the other babies with extra breast milk. There's so many things that I don't want on the tape.

B: Well, if you don't want it on the tape, you shouldn't say it, but if there's something that you say that you want to take off the record later, you'll get a look at the transcript.

K: Are you taping all this now?

B: Oh yes, I'm recording all of this now, ever since I started. Would you like to take a break?

{Break in Interview}

B: Well, I understand that you started the Mound Park School of Nursing in 1927, is that right?

K: Right.

B: And you graduated in June, 1930. In the meantime, your parents moved to California, is that right?

K: They moved back to Troy, [New York], first, and then to California later.

B: Did you have any more family members in St. Petersburg when you were going to nursing school?

K: No.

B: How did you meet the man who wound up becoming your husband?

K: That's a real romance, that's the gospel truth. His mother had an operation and he and his sister came in at night to visit his mother, and it was when I was on night duty. While I was sitting at my desk during visiting hours making out my medicine list, he came and asked me for a date. That's how we met.

B: And you agreed?

K: After I got off night duty.

B: Where did you go for your first date?

K: I don't know, but we used to go to the **Coliseum** as much as we could; we both liked to dance.

B: Was that after you had been in school for awhile?

K: Oh yes, that was in my second year, almost to the end of my year because I had been going five or six months or so I think.

B: You got engaged while you were still a student, and then as I understand it, you got married just a couple of months after graduation.

K: Right.

B: When you graduated and got married, that was about eight to ten months after the stock market crash. The Depression was maybe not officially called the Depression yet, but did it seem to you as though times were hard?

K: Yes, he and I went to Troy to visit my folks after I got married. My mother never forgave me for not waiting and getting married up there, but I got married in St. Petersburg and we went up there and we had a little Ford with a trunk rumble seat. We went up there and stayed, visited my other friends and relatives and everything, and then we came back to St. Petersburg. We bought our first house for four thousand dollars, four percent interest, and we paid fifteen dollars a month to the St. Petersburg Savings and Loan.

B: Where was that house?

K: 1930, right after we got married.

B: Where was that house?

K: It's at 3132 21st Avenue South.

B: Okay. Now backing up for just a second, what was your husband's name?

K: John **Leonard** Klutts, Jr.

B: What did he do?

K: He was a bookkeeper and he worked for **Pinellas Cigar**, which is part of **Havatampa** [cigar company].

B: Is that the job that he had at the time you were married?

K: Yeah.

B: Did you have children?

K: I had two boys.

B: What were their names please?

K: Donald Arthur, born November 1, 1931, and then Robert Leonard, who was five

years after.

B: So 1936 then.

K: He was born February 16. [I forget]; I'm ashamed.

B: You're doing fine. Were your sons both born here in St. Petersburg?

K: Both at the same hospital.

B: Which hospital?

K: Mound Park Hospital. And Donald was born November 1, and it was the day after Halloween, Halloween night, and we went into the hospital on Sunday morning. We'd been to a Halloween party on Saturday night.

B: It would have been interesting then, you were a graduate of the school of nursing there, and you had worked at that hospital as a nurse, and now here you are coming in from the other door as a patient. Did you feel pretty confident that you were getting good care there?

K: Oh yes, all the girls, I knew everybody. They knew everything.

B: Would you have said that Mound Park was a pretty good hospital at the time?

K: I think it was the only good hospital; it was the only standing hospital.

B: Certainly in St. Petersburg, but I mean in comparing it to hospitals in other places such as Tampa, from what you knew.

K: I don't know a thing about Tampa Hospital.

B: Well, you worked as a nurse at Mound Park after graduation up until your first son was born. Is that right?

K: Yes.

B: And when you were working as a nurse, were you assigned to any particular

department or any particular duty?

K: No, I can't remember. I don't remember because it was the whole hospital.

B: How big was the hospital then?

K: Oh my, I don't know.

B: It was all in one building I guess, is that correct?

K: Yes.

B: And the old shell mound was there, is that right?

K: Yeah.

B: Do you remember walking around on the shell mound?

K: I sure do, and climbing the stairs to the top of it.

B: Was there a good view from up there?

K: Yeah.

B: You could see the bay.

K: Yes.

B: Well, I was starting to ask you about the Depression. You got married early on in the Depression and then you had your children and worked at various times. Do you remember the Depression as being a particularly hard time for people in St. Petersburg?

K: Yes, I do. I mean, even bread was ten cents a loaf.

B: Did that seem like a lot of money then?

K: Yeah.

B: Although you and your husband, as you've said, bought a house and were able to keep up the payments on it.

K: Fifteen dollars a month.

B: Which was a lot of money at the time. It doesn't sound like much to us now, but it sounds as though . . .

K: Four percent interest.

B: It sounds as though you did pretty well considering how tough things might have been. A lot of people lost their homes, I guess, and you didn't. You were able to hang onto yours and start a family all at the same time. It sounds as though you and your husband both had good skills that made it pretty likely that you would always have a steady job whenever you wanted one. That sort of set you apart from most people, would you say, because a lot of people . . .

K: Yeah, because my husband stayed with the **Havatampa Company**. He was with them when he died. He was in the Navy, he went down to Australia and all over while he was in the service.

B: Was that during World War II?

K: Yeah.

B: You were sort of different from most women your age because you had nursing training and you had, really, a good skill, and one that would make it likely that you could get a job anywhere you wanted, whenever you wanted. So you worked until Donald was born, and then took a couple years off. Is that right?

K: Yeah.

B: Then you went back to work as a nurse again, is that right?

K: Right.

B: At Mound Park?

K: Oh yes, I always went back to Mound Park.

B: Who was the person in charge of nursing when you went back to work there? Do you recall?

K: I think Phoebe Daily retired and May Meeks was the head of nursing at the hospital. Then Kupitz, and **Streeter**, and others—I keep looking at their pictures and I can pick out each one, but some of them I don't remember their names.

B: You've mentioned the name Kupitz, but I'm not sure how we should spell that.

K: K-U-P-I-T-Z.

B: Kupitz, alright.

K: I must have it somewhere, but it's in my memory I guess.

B: When you went back to work during that period you worked for about three years until your next son was born.

K: Yes.

B: Okay. Did you do the same sorts of duties as you had before?

K: Well, I did some floor duty, supervising duty, helping to train some of the new students.

B: You were a graduate nurse then. One of the things that other people have mentioned about Bayfront, and Mound Park earlier, is that the population would rise in the wintertime and fall away in the summertime because of all the winter visitors. You saw that to be true?

K: Oh yeah. Yeah, we always had to take our vacations in the summer. Everybody, if you were nursing, doing private duty, there wasn't hardly any unless somebody had money or was real sick and had to have a private nurse.

B: Did you find that you were called on often to do private duty nursing?

K: Yeah.

B: But that would typically be for somebody who was a winter visitor?

K: Yeah. I hate to say it, being my age now, but it was all the old people that used to come to this area, and Arza, and to the Vinoy [Hotel.] If we got somebody at the Vinoy, why, we thought that was something. I had one patient there that had a chauffeur that used to take me home. It was a treat for some of us too because the meals in the hotels that they would give us were a lot different than [what we were fed at school]. We always thought we were in high heaven if we got a wealthy patient to take care of.

B: That would have been during the 1930s. How about during the war years of the 1940s? Did you do private-duty nursing then as well?

K: Yeah.

B: Your husband went off to war during the Second World War in the Navy?

K: In the Navy, yes.

B: So you were raising your two sons at home.

K: I stayed with my mother and my boys, and while **Leonard** was getting his training in Boston, I used to go over there and spend some time on weekends [with him].

B: Well, that must mean you moved back to Troy, New York, then.

K: Yes, just for six months or so [while] he had to train in Boston. The boys were with my mother and father and I'd spend my weekends with him. Then he had to go to Newport or something like that to get on the ship to go to Australia.

B: Then did you come back to St. Petersburg?

K: I came back. I brought the boys and came back. We had our house here and everything.

B: So you just closed up the house for six months or so. When you came back did you continue to work as a nurse at Mound Park?

K: At that time I could get a colored girl for eight [to] ten dollars a week to help with the kids when they went to school and everything.

B: So did you go back to work?

K: I went to private duty, yeah.

B: Oh, not at Mound Park anymore?

K: Well, anyplace where I was called.

B: But not as an employee at Mound Park.

K: No, not as an employee, it was private duty.

B: When you were working as an employee nurse at Mound Park, would you ever have anything to do with Mercy Hospital? Were there times when you were called [over there]?

K: The only times was when **Dr. Gable** needed me to help with surgery. They'd take me over there just for a couple of hours, but they did that with the other nurses too.

B: **Dr. Gable**, can you tell us a little bit about who that was?

K: Oh my, **L.M. Gable**, you can look him up, and his brother **N.W. Gable**; they were the two most famous doctors there were around here.

B: Well, I didn't know them, but you did, so I'm wondering if you have any comment about what kind of people they were?

K: They were wonderful fellows; they were both in the service. I had a picture of **Dr. Gable** in his uniform, but when I moved—I hate to say this—three years ago when I moved from my big house with all my stuff, my kids said, oh mother, you don't need this, you don't need that, you're going down there. They threw out so much of my stuff [laughter] that I would like to have probably hung onto, but my place is a mess now with stuff that I've got in there. But I got rid of an awful lot of stuff that I kind of wish I'd hung on to.

B: Including a picture of **Dr. Gable**. What sort of doctor would you say he was? He did surgery I guess.

K: He delivered my boys.

B: Oh, so he did any kind of procedures. Not any specialization at all?

K: No, but he took care of me when I had my boys born, both of them.

B: So if somebody had a ruptured appendix he might do it, if they had a broken bone he might take care of setting that, he did it all.

K: He was a wonderful guy. I had my appendix out while I was in training.

B: Really?

K: While I was a student; I forgot to tell that.

B: Did it get infected? I guess it must have.

K: No, I just had a bad appendix and **Dr. Gable** operated on me.

B: Okay, so you had good timing.

K: That's the only surgery I've ever had in my whole life.

B: I salute you; let's keep it that way. That's good.

K: I had one later on in the 1970s; I fell and broke my hip here, and that's the only injury I've ever had. I've always had real good health. Excellent health, I guess, or I wouldn't be here at ninety-seven.

B: I'd say you must have done something right. The least we can conclude is that **Dr. Gable** performed a successful appendectomy on you. He must have been a very skillful doctor.

K: He was.

B: Do you remember any other doctors?

K: There was **Dr. Lambdin** and **Dr. Griffin**--they were surgeons. That's all the other ones I wrote down here. Both the **Gables** and **Dr. Griffin** and Dr. Lambdin.

B: When you say Lambdin, that's . . .

K: L-a-m-b-d-i-n. It's his wife that gave all the money. She married that old doctor-- she was my age, graduated in my class, and she married old Dr. Lambdin and she got all his money. She sold all his property on Beach Drive and everything and went into the nursing home out near Seminole. She left all her money to the hospital; don't you know that?

B: Well, I don't know Dr. Lambdin, so I wouldn't have made that connection.

K: Oh, we all had a fit, all us girls had a fit because she married an old man.

B: Did she keep working as a nurse?

K: She did some, but not very much; she didn't have to you know. She was an only

child and I remember—well you can imagine what all us young girls would think when she married an old man.

[Break in Interview.]

B: Returning to your experience as a nurse, you had to pay some of your expenses for things when you were a nurse. I guess they fed you and gave you a place to stay, but what did you have to pay for?

K: We had to buy our bandage scissors, our books, our textbooks, and our notebooks, and that's all.

B: Were you able to get used books or did you have to buy brand new books?

K: I think they were all new; we all got our own.

B: Do you remember whether they seemed like they were pretty expensive books to you at the time?

K: No.

[End of Tape A, Side 1.]

B: We were talking about the textbooks that you bought for your student nursing education.

K: We had to have the anatomy book and the book with our medicines—dosage and you had to learn the symbols: [c for with] and SOS and BID and TID. We had to learn everything, and then of course we had to learn the circulation.

B: Did you keep those books and refer to them in later years when you were working?

K: They were ours.

B: Did you find them useful in your working career?

K: Sure.

B: Okay. Did they pay you a salary?

K: Seven dollars a month.

B: [Laughing] Well, you didn't have to pay rent and you didn't have to pay for groceries. What expenses did you have?

K: We didn't have to pay for laundry, we got three good meals a day. The only thing we had to buy was our hose and our underwear of course, because our uniforms were furnished to us—the blue dresses and the white aprons and bibs, and then later our caps.

B: Even the shoes?

K: No, I always remember buying our shoes and our stockings.

B: Okay. What kind of things did you do for fun?

K: Outside of walking . . . we had a piano, I know that, and some of them used to play the piano and we'd all sing around the piano. They had a kitchen and we were allowed to fix little snacks if we wanted to. We didn't stay like nuns, but we stayed pretty close. We went to breakfast and then we went on duty for awhile, then we had to leave and go to class, usually about ten o'clock until it was time for lunch, then after lunch we went back on [duty]. Then in the middle of the afternoon, sometimes for just an hour, from like three to four [o'clock] we'd go to a class. Then we'd go back on duty till it was time for supper. We had a pretty regular schedule, especially the first six months, until we had to study and had to learn so much before we took our test to get our cap.

B: Were you able to ever go out to see a film, a movie?

K: No, I don't remember that, but I remember my folks coming and getting me and taking me to different places.

B: Did you ever go out off the campus to go get maybe a lunch or dinner on a special occasion?

K: No.

B: How about something like going out to the beach at **Pass-a-Grille**, or over to **Spa Beach** on the Bayfront? Did you ever do any of those things?

K: Well, we went to the Spa on our day off.

B: That's Spa Beach?

K: Spa Beach. I used to swim from the beach out to the pier and back. The beach was usually pretty crowded; it was a big clean beach back then, and the swimming pool was right there.

B: That's the city swimming pool.

K: It was the city swimming pool. We called it the spa. Of course the pier was the old pier, and we always used to go to get an ice cream cone. Everybody had to get an ice cream cone.

B: That was the so-called "Million Dollar Pier."

K: Yeah.

B: How would you go to get to the beach and the pier? Just walk?

K: Well, we always walked to the ballpark, and we had to do our own walking around the block if we wanted to. There was no bus service back then; we did more walking than anything.

B: And there were no streetcars.

K: Well, there was a streetcar, but there was one not close to the hospital. I think it was on Third Street, and the Catholic Church, I told you, was on Fourth Street. We used to walk there.

B: Did you go to church services when you were in nursing school?

K: Yeah. My folks nearly always came and got me.

B: Where did you go to church?

K: I went to the First Presbyterian Church, and I'm still [going there].

B: Right next door to where we are today.

K: The old church; I marched from the old church to the new church.

B: So you've been a member all these years?

K: All these years, yeah.

B: That's wonderful. Did your fellow student nurses also go to church?

K: The three Catholic girls went to St. Mary's, and there were three of us that were not Catholic. **Father O'Reardon**, I can see him now, great big heavysset Irish voice, if you know what I mean, and we used to go with the nurses sometimes when the church was decorated for something special. We were allowed to go to the Fifth Avenue Baptist Church on Sundays, which we could walk to, which I don't think is there anymore.

B: Now you mentioned going to the ballfield; which ballfield are you talking about?

K: The one down on the water.

B: Okay.

K: That's where we saw Babe Ruth.

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B: You saw who?

K: Babe Ruth, back in 1927.

B: That's when he was here for spring training?

K: Yeah.

B: Did you see him actually play in a game?

K: I don't remember.

B: Did you ever have a chance to meet him or talk with him?

K: No.

B: You said you went to the beach but only at Spa Beach, you never got to go out to Pass-a-Grille, huh?

K: We went to Pass-a-Grille when somebody took us, and like I said, **Wilhelm's** used to take us out there. The Pass-a-Grille Beach was a block long and had these covered cabanas and we used to go out there.

B: When you say **Wilhelm**, who are you referring to?

K: **Wilhelm Funeral Home**, they're not in business anymore. **Walters** is not in business anymore. Palms isn't in business anymore.

B: I recall the name Wilhelm, I'm not sure I understand why they would take nurses out to the beach.

K: Well, I guess just for our recreation more than anything.

B: Just to be nice?

K: Just to be nice.

B: When you finished your education as a nursing student, tell me about the

process of actually becoming licensed or certified. Was there a licensing exam?

K: I had to take my state board exam and I had to go to Jacksonville and pass all our exams before we could get our license.

B: That would have been because the State Board of Health was based in Jacksonville at the time.

K: Yeah. It was the Nursing Board.

B: So anyone in Florida who wanted to be a nurse had to go to Jacksonville and pass a test there?

K: Oh, absolutely.

B: Now, let me ask you this, was it necessary for you to have graduated and gotten a diploma from a school of nursing before you could go to Jacksonville and take that test?

K: No, you had to finish your exams at Mound Park before you went up there to pass your state exam.

B: So they wouldn't give you a state exam . . .

K: They gave you your RN degree.

B: At the school of nursing.

K: Yeah.

B: Okay. But only after you had done that was it possible to take the state test. Was the state test hard?

K: As I remember, it was. We had to do all our subjects; there were different subjects that we had to cover. We all passed; as far as I know we all graduated.

B: That's a good thing and a compliment to the Mound Park School of Nursing. You

think you got a good education at the Mound Park School?

K: Yes.

B: You always felt [prepared]?

K: I have had people tell me that we were certified, and we would argue with them because we were certified—I shouldn't say it—but **Wendy Smartex** from Boston and New York and everything would come down in the winter because they knew there was good nursing down here. To come from some of those big hospitals, why they thought they were better than we were. But they weren't; our tests were just the same—we were certified and given our RN degree, just like anybody.

B: So you felt as though with an education from Mound Park you could have gone and gotten a job anywhere in the country?

K: Oh, absolutely.

B: Let's see, do you remember any other experiences, after your education I mean, your working years as a nurse? You worked in all different departments in the hospital, and you participated in the operating room, worked in the emergency room.

K: Absolutely.

B: You've said that you participated in lots of child deliveries, I guess, in OB.

K: Absolutely.

B: Tell me about the OB. When you were taking care of new mothers and new infants, was there a separate infirmary?

K: There was an OB floor for the mothers because they were kept separate. There was a surgical floor and an OB floor and a medical floor. The people that had

been operated on were on one floor, and the mothers were on the OB floor, and the nursery was at the end of the OB floor where the babies were. Back then, a mother had to stay in bed ten days before she could get up. We had to pin all their binders on—their breast binders on and their abdominal binders on—and bed pan them because they had to stay in bed. We'd bring the babies to them and they had visiting hours from two till three o'clock in the afternoon, when the father's and the relatives and everybody could come in. Then when we had a Jewish operation . . .

B: You're looking for a word for the operation [Bris]? Are you referring to circumcision?

K: Circumcision. We had to watch the circumcision. We were all happy we had one because all the men came and stood in a ring, and the women always brought wine and sweets and everything, then after it was all over we got a little of the treats.

B: Well it was a happy occasion. So births to Jewish women routinely were in the delivery room at Mound Park; births to Jewish families were routinely in the OB at Mound Park.

K: I think that every Jewish child that was born in St. Petersburg was born at Mound Park.

B: I understand the city operated Mercy Hospital at the time, which was exclusively for blacks, and they had their own OB unit and nursery over there, so that was all completely separate. Did you ever have anything to do with any deliveries?

K: Not deliveries, but I had to go over there and help with surgery a couple of times.

If they needed a white nurse that had operating experience, if they thought it was something that they needed, they used to take us over there just for the operation.

B: Was there a concern that the black nursing staff at Mercy maybe had not had as much education or preparation?

K: I can't answer that; I really don't know.

B: Did their surgical operating room seem to be as well equipped as Mound Park's?

K: Yeah.

B: So they had the facilities.

K: Oh yes.

B: You didn't have an opportunity to get to know any of the nursing staff at Mercy, I guess?

K: No. I think they kind of resented us coming in sometimes thinking that they were not qualified enough. But no, we didn't go; only when the doctor specified for one of us to come.

B: The climate in St. Petersburg would have been different from what you were used to growing up in Troy, New York. Did you find it tough to adapt to St. Petersburg?

K: I enjoyed it.

B: How about working in the hospital? Did it seem comfortable there? There was no air conditioning in those days, I guess, in the 1930s. Did they have enough fans to keep it comfortable in the summer time?

K: Yeah. The newer hospital compared with the old part, where the emergency

room was and the big porch was with a lot of patients and where the men's isolation was, the old building that was there before they built Mound Park. I don't remember us having any trouble without any air conditioning. We must have had the windows open. I don't remember.

B: I guess I would conclude by just asking you to compare Mound Park with the hospitals and places you worked at later in your career. I understand that after you left Mound Park and no longer worked there as an employee nurse, you did private duty nursing sometimes there and sometimes elsewhere, you worked also at Faith Hospital, which later became St. Anthony's.

K: Right, and I worked at **Morton Plant**, and I was there the year they transferred the blacks and allowed the mixture of the blacks and whites in the same ward.

B: Do you remember what year that was?

K: No.

B: Okay. It was a difficult time I gather?

K: Right.

B: A lot of resentment?

K: Yeah, the white people didn't want to go in where any of the blacks were.

B: I'm curious about your reaction to that. You're a woman who grew up in the North, did that seem strange to you?

K: No, I don't think [so], because we didn't have any blacks in our hospital. We only had one or two in the kitchen that I remember. I don't remember any black help at all.

B: What hospital is that?

K: In Mound Park.

B: I guess I just wondered if you ever compared Mound Park in your mind to Morton Plant and St. Anthony's. Did you think that Mound Park was the equal of those hospitals?

K: Oh you know I did, absolutely.

B: Was there something that Mound Park was particularly good?

K: Mound Park had all the emergencies; I don't think St. Anthony's took the emergencies, the ambulances didn't go there. Like I said, the policemen rode motorcycles, they didn't have cruisers like they have now, and we always heard them coming. We knew there was an accident coming. Of course, the emergency room was in the old building.

B: That place sure has changed hasn't it.

K: [Laughing.]

B: Mrs. Klutts, I think we've probably reached a time to bring it to a conclusion for now. Is there anything that you can think of that you'd like to add to your recollections about Mound Park?

K: No, except that I think it was one of the most enjoyable, besides educational, [times]. We made such good friends with the other nurses. In fact, me being the last one of the group. We all kept in touch with each other all the time. And like I said about Doris marrying Dr. Lambdin. We were very close, we were always close; the six of us more than [anything]. If it had been a great, great big class, I think we would have [been less close]. Now they go to junior college to get their education; they don't get it like we got it.

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B: Well, yeah, the six of you had a unique experience that you shared, and it's good that you were able to stick together with each other and stay in touch, and it's good that you could share some of that experience with us. So I say to you, thanks for your time and energy in recalling all of this.

[End of Interview.]