

AL 174

Interviewee: Dorothy Jasiecki

Interviewer: Faith McCarthy

Date of Interview: November 4, 1993

M: My name is Faith McCarthy. I am here with Miss Dorothy Jasiecki. Hello.

J: Hello.

M: Please start by giving me your full name and your address here in Gainesville.

J: My name is Dorothy Florence Jasiecki. 8620-157 NW 13th Street, Gainesville.

M: Let me get a little bit of your background history. Start by telling me where you were born and what year.

J: I was born in Shamokin, Pennsylvania, October 30, 1925.

M: Did you grow up there?

J: No. When I was about five and a half we moved to Brooklyn, New York. I was reared there.

M: Tell me a little bit about your family.

J: Well, I am one of seven children. My dad worked for the Brooklyn Union Gas Company. My mother was a homemaker. One of my sisters was a RN. My other sister went to business college. Both of my brothers finished high school, and my oldest brother died at age forty-two. My younger brother is now sixty-two years old. One sister died in infancy.

M: So most of your siblings went ahead and got further education like yourself.

J: Yes.

M: So would you say that education was valued in your family?

J: Well, my father had the idea that women should not be educated. But through the cadet nurse corps, I went on to school. He approved of women being nurses, and he was very proud when my older sister became a nurse. Then when I said I would become one, he consented. Otherwise, even though I had scholarships, he would not allow me to take them. So, a poster that said, "Be a cadet nurse. Travel, get an education, and get away from home," was my way out.

M: So would you say that the recruitment being offered by the government, the posters and that sort of thing really influenced you into going into nursing?

J: Well, what influenced me was seeing the movie *Nurse Edith Cavell*. I [also] came from a family of medical people. I truly wanted to be a doctor, and had not _____ that but my father was a proud man and he would not take assistance from anyone.

M: Tell me about the movie. You saw it when you were in high school?

J: Yes. She just impressed me tremendously. It was her life. Even as I got older I went to England to see the memorial that they have of her. It was just an inspirational film, and I was always a very small person. When World War II was declared, I went down to volunteer [or] whatever I could do. Mayor LaGuardia tapped me on the head and said, "Well, we have a big job for you," and he took me into an office, and I was licking the envelopes. We were sending out the mail for the City of New York. That was my war effort because they had no personnel. Then I kept thinking about what I could do. I was a very patriotic young lady, and so when I saw that poster I thought about it. I worked for the telephone company at the time, and in my building we had a lot of service people, and I was much impressed.

M: How old were you?

J: Well, I must have been seventeen, eighteen at that time.

M: So you had graduated from high school?

J: Yes, and I went to work for the telephone company, and made the decision with my father's consent to become the cadet nurse. I could not even tell him my last six months I was sent to Topeka, Kansas, to the Winter General Hospital, and my mother had to intercede. We did not exactly tell him the truth, but we did not tell him a lie.

M: He would have had a problem with you going to Kansas?

J: Oh, yes. My father was very protective. But I was there in Topeka, and they evaluated us. I was evaluated for the psychiatric unit. My mentor was Dr. Carl Menenger, and I was very fortunate to study with him. That was it.

M: So the influences, you would say, were that you were very patriotic, you, of course, had your older sister as a role model, and you had the film that you saw and the poster, saw all of the recruitment, and you really did not have any other opportunity because [of] your father's restrictions towards college for girls. But they did approve of your nursing?

J: Oh, yes. Of course, my father, when he took me to the nursing school, said, "You won't make it. They will throw you out in three weeks." He did not have

much confidence in me, although he always called me the brains. I was sort of independent and that hurt my father deeply. So, he did not have much confidence. Of course, even when I got a scholarship to Hunter College after I graduated from nursing, he thought I was insane.

M: What would a girl be doing in college?

J: That is right.

M: Why in the world would you want to do that? Tell me a little bit about the application process. You made a decision to go into a nursing school. How did you pick a school?

J: Well, I first chose the school my sister attended. However, they were not going to have a class until January, and I was most eager to get in. So, I applied at a large city hospital, Kings County Hospital in Brooklyn. They accepted me and I was in the September class, I guess it was.

M: Did you have to fill out an application?

J: Oh, yes, and we had to go through a physical. We almost did not make it because of a heart murmur, but the doctor who examined me said, "Well, we will take you anyway." When you graduated high school in New York you had to have a certain number of state credits. I had that and I was an honor student, so I did not have difficulty getting in. It was just that I was small, and they gave me an ultimatum that I had to weigh a certain amount. I ate a lot of bananas and drank plenty of water the morning that they were to weigh me, and I made it.

M: Good for you! What sort of restrictions were at the school that you attended? Could you be married, for instance, or have a family?

J: No. They expected you to be single. They expected you to be free of any relationship with any male. We were not permitted to wear any make-up, definitely nothing on your fingers. Your hair was always in a net, and every morning we had chapel, even though it was a city hospital. We were inspected; our underwear was inspected and they checked to see that every button was on your uniform. We had a house mother and we were very protected. Of course, it was an extremely large hospital. In one day we would have over six hundred patients admitted. We went eight blocks.

M: Your dormitory was on the premises of the hospital?

J: Yes.

M: How many girls were in your program?

J: We were seventy-two girls. Well, that is how many we had in Topeka, but they came from other parts of the United States. We had a fairly large class.

M: And they were all women?

J: Oh, yes, and we did have one or two colored girls ([as] we called them at that time) in our class, which was unusual. We had individual rooms, and we also had someone to share a room if you wanted. So we were an integrated school.

M: So out of somewhere around seventy students, [there was] two black students and that was fairly unusual at that time?

J: Yes, and most of the young ladies came from Pennsylvania. The school was recognized throughout Scranton and Pittsburgh. Of course, our school was a shoot-off. We were the daughter school of Bellevue Hospital and Bellevue nursing. So, we had a very fine reputation, and it was a very fine school. I mean, I worked with lepers; we had a separate unit for lepers. I have spoken to many people and taken care of diseases that some physicians say they have never even been exposed to. So, it was a large place and a thorough place.

M: You got very good experience there?

J: Excellent.

M: Now, you were seventeen years old when you applied?

J: I was going to be seventeen. I graduated in May, and in October I was going to be seventeen, so I had to be eighteen at the time.

M: The school restriction was eighteen?

J: Yes.

M: Were there any older girls in the program?

J: There was one young lady in our class. She was the oldest one. She appeared to us to be in her thirties, but she would never divulge her age.

One of the things about the cadet nursing corps, we really ran the hospital because they had a large unit going overseas from there. Our instructors sometimes had to be in charge of the floors because the RNs were gone.

M: From what I understand it was just a crisis for nursing care. There were not very many graduate nurses to work.

J: No, and I had eighty patients to take care of, three to eleven shift. They

inspected that we gave, what we called, PM care; everybody got a back rub. Those were the days when you carried the buckets. I was on an orthopedic floor and you carried the buckets for the doctors to put the casts on.

M: My goodness. So you were the cast tech and the nursing aid and the nurse.

J: And you went to central supply and picked out everything that was needed, you know. We did not have the trays set up. So, we were praying that you were always getting the right stuff because those doctors were overworked and they knew we were students so they were not too kind.

M: Tell me more about the relationship between the student nurses and the doctors.

J: Well, many of them were very kind. They were very overworked. I know when I was on OB, the young man with whom I worked, in order to keep him awake I would have to read a novel or something, so that he could keep his eyes closed. But he would be on duty seventy-two hours, and sometimes we were forty-eight hours, but in between we had to go to class. But they worked long, long hours, and of course, we were in all in a financial situation where if you went out on a date with him, it was dutch. We got a paycheck of six dollars a month. We treated them because those fellows were making twenty dollars a month. Today, of course, they get paid well, but then for young men it was dedicated service.

M: Were you working primarily with medical students or were they full-fledged doctors?

J: Most of them were medical students and residents. I do not remember full-fledged doctors because they were pretty much gone.

M: They were at war along with the graduate nurses.

J: Yes.

M: So the picture I get is that the students really ran civilian health care.

J: Absolutely. Even those days we ran on the ambulances. If you were in the emergency room service, you went on the ambulances, and those young men had to go, too. I lost seven pounds in one day. We, of course, were rationed. It was awful. We had to turn in our ration books to the hospital. We ate whatever Uncle Sam had. We had rhubarb for breakfast, rhubarb for lunch, rhubarb for dinner. You were hungry, but you got one pork chop and one potato. Of course you did not want to go home because they would have to use their rations to feed you. So we were hungry. It was not until I went out to Topeka where the actual soldiers were that we got four pork chops if you wanted. They fed us well.

M: Tell me a little bit about school. You started by telling me about your education. You were required to work forty-eight hours, but you had classes in there.

J: Yes, sometimes.

M: Give me an idea of what the structure was like, the curriculum.

J: Well, we would be on duty by seven in the morning. At ten o'clock we would go off most of the time and go to class from ten to twelve. We had our nursing arts, we had our microbiology, and most of them were taught by instructors who were assigned to the school. Like our psychiatry, we were taught by a psychiatrist. Then we would go to lunch, go back to the ward after lunch. Then about three o'clock, we would go back to school, have our dinner, and many had to return to the ward.

We had a typhoid epidemic and fifty-two of us were afflicted, but only nine of us were really very sick. So, then at that time, everybody had to double and triple their time. We did get time off on the weekends to go into the city or to go home. We were obliged to wear our uniforms, you know the gray uniforms.

M: Tell me a little bit more about your uniform. You saw the poster for the recruitment, but did the idea of the uniform attract you, too, as a young woman?

J: No, because I was a rather shy person, and I wanted to be unobtrusive. I was proud to wear it, absolutely. Our duty uniforms, of course things have changed drastically now, but you were called a "pinky." You went in and you wore a pink uniform with a white bib and apron, and on our left arm we had a patch [for the] cadet nurse corps. Then you earned your cape and cap. That was a big thing. Your cape and cap [were] special ceremonies. Then we went into stripes. But when you were a pinky, you wore brown shoes and brown stockings. Then, when you went into stripes, you wore white shoes and white stockings. Of course, that indicated that you have made it. I think I packed my bags four times to leave because of the stress.

M: A lot of the young girls did leave?

J: Yes. Being tired because it was strenuous work. We did so much of the physical work. We did not have the aids. In fact, how we got aids was we stood out on the street and anyone who looked capable to follow directions we had special classes for them to teach them to read and write. So, those were the people that we employed.

M: To do the heavier work?

J: Well, even the running around because you were the only nurse on the floor and

you had eighty patients. So the aid (we called them attendants at the time) would have to go and run the errands for you.

M: You kept this up for three years?

J: Well, two and a half because the last six months they gave you a choice to stay at the hospital an go into administration, or to go with the Army or with the Navy. I chose to go with the Army. We had no idea where we were going. We had to meet at Grand Central Station with our luggage and we got on a troop train. Our orders were not given to us until we reached Chicago. When we got to Chicago, we were separated from the other troops and went on a cattle car to Topeka.

M: This was your senior cadet nurse experience?

J: Yes. As I said, there were seventy-two of us who went to Topeka, but they came from other schools. That was another adjustment. Topeka was a segregated town. At the post when we had a party, some young ladies made a mistake, according to the culture of the place, to dance with colored fellows and we almost had a lynching. They were the Washburn University young men who resented the fact. Several of the young ladies were shipped back home because that was the easiest way to pacify the people before they had the lynching.

M: This was a party at the house?

J: At the fort.

M: At the Army base?

J: Yes. At this time, now, the Army base was being converted to a Veteran's Hospital. So, what we were getting there was primarily a psychiatric unit. What we were getting there were the basket cases that were brought in by ships at Charleston, South Carolina. Then they shipped them over by plane to Topeka. We had a Halloween party and that is when the headlines in the newspapers read, "Seventy-two communists invaded Topeka, Kansas." I wish I had the paper. I was not thinking. I had to be the one to defend them. I represented the gals. It was a terrifying experience. One of the experiences [I had], I was in uniform and I was with two other cadets and we went into a soda place, a drug store and they had a counter. We all ordered tuna fish sandwiches and a chocolate shake. They got served but I did not. I sat there and they were waiting for me to be served, and finally I said to the counterman, "Sir, what happened to my order." It was identical to what they were getting. He said, "Your kind get to the back. Go outside." I had a deep tan and he thought I was black. So, of course, that particular drug store was off limits to any of the service people.

M: After that situation it became off limits?

J: We had to report it, you know. We were refused service and the reason for it. Thursday was the only day that blacks could go to the movie and they sat up in the balcony, but you could not sit there with them. Even though she was in uniform, she still had to go upstairs.

M: The girls that had been cadet nurses with you in New York, did they come to Kansas with you?

J: Some of them. Some chose the Navy and some of them remained at the hospital in administration.

M: What about the black students? Did they come to Kansas with you?

J: Yes.

M: What was their interpretation of this racial behavior, this discriminatory behavior?

J: They had not been exposed to it before. Well, they were very noble about it. Number one, they were very intelligent gals, and secondly, they were in command of themselves. They were not belligerent or hostile. They took the pacifist approach to the problem, and that sort of calmed down the situation.

M: What an experience!

J: Yes, it was.

M: But being in Kansas was a good experience for you. You had not chose it, but psychology became important to you. You developed into a psychiatric nurse out of this experience?

J: Oh, yes. Well, I did not want to be a psychiatric nurse. I wanted to work in neurology, but I resented that I forced to go into it. When we had our training at Bellevue hospital it was located in a terrible neighborhood. You were intimidated constantly. We were always finding men in our dormitories and we were terrified. The situation in that environment at Bellevue was very intimidating compared to what we had at Topeka. Topeka was paradise. Some of the experiences we had at Bellevue were threatening experiences, so when I said I had to be in the psychiatric unit, I said I did not want it. Well, there was no choice. Then gradually, I felt very comfortable and that is what I was in nursing, a psychiatric nurse.

M: Let me ask you a couple more things about school. You mentioned the dormitory. Let me ask you a little bit more about that. You had your own room?

J: When we were in Brooklyn we had our own rooms. We shared a common bathroom. We had to sign in and out with our house mothers. But in Kansas we had a major who lived in our quarters. We had the barracks. We had the bunks the same as the regular Army people, and we were supervised very closely. You signed in and out each time you went either to work or if you were on leave. The major was a very strict woman and she toted the Bible at us constantly. If you were unfortunate to be in the barracks at the time, you would have to listen to her sermon. So, we decided to do something shocking. When she called us together for the Bible reading about a quarter till seven in the evening, we all came in our pj's and robes and cigars. We gave the signal to each other and started puffing away. She got hysterical. She called the officer of the day and we were grounded for thirty days.

M: Was she a nurse?

J: Oh, yes. Absolutely. She was happy to see us go.

M: It would seem that this very protected dormitory life would be restrictive, but also would be very safe for young women just leaving home. Did you find that?

J: Yes. Most of the young ladies came from large families. Many of them went to Catholic schools, so they came from very protective families. We had a few Jewish girls and they were the ones who initiated a lot of the liberal activities. And of course, if we did follow, we got into a lot of trouble. That is what we were told to expect. Just think about it, when a doctor entered a room everybody in that office had to stand. In surgery, some of them would kick you and you would have a swollen ankle. If you complained about it, it made matters worse. The doctor was God. That was the way and that was the orientation. So many of us had the idea of a dedicated life. We took the pain. Women were not liberated and women were not looking for liberation. So that was the orientation. It is the same way. If you are not exposed to, say, classical music it does not make any difference. Once you are exposed and you are denied it, then it means something to you. That was the same.

M: So these are young people following traditional lives where a male doctor was in power and a female nurse was not.

J: No, she was subservient to him. We did everything. We scrubbed bedpans. We did not have anyone else doing it. We had to scrub the beds when the patients went home or expired. We did all of the housework, you know. That was part of the training.

M: And it was part of being a woman. Woman's work.

J: Yes, and to be honest with you, when we had anatomy, the class on

reproduction, even the instructor blushed and said, "Read chapter such and such in the book, and some of you who are knowledgeable help the others who are not." That is how we got our [knowledge].

M: That was the extent of even nursing anatomy.

J: We had our sessions then and we were not thinking of it except, "Hey, I have to pass the test to remain," because if you failed any subject you were dismissed immediately.

M: So you read the chapter and studied?

J: We read that chapter and still did not understand. There were some who were knowledgeable, maybe one or two. They gave us the orientation to what life is all about.

M: Everybody passed the exam?

J: Yes.

M: It would seem that this restricted but safe dormitory life would appeal to your parents. Did that make it a little bit easier for them to have you leave home?

J: Yes.

M: You said your father drove you to the hospital. Did he come in?

J: No, my father only dropped the bags. I told you what he said to me, and left me there. That was that. Well, he knew from my sister because my sister was already graduated. She was a supervisor in an operating room.

M: Was she in New York also?

J: Yes, she trained at a Catholic hospital in Brooklyn. It was a small hospital. It does not even exist anymore. My nursing school does not exist either. It was a good place. It was a very fine place.

M: You developed a lot of friendships with the other girls?

J: Not really because I did not have an outgoing personality. At that time even though I wanted to go to college and I wanted to be a doctor, I still wanted to be a nun. So, see, I was given the orientation by my roommates in Kansas when we were there. They tried to break me of some of my attitudes.

M: Your introverted personality.

J: That is right. They would go to a party and I would go to my room to pray.

M: They would not put up with that for long. They made you go with them?

J: They tried, yes.

M: Were they successful? Did you break out of that shell?

J: Yes, somewhat. I had to in order to survive.

M: Much has been said about the accelerated program and that was the plan that started early in the 1940s to shorten the education of student nurses to either twenty-four but more likely thirty months.

J: We had the solid three years. No, at that time they were not talking about it. In fact, even after we graduated the idea of going on to school was not [accepted]. I became an instructor immediately, two weeks after I graduated. I did not have my RN. Then I climbed up without any college work, except I was going to college but I was not in nursing. The nursing program at that time in the colleges were very few. Still, I really did not think I needed it, and I enjoyed literature and that is what I pursued.

M: So, your education after nursing school was more liberal arts?

J: Yes, I went on and I got a bachelor of arts in english. Then I went on and got a master's of arts in english, and then I got a diplomate in collegiate teaching. I was supposed to be in a PhD program in literature, but the committee changed the requirements and I was getting too old. They gave me an ultimatum. I had to be finished by age fifty and I was forty-nine. There was no way that I could finish it. I had a year to go to Wales to study, then I had to write my dissertation - no way. Then they said, again the anti-woman bit, even if you complete everything, it is no guarantee that they would give me the degree. They were looking for young men.

M: What university was this?

J: University of Miami.

M: Let me back up a little. I do want to discuss that more, but what year did you graduate from nursing school?

J: 1947.

M: Then you took your boards after that?

J: Yes.

M: You were in Kansas?

J: No, we came home to New York in February. We were finished in February, but the actual graduation ceremony was not until June. I immediately started working at Kings County. As I said, they made me an instructor in pediatrics, and then moved me over when I told them I wanted to be where I was trained to be. We opened a new psychiatric unit and I was a supervisor there and an instructor. I was in charge of the training of the non-professionals. I stayed there and I was a clearance hospital. We distributed our patients to go home or go to a private sanitarium or a state hospital or a veteran's hospital. Of course I was inquisitive to know what happened, so I resigned and I went to a state hospital. I stayed there for two years.

M: Which state hospital?

J: Friedmore State Hospital.

M: Was this in New York?

J: Yes. It was Long Island; Queens, ____ or one of those places. Then I decided to see what happened to our patients when we sent them to a Veteran's hospital. So I got a position, supervisor, in Northport. At that time it was only a psychiatric hospital; now it is everything. I was going to be director of education. When they were waiting for my approval, the officer of the day who went to Washington discovered that I was number two on the draft to go to Korea. As a cadet nurse, as long as I had no children, I was obligated to serve my country in case of an emergency. So that held up my appointment as director.

M: What year was this?

J: The Korean War. I forget the years. So, the reason they were going to draft was they did not have enough volunteers, but when they got enough volunteers, the draft threat was over.

I became ill with an unknown disease and that changed my whole life. I moved to Florida. Actually, it was lupus, but at the time they had no test for it. I was not diagnosed until 1972. But I was very, very ill.

[End side A1]

M: So you were in Northport, New York, about a year?

J: Yes, and it was a VA hospital.

M: Then you began to have symptoms of lupus and get sick?

J: Yes.

M: How old were you at this point? Do you remember?

J: That was the beginning of the 1950s. I had the same symptoms while I was in training. They put me to bed thinking I had tuberculosis, but I did not. Rumors circulated around the hospital that I had cancer of the blood, but they had no idea really what it was since I was so anemic.

Then I moved to Miami and of course, I was incapacitated. I did not work. They were opening a new psychiatric unit. So, I went to the beach, you know, thinking the sun was going to dry me out and give me relief to the pains that I was experiencing. Then finally one day I said, now I am able to walk and I can go to work. So I applied at the Institute. They called it the Institute. It was not open [and] the building was just completed. They hired eight of us to set it up. In the meantime, we had to work in other units. I was a charge nurse on an orthopedic and neurosurgical ward. They were not opening it up, they were not opening it up, and finally, I think I was a charge nurse about a year and I said, "Unless you do something about putting us where we belong, I am going to resign." The other people said the same. So, shortly after that we were moved over there. We completed setting up the units. We wrote the curriculum and so forth, and that was the start of the Institute.

M: Was it the Miami Institute?

J: No, it was Jackson Memorial Psychiatric Institute. I was there a number of years.

M: Part of the administration?

J: Yes, and because of the politics I decided I was going to leave. There were too many things going on that my conscious would not permit me to fulfill and being an administrator I was obligated to fulfill them. So my next move was to find a job outside of nursing because now I had my degree in English. I went to work for, I thought, a newspaper, but when they discovered I was a nurse in the agency and there was a drastic shortage of nurses, they refused to place me unless it was a nursing position. A friend of mine had an agency and she said, "Why don't you try teaching?" I said, "No way. I had enough." I went for an interview and I taught third grade at a Catholic school.

M: So this was quite a career change.

J: It was, and I was getting forty dollars a month pay. By the way, I was getting as

a supervisor at Jackson Memorial two hundred dollars a month, six days a week, too.

M: About what year was this?

J: 1952. So another Pastor heard about me and he called me up and he offered me sixty dollars a month. I said, "Well, I am going to have to finish the year with this school because it would not be right to leave in the middle." Then I went there and I worked there as the nurse, as well as the fifth grade teacher. Then I got tired of that because I had to sell encyclopedias to make a living, so I applied at the school system. They were opening a new high school. I got the position.

M: What position was this?

J: Seventh grade English teacher. Then I went to eighth, tenth, eleventh, twelfth, and advance placement. I stayed there for six years and then opened a new school closer to home. By this time I had my master's in English so I started to teach at the college where I got my master's, but I also taught at the high school. Then I taught at the University of Miami and the Bahamas. I was a weekend professor. We flew over Friday and we came back Sunday. We had class all day long.

But in the meantime, I kept nursing. For example, one of my students was in a terrible automobile accident. The entire family, I nursed them. I did the midnight shift, but I worked at my regular job during the day. It was only in the last year that I retired my license. I had been taking courses. The last one I had was on AIDS. I kept up the points. I had my license in New York as well as here because every time someone was ill in my family, I would go and take care of them. The last time I worked in New York was five years ago when I nursed my sister. But I was always the school nurse no matter where I went.

M: You left your job in the psychiatric?

J: I spent fifteen years as a psychiatric nurse.

M: You went into education initially teaching elementary [grades] at Catholic schools. Then into public high school.

J: I retired from the public high school.

M: How long did you teach?

J: I taught thirty years in the public school. I taught on the university level since 1962. When I left the university, I had a full time position. I was going to take it because I did not intend to retire, but I have not been that well, so I said, "I will

retire."

M: Did you get your degree from the University of Miami?

J: I went to Hunter College. Then I went to Humpsford University and that is when I got so sick. I got my bachelor's then. I was at my senior year at Humpsford, but I took that year off. Then I finished at the University of Miami. Then I got my master's at Barry. Then I went into the PhD program at the University, but because again, the situation with the credits, and my lupus flared up. I took the diplomate, which is an internal degree, but of course, I was on in years.

M: Yes, you were fifty or forty-nine.

J: No, I was older when I got my last degree. I got that in 1972.

M: So when you went the University of Miami to the Bahamas, it was Jamaica?

J: No, Nassau. The had a program where we taught at the junior college of the Bahamas, but we were giving the four year degree from the University of Miami. So, they would fly us over and we would teach all day. You could teach two days if you wished. We went every weekend for an entire semester.

M: And you enjoyed that?

J: I loved it because they were wonderful students, eager.

M: When did you retire? You put inactive on your license last year?

J: Yes.

M: So you had a long career in nursing.

J: On and off, yes. I did want to give it up.

M: It sounds like you enjoyed it.

J: Oh, I loved it. I would never have left it if it were not for the politics. One of the examples when I talk about politics, the mayor's father was an alcoholic and he lived in Key West. They were bringing him up to my unit. I got the orders to clear out two bedrooms because the family was going to stay there. I had to choose five patients. At the time, most everyone we had there was suicidal. I refused. Of course, (we called him) the General (he was a General), he gave me the order and said, "It is your job or you follow the order." So, I thought about it and I followed the order. Then one of the patients committed suicide and I could not live with that. The irony of it was they never came. So, I felt that was an

injustice. There were other things. It kept compounding itself.

I forgot to tell you I decided to join the reserves. I went to the reserve unit and everything was going to go along fine. I had my date for my physical.

M: What year was this?

J: It was in the 1960s. At that time they were getting the unit ready to go to Fort Benning for their two weeks and I was just going to slip in ready for that. They were rushing the job for me to go. Everything was find until I went for my physical and was more or less told that I was being rushed in because I had special orders. I was not even in the unit and I had special orders to go to Fort Benning a week before everybody else, and I was going to stay at the motel where the General was going to stay. I said, "No, no, no." If that is the way I have to, you know, I was promised I was going to be a major. I said, "No, no, no. Not for me."

M: So you backed out?

J: I backed out. I withdrew, yes. That was my experience. That was a very fine unit to go into. So when he died, his obituary really struck me because he was such a dedicated father, grandfather. So someone else did the therapy for him.

M: Well, this is just the sort of stories that you hear from nurses. It is not only hard work, but there is quite a many unreasonable demands put on nursing.

J: Well, it was for me anyway. Of course there were some who did not mind those kind of obligations. We always had, you know. But they promises that they were going to get married to the doctor, and many of them succeeded, but I was not willing to pay the price.

M: In the recruitment pamphlets, that is one of the things that it says there is a high rate of marriage among nurses. That did seem to be a recruitment promise and a lot of women went in because of that.

J: We had the "golden girls." There were eight of them. They all bleached their hair. They kept the interns and residents glowing. Most of them did marry one. I do not know if they are still together, but that was their project.

M: And I guess at that time a lot of women felt like marriage was the thing to try to achieve.

J: Absolutely. That was more important for a woman than a career. The career was a secondary thing. I will say that so many of them that we taught said that they went into nursing because they would be able to meet somebody that would

take them away from the little towns they came from.

You are bringing back a lot of memories.

M: I hope that is good.

J: It is.

M: You have really just recently retired from nursing. What do you think of nursing presently? Has it changed much?

J: Tremendously. I did not feel as confident as I did when I was in full time. I thought about now that I am retired that I could do something and going back to school, but it is too threatening now. Because when I see what the girls do on the floors, to me that was not my concept of [nursing]. I like the patient contact. In fact, when I apply for a position anywhere, I always applied for floor duty. But then when I went to the psychiatric unit, Creedmore, I went in as a floor nurse. They handed me the keys the day I started and said, "You are supervisor of an entire building." But I liked being with patients. I was most impressed with the nurses in the outpatient. They spoke to you, they gave you a feeling of confidence, but with my sister up in Jersey, we never saw the RN except to change the infusion. "How are you feeling," pat you on the toe and out they go. That would make me very unhappy because I feel three-fourths of the recovery of a patient is that nurse contact. The anxieties and the intimidations of hospitals do affect how a patient responds to the therapy. Drastic changes.

M: Obviously it is going to change in the future, but do you think it will get better or worse?

J: I think the registered nurse who goes on to get herself educated. I mean you could not start an infusion except if that doctor trusted you, and that was on the slide. Legally you could not do it. I think nurses are assuming more of what the doctors used to do. In my thinking that may be even better because I feel the women have much more of a responsible sense of obligation than the doctors. Knowing why my students went into medicine frightens me. They went in because it was a lucrative deal. They did not go in because they had ambitions of discovering something, to help lupus or you know. But most of them would be leaving medicine now to go into engineering or vice versa, whichever is going to be more lucrative for them. Those young men and women, I thought, were extremely sensitive to humanity. As they get older, it is a rat race for them.

M: So you think that many of the students that are going into medicine now are really in it for the money, not much humanity there?

J: No, and since I came to Gainesville and I have been to a number of doctors, I

feel extremely frustrated because they leave you up in the air. You do not know. When you go in with a runny nose some of them do not even take your temperature. "Oh, take an antibiotic. You'll get over it." That is it. See me in six months. My veterinarian calls to see if the dog is okay after the dog has something done. But I think nurses are going to assume much more responsibility.

M: They may handle it differently?

J: I think so. I have that confidence at least because when you observe the young ladies working, the ones who are working in, like ICU, they are there [and] they are working. [They are] determined that they are going to help that patient. When you get to the floor, there is a different attitude, plus the fact you do not know who is a nurse and who is not a nurse. I was in the hospital in south Florida four days and the charge nurse never came to my room. My doctor said to me, "Why don't you apply for the superintendent of this hospital?" It was a small hospital. It was a joke so I said, "I'll give it consideration." So when the nurse cam in to do something for me I said to her, "Gee, there is an opening here for a superintendent." She says, "Oh, are you interested?" I said, "Yes, I am a RN. I have several degrees. I think I could run this small place efficiently." Well, it was not ten minutes after she left the room that charge nurse was in there. She came in before she went off duty. She came in three or four times a day because there was the threat that I was going to apply for that position. That does not sit well. I understand the responsibilities that they have, but its...

M: It seems what is really important has been lost in modern American medicine.

J: Yes. I had ten wards and every time I made my rounds I went from patient to patient. On some wards we had a hundred patients and I knew almost every one by name. I knew where they were destined to go [and] what the therapy was. We had meetings about it. I am happy to see that they do have inservice classes. That is very important.

M: Continuing education?

J: Yes. Because as much as you know or as much as you think you know, you have to learn more. I am thankful. I would not have been a nurse if it were not for the corps. That I know. I do not know what I would have been, but I would not have gone into nursing on my own. Except as I said, my dream was to go to the Isle of Malachi an be a doctor to the leopards. Look where I am – Gainesville.

M: Not a leopard in sight.

J: Let's hope not. Maybe a panther.

M: It has been wonderful talking to you. Thank you this has been a very good interview.

J: I hope I have given you something that is enlightening.

M: Yes.