

# Arizona State University

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College of Nursing  
Tempe, Arizona 85287

## ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

### INTERVIEW AGREEMENT\*

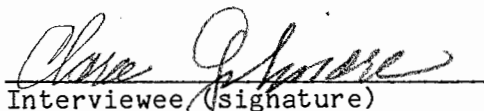
The purpose of the contributions of Cadet Nurses Project is to gather and preserve historical information by means of the tape-recorded interview. Tape recordings and transcripts resulting from such interviews will become part of the University Archives, Arizona State University as The Joyce Finch Collection. This material will be available for historical and other academic research by scholars, students and members of the family of the interviewee, regulated according to the restrictions placed on its use by the interviewee. Arizona State University, College of Nursing is assigned rights, title, and interest to the interviews unless otherwise specified below.

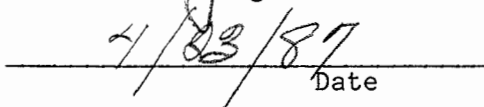
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I have read the above and voluntarily offer the information contained in these oral history research interviews. In view of the scholarly value of this research material, I hereby permit Arizona State University, College of Nursing to retain it, with any restrictions named below placed on its use.

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Interviewee (signature)

  
Date

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Name of Interviewee

This is Joyce Finch, Ph.D. Today is April 23, 1987. I'm interviewing for the first time Ms. Clara Gilmore. This interview is taking place in her office at the Infirmary of Grand Canyon College at Phoenix, Arizona.

This interview is sponsored by the Arizona State University College of Nursing and the Arts, Social Sciences, and Humanities Council. It is part of the Contributions of Cadet Nurses Project.

JF Now, my plan was that we would just follow this list of topics in a sequential fashion. So that would start us off with your nursing education. What year did you graduate?

CG 1947.

JF So you would have gone into nursing into 1944?

CG Yes.

JF You went to a hospital school?

CG Yes.

JF And where was your school?

CG St. Joseph's Hospital in Alton, Illinois.

JF About what was the size of your hospital?

CG I think it was about 300 beds.

JF And do you remember what size your class was when you began?

CG I think we started with 63 and graduated 31.

JF So there was a fair amount of attrition there.

CG Yes, very much so.

JF Since you went in to nursing in 1944, did you go in as a Cadet Nurse?

CG No, I went in under just the regular nurses' training, and then after I was in about six months, I joined the Cadet Nurse Corps.

JF How did you happen to make that shift into the Corps?

CG Well, when I went into training, I was not sure what the requirements in lieu of the nursing program would be. You know, if they would be different, what they required, or what we would be expected to do. Really, after we were in training, we were all doing the same thing. I felt that it

would be just as advantageous to go ahead with the Cadet Nurse Corps.

JF So you found that it did not make a big difference in your actual nursing experiences?

CG No.

JF One of the provisions of the program was that students might have opportunities for some special experiences in their last six months. What did you do in your last six months?

CG My last six months were spent in Surgery and Emergency Room.

JF In your home hospital?

CG In the home hospital, yes.

JF Before I go onto that, I did skip by something. Did you have any affiliations away from your home hospital?

CG Yes. We affiliated with St. Vincent de Paul in Chicago, Pediatrics.

JF One affiliation?

CG Yes.

JF Did you have any college affiliations in your basic nursing program?

CG No.

JF So, then you were working in the Operating Room, and in the Emergency Room for the last six months?

CG Yes, we did the two together back then.

JF Did you split it up into, say, three months of each?

CG No. It was a combination.

JF So, you were working in both somewhat simultaneously?

CG Yes. Usually it was during the evening. You know, they would have an Emergency nurse, but if she needed help, then she would call Surgery.

JF So you were taking "call" then?

CG Yes. This was the pm shift only. OR was usually not that busy.

JF I was wondering how you knew where you were supposed to be if you were doing both simultaneously. So your Emergency would be more like in the evening, or nights, or weekends?

CG Yes, during the day would be your big Surgery schedule, unless you had an emergency surgery come in in the evening.

JF That's a little bit different than experiences I've heard about before. Since you were in what was one of the big specialities at that time, did you have additional classes for your experience?

CG No. It was just the actual experience I think.

JF So you grew into the role?

CG Yes.

JF And how were you supervised during the period, when you were in the Operating Room and the ER?

CG Well, the hospital was run by the Sisters of Charity, it was a Catholic hospital. We had the supervising nun who was on call all the time.

JF It sounds like, from what you've said, that you would have been a nurse anyway, as far as the Cadet Corps was concerned.

CG Yes.

JF And the nursing education that you had was the same, whether you were in the Cadet Corps or not.

CG Yes.

JF So how did the Cadet Corps make a difference in your nursing education?

CG Well, I think the Cadet Nurse Corps made the difference of sort of making you feel a part of what was going on at the time. Making you feel that if you were needed you'd be able to go, and that there was more or less of an equality between the men being needed and the female being needed.

JF One of the nurses that I interviewed said that in her hometown, the Cadet Nurses were sworn in. Actually, all of the nurses in that town were sworn in in one, big ceremony. That's not something that I think you would forget. But, do you remember any kind of induction ceremony into the Cadet Corps?

CG No.

JF Okay. That had not occurred to me before, and so I just wondered if other people had that experience. Apparently, it doesn't seem to have been very common.

CG No.

JF Okay, then you finished up in the OR and Emergency Room. After you finished in 1947, what did you do in terms of your work experience? What was your first job?

CG The first job was in St. Louis in Surgery.

JF Okay. So you made a geographical move.

CG Yes. I was from St. Louis, so that's why. But, during the War, really, the schools in St. Louis were quite full. I applied at St. Mary's in St. Louis and they had their class quota full. So they referred me to St. Joseph's in Alton, Illinois. That was how I went across the River.

JF Well that's new. I had not heard that before, that they had restricted enrollment into the schools.

CG Yes, they very definitely did.

JF Well, I suppose unless somebody was actually turned away from a first choice, they wouldn't know that there was restricted enrollment.

CG That's true.

JF So you were in St. Louis working in the Operating Room. And you must have felt pretty well prepared for that role by that time.

CG Yes. I enjoyed that area very much. The hospital I went to in St. Louis, the Director of the hospital had been the Director of Nurses at Alton while I was in training. So I knew her directly and that was probably why I went back there.

JF Alright. Now, what was your role in the Operating Room? Did you circulate or scrub, or both?

CG I did both. When I went to St. Louis it was more or less on a supervisory role there -- scrubbing when I needed to, but mostly circulating and supervisory.

JF So you had benefit of your special experiences right away.

CG Yes. That was the area I enjoyed and that was the area I wanted to go into.

JF How long did you do that?

CG I did that about six months. Then I got married and moved back to Alton.

JF Now, does that mean that you did not work for awhile?

CG No. I went back to work at St. Joseph's Hospital where I had graduated from. I have to stop and think how long I worked there. I worked there about four years, and then I became pregnant.

JF Now, in those four years were you in the Operating Room all that time?

CG Yes, I was back in the Operating Room.

JF And were you in the same kind of role that you were before?

CG No. When I went back I was scrubbing and assisting. There was no Emergency Room involved. They had become two separate entities by then.

JF Now, when you were in St. Louis, was there any Emergency Room work?

CG No.

JF They were separate?

CG Yes.

JF So you then were scrub nurse and assisting?

CG Yes.

JF Now, when you say "assisting", are you talking like you kind of stood in as an assistant to the doctor, as somewhat different from managing the instruments? What do you mean by "assisting"?

CG I think "assisting" I'm referring to the same as "scrubbing". Scrubbing or assisting in the Surgery, and then the other role would be circulating.

JF Oh, I see. And you got pregnant.

CG Yes.

JF So we're talking about 1951 or '52 at that point?

CG Yes. Our first daughter was born in '52.

JF Am I correct in inferring that you retired from nursing for awhile?

CG For just about six months, and then I went back to work for two OB and Gynecologists. I worked there for five years.

JF In an office?

CG In an office setting.

JF Now, what did you do in the office?

CG Assisted the doctor with examining the patients.

JF Did you have any responsibility for record keeping or insurance work, or making like... I'm not sure of the word -- scheduling surgery. Any of those kinds of things?

CG No. Now all the scheduling, insurance, billing and all of that was done by the front office. We worked directly with the patients. We did a lot of counseling and education and pregnancies, and this type of thing. But all of our work was directly with patients and with the doctor.

JF How did you happen to make that shift from the Operating Room to the OB-Gyne office?

CG Well, I knew the two doctors real well. I'd admired them a great deal while I was in training. They had an opening about the time I was thinking about going back to work. And I went back to work for them.

JF Now, you said you worked for them about five years, so that would be about '57 or '58, along in through there?

CG Yes.

JF You said your "first daughter". Did you have a second child or more along in through there?

CG Yes. Then about five years later we moved to a little town -- Paris, Illinois -- and we had our second daughter. I went back to work there and I went into a hospital, a very small hospital which was quite a different situation.

JF Would you be willing to talk about how that was different?

CG Like I say, it was very small. The floors did not have many patients. Some of them had 10 or 15 patients. You might go to work on the OB floor and there were not that many patients, so you would go down to the Surgical Floor or the Med. Floor, or something like. Or, you might be called, if they had emergency surgery, to assist in Surgery. So, like I said, it was kind of interesting. You really worked all the areas.

JF Yes, I was thinking that you'd have to be able to do just about anything in a small hospital like that. Did you feel prepared to do that, to be that flexible?

CG Yes, I think I did at that time.

JF How long did you do that then?

CG We moved out here in 1961, so I that did up until that time.

JF So when you came to Arizona, did you work right away or did you take some time off?

CG I went to work at Valley View Hospital which is no longer in existence. It was on Northern and about 51st.

JF Now, that's 51st Avenue?

CG Yes.

JF That must have been way out in those days.

CG Yes, it was. Way out in the cotton patches.

JF Now, Valley View -- I kind of remember that name -- and that was small.

CG Yes, that was small.

JF And wasn't it like one doctor owned and managed it?

CG No. It was a combination of doctors, but it was a small hospital.

JF So, was it a general hospital?

CG Yes, a general hospital.

JF So they did everything there?

CG Yes.

JF And did you do everything there, too?

CG It was quite a bit the same. It was like an L-shape, and you started on this floor and if they needed help in the Emergency Room... It was really quite a bit the same.

JF Now, were you still staff nursing and moving around as a staff nurse?

CG Yes.

JF And you were working full-time?



CG Yes. I only worked there I think it was about three months. Then my husband was out of town a great deal of the time, and we had just moved here. So it just was not working out with baby-sitting. So, like I said, I only worked there three or four months. I don't even remember any more. Then I started down here in October of 1961 at Grand Canyon, and I've been here since.

JF In the Infirmary?

CG In the Infirmary.

JF Wow!

CG So I've been here 25 years.

JF Well, we've got to give you points for stability, right?

CG Yes, I think so.

JF But in 25 years that you've been here in the Infirmary, you must have seen some changes in the role of the Infirmary Nurse?

CG Oh, tremendous changes.

JF Would you be willing to talk about that a little bit?

CG Well, I think I have seen a tremendous change in the college atmosphere and the young people... I think a change in the college nurse as such, from becoming more or less of a second mother, to sort of a health educator, health promoter, advisor, counselor, this type thing.

JF Now, in this period, have you involved yourself in any formal or informal educational activities?

CG Yes. In this time I went to school here and graduated with a B.S. in Education, and minor in Health.

JF At Grand Canyon College?

CG Yes.

JF So you have your degree?

CG Yes.

JF How did you come to do that?

CG Well, it just seemed like a very good opportunity while I was here. And of course, I graduated from here in 1973 and we didn't have too many extension classes over on the other side of town. It was all commuting which was difficult, with the children being young.

JF You mean over to ASU?

CG ASU, yes, and working full-time. So I talked to several advisors here on campus and they suggested the Education with a minor in Health, which would still be in a health-related area.

JF Sure. And if health education is one of your major roles here in the Infirmary, that seems somewhat useful.

CG Very appropriate I think, really.

JF So apart from the degree itself, do you have any other educational or informal...

CG Yes. I have continuing credits all the time, and workshops and different things that I attend.

JF What kind of continuing education do you find useful?

CG Well, I try to continue in the areas that directly related to this area of nursing. You know, the upper division education, rather than the elementary grades and this type of thing. I have a lot of credits in counseling.

JF More for the adult learner, as opposed to the child or adolescent learner?

CG Yes.

JF One of the things that is of interest to me -- this is not on my list of questions -- but, you're the first person that I've interviewed who, in one sense, works independently. You've had a lot of independence in your experience. Your years in the office, and then your years here.

CG Yes.

JF How do you keep in touch with nursing, or how do you feel about working independently?

CG How do I feel about nursing?

JF No. How do you feel about working all by yourself? You see, because in your hospital nursing, there were a lot of other nurses around to talk to. But here...

CG Yes, I see. Well, I feel a great need, and I think this is why I've continued very diligently in the continued ed. for this rapport with the different nurses. I communicate and have good rapport with NAU and their health center. You know, relating what we're doing and how they're doing it. If I need help I call them and find out what their procedure

is, this type thing. So, I think in that field I do feel a great need for the support from school nursing.

JF And so, you do seem to have a network that you've established, that really relates to your particular concerns and interest.

CG Yes.

JF Well, that's very interesting. I don't know that I would have intuited that if you hadn't told me. Somethings I can imagine, but that's very interesting.

CG Yes. And I enjoy very much the Pacific Coast College Health Nurses' Association. I benefit a great deal from their meetings and their newsletters, and this type thing that we get every months. See what different colleges and universities in the western states are doing, and the different programs they offer. You know, I can do this with a little bit of implementation at Grand Canyon College.

JF Now, let me see if I hear you correctly. There is an organization of western schools in the infirmary, or student health services? I call it an infirmary, but this really isn't an infirmary.

CG It's college health.

JF Yes, college health. And you belong to that group?

CG Yes.

JF I've never heard of it before; I'm fascinated. Is this a large group that you belong to?

CG Yes. I don't remember the exact number of states that belong to it, but it is the western coast.

JF And you have meetings that you can go to?

CG Yes. And they have, like I said, weekly, or monthly, bulletins or magazines that come out with input from all the different areas. What they are doing, the programs they are implementing and this type thing. Of course, the big thing now has been the measles and rubella update.

JF Sure. Well, that's even more specialized, because before we began the interview I asked you about occupational health, but you even have it narrowed down more than occupational health.

CG Yes.

JF Well, I'm fascinated when I find something I haven't heard of before. So that's how you keep in touch. You've developed a network to handle the working alone aspect?

CG Yes, I think so.

JF That somewhat brings us up to date, then, in terms of your work experience. When you have a lot of job stability you can do that somewhat rapidly. One of the things I did want to ask you is have you always wanted to stay in nursing?

CG Yes.

JF Tell me, though, going back to this job, what you like about this job that would keep you here for 25 years?

CG Well, I enjoy this age group for one thing, and I think I enjoy the initiative that I can experience here. I definitely have a supervisor and supervision, but I still have a lot of initiative that I can use. I enjoy that very much.

JF To whom do you report?

CG The Dean of Students.

JF Is that person, who I'm assuming is not a nurse, supportive of you pretty much, in terms of your initiative and your ideas?

CG Yes, very supportive.

JF Well, I think that helps in liking your job.

CG It makes a great deal of difference, very definitely.

JF Now, I know are married and have at least two children.

CG Yes.

JF Did you have other children?

CG No, just the two daughters.

JF How did you juggle your work and family responsibilities? Because, you never seem to have taken off long periods of time after your children were born.

CG No, I didn't.

JF So you worked quite hard.

CG Well, it was many times difficult. After we moved out here my husband, who is since retired, he was in construction and he worked with the big powerhouses all over the state. So,

many times he would be gone and the girls and I would be home. And yet, the only time I had problems was when I was trying to work at the hospital, and that schedule did not work with mine. Then when I started down here, I started out only part-time, four hours a day with the weekends off. Of course, I was on call 24 hours a day. But, the hours there corresponded to the hours that our girls were in school. Gradually as they became older I became more involved in work and was able to work longer. So it worked out very well, really.

JF Do you still take call?

CG Yes, I'm still on call. It does not involve nearly as much time. In fact, when I started 21 was the legal age, and everyone who went to the emergency room under age 21 I had to take there. So, like I said it took more time than it does now.

JF That is an important change in your role.

CG Yes.

JF What was most supportive to you in your dual roles of mother, homemaker and nurse worker?

CG What, or who?

JF Either.

CG Well, of course, my husband was quite supportive. He knew that I enjoyed working. And, I think our daughters grew up with a respect for my working and they did not challenge it or feel that I was taking time away from them. When we were together we had prime time. So I never felt that I was really taking time away from my family as such. So, I think really the support of your family is the main thing.

JF That seems to be a pretty common response. That makes a big difference to people. Why did you work?

CG Why did I work?

JF Yes.

CG Because I wanted to. I felt I had something to contribute, and, really, over the years I probably could have gone any place in town and bettered myself financially.

JF Sure. Alright, then have you ever seen yourself as an innovator or a leader?

CG Not especially.

JF In the Women's Movement? Now, before you answer that, let me say that when I wrote this down in my little booklet "The Women's Movement", I did not realize that when people would see it they would think of a rather restricted, political activism; the rowdy, bra-burner kind of role. That wasn't really what I meant. I was thinking more of the rather social movement, the larger social movement -- women moving out of the home and working, and being co-contributor to the family in a financial way. So, when I say that, that's what I mean. Have you seen yourself as a leader in that respect?

CG Yes, I would think so, as far as initiative and assertiveness.

JF And you did say that your daughters saw you in that role as kind of a natural role?

CG I think so.

JF So it was modeling for them.

CG Yes.

JF That in itself is somewhat different.

CG Yes.

JF Alright, I have really gone through my list of topics. But before we conclude our interview, is there anything that you have thought about your nursing career or your nursing education that we haven't covered that you would like to add?

CG I don't think so. I think nursing gave a lot of the people at that time, a lot of the females, the poise, the self-confidence, and the attributes which, back in '43, '44, '47, were not manifested that much by the female. I kind of feel like that might have been the coming forward of the female movement.

JF I think that nurses have certainly been very much out front of the movement.

CG Yes.

JF Okay, then I want to thank you very much for participating in my study. And this will conclude the interview.

FINAL EDIT PER C. GILMORE 12/18/88