

Arizona State University

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.

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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Frances S. Knudsen
Interviewee (signature)

4-8-87

Date

FRANCES S. KNUDSEN
Name of Interviewee

*Modified from: Charlton, T. L. (1981). Oral History for Texans. Austin: Texas Historical Commission. p. 64.

This is Joyce Finch, Ph.D. Today is Wednesday, April 8, 1987. I'm interviewing for the first time Dr. Frances Knudsen. This interview is taking place in Room 303 of the College of Nursing Building at Arizona State University.

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 I'm going to just generally cover some of your education and then some of your career, then some related questions. What year did you graduate from your nursing program?

FK 1946.

JF 1946. Were you in the Cadet Corps all three years, then?

FK Yes, all three years.

JF Where was your school of nursing?

FK Philadelphia General Hospital.

JF And about how large was that hospital?

FK Twenty-five hundred patients.

JF That was a big hospital. And how large was your class when you entered the nursing program?

FK About 125.

JF And do you remember about how many graduated?

FK About 100.

JF During your nursing program did you have any affiliations at a college?

FK No, our school had students there for affiliation. We did not go anywhere.

JF Alright. Now in the Bolton Act there was a provision that students be in an accelerated nursing program, but because of State Board requirements they had a kind of compromise position that the students could go into other areas for the last six months of their nursing education, or they could choose to stay in their home hospital. What did you do in your last six months?

FK I signed up for the VA and I went to the Veterans Administration Hospital at Hines, Illinois. But our program was accelerated in other ways because our basic educational

program was finished in two years, so in my last six months at Philadelphia General I had three months extra of operating room and three months extra of psychiatric nursing. I was a leader for some of my colleagues or classmates, I was really like a mini-Head Nurse or instructor.

JF You did say your classmates?

FK Yes, they were still getting through some of thier rotations.

JF How did that work?

FK It was fun, it was interesting.

JF I'm not clear how you were finished early but some of your classmates were not.

FK It just depended on how the rotation worked. There were elective kinds of things that you were scheduled into, maybe you didn't especially want them, and you had no control over when you were scheduled where. I had experience in Eye, Ear, Nose and Throat and some people didn't. By the same token I went to the Operating Room very early and then I was sent back, and other people didn't. You know, some were assigned to Pediatrics and they would be there -- instead of three months they might be there four or five months before they'd be moved and that's why I just happened to get through. I don't know why, they just assigned me that way.

JF It sounds like it might have been on the basis of need, too, where students got their assignment.

FK I'm sure it was.

JF When you went to the VA at Hines, did you have any additional classes; well, before we get into that, what areas of the hospital did you work in during that six month period?

FK Mainly paraplegia, because they had so many of them there.

JF I do have a faint recollection that that hospital was noted for its paraplegic care for many years.

FK I had some post-operative kinds of things, but most of it was paraplegia.

JF Did you have any additional classes for this kind of experience?

FK Oh, orientation and in-service for paraplegia, and some State Board review.

JF And how were you supervised when you were there?

FK Very minimally.

JF Were you ever in charge yourself during that period?

FK I would say so, yes, when the Head Nurse would go off to meetings or dinner, or something.

JF In some ways it sounds as if they took you on like a graduate nurse and that's the way you were treated at that time.

FK Right.

JF Then one of the questions that I wanted to ask you is how the Cadet Corps made a difference in your nursing education.

FK Well, for one thing I didn't need to borrow the money -- I was going to borrow it from my parents. My parents were already paying for it and as soon as I was admitted, I got a check for reimbursement for my books and registration, whatever all it was -- uniforms and all those things. I think we got \$5.00 a month besides.

JF A little stipend, yes. But it sounds like you would have been a nurse anyway.

FK Yes, it just made it a little easier financially.

JF One of the things that's kind of related to that -- were there any people, any students in your class, who were not Cadet Nurses?

FK Yes.

JF Did you see any difference between the way you were educated and the way they were educated?

FK No. They changed our on-duty time; for example I think classes before ours were not so limited as to be only eight hours of clinical, I think they used to be like ten or twelve. Ours, they were more careful about that. We had longer vacations, I think, than previous classes because of the Cadet Corps.

JF So that the hospital was accountable for your education, like they had to report that you did certain kinds of things.

FK Oh, yes. We had little blue books, we had to have our Head Nurse or clinical supervisors sign off various procedures and experiences.

JF Now if you went into nursing in 1943 you were in one of the early Cadet classes.

EK Yes, because I was admitted before I knew I was a Cadet Nurse. Then after I was admitted they told me that there was this possibility of getting funding, and was I interested. Then after a week or two of classes, we were told we were officially in.

JF Did you have any swearing-in ceremony or any special induction into the Cadet Corps, or did you just get a check?

EK I don't remember, I don't remember any special induction. We did get uniforms, but I don't ... We had so many ceremonies that it could have been. You know, we were capped and it seemed like there were a lot of ceremonies.

JF One of the reasons I did ask that particular question is that one of the Cadet Nurses had a picture, her picture, in the Des Moines Register and every student in Des Moines was collected in one place — there were 480 of them. They were all sworn in at once. You would remember something like that.

EK Yes, I should have. We had formal teas and we had a lot of other activities, and that's why maybe it was something that I don't remember.

JF Then you did graduate and you were finished with your nursing education. I'd like to talk a little bit about your work experiences and your nursing career. After you finished the nursing program, you went to work?

EK Yes, right away, right after State Boards.

JF What was your first job?

EK Right back at the same VA.

JF Oh, so you stayed in the Chicago area?

EK Yes.

JF Did you work with paraplegic patients?

EK Right.

JF What was your position there?

EK Just a Staff Nurse.

JF And how long did you do that?

FK Well, I was transferred off that unit to the Tuberculosis Unit, and I got married in the meantime. Then I got pregnant and so I left. Let's see, it was April or May of the next year -- I had only worked about eight months.

JF Okay, so that was about '47?

FK Yes.

JF So you left that position and were married and had the child. I don't want to suggest that you weren't working at home, but when did you next take a nursing position?

FK I had three children and I didn't work again until I had moved to Tucson and we had some financial reverses, so I went back to work.

JF About when was that?

FK 1951 to 1952.

JF And what did you do then?

FK I went to the VA in Tucson and worked as a Staff Nurse.

JF Alright, what kinds of patients did you work with there?

FK Surgical patients, mainly, surgical patients on a Surgical Ward.

JF You said you worked there one year. What did you do then?

FK Well, I was pregnant again so I resigned again -- story of my life.

JF Okay. And then when did you go back into nursing?

FK Then I went back into nursing after my last baby was born and was two or three years old. Again, we needed money.

JF About when was that?

FK Oh, 1956.

JF 1956, alright. And did you go back to that same VA?

FK No, then I decided I would go to County. I wanted to only work part-time, so I went to County Hospital because they would let me work part-time. The VA was not letting people work part-time.

JF When you worked part-time then, I assume you worked as a Staff Nurse.

FK Yes.

JF Did that mean you had to work shifts?

FK I preferred working shifts; I usually worked p.m.'s on weekends.

JF If you were working part-time then did you float around as you were needed in the hospital, or did you have a home base?

FK No. Usually I was on the Medical-Surgical Ward, usually on the Men's Medical-Surgical Ward. But sometimes I floated to Pediatrics or the Women's Ward.

JF How long did you do that?

FK Well, I did that part-time for about five years, and in the meantime I had started to go to University of Arizona because I wanted some continuing education. Then while I was going to University of Arizona the Dean called me in one day and wanted me to start teaching, so I decided I would try it. I was teaching a home nursing course to Home Ec. students so they could go out and teach home nursing in high schools.

JF I see. Let me just clarify; when you said that you wanted some continuing education is it correct to infer you were not seeking a degree at that time?

FK Initially no. Initially no, because I just wanted to go back and learn some more things because there were a lot of changes in nursing by the time I had gone back to County Hospital to work after, well, almost ten years. I wanted a refresher course and they were not available. At County they said, "Well, don't worry about that, we'll be your refresher course." So, whenever I needed to do something that I hadn't done before, such as start IV's, pass N-G tubes, and I can't remember what all kinds of things -- there seemed to be lots of things I hadn't done before -- I would just call the supervisor and she would come and supervise me and then I could go on and do it. I felt the theoretical need, and so that's why I started going for continuing ed.

JF Now, were these formal courses for credit or a one-day workshop, or what?

FK Oh, they were courses for credit.

JF They were courses for credit, okay.

FK But they didn't all count toward my degree because I was focused more on getting something to help me right away. But then while I was going for that I decided I might as well go for my degree, too.

JF How long did it take you to come to that particular decision, that you might as well go for the degree?

FK Probably a year.

JF And then in the middle of that you started teaching at the University?

FK Right.

JF So you taught Home Ec. students home health nursing.

FK Yes.

JF Now, just give me a little "for instance"; I'm curious what would be some of the content you would teach these Home Ec. students.

FK Oh, how to take temperatures, pulses, respiration, how to give bed baths, how to give back rubs, care of babies, sponging people to reduce temperatures, what you might plan to feed people that are ill, how you would help people ambulate and turn people so they wouldn't get decubiti, how you make a bed with somebody in it, how you give a bed bath.

JF That's very interesting, I didn't know there were courses like that. Still in that area of curiosity, did you fit into a Home Ec. course or did you have a course that you taught?

FK No, I taught the course, the home nursing course it was called. It was for Home Ec. students, they were seniors and they were going to be graduating, and they were expected to go out and be able to teach that to high school students. That's why the College of Nursing offered it to the Home Ec. students.

JF That's amazing. And that was about 1961?

FK Yes.

JF Gee whiz. Well, alright, I suspect that's a whole study in and of itself.

FK Well, it was very interesting. At the time I didn't think it was too unusual. But I was teaching before I had my Baccalaureate Degree.

JF Well, yes I had understood that. Okay, so how long did you teach these Home Ec. students this?

FK Oh, one year, and then they assigned me to teach basic nursing courses.

JF And you were still working on your degree at that time also?

FK Yes.

JF So you taught fundamentals of nursing, or the basics of nursing science, some of those?

FK I mainly filled in on labs and things.

JF Okay, and someplace along in there you did get your degree?

FK Oh yes, I finally got my degree then in '62.

JF 1962. Okay and so you were still teaching -- working with the lab students and the basic nursing courses?

FK Well, not just lab. I also filled in -- this is rather interesting -- I needed to take a team leading course, even though weekends I was doing team leading at County Hospital for pay. I still needed to take this team leadership course, one of the last ones in my Baccalaureate Program. So I started the course as a student, and then while I was taking the course the instructor had to have surgery and her prognosis was not good. She never did come back to teach the rest of the semester. Her best friend was also a colleague and a teacher of the course, they were co-teaching the course. The Dean said we couldn't do much for the faculty member that was ill, but we could relieve her friend to be with her. So I was the instructor for the course then. So it was very confusing to hospital administration, too -- here one day I'm a student and then the next day I'm back as the instructor.

JF Yes, that would be. Now you said that you were also still working part-time at County Hospital during this period?

FK Once in awhile, yes.

JF But it wasn't steady.

FK Right.

JF I thought, my goodness, you did have a heavy schedule.

FK Well, yes.

JF Alright, so you got your degree in '62 and you were now somewhat better qualified to teach, and you continued teaching, is that correct?

FK Yes.

JF Did you teach different things then, after you got your degree?

FK Oh yes, I taught much more theory then after my degree.

JF So you did that then for a couple of years?

FK Let's see, one year.

JF One year, okay. I was thinking '61 and it was '62.

FK Yes, '62 I got my degree and then I taught for one academic year. Then I went to University of Colorado to get my Master's Degree.

JF So you did then go to -- that was in Denver and Boulder at that time, and that was a one-year program at that time?

FK Yes, one calendar year.

JF One calendar year. Alright, so you finished up then in '64?

FK Yes, August of '64.

JF After you finished your Master's Degree, then what did you do?

FK Then I came here to work.

JF Okay, and that was '64. It is now 1987 and your still here, but many things have happened in the meantime. So when you first came here in 1964 what was your primary responsibility?

FK That's a good question; I think teaching the basic nursing courses.

JF We're talking then something close to thirteen years.

FK Twenty-three.

JF Oh, that's right -- I lost ten years in there. Okay, so we're talking 23 years here. Over these years, from starting out with the basic nursing courses, how have your responsibilities changed?

FK Well, I think I've taught almost every course that we've had in the Baccalaureate Program, including some that were not in my area. I think the only one I missed was maternity because we had that continuous progress curriculum, you know.

JF Yes.

FK So I was teaching in Pediatrics, Psychiatry, and I've helped students in Operating Room in this program. Then I started teaching in the Graduate Program, too, after I got my Doctorate.

JF Yes, I was going to say -- there's a biggie in there. Now when did you get your Doctorate?

EK In 1979.

JF In 1979, and you worked here on the faculty I believe as a lecturer, on a part-time basis, just about all of that time you were working on your Doctorate.

EK Right.

JF So how long in years did it take you to get your Doctorate?

EK Oh, six.

JF Six years. Well, when you're doing all those different jobs, I'm thinking that that's really going very speedily. Along the way did you go to informal educational offerings, as well as working on the Doctorate? I'm talking over the 23 years now, not just during that period.

EK Right, all kinds of conferences, courses -- I've taken many courses -- workshops, all sorts of things.

JF And then you also have responsibilities presumably for giving workshops, conferences and all sorts of things, too.

EK Right.

JF Plus the research.

EK Right.

JF It seems to me that in my observation, somewhat at a distance to be sure, since you finished your Doctorate you've always been involved in some research activities and have publications and papers related to those activities as well.

EK Yes.

JF That does seem to bring us up to date on your career, up to 1987. Let me ask you some aspects about your role. Have you always wanted to stay in nursing?

EK I think so. When I was in my hospital program there was a very brief time when I was thinking about going to medical school but didn't.

JF Would you be willing to share why you did not?

EK Oh, I was afraid I couldn't manage it financially. That was one of the main reasons.

JF Okay, now in the career activities -- we've kind of counted up a husband, marriage, five children -- how did you manage to juggle all that work and your family responsibilities?

FK With difficulty.

JF Well, I can recall, because we did go to graduate school together, how impressed I was because we were taking all of those courses up in Boulder, which I thought was a full-time career, and you were also going to learn the new math so that you could coach your children at home, because your children were in graduate school with you.

FK Right.

JF So that really was hard work, going to graduate school and raising your family.

FK Yes.

JF Well, you said it was with difficulty, and I said it was with hard work, so we've got that. Okay, why did you work?

FK Well, part of it was satisfaction, but most of it was need, initially.

JF In that juggling of the work and family responsibilities, what was most supportive to you?

FK I don't know. I can't really say that my first husband was that supportive to me. It was just knowing I had to do it, you know. I guess I just have a lot of stamina.

JF Okay, that's a positive thing. Then, have you ever seen yourself as an innovator or a leader?

FK I don't think so, not especially.

JF Does that include nursing and in the Women's Movement?

FK Well, see, as some of my friends have pointed out, I was back to school, an older person with young students in the class, before it was the "in" thing to do.

JF That's true. And I think when you also got your Doctorate that may have been becoming the "in" thing to do, but before, I think it was not as critical for the academic role when you got your degree as it is today.

JK That's right.

JF So, that was a forward-looking kind of thing.

FK Yes.

JF Well, when I do say the Women's Movement, it became somewhat clear to me fairly early when I started doing these interviews that the Women's Movement was kind of a put-off to people, because that's associated with political activism, a lot of somewhat rowdy and loudly verbal people, the "bra burners", you know, there's a lot of negative associations with that. And in fact, that was not precisely what I had in mind, that was only a small part of what I had in mind, so I've used the wrong term obviously. But I was thinking in terms of after World War II women started coming out of the home into the workforce, from a small percentage up to better than 50% of the workforce now.

FK Yes.

JF And Cadet Nurses were a part of that movement of moving out of the home, changing the expected role.

FK Yes.

JF So when I say, "Do you see yourself as a leader", that's the broad picture that I had in mind.

FK Well, probably, yes.

JF You were in that forerunning group.

FK Yes.

JF I'm making the inference from the way you're saying "probably" that you did not see yourself in that role.

FK No, not really.

JF It's more in retrospect that you can say, "Well, yes, that's true I did do that." But that was not something that you planned to do.

FK Right, and the women that I was working with, we all were either working from financial need and maybe some satisfaction doing what we wanted to do, but I don't think any of us thought we were forerunners or leaders, as far as that. We were just working because we needed to, and also wanted to do what we were doing.

JF Well, I suspect that there was a lot of that going around at that time. Okay, this somewhat concludes my list of topics I wanted to cover for this interview. Before we do conclude the interview is there anything that you think we might have covered but did not that you would like to add?

FK I can't think of anything.

JF Well, then I want to thank you very much for participating in my study. Thank you very much.