

Dr. Church.:

I don't want to lose some of this conversation that we're having. What did the symbolism stand for on the front? Do you have any idea?

Mrs. Dixon:

It was a pelican.

Dr. Church.:

A pelican?

Mrs. Dixon:

Uh-huh (affirmative). I think it stood for mother love.

Dr. Church.:

Oh.

Mrs. Dixon:

As I remember.

Dr. Church.:

That's a beautiful piece.

Mrs. Dixon:

Uh-huh (affirmative). I wanted to have this here safety lock put on it. They said it would ruin the pin. They couldn't do it because for something. They did put something on, but it isn't exactly a safety because when I got it was afraid I was going to lose it too.

Dr. Church.:

Oh yeah.

Mrs. Dixon:

I said [inaudible 00:00:52].

Dr. Church.:

So when you lost your pin, you wrote to the Illinois Training School?

Mrs. Dixon:

I wrote to the alumni.

Dr. Church.:

Oh, okay.

Mrs. Dixon:

The alumni, ITS alumni, and asked because I told them I wanted to get another pin because I had contacted Pete at CV Peacock. They said I couldn't get another pin unless I had verification that I was a graduate. They had to be sure that you were ...

Dr. Church.:

Right. So this woman had died and ...

Mrs. Dixon:

No, one of her daughter's sent me this. I got it from California, but I got a letter a couple of years later that she had passed on.

Dr. Church.:

Did she have an extra pin? Is that why?

Mrs. Dixon:

No, she wasn't active, and she wanted to give it to a nurse that was still active with ITS.

Dr. Church.:

Really?

Mrs. Dixon:

So that you could still have somebody representing our training school. When I got out of training, I did visiting nursing. I worked at the county for a while and did visiting nursing. And then I got married, and then I had my kids, and then I just didn't work in the hospitals around here.

Dr. Church.:

Mm-hmm (affirmative). Is she still alive or not?

Mrs. Dixon:

No, she's not [inaudible 00:02:14]. About four years after I got that I got a card from her sister and daughter that she passed on.

Dr. Church.:

Oh, I see. That's just beautiful. I haven't seen one of these before.

Mrs. Dixon:

Haven't you?

Dr. Church.:

No. One of the ladies that I visited showed me her old uniform. She kept that.

Mrs. Dixon:

I've got my uniform. I've got my graduation uniform.

Dr. Church.:

With the blue and white stripes and everything?

Mrs. Dixon:

The blue and white stripes, the apron.

Dr. Church.:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Mrs. Dixon:

And the cap.

Dr. Church.:

She didn't have the apron and the cap. She only had the dress part of it and a collar.

Mrs. Dixon:

It had a collar, and then you used to have stiff cuffs you put underneath your uniform. When you were a senior you did that. When you were a freshman and a junior then you wore them on the outside. And then we had a little ... See these little pins here.

Dr. Church.:

Uh-huh (affirmative).

Mrs. Dixon:

Those were little stripes, a little blue with ITS on them. And they had first one stripe and then two stripes, and then when you were a senior you got three stripes.

Dr. Church.:

Huh, like being in the army.

Mrs. Dixon:

I'll tell you, it was like being in the Army when you were in training those days. I says, they never left you alone.

Dr. Church.:

That's what I hear. I have a set of questions that I'd like to ask you. That doesn't mean that we can't digress and talk about other things. It just gives me an outline so that I know that we're covering everything that we'd like to cover in terms of getting information. So if there's something that occurs to you while we're talking that you'd like to say, you can just jump in with it. You don't have to just strictly answer these questions. And there's no right or wrong answer, so if you can't remember something that's fine too. Can you tell me a little bit about your life before you went to Illinois Training School?

Mrs. Dixon:

Well, I graduated from high school, and I went right into training. I worked at the telephone company that summer before I left was all. And why I went in training to the county was my doctor's suggestion. And I lived in Peoria, Illinois then. That's where I'm from, really just Peoria, Illinois.

Dr. Church.:

Is that where you grew up? Did you spend your life as a child in Peoria?

Mrs. Dixon:

Yeah. I was born in Peoria and lived there [inaudible 00:04:50].

Dr. Church.:

Were you a town girl or did you live on a farm?

Mrs. Dixon:

No. We lived in town as towns were those days, 80 years ago almost.

Dr. Church.:

What was your family like?

Mrs. Dixon:

My mother and father both came from Sweden, I'm from Swedish descent. My father was a ... I think now you would call him a pattern maker. He was a molder. My mother was just a housewife. She came over to this country when she was 16 years old. She had two brothers that was over here, so she came over at that time and got a job. Somebody had to sponsor her though. At that time in order for her to come over somebody had to sponsor her. So a woman sponsored her and used her as a cook and a maid.

Dr. Church.:

In Peoria?

Mrs. Dixon:

No, Virginia City, Illinois. That's down in the southern part of the state.

Dr. Church.:

What was your education before you just entered the Illinois Training School?

Mrs. Dixon:

High school. [inaudible 00:06:10].

Dr. Church.:

They sometimes just get around.

Mrs. Dixon:

I don't know. Sometimes these flies ...

Dr. Church.:

It's amazing how they stay alive.

Mrs. Dixon:

No, I went from high school into nurses' training. That's all.

Dr. Church.:

And you said your doctor was the one who suggested that you go into ...

Mrs. Dixon:

To the county, yes. He said that was a good school. Now, I don't know why he recommended it or what, but I sent an application in. Of course, those days all you did was send an application in, and they looked at your grades more or less, and if they thought you were a decent sort of person they accepted you. You didn't have to pay a tuition or anything.

Dr. Church.:

Oh, okay.

Mrs. Dixon:

There was no tuition. Fact is, when we were in nurses' training, they paid us. I won't say a big pay, no, but it was something like first year I think we got something like \$4 a month, and the second year I think we got five something, and the third year I think we got seven dollars and something a month. But I'll tell you, that was like money from home because it was really ... You really thought you had some spending money because nobody had any money until that time. In 1926 people weren't wealthy.

Dr. Church.:

Yeah. So that was a lot of money for that time.

Mrs. Dixon:

That's right. I would say it was maybe the equivalent to maybe \$75 to \$100 now.

Dr. Church.:

That's a lot of money then.

Mrs. Dixon:

Sure, when you went into nurses' training and then of course you went in for three years. It was not a five year [inaudible 00:08:00]. There was just the three year program.

Dr. Church.:

Right. What made you decided to become a nurse?

Mrs. Dixon:

I always wanted to be a nurse. Ever since I was a little kid I always talked about being a nurse. And of course my mother and father didn't have any money. They couldn't send me to college or anything. And

my father died when I was a junior in high school, so I worked every summer during when I was in high school. You've heard of these Boss work gloves?

Dr. Church.:

Yeah, sure.

Mrs. Dixon:

I used to sew those darn things. There was piece work, too, and if you sewed two thumbs or six fingers you had to rip them out, and then that cut down on your wages.

Dr. Church.:

Did you come from a big family?

Mrs. Dixon:

No, there was four of us. I had three sisters. There was three girls and one boy. There're just two of us left.

Dr. Church.:

What prompted you to ask your family doctor about what school of nursing to go to?

Mrs. Dixon:

I don't know. I don't remember. I think I had to go for physicals and all that stuff, and I knew I was going to nurses' training, and he wanted to know where. And I said well, I didn't know, but I was thinking of going there was those hospitals out in Peoria. It was the Methodist and St. Francis, and Proctor. He says, "I would suggest if you want a good nurses' education you need to go to Cook County." So then he made out some papers, and I signed them, and we [inaudible 00:09:46], and I had to have a thing from the minister, all that stuff.

Dr. Church.:

You had to have a recommendation like from a minister?

Mrs. Dixon:

Uh-huh (affirmative).

Dr. Church.:

Hmm, that's interesting. But yet the Illinois Training School wasn't a religious organization.

Mrs. Dixon:

No, it was not a religious ... It took anybody and everybody.

Dr. Church.:

What did your family think about you going to nursing school and going away from home?

Mrs. Dixon:

Well, of course my mother wasn't too happy about it because I was the only one that ever talked about leaving home. My other three siblings at home, they stayed home and did everything Mamma said. I said, "If I'm [inaudible 00:10:32] I want to go." I said okay, so I worked, sewed gloves. I ushered my junior year in the theater, and every night, every weekend.

Dr. Church.:

A movie theater?

Mrs. Dixon:

Well it was a, they had plays.

Dr. Church.:

Oh, okay.

Mrs. Dixon:

It was kind of like a vaudeville house. It was called Hippodrome. Then I worked for the telephone company the last year. That's when I made money. And I should've stayed with the telephone company. I would've had a darn good paycheck by now.

Dr. Church.:

Probably made more than you did as a nurse.

Mrs. Dixon:

Right?

Dr. Church.:

Okay. Do you remember what month and what year you began your studies?

Mrs. Dixon:

I entered training October the 3rd, 1926.

Dr. Church.:

Okay. They had several different starting sessions.

Mrs. Dixon:

Yes. We had the classes come in every three months. And when we were the last of that year, '26, to come in because some of these gals came in earlier, so they finished earlier. I didn't finish until November 13, 1929. And May up here, I know. She was sick a lot during training. She had to clear into the next year.

Dr. Church.:

Were you the last group that graduated?

Mrs. Dixon:

From Illinois Training School. But then they [inaudible 00:12:20]. In the meantime there was kids coming into nurses' training all the time. But then when they severed our relationship it was ITS with Cook County. Then it was called Cook County Hospital School of Nursing.

Dr. Church.:

Okay. So they continue to admit students.

Mrs. Dixon:

Oh yes.

Dr. Church.:

They just switched it to [crosstalk 00:12:39].

Mrs. Dixon:

With the new name.

Dr. Church.:

Oh, okay. So there was never really a lag time between when they started?

Mrs. Dixon:

No.

Dr. Church.:

When they stopped Illinois Training School and they started Cook County School of Nursing.

Mrs. Dixon:

No. Because I still correspond to a couple of Cook County kids that was in training when we were in training. But of course they came in when we were seniors they were maybe freshman, sophomores, juniors [inaudible 00:13:07] sophomores, juniors.

Dr. Church.:

Yeah. I'll have to ask Mrs. [Neander 00:13:12] about that then because she technically then would've graduated from the Cook County School of Nursing.

Mrs. Dixon:

No, she entered at ITS, and then she had time to make up, so that was time made up that she had to make up. She graduated from ITS.

Dr. Church.:

Still? Okay. Even though the rest of the students all finished.

Mrs. Dixon:

No, that's right because when they came in I think at that time they was told that there would probably be a switch over, something to that effect.



Dr. Church.:

Were you told? Do you remember?

Mrs. Dixon:

No, we were never told.

Dr. Church.:

You were never told?

Mrs. Dixon:

We would enter the Illinois Training School for nurses, and we would be ITS.

Dr. Church.:

Would you guess that it would've been the next class that came in after you since you were the very last class?

Mrs. Dixon:

No, I don't think it would've been the kids came in '27. I think it would be the ones that came in in '28 would be told because at that time I think Laura Logan was negotiating in with the University of Chicago because we were having professors come out to the University of Chicago for some of our lectures, sociology and different things.

Dr. Church.:

So you had lectures from the University of Chicago already?

Mrs. Dixon:

Oh yes, we were in training, yes. Because when we graduated, our class that graduated from ITS I think they gave us the equipment of one and one quarter semester's credits for University of Chicago if we wanted to go on to school.

Dr. Church.:

Do you have any remembrance of what the reputation of the school was like?

Mrs. Dixon:

Very good.

Dr. Church.:

It was.

Mrs. Dixon:

Very good. They said that if you was an ITS graduate you could go out and get a job anyplace. Many ITS' started many schools. They started the one in out in Juliette, Silver Cross, and they also started St. Mary's up in Rochester. Old Miss Ludwig started that school, I think, years and years ago.

Dr. Church.:

Who was Mrs. Ludwig?

Mrs. Dixon:

She was really the head of contagious. We had a nurses' home, and she took care of the nurses over there, and then she was our Godmother.

Dr. Church.:

She left and started a school of nursing in Rochester, Minnesota?

Mrs. Dixon:

Uh-huh (affirmative). There was quite a few of them that started different schools of nursing.

Dr. Church.:

Do you have any recollection of what your expectations were and if they were met?

Mrs. Dixon:

When I graduated?

Dr. Church.:

No, when you went to the school, what were you expecting? What were your fantasies about the school? Did you have any?

Mrs. Dixon:

I don't remember I had any. All I do remember is I got there, and my truck didn't get there when I got there.

Dr. Church.:

Oh no.

Mrs. Dixon:

My truck was still down in Peoria in the railroad station.

Dr. Church.:

Oh my gosh.

Mrs. Dixon:

So I called my sister, or I sent her a telegram because she was working for the Western Union. So they shipped up the ... I had to wait a couple of days, so I was [crosstalk 00:17:02].

Dr. Church.:

That happens today too.

Mrs. Dixon:

Losing your luggage, huh?

Dr. Church.:

Yeah. Were you frightened at all about leaving home and coming to the big city?

Mrs. Dixon:

No. It didn't bother me a bit. Of course, I had an aunt in Chicago. We never was that close, but I mean we became very close when I was in training because I used to go over and see her, and she used to come over and see me. Her picture isn't on here. I had a very good friend that died when I was in training, Katherine Igone.

Dr. Church.:

She died when you were in training?

Mrs. Dixon:

Yeah.

Dr. Church.:

What happened?

Mrs. Dixon:

She got miliary TB. I don't think she was sick any more than 10 days. It just went through her like wildfire. She broke out with all these little papula, you know, little blood vessels that burst and all that.

Dr. Church.:

A lot of the other graduates have said that since that was before the days when they had antibiotics and things pneumonia was so prevalent, and there was a big flu epidemic.

Mrs. Dixon:

Oh yeah, well I'm thinking you had your big flu epidemic. Of course, I wasn't in training then. I can remember how people died, and you never had ... I don't think any of these here antibiotics came in until I think the first one that came in was sulfa.

Dr. Church.:

Right.

Mrs. Dixon:

Because my daughter when she was sick and had pneumonia when she was two years old, that's what they gave her was sulfa. They didn't have a lot of this penicillin and all these here mycins and all this stuff at that time.

Dr. Church.:

Oh no, right. That was just the beginnings. Do you remember how many classmates started in your class?

Mrs. Dixon:

I think there was about 38 or 40 of them. Most of us stuck with it and graduated. There was some that was kicked out, some that left for various reasons. Maybe they couldn't take it. Maybe they got homesick.

Dr. Church.:

Did that number start in the October group or was that much smaller?

Mrs. Dixon:

I won't say for sure, but I think we were 38 that started in the October group.

Dr. Church.:

In the October group, okay.

Mrs. Dixon:

I think out of the whole year I think this is all that graduated. I think there was around 33 of us here or something like that.

Dr. Church.:

What were the various reasons that people got kicked out and dropped out that you remember?

Mrs. Dixon:

Well, some of them stayed out all night without permission.

Dr. Church.:

So they got kicked out of school for that?

Mrs. Dixon:

Oh yes. If you weren't in by 10:00 and you didn't have a good reason you were sent to old Laura Logan and she wanted to know why. She was the dean, and you were ousted.

Dr. Church.:

One time staying out?

Mrs. Dixon:

You didn't have many times. I don't remember.

Dr. Church.:

So you obviously never did that, huh?

Mrs. Dixon:

No, I didn't do that. I was a little goody two shoes.

Dr. Church.:

People were kicked out if they got married?

Mrs. Dixon:

You got married. Of course now there were some people that came in training. Of course, you had big sisters and little sisters. I had a little sister when I was a senior, and she was married when she came in training. But now I never ever kept track of her, and she never ever kept track of me. I guess we just didn't get along very well, I don't know. Her name was Idaika Woody. If I can remember.

Dr. Church.:

Did she keep it a secret that she was married?

Mrs. Dixon:

No, they knew she was married when she came in. She came in under her married name, yes.

Dr. Church.:

Had they changed the rules by that time?

Mrs. Dixon:

I don't remember. Some of these things you get kind of foggy on.

Dr. Church.:

Right. That's just kind of interesting that they let her in, and she was married if that was the general rule. It just makes me curious as to why they might've made an exception.

Mrs. Dixon:

I think she was married when she was in training. [Minnie Mindrum 00:21:46] was married the last six months that she was in training. Whether they ever knew it or not, I don't know, but she was.

Dr. Church.:

I'll have to ask her.

Mrs. Dixon:

Don't go telling tales on schools.

Dr. Church.:

I'll keep it confidential.

Mrs. Dixon:

Let her tell you.

Dr. Church.:

I'll just ask her the right questions.

Mrs. Dixon:

The leading questions, yes.

Dr. Church.:

Right. Can you describe a typical day in our education while you were attending Illinois Training School?

Mrs. Dixon:

Well, you got up in the morning. You usually had the little prayer session in the big living room.

Dr. Church.:

What time did you get up?

Mrs. Dixon:

We had to be on duty by 7:00. I think our class was the '29 class. When I went in training they started the first eight hour day. Usually you went 12 hours. They started this here eight hour day, but our eight hours was broken up where you came in, in the morning and you was on duty at 7:00. You had your breakfast. You came to the living room, and you had a little prayer session. Then you went on duty. You had to be there by 7:00, so you got up about 6:00, quarter to six, you know. Then you went on duty and you got your assignment, and then you did your baths and your chores you were assigned to do. If you had pneumonia or you had whatever you were or surgical or whatever then you did that. Then you went and had your noon meal, and sometimes you didn't go back to work until 4:00 and sometimes you went back to work right after lunch, 1:00. I'm real certain I went back right after 1:00, and sometimes you didn't go until 4:00 and you stayed until 6:30.

Dr. Church.:

Did you ever have to work nights?

Mrs. Dixon:

Oh yes. You had to work nights. You had to work your afternoon shift. Oh yeah, I sure did all that night business.

Dr. Church.:

Did that happen right at the beginning or towards the end?

Mrs. Dixon:

No. You went into nurses' training, as I remember we went into nurses' training we had a probation, about three or four months, I think it was three months. And you wore a pink uniform with a little apron. Then after three months then you got your stripes, your striped uniform. We called them stripes. It was a striped uniform that they gave you and an apron. But you didn't get a cap until you were there for I think it was six months. Then if you passed everything, okay you got your cap for six months. Well, I was one of the dumb bunnies, so I didn't get my cap. I had to go another three months before I got my cap. So I can't understand how these kids can go and do work on a floor without that cap on their head. To me that cap was a very important thing. I had to work damn hard for it.

Mrs. Dixon:

I go in these hospitals, and I ride these kids all the time. I says, "Where's your dignity?" Oh, we don't wear that anymore. I flunked anatomy, and I had to take anatomy over. And I'm glad I did take anatomy over because I learned a lot more the second time around then I did the first time around, but there was about seven or eight of us that failed. She isn't here anymore, Mrs. [Garce 00:25:53]. She didn't get her cap, and Carlson didn't get her cap. I says we all lived through it, and I says it didn't bother me too much. I went on the floor with my stripes and my apron, but I just didn't have my cap. And some of the patients say, "Well, where's your cap?" And I'll say, "Well, they forgot to give it to me."

Dr. Church.:

It's true the cap during those days was really very symbolic.

Mrs. Dixon:

That's right.

Dr. Church.:

I don't think there's as much symbolism attached to it these days.

Mrs. Dixon:

No, nowadays the cap doesn't mean anything. And to me I had to work awful hard for that cap. I still have my cap.

Dr. Church.:

Yeah, I'm ashamed to say I've never kept mine.

Mrs. Dixon:

You didn't? Oh, I wouldn't like that.

Dr. Church.:

It got battered up, and I don't know what ever happened to it.

Mrs. Dixon:

Shame on you.

Dr. Church.:

I know. I wish I had it now.

Mrs. Dixon:

You wish now. At one time in ITS or some school, maybe it wasn't ITS, maybe it was the school here that I ... Some hospital I was working for, asked me if I had a cap. And our cap was very simple. I can get out my cap. Do you want to see it?

Dr. Church.:

Oh sure. Do you want me to come with you? Are you going to bring it in here?

Mrs. Dixon:

No. It's [inaudible 00:27:32].

Dr. Church.:

Do you remember how much class time you spend during the day?

Mrs. Dixon:

Our class was usually an hour. Sometimes if it was lab work it was two hours.

Dr. Church.:

Mm-hmm (affirmative). And you just basically had one class a day, or did you have more than that?

Mrs. Dixon:

No, we had more than that. At one time during our senior year we had three months we wasn't in the hospital at all. We had three months of just nothing but classes.

Dr. Church.:

Was that during the probationary period?

Mrs. Dixon:

No, that was during your senior year, the last year we were in training.

Dr. Church.:

Oh, okay.

Mrs. Dixon:

They gave you all these here ... That was when we had most of the University of Chicago professors come out and give us our lectures.

Dr. Church.:

Was that something new that they did for your class or just the last few classes?

Mrs. Dixon:

I think it was an affiliation with the University of Chicago. See, what they were trying to do was get these schools of nursing into these universities.

Dr. Church.:

They're still trying to do that.

Mrs. Dixon:

That's Laura Logan. She really was the one, she ruined ITS. I shouldn't say this on tape.

Dr. Church.:



That's all right. That's your opinion.

Mrs. Dixon:

The editor. I feel that she was an education fiend, which was very nice. I think it was worthwhile, but I think she ruined ITS. Otherwise, I think we would still have been affiliated with Cook County Hospital, and they wouldn't have started another school. When they started the other school I think that was more or less connected with the college.

Dr. Church.:

In what way do you think that ...

Mrs. Dixon:

Well, I don't know. I just feel that ... I couldn't really explain it, I don't think. I really feel that her and Katie Denser. Is that name familiar to you? Well, she was the one that taught us history of nursing. She was really into ... I think she was an aristocrat from the East. I think she graduated from school of nursing in the East.

Dr. Church.:

So she was sort of in kahootz with Laura Logan to get the ...

Mrs. Dixon:

To get this thing rolling, to get your college.

Dr. Church.:

Do you think the emphasis changed then?

Mrs. Dixon:

Yes. I think whole nursing changed at that time.

Dr. Church.:

I don't want to put any words in your mouth, but what ways do you think it changed then?

Mrs. Dixon:

I don't think you had the personal touch with your patients that you had at the time I was in training. To me nursing was good common horse sense. Now nursing is nothing but monitors. At that time it was just coming into being that it was getting into all this here university stuff. It was trying to get you into more technical aspects of the nursing, which to me good old TLC is still the basis of nursing. And if you don't have that you haven't got nursing.

Dr. Church.:

That's true. Do you think that students ultimately had less contact with patients or they were taught to approach patients in a different way because ...

Mrs. Dixon:

Of course when I was in training you were told not to tell the patient too much. To me, even at that time, I thought that was a mistake. After all, it was the patient that was ill. It wasn't the nurse or the doctor. And if the patient didn't know what was the matter with them then who should know what was the matter with them?

Dr. Church.:

Sure.

Mrs. Dixon:

So if it was up to me I think that you kind of lost contact with your patient, nurse, doctor relationship. You know yourself when you go to a doctor nowadays, what do they tell you? You go in there, and you give them your whole history, and they look at you like, "What are you doing here?" Now I says, "Don't go writing down a lot of stuff. Just pay attention to what I'm talking about and listen." They get so mad at me.

Dr. Church.:

Okay, let's get back to talking about classes a little more. Do you remember what classes were offered? You mentioned some, the sociology and [crosstalk 00:33:07] Chicago.

Mrs. Dixon:

We had chemistry, and we had anatomy. We had history of nursing. We had sociology. We had the mid level lab work, dissections and things like that. I've still got some of my books.

Dr. Church.:

Really?

Mrs. Dixon:

I've still got my Materia Medica as we called it then. Now they call it Pharmapedia or whatever it is. And I've still got my anatomy and physiology.

Dr. Church.:

Those would be interesting to take a look at sometime. What classes did you enjoy the most?

Mrs. Dixon:

We had our showing us how to do things like make a bed and catheterize a patient. Of course, those days they never had Levin tubes. They never had all this here tube business. My God, if anybody came into the hospital with a bad heart it was an OHD. You know what it was, organic heart disease. Everything was OHD in the emergency room, organic heart disease. And they dragged them to the full ward, propped them up on a back rest, ice bag to the chest area of the heart, and hoped they made it. Gave a little Digitalis, and that was it.

Dr. Church.:

What was the ice bag supposed to do?

Mrs. Dixon:

It was supposed to cool off the heart so it wouldn't beat so fast. That was probably the same thing as your oxygen does today with the cooling of the ... When they put you in a tent. Of course, now they don't even put you in a tent anymore. They give you all this nasal oxygen and all this crap.

Dr. Church.:

So you enjoyed the actual patient care the most? Is that what you're saying?

Mrs. Dixon:

I enjoyed the actual patient care. I didn't care so much for I would call it the technical stuff.

Dr. Church.:

What kind of hospital responsibilities did you specifically have?

Mrs. Dixon:

We always had a head nurse on the floor, but when you were on during the daytime, that was on your 7:00 to 3:00 shift, but then during the afternoon and night shift they would give you the responsibility of the whole floor.

Dr. Church.:

The students?

Mrs. Dixon:

Oh yes. They had a night supervisor that would come around, make rounds, but if you were on the floor and you were the senior nurse, then you had the responsibility of all the medications and everything. And if anything happened then you were supposed to call the night supervisor. Of course, now you call the emergency room a lot of times. We used to have to call the night supervisor.

Dr. Church.:

Did that disturb you at all when you were just a student?

Mrs. Dixon:

Not at that time it didn't. Now it would, yes. It didn't bother me a bit. Fact is, I used to be okay [inaudible 00:36:26] thought I was really something, I guess.

Dr. Church.:

So you were kind of proud of yourself?

Mrs. Dixon:

Yeah.

Dr. Church.:

Good for you. Do you remember what the relationships were like between the nurses and the doctors?

Mrs. Dixon:

Very stiff. We were told we weren't supposed to date the doctors or we couldn't date the interns or any of that stuff.

Dr. Church.:

Did you go to any of the medical meetings? Were you allowed to go or invited to go to any of the medical meetings?

Mrs. Dixon:

Not many. You could go down and see autopsies, things like that. They had some, but there wasn't very many medical meetings that the RN or the student nurse was allowed to attend.

Dr. Church.:

Do you think the doctors respected the judgment of the nurses?

Mrs. Dixon:

I would say some of the doctors thought some of the head nurses on the floor were better than they were. Their judgment was better than theirs. As far as a student nurse and attending physician and that, of course we were scum.

Dr. Church.:

Because you were students, the bottom of the totem pole?

Mrs. Dixon:

That's right because we didn't know nothing. Oh yes, we had psychiatry and they talked about going back. We had all the mental disturbances too because we had pediatrics and psychiatry. We had one doctor [inaudible 00:38:02], Dr. Newman, [inaudible 00:38:08].

Dr. Church.:

It's interesting because you're saying very similar things to what the other people that I've interviewed have said about the relationships with the doctors. But every single one of them, including yourself, have also said that the reason that they came to the Illinois Training School was because they were recommended by doctors. Even though the relationships sometimes weren't real good during the school time, it sounds like the doctors really respected the kind of education that you got.

Mrs. Dixon:

I think they respected, and they knew what kind of an education you were getting, and they knew what kind of patients you were treating. At Cook County you saw everything from everything. There was nothing that you didn't miss because you had training and everything. You had training in your medical, your surgical, your pediatrics, your psycho, your contagious, all that. I don't think there was a field that you weren't educated in.

Dr. Church.:

Do you think that the education at the Illinois Training School emphasized community and private duty nursing or hospital nursing?

Mrs. Dixon:

Hospital nursing.

Dr. Church.:

Hospital nursing, that was the focus. Why would you say that?

Mrs. Dixon:

Well, because at Cook County you don't get patients that you would have ... I did private duty for better than 25 years around here, and you don't have patients that can afford private duty nurses. We were so close to Presbyterian Hospital that we worked, because we used to go to Presbyterian for classes. They used to come over to our school for classes for different ... We used to intermingle. But of course they always thought they were the elite, and we were scum. But I don't think the relationship was read good.

Dr. Church.:

Did you get community experience or private duty experience while you were in school?

Mrs. Dixon:

We didn't get any private duty, no. But you did get your social service worker. You got a course in that, and then when you were in training you also got to either go on VNA or welfare and go out for two months at a time. So you did get that.

Dr. Church.:

Which one did you do?

Mrs. Dixon:

I did the VNA.

Dr. Church.:

Did you like it?

Mrs. Dixon:

Yes, I did it after I graduated [crosstalk 00:40:58].

Dr. Church.:

Oh, that's right. You mentioned that. So you worked for the Chicago VNA.

Mrs. Dixon:

Uh-huh (affirmative).

Dr. Church.:

So did I.

Mrs. Dixon:

Oh did you?

Dr. Church.:

So did I.

Mrs. Dixon:

Oh did you?

Dr. Church.:

Yeah. For four years right after I graduated.

Mrs. Dixon:

I did too, not four years. I only worked maybe six months. Then I got married. And of course after you were married they wouldn't take you anymore [inaudible 00:41:16].

Dr. Church.:

Yeah, that's what I found out from interviewing somebody else. I had no idea.

Mrs. Dixon:

Yeah, they wouldn't [inaudible 00:41:24]. You became married or you even had a ring on your finger they'd say, "Well, we better start terminating." Look at your stewardesses on planes now. They can be married, and my God, years ago they wouldn't take a steward unless she was an RN, and then you couldn't be married.

Dr. Church.:

That's true.

Mrs. Dixon:

When I got out of training what I really wanted to do, I wanted to go down to Venezuela, and go down to the oil fields. But I had a mother and a boyfriend.

Dr. Church.:

So you couldn't go? You missed the adventure of your life.

Mrs. Dixon:

I think I did.

Dr. Church.:

It sounds exciting to me. I don't know if I would've had the courage to do it, though, myself.

Mrs. Dixon:

Well, at that time I think you're a little braver. The older you get I think you lose more confidence. You get a little bit more timid.

Dr. Church.:

Sure.

Mrs. Dixon:

I'm afraid to walk up that walk out to the garage for fear I'm going to fall. See how timid I am now?

Dr. Church.:

Well, you've had experiences that make you timid, so that's probably why. Is there a particularly memorable case that you nursed while you were a student at Illinois Training School?

Mrs. Dixon:

No, I can't remember anything. The service I think I liked the best was the OB because the women would have their babies. They would be so happy, and the babies were so cute. I think I liked that the best.

Dr. Church.:

How about an unfavorable memory?

Mrs. Dixon:

[inaudible 00:43:25] unfavorable memory. When I didn't get my cap I was disappointed, but I lived through that. I thought, "Well, this is just one disappointment in my life. I'll probably have many more before I die."

Dr. Church.:

Good way of looking at it. Could you describe a little bit about the closing of the school? We talked a little bit about it.

Mrs. Dixon:

I don't remember much about it, to be honest with you. All I know is when our group graduated we graduated all together in June, and then we finished in those various times whenever your three-year period was up. You just went off, and that was it. If you wanted to still work at County you could. They would give you a job. Of course, at that time it was The Depression, so the amount of money you got was very little, if any. That's about all I can remember. I can't remember anything fantastic. They didn't have no big dinner or anything [inaudible 00:44:35] the closing or anything.

Dr. Church.:

How did you feel about the school closing?

Mrs. Dixon:

I was a little saddened like everybody was, but I figured I went to high school. They tore the high school down after I graduated. I went to grade school. They tore the grade school down after I graduated. I says, "I think I'm a jinx. I don't think I better go to any more schools."

Dr. Church.:

Do you remember what the atmosphere was like that last year in the school?

Mrs. Dixon:

Not any different.

Dr. Church.:

With everybody knowing that it was closing.

Mrs. Dixon:

It was no different. You just went on. We had classes still keep coming in because they came in under the Cook County School of Nursing then instead of ITS. We had an awful lot of affiliates from different hospitals around and from different parts of the country they came in to Cook County to affiliate. Some of them lived in the nurses' home, and some of them didn't. Some of them still lived at their own school. But that's about all I think that ... But they still had a lot of affiliates, and they still had a lot of students coming in under Cook County Hospital School of Nursing.

Dr. Church.:

Mm-hmm (affirmative). So the emphasis still remained hospital nursing?

Mrs. Dixon:

Hospital nursing. As I said, if you wanted private duty or doctor's office or dress up nursing, then I think you-

Dr. Church.:

What's dress up nursing?

Mrs. Dixon:

Well, I would call that stuff that you didn't have to dirty your hands.

Dr. Church.:

What kind of nursing was that?

Mrs. Dixon:

Well, I would say it was working in a doctor's office or a clinic or something like that. Maybe it'd be like what you're doing, nursing service, work for a school of nursing, or working in the office of a training school, something like that. I think you would go to a different hospital in Cook County. But I think if you wanted to learn the basics of nursing, you would go to Cook County Hospital.

Dr. Church.:

I had never heard that phrase before. It's kind of cute. Do you remember who made the decisions about the education requirements and the course content at Illinois Training School? Was it the nurses? Was it doctors? Was it administrators of the hospital?

Mrs. Dixon:

I would say it was Laura Logan that made all those decisions.



Dr. Church.:

And the other woman that you mentioned.

Mrs. Dixon:

Katie Densler.

Dr. Church.:

Yeah. Was she just a teacher or was she like assistant superintendent or something like that.

Mrs. Dixon:

I think she was kind of Laura Logan's assistant.

Dr. Church.:

Okay.

Mrs. Dixon:

She taught classes too. She taught history of nursing, which she was very good at.

Dr. Church.:

When it switched over to Cook County School of Nursing, was Laura Logan still able to make those decisions or did that change?

Mrs. Dixon:

She was rooted out [inaudible 00:48:10] when it became Cook County School of Nursing.

Dr. Church.:

Oh, she wasn't?

Mrs. Dixon:

I think Powell became superintendent.

Dr. Church.:

I don't know.

Mrs. Dixon:

I think that's right. I don't think Laura Logan, I don't think she was ...

Dr. Church.:

That's interesting, if she was the one who sort of initiating the push.

Mrs. Dixon:

I think she was head, not only the director of nurses, but I think she also had to do with all the classes and what we took and how long, what hours we took, and how many hours we put in and the whole

schedule of our regime that we were going through. But when Cook County Hospital School of Nursing came in effect I can remember that Powell was the name. She started in as an ITS because she was in training when I was in training. But she was a smart gal. And she was a little older too and a little bit more experienced. She'd probably been out in the world working a little while before. I don't know anything about her history, but Powell ... Probably May Mindrum could give you more information on that than I could because she was pretty active in the alumni. It was too hard for me to get into Chicago, and I was working. I would just never go inside that I could ...

Dr. Church.:

Sure.

Mrs. Dixon:

I have to make a living too.

Dr. Church.:

Right. I know what you mean. What was your experience like after graduation? You said you worked for a while at Cook County?

Mrs. Dixon:

I worked for a while at Cook County.

Dr. Church.:

How long? Do you remember?

Mrs. Dixon:

Oh, I finished in November, and I went on VNA in March or April, so just three or four months.

Dr. Church.:

Okay.

Mrs. Dixon:

And then I got married in August that same year, so I got off of VNA, and then I went down to Peoria.

Dr. Church.:

What did you do when you were at Cook County after you graduated?

Mrs. Dixon:

I worked on the floor. I was night nurse on one of the floors.

Dr. Church.:

Oh, okay. And then what prompted you to leave and go to VNA?

Mrs. Dixon:

I don't know. I just wanted to. I had my application in, and they called me.

Dr. Church.:

Did you have much contact with the student nurses while you were at Cook County?

Mrs. Dixon:

No, not a whole lot, not at night because most of the time you had your older students at night, the juniors or ... Because when you was in the first year they never put you on nights.

Dr. Church.:

Do you have anything more that you want to tell me about your VNA experience?

Mrs. Dixon:

No. [inaudible 00:51:33] visiting nursing. I worked down there in Mackenzie Crawford area. Lots of Jewish people down there at that time. Every place you went they wanted to feed you.

Dr. Church.:

I wouldn't have minded something like that.

Mrs. Dixon:

I don't know. Some of the houses I went into, I wasn't too happy about eating.

Dr. Church.:

Do you think your education at ITS prepared you for working at VNA?

Mrs. Dixon:

Yes. I think VNA favored ITS nurses because there was an awful lot of them that was from ITS at VNA and infant welfare both.

Dr. Church.:

Why do you think that was?

Mrs. Dixon:

I don't know. Maybe it was Foley and Wesfal. Maybe they were in kahootz with Densford and Logan, I don't know.

Dr. Church.:

So Foley and Wesfal were the two nurses that were in charge of VNA?

Mrs. Dixon:

Uh-huh (affirmative).

Dr. Church.:

You said after you got married went back to Peoria, to live?

Mrs. Dixon:

Yeah, we lived down in Peoria for about 13 years. Then the war came along, and my husband came up here and got a job.

Dr. Church.:

Did you work as a nurse during that period at all?

Mrs. Dixon:

13 years, no I didn't, just family, [Grattis tree 00:53:14], Grattis. You're the nurse so they think you can come in and do anything and everything, save lives like you wouldn't believe it. And then I came up here, and I talked ... I started down in Peoria. I started teaching home nursing from the Red Cross. Then I came up here, and I taught home nursing to a lot of the Girl Scouts. I had a couple of classes in Lansing here. You know that I talked to senior Girl Scouts, and I had about 20 senior Girl Scouts, and I taught them home nursing, and you know that 13 of them went into nurses' training.

Dr. Church.:

Wow. You were an inspiration.

Mrs. Dixon:

I don't know whether I was an inspiration or what, but I mean they ... 13 of them, and 13 of them are still working. Most of them are still working.

Dr. Church.:

Wow. Did you ever go back to work to regular nursing?

Mrs. Dixon:

Then I went up here. Then I worked for a doctor down here in town, Dr. [Randrunen 00:54:31], for a while. But office nursing didn't appeal to me.

Dr. Church.:

Dress up nursing. You were doing dress up nursing.

Mrs. Dixon:

It was too much bookwork for me. It was too much keeping track of this and keeping track of that and appointments and all this and that. People called in about their babies. Their baby's got an earache and what do they do? I couldn't tell them what to do. I wasn't the doctor. You didn't tell them. And then I went back into ... I worked at St. Margaret's for a while on OB. I liked that very well. I worked there about two years. Then I did private duty.

Dr. Church.:

Okay. What made you decide to get back into more traditional nursing after your Girl Scout experience?

Mrs. Dixon:

I think it was mostly finances. I thought, "Hell, I'm doing this for nothing," because I was with the Health Council, and I was going to baby clinics and weighing babies and all that that they had in Lansing, and I was teaching Girl Scouts, and I thought, "If I'm going to do this and use my time I might as well use my time and make money."

Dr. Church.:

Makes sense, sure. Do you remember what most of your classmates did after graduation, what kind of nursing they went into?

Mrs. Dixon:

I couldn't tell you. Some of them went into private duty, some of them went into hospital nursing.

Dr. Church.:

They just did all kinds of things.

Mrs. Dixon:

Just everything. When your class breaks up and everybody goes their way you kind of lose track unless you're really keeping track of them personally.

Dr. Church.:

That's true.

Mrs. Dixon:

I know May Mindrum, she did private duty. Gertrude Anderson that I kept track of, she did private duty. Katherine Ferris, she went into the service. She went into the service. She didn't do nothing after she finished. She just got married and that was amen, and she was a smart gal. She lived in South Holland. We were very good friends. But most of these, a lot of them are moved out to California and different places, and you don't keep track.

Dr. Church.:

Yeah.

Mrs. Dixon:

You just kind of lose them.

Dr. Church.:

Mm-hmm (affirmative). That's true. It's been a while since you graduated.

Mrs. Dixon:

Since I went in nurses' training it's been 60 years, 60 or 61. Figure that, that's a little while.

Dr. Church.:

Mm-hmm (affirmative). Is there anything more about Laura Logan that you remember that you'd like to talk about?

Mrs. Dixon:

No, and I never cared for her too much.

Dr. Church.:

You didn't care for her philosophy or you didn't like her too much personally?

Mrs. Dixon:

I think we had a personality clash. I don't think she cared for me, and I didn't care for her. That's all I can remember. [inaudible 00:57:50], Patrina Abbey, she became a doctor. She lived in [inaudible 00:58:00], Maryland. Her folks and Laura ... That's how come she went to Cook County, and Laura Logan were very good friends. I think they knew each other in college.

Dr. Church.:

Oh, I see.

Mrs. Dixon:

And she thought there was nobody like Laura Logan. Pete and I we were good friends, but we never ever discussed Miss Logan. She was a smart woman. Her ideas probably were all right, and she was probably just a little too far advanced for the time period she was in.

Dr. Church.:

Yeah, that makes sense.

Mrs. Dixon:

Because she was pushing college and nursing combination, which is what they have now like Purdue and University of Chicago and all that. It's college, Northwestern, Wesley. That's all college. Where'd you graduate from?

Dr. Church.:

Well, I started out at Illinois Masonic in a three-year program, and then I got my bachelor's degree from DePaul and my master's degree from U of I, University of Illinois. And now I'm working on my PhD.

Mrs. Dixon:

You're just still right in the same area though?

Dr. Church.:

Oh yeah, all in Chicago. Chicago is my home.

Mrs. Dixon:

That's nice. Managed to stay around Chicago. So many of them they'll take one course here and then get their master's someplace else and their PhD someplace else. And who's going to write up this book?

Dr. Church.:

Olga Church is the primary researcher, right. She's a professor, a nurse historian at the University of Illinois. So this is her project, basically.

Mrs. Dixon:

You guys are working ...

Dr. Church.:

So I'm just helping. Jane, the person who called you on the phone the first time, Jane and I are research assistants for Olga. Olga, I believe, is aiming to get everything finished by the end of April.

Mrs. Dixon:

Was she?

Dr. Church.:

Mm-hmm (affirmative). We're hoping to get the interviews done by the end of February and then have everything written up by the end of April.

Mrs. Dixon:

What do you do, go through these tapes and edit them and then pick out the important parts?

Dr. Church.:

Right, the themes and similarities of what people say.

Mrs. Dixon:

That'll be nice, yeah.

Dr. Church.:

I've got just a couple more questions to ask you. We talked a little bit before about how you compared your nursing education to how nurses are educated today. Do you want to say anything more about that?

Mrs. Dixon:

Well, [inaudible 01:01:07].

Dr. Church.:

No, that's fine. I have some certain thoughts about how my education was different than say for instances nurse who graduate from-

Mrs. Dixon:

Well, I think we were taught bedside nursing. The nurses today are not taught bedside nursing. All they do is sit at the desk and listen to that monitor or watch that monitor and hope that it keeps on working the way it's supposed to work. To me that is not nursing. I think you have to go in there and fluff that patient's pillow up, straighten out the covers, give them a glass of water, ask him if he wants a glass of juice, comb his hair, do things like that. I think that is what nursing is all about. I don't think it's sitting

there at the desk and waiting for those doctors to come in and chat with you and kid you. That's my view of it.

Mrs. Dixon:

And then what do they do, they come in and sit on your bed, and maybe you're hurt. You don't like them to sit on your bed. They'll come in and they'll sit on your bed and talk to you, and you think, "Oh God, I wish to hell she would go off, get out of here. I'm not interested in what you're talking about."

Dr. Church.:

Are you saying that from the perspective of having been a patient in the hospital or ...

Mrs. Dixon:

A patient and a nurse both. I've been a patient many times.

Dr. Church.:

Yeah, with all those broken bones I bet you have.

Mrs. Dixon:

I got both ends of it. And I can see the nurses' viewpoint, but I don't know how hospitals that you work in or the ones you're connected with, but I know over at St. Margaret's or our here at Community and Munster, they've got these little modules in the halls, and then all your patients medication and everything is in the patient's room locked up in a drawer. Excuse me. But these little modules, the nurses at that module, she's supposed to have maybe six or eight patients that takes care of that she's responsible for. She's supposed to be doing everything that she can for that patient, but if she's sitting at that module or chit chatting with somebody else she's not paying attention.

Mrs. Dixon:

You either turn your light on, and I know there is no light that goes on that module, she's just supposed to keep looking up and down the hall to see that light come on. Now, is that good nursing or isn't it? I don't know.

Dr. Church.:

It's a whole lot different than your day. That's for sure.

Mrs. Dixon:

Oh my God, yes. We never had no lights. The patient banged on the glass or hollered because what did you have? You had a big ward here of 40 beds, and the head nurse would say, "All right, Miss [Thundle 01:04:43], you're responsible for this half of the ward, and Miss Newcomb or whatever her name is, you're responsible for the other half of the ward. Two nurses, you had all those bags to give, all that cleaning up to do. Everything was cleaned and put back in order, and the beds were all lined up, and boy they had to be lined up just like in the Army. All those little rollers on the bed had to be turned in. They couldn't be turned out. They had to all be turned in. We used to have the charts hung on the end of the bed. The charts weren't in the chart room. They were hung on the end of the bed, and all those charts had to be just lined up so when you looked down that line you can see everything. That was regime they called it in those days.



Dr. Church.:

I'll bet.

Mrs. Dixon:

Would you like a glass of pop or something? I don't drink coffee or I don't drink tea.

Dr. Church.:

No, a glass of water would be fine.

Mrs. Dixon:

I'll give you a glass of milk or pop.

Dr. Church.:

No. Water would be just perfect.

Mrs. Dixon:

With ice?

Dr. Church.:

Yeah. That'd be great.

Mrs. Dixon:

Would you like a brownie?

Dr. Church.:

Oh sure. I'll always say yes to a brownie.

Mrs. Dixon:

Will you excuse me for a minute?

Dr. Church.:

Sure.

Mrs. Dixon:

[inaudible 01:06:10] you know.

Dr. Church.:

You might know of that might consent to be interviewed that we might not have contacted? We did contact Mrs. Neander.

Mrs. Dixon:

Those are the only ones I knew personal. Gertrude Anderson-Olson, she lives in Minnesota, so I mean that would be ...

Dr. Church.:

Oh yeah, we need people that are geographically closer.

Mrs. Dixon:

Uh-huh (affirmative).

Dr. Church.:

Is there anything else that you want to talk about?

Mrs. Dixon:

We had a good time in the nurses' home. I think that's what the kids today are missing.

Dr. Church.:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Mrs. Dixon:

Living together. They live in a dorm, but that's not the same as when you were living in that nurses' home because you had to be in at a certain time, you all worked in the same place. You did things together.

Dr. Church.:

So you developed a certain kind of camaraderie, huh?

Mrs. Dixon:

I would say you had little cliques like sororities and things. It wasn't sororities because we didn't have sororities.

Dr. Church.:

Are these homemade brownies?

Mrs. Dixon:

Well, yes and no. Let's say they're box brownies.