

Church Study

Subject: Mrs. Vern Maloney Mullen - Class of 1925
of the Illinois Training School

i. We are here in Seneca, Illinois and Mrs. Mullen has agreed to be interviewed for this project that we are doing for oral histories on the graduates of the Illinois Training School. First of all, you are of the class of 1925. Does that mean that you entered in 1923? or 1921?

s. 1921. It was two and a half year course at that time.

i. Okay. So, if you can, describe your life before you entered the Illinois Training School as a young woman. Were you a native to Illinois?

s. No. I was from Chippawa Falls, Wisconsin.

i. Chippawa Falls, Wisconsin. Sounds like an interesting place. Did you live there most of your life before you came to Chicago and entered school.

s. I always wanted to be a nurse. My father didn't think that was a thing for a young girl at all. I had an opportunity to work in a lawyer's office and that wasn't a place for a young girl either. So my sister finally convinced him that nursing was the thing I really wanted. So he said alright, we were Catholics and thought I should go to a Catholic school. Of course, in the background he really wanted me to be a nun.

i. Ah hah. Now were you the oldest daughter?

s. No. the youngest and I didn't want to be. So he wanted me to go to Sacred Heart in La Claire and I didn't want to because I knew he tell the nuns, "I want her to be a nun" and that I would be the worst nun that ever lived. (laughter) So he said well you can go to St. Mayo's. Well, that didn't appeal to

me either because of the same situation. So I had to go to the doctor for a physical before I could go and he was from Cook County Hospital in Chicago and his wife was from Illinois Training School. So he said, why do you want to go to Mayo's and I said it's the only place Dad will let me go. And he said, did you ever think of Cook County in Chicago? and I said, No, and he said well that's the place for you.

i. This was a family doctor that your father knew?

s. Oh, yes. I said that Dad would never let me go there. He said, "You write to the superintendent," and he gave me her name and address, "and I'll take care of Dad." Ten days later I was on the train going to Chicago.

i. Is that right? Oh, that's wonderful. A little bit of political savvy there, getting the doctor to do it for you. Well, that worked out real well then. So when did you enter? Did you enter into in those days they had like an October. . .

s. This was January.

i. January. So in ten days time, that was quick.

s. Yes it was.

i. And you gave your notice at point were you working?

s. Yes. Well, they were glad because they knew that this was what I wanted and so they were glad.

i. So this would have been January of 192...

s. 22.

i. 22. Okay that's good. Great! Okay! At that point, you hadn't heard of the Illinois Training School except from this doctor so you didn't know anything about the reputation of the

school except for what he told you.

s. No. Nothing. He and his wife. That seemed to be enough for the family.

i. And she was respected, the woman that he was married to was a nurse from ITS and respected. Do you remember how many people started with you in January? There must have been a small group each time.

s. I don't know exactly. Maybe 15 or 20, something like that. There were 41 all together.

i. The whole class of 1925 graduated 41 or were there 41 that came in?

s. 41 graduated.

i. Probably quite a few more came in. Don't you think?

s. Yeah.

i. Do you remember why some of them didn't finish?

s. Oh, loneliness probably and grades.

i. They were pretty tough on grades. Were there other kinds of things, cause now we're talking 1922, women just got the right to vote in 1921, you know there were some things women couldn't do. I remember Signi Pearson told me that they caught her smoking, or she wasn't smoking but somebody was smoking and they thought it was her and she almost got into trouble and maybe would have been asked to leave just because of smoking. So were those the kinds of reasons that people left?

s. Well, I suppose.

i. You don't remember any particular instance of a classmate that was asked to leave because of something like that? I'm trying to get a feel for what it was like being a woman in

those days.

s. Well, our rules were very strict so that we had to obey them pretty well cause we were young and I didn't like that too well. I had a roommate who had a pretty voice and she sang real loud and of course we weren't supposed to do any of those things.

i. You weren't supposed to sing?

s. Well, a lot of the nurses would have to sleep during the day so we had to be quiet. So somehow or other, she always managed to be out of the room when the house mother would come up the stairway and our room was at the head of the stairway and I would be alone in the room and couldn't sing if I tried, and she'd scold me for singing and making all that noise. (laughter) So there were a lot of little things like that that kids do.

i. Did you keep up with that roommate?

s. No.

i. She was your roommate for the whole time?

s. No. Just for a few months. I dared to ask for a new roommate. She was happier and so was I.

i. That happens even today when students go to college and they have been inappropriately matched. Can you describe, I know it's hard, it's been awhile, what your first impressions of the school were? Here you got on the train ten days after the doctor says he's gonna fix it for you and arrive. What was it like?

s. My father sent my oldest brother with me. He wasn't going to send me to Chicago by myself. We went up the nurses home and -- , of course as I said she was an aunt, someone you always knew they would be nice and kind to you. So she talked to

*Re: Wheeler
Director
of
Nurses*

me for a few minutes and then she said the rest of the day is yours. You and your brother can go and do what you want to. So we went down to the Loop and had lunch and went to a show and then had to be back by five o'clock. He stayed a couple of days to see that I wasn't going back home with --.

i. Just in case you changed your mind. Then you got to meet the other students that came in that same time?

s. I remember we all came the same day.

i. Then your brother left and this was serious. You were going to be a student nurse here. You got to meet your classmates. What were your first classes like?

s. Course we had an orientation first.

i. What were your impressions?

s. I suppose we were all frightened. Wondering what we were doing. We had a turn of Cook County Hospital which was something because we were used to little private hospitals. These were huge with great big wards with lots of people in them instead of private rooms. Black people. We weren't used to being with them. I wasn't anyway up there.

i. And they didn't have black women in the schools for quite awhile.

s. No. So I supposed we really were awed of the whole thing.

i. Okay. Do you remember in terms of the classes that were offered, what was offered you as a student and what were your favorite classes or those you didn't care much about? Anything at all about your school experiences?

s. Well, -- physiology course was the class, the

principle one, you know, and it was difficult and I liked it but it was really difficult.

i. Who taught that? I don't mean the name but I mean a doctor or a nurse?

s. No. it was a nurse. One of the teachers from the teaching department and on, wait a minute. History of nursing.

I. History of nursing. Who taught that? Did Miss Wheeler teach any class?

s. I don't think so. She came in, gave us a talk shortly after we were there, and she said that she knew we were all lonesome and that we wanted to go home, even for a little while. But she said when you go home for the first time, and we never had a holiday, I mean we couldn't go home for Thanksgiving, Christmas, Easter any of those.

i. Why not?

s. Well, if one went, and another one didn't, it made them unhappy and probably didn't do as good work or be as cheerful around the patients or something. So none of us went. I think that changed in the years. And they would have a Christmas party for us on Christmas Eve and we dressed as children and they had gifts for us and a special dinner and all the rest of it. They did a lot of special things. And those that had to go on duty at 9:00 o'clock in the evening, that was sad because they had to leave the party and go and we were all lonesome for home.

i. Especially during the holidays.

s. Christmas especially. but because we were all there, all ages, it wasn't just our class, it was all classes. Well,

then we went on duty and the patients were so unhappy because they were lonesome -- -- so we had to be cheerful for them and the interns were unhappy cause they weren't home with their families and wives and so on. So everybody had to put on a big front that you were happy.

i. So the staffing in the hospital was mostly the students then.

* s. Oh, no! It was all graduate staff. Always.

i. Did they get the holidays off?

s. No.

i. They didn't get the holidays off so there were people working and students were expected to work. That's interesting. That hadn't been mentioned before about the holidays and not being able to go home. What did you enjoy the most? Did you enjoy the history course. See I teach the history course so I want to hear that you enjoyed that.

s. Yeah, I did. Strange to say that I like Psychiatry, I didn't like to work there, I didn't want to work there.

i. Where did you go? Was there a unit at Cook County that was psych unit that you worked at or did you go someplace else?

s. No, it was optional. You took that course if you wanted to take care of the patients. It was -- and I think possible at the state hospital too.

i. At the Illinois State Psychiatric Institute, maybe so?

s. I can't remember the name. But I didn't want to be with the patients but I did enjoy the course. Of course, surgery was my first love and obstetrics. So the doctors taught a lot of the classes; Pediatrics, surgery, medicine, ear, nose and throat.

i. You mentioned surgery. Did you go into the operating room and did you spend time there? How long did you spend in the operating room?

s. From the time I was a child, I wanted to be a surgical nurse. Why, don't ask me, I don't know. But when I got there, as a student, it took me two weeks to get adjusted. To me it was horrible.

i. Two weeks to get adjusted to the surgery?

* s. Surgery. Oh, I couldn't believe the size of the instruments and the incisions although I took care of the patients, post-operative patients. But seeing those big contractors pulling those muscles apart and it took two weeks to adjust myself to it. And finally -- -- But then I decided it was cruel kindness and it had to be done.

i. Cruel kindness. It looks so awful. Barbaric! I had surgery in November and that's exactly how I felt. This is barbaric. Why I am I letting them do this to me? They're going to cut me open.

s. My girls neither one of them like surgery at all. My husband was a good surgeon.

i. Really?

s. But after that, that was my first love.

i. So you really had to get yourself adjusted to the reality of it. And once you did that it was okay.

s. We always had anatomy in class on thursday morning. But on Wednesday evening after we had our dinner, we took a course in aesthetic dancing. And we all had to get our of our uniforms put on these cute little dyed outfits and dance

barefooted.

i. wonderful.

s. It was for relaxation after a hard day. But the only bad part of that was we were too relaxed to study for anatomy the next morning. The timing was awful. But it was wonderful.

i. Now that's the first time I've heard that. I've heard about the morning meetings, whether they were religious or not,

s. Yes, first thing in the morning either before or after breakfast, we all went to the living room and either the superintendent was there or one of the head nurses to read out of the bible. It didn't make any difference what religion it was, it was prayers. And we all accepted it that way and that was the way it was and we liked it. Then another thing they had was cocoa. And when they first asked me if I had been to cocoa, I didn't know what they were talking about. And everybody even then down to the dining room and we had a cup of cocoa and cookies or a piece of bread and butter and we could be gone fifteen minutes.

i. Sort of like a break. Instead of a coffee break it was a cocoa break. And this is everyday at a certain time? in the afternoon?

s. In the morning. See by the time you got on duty, had given baths and heard all the sad affairs from patients and so on, why by ten o'clock you needed something because you were there at 7 o'clock. I think it was from 10 to 11 so only a few could go at a time so the floors were covered. They thought this kept us in better health.

i. Certainly mental health.

s. Yeah, mental health and physically too because you were tired by that time and needed a break.

i. How long was your duty if you started at 7:00 a.m. and it had to start earlier because you met before breakfast to do the early reading so say 6:30 but early. How long were you expected....

s. It was supposed to be an eight hour day so I'd say 7 to 3:30 p.m. Then another group would come on at that time and ¹²relieve.

i. When did you have your classes? During the day?

s. Yes, while we were young students, during the day. At first, we had intensive classes. We went to school exclusively and like on Saturday and Sunday we'd be on the wards. I think they were the days or certain hours. We were probably on the wards everyday but only for a short time as young students because we had intensive classwork. And those that were on night duty usually didn't have to get up and go to class.

i. They were probably older more experienced students that had been there longer.

s. Yes.

i. The other thing that comes up a lot when I teach this course to the seniors, they keep ^Mcoming up with the question of the relationship between the doctors and nurses. They see today real tensions especially with the almost overproduction of physicians now. So people are worried about their turf, they're worried about our nurses doing too much. What was the tension like in those days?

2 || s. No. There were very few things the nurses could do. We had interns for one thing. Students especially were not allowed to do a great many things, giving out medicines was a hand shaking affair, a nervous affair cause we were scared to death. We didn't sleep the first few nights you gave patients aspirin, soda bicarb and -- were about what we had then. But if you gave the wrong person the medicine. We never took blood, or started IV's and all those things. We took temperatures and pulses and so on. Gave lots of --.

i. So it was very clear that what nurses did was separate from what the physicians did. There was no cross over and so no problem.

2 s. That's right. You could go into the dressing room to watch the intern or doctor change dressings on patients but you didn't do them unless you were authorized to do them.

i. How were you authorized?

s. By the intern or the doctor telling the supervisor that the nurses could do it. But she was always present it was seldom that we touched a dressing without her there.

i. So the relationship then in turns of the cocoa break, when you went on your cocoa break, was it okay to talk to physicians? Did they talk to you or did you stick to your self?

s. The attending men never talked to us I don't suppose.

i. What about the residents?

s. Well, yeah.

i. Cause you worked with them.

s. Yeah, but it was all very proper. It was Doctor so and

so and Miss so and so. No first names.

i. Some of your classmates have told me that they weren't supposed to date any of those people but they did. And they're telling me now, many years later when it's okay to tell me. I wondered how much of that really went on.

s. Probably quite a bit.

i. given that you worked so hard you didn't have time for a social life any where else.

s. We didn't meet anyone else. You were stuck there unless you family lived there. You didn't meet any one else and you didn't meet the kind of patients that you'd want to go out with. And so, that was it. If it wasn't medical students or dental students which we had right across the street from us both ways and they often were -- or clerks and they worked at night lots of times and -- -- romances with those but ...

i. You had social occasions probably rare, but dances and the interns and residents would be invited and it was okay. It was alright for you to have a date?

s. Yes.

i. When I was a student in the 1950 in the diploma program, we were not to date. We were not to show that we were dating and if there was a dance we could not invite them.

s. I think so. I don't remember exactly.

i. It may be that you are right. That that was a different kind of atmosphere.

s. I'm not quite sure but I'm thinking certainly some of them must have. I know I wasn't dating anyone early but...

i. Did you meet your husband there? the physician?

s. Yes.

i. While you were a student?

s. No after I finished training. I went back to the operating room and I really wanted to work in surgery and there wasn't an opening at the time so I was sent to OB. I liked OB very much but that wasn't where I wanted to be so the supervisor, a lovely lady in OB, wanted me to stay with her and I kept saying that I really want surgery. So probably a couple of months afterwards, I was called to the office and told there was an opening for me in surgery. I had two years there in surgery.

i. Scrub nurse or head nurse?

s. Head nurse and sometime you scrubbed.

i. That is a big responsibility being a head nurse in the OR of Cook County.

s. Well, I wasn't supervisor. I was one of the head nurses. I was one of the youngest head nurses there.

i. Still a big responsibility.

s. Oh yeah. Miss Eagle was my supervisor. Did anyone tell you about her?

i. No. Tell me about her.

s. she was a very nice lady, very strict, she ordered the surgeons around just as she did us. And every body respected her because they knew she knew what she was doing and she managed that great big operating room, that whole eighth floor I think it was and all the surgeons respected her as the students and head nurses did. Sometimes she cursed when she wasn't too happy about things but she would straighten things out for you. I remember

one surgeon when I worked up at --, American College of Surgeons, all these men from out of town sitting up in the gallery

i. Like a convention or something?

s. yes, and everybody had to be on their best behavior and do their best surgery and I had worked with this man quite a bit and I felt that I knew what he wanted after working with him for quite a while under ordinary circumstances you know what they want so you have that instrument ready or suture or so on. He'd start saying well sometimes the nurses get to know more than you do and remarks like that and I was a sensitive person. After this had gone on for three or four operations and he was trying to impress the people upstairs and we were all trying to do all our very best so they would think we were good, oh, I was in tears before I left the operating room. So my husband happened to be --- and when I left the operating room he started to leave too but his resident said stay here.

i. He knew he was coming out to support you maybe.

s. Of course it was when they were putting dressings on so I wouldn't have left before that.

i. Oh no of course not. But you took only so much and you couldn't take any more.

s. Right it was one of those days. I went to the office and she wanted to know what was the matter. This man was difficult to get along with. He always was. So I told her and she said I shouldn't be so sensitive you shouldn't bring so much tension -- he was under tension too. I went to change and he came to the office or she asked him to and she told him about it. -- -- -- -- So then when I went to St. Luke's in charge of

their operating room, who was on the staff, Dr. --. So the first case we had, I thought we have to be friends or enemies and it's better to be friends so I decided to do my best and he did too. I think he was as unhappy to see me as I was to see him. So he started after I was there awhile, he started -- the students or ridiculing them just like he had me. So I asked him to stop at the office and see me before he left and he did. So I asked him if he would please not embarrass the students, the were young, doing their best and they were frightened and knew very little about surgery, I was always standing behind them patting their back, trying to keep up their courage. He said you know I made a little girl cry one time and I've never forgotten it and I'll never do it again. And he didn't.

i. Good for you. You did that. You made it possible for him to ^{be} that sensitive. That's terrific.

s. He was always a good friend after that.

i. I'll bet the students appreciated that. You were the right person for the right job. I didn't like surgery, I was intimidated by it, overwhelmed by it, and

s. My daughters were too.

i. and the surgeons, most of them, not all of them, some of them had funny senses of humor, some of them were wonderful and under the worst tension they were able to make you laugh. But the ones that were so tense themselves made it very difficult.

s. I think this man was really trying to put on a good show.

i. It's a tense place to be. Let's go back a bit. You were in surgery at Cook County for two years, and then you took the job at St. Luke's at that point were you married?

s. No.

i. But you were dating this physician?

s. Well, a little bit.

i. and he stayed on at Cook County and you were at St. Luke's?

s. he finished his residency there and then went into practice and of course that was during the depression. And we got married in 1933 and nobody was getting married then.

i. That was a really risky thing to do. So you both stayed in the Chicago area?

s. No. Things were really bad in those days. There was no medicare, hospitalization. There was no way of collecting money. Patients didn't pay, and so the civilian conservation corps opened up. President Roosevelt started that and so a lot of the doctors when they finished interning were going into that. It happened that we went. So I convinced that he should do that because it was only six months. I said maybe they'll give you a break and ---- people who aren't paying you cause they had a lot of relatives, who were patients and of course they didn't feel like paying you.

i. And a lot of them couldn't pay.

s. right and there was no way. I had done private duty -- after I finished training, I had nine cases and got paid for three of them and you can't live that way. There was no way of

collecting. So he was down to Marsailles.

i. Oh, which isn't too far from here.

s. Five miles and live in this big camp down there. And

----- -- -- --

i. Now these are camps for people who couldn't afford care and they would go there like a clinic or this is the way they train?

s. No. This is just for people out of jobs or the young people, young boys that couldn't get job and their parents were in desperate straights too because of the depression. And they put them like an army.

i. like a work camp.

s. it was part of the army, became part of the army. And the medical officers and engineers and so on who had belonged to the reserves came down and well of course most medical students belonged to the reserves. I don't remember just how that happened but.

i. national emergency or something

s. so they took them and gave them a fair salary, seemed like a lot then, \$165 a month

i. that's very good for then

s. So we got married then

i. and you didn't do private duty.

s. never went back to work.

i. so you never worked again. Isn't that interesting. So you were having kids by then.

s. Well, in 1935 my first daughter was born. We have three and then we had five years of war and he was in the service

for five years.

i. Did he go overseas?

s. Yes, he was in the Phillipines, terrible places. The baby was born a week after he left. Yes, those were the ..

i. difficult. You were alone for a long time,

s. Five years.

i. Five years while he was away for five years.

s. he was in Tennessee for two years -- -- and then moved out to -- , Washington Fort Lewis and so we and the children went out there. Then he went to California desert which meant that he was going to the Pacific and so we went to California for three months and then he went overseas. So that's how the children saw him. That's all I saw of him.

i. So did you stay out there?

s. No I came home to this house. When we bought this, we were going to build a house but all this came up and so I had to buy a house and so we bought this one.

i. What year was that?

s. 1942.

i. And he was still out there somewhere?

s. He was in Hawaii.

i. No wonder this house is important. It would be very hard to leave wouldn't it?

s. I would just have to make up my mind to it. I don't think I gave you enough answers.

i. We're not through we got off the track. Once of the things i'm trying to pin down is that was your education geared

toward you working in the community or did you expect to work in the hospitals when you got done?

s. I think each one knew what they wanted to do themselves. I think they had had private duty and that sort of thing previous to my time. I know I didn't have private duty training and public health, I remember hearing something about that. But we were sent to various hospitals of our counties you know, like the -- that was optional also, Psych and TB were optional.

i. Psych became required in the 50's.

s. So most of us didn't take either of those. They weren't too interesting. I mean they were dangerous

i. And threatening.

s. So most of us didn't take those. We had mental and nervous, that was in Psychopathic hospital but it was one floor

i. Pediatrics, right there you had pediatrics

s. We had everything. That was one of the reasons that my doctor from home said why do you want to go to Mayo if you'll be traveling most of your life. -- -- they didn't have OB at that time, or Pediatrics, it was mostly medicine and surgery. He said you'll be going to Minneapolis and Milwaukee and all those places for courses.

i. Do you remember a particular memorable case that obviously you wouldn't have gotten anywhere else that was unique to Cook County or something you remember because you learned from it or anything at all? I still couldn't remember certain patients and I haven't done hands on nursing for a while. I graduated in the 1950's and then did a lot of other things. But

I still remember the names of particular patients.

s. I don't think I remember any names. One case which is probably is the answer you want, was a young woman about 18 or 20 years old who came into medicine, with pneumonia and she was married and had a little girl. She worked in a factory and she was terribly sick. I became very fond of her and taking care of her and her parents were around a lot and her young husband and wife knew that she was desperately sick. One Sunday afternoon I went out to -- and she was in a private room and that meant that she wasn't going to survive. Oh, I was just sick when I saw her in there. I said something to the intern about how sick she was and he said oh, you know what's the matter with her don't you? Sure, Pneumonia I think. Well, that's not all, he said, she had an abortion. That was the first time I ever heard of an abortion.

i. Did she have an infection from the abortion?

s. Yeah, and she had worked in this plant and one of the things they need was slippery elm that was used in abortions. I don't know if it's on the market any more. Any way, some of the women with whom she was working, well, she had this little girl that was probably a year and a half, two years old something like that and she was sick of course. So these older women said well just take some of the slippery elm -- -- -- and inserted it and that she would lose the fetus. Well she lost it but not completely. And so she was terribly sick. I guess they couldn't make anyone admit for a while that's what was really wrong that she had done this. She couldn't admit it to her family or

anybody else. Even her husband probably. They were poor and uneducated and so on. So anyway she died and I just never forgot that. Never.

i. No you don't.

s. she was so pretty though. So sick. I enjoyed taking care of her. You know I could think of a lot of -- patients, a lot of surgical patients and a lot of OB's, the one's that the baby's were fine, and they were fine, everybody happy, that was nice. And then the ones that lost the baby that was very sad.

i. Out of all those memories, what was the most memorable in terms of your experience there being a student nurse?

s. Well, I think one thing that when I go away for vacation and came back the minute I got on the floor, I felt like my people really missed me. I really loved it that much.

i. So when you got married and you gave it up because of the war and the depression, wasn't that hard?

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s. No. Nurses that time and teachers could not work if they were married. You could do private duty married.

i. But you could not work on a

s. Teachers couldn't teach if they were married and nurses couldn't hold down a job if they were married and --doctors had nurse in the office ----.

i. So that was a big choice to get married.

s. That was one reason people didn't get married young.

i. I didn't realize that. I knew the students couldn't get married cause even in the 50's my classmate got married and she had to leave. I knew that. But I didn't know that once you were married, you couldn't work as a nurse. Is that true?

s. Teachers either. They thought right away you'd be pregnant and be sick and you wouldn't be available and you wouldn't be working, doing the work you should, so. With teachers, they wouldn't let pregnant teachers in the classrooms.

i. you certainly made a choice when you made that choice. It really was a big one. Well, what about your most negative memory then?

s. My last week in training cause I had accomplished all the wards I was supposed to do, I was sent to -- -- for a couple of weeks which I didn't like one little bit. Didn't want to be there and the first thing they gave me to do was put a little old lady in the tub for her bath. And her bath water was covered with lice. I had to wash her hair and of course I had put on a gown and cap, mask and gloves to try and keep them away from me and she had come in like that. And I thought, here I am ready to graduate or leave and here I am doing something a probbie would do. So it was sort of degrading and when I left the hospital that day, going home at lunch time, I went to the drug store and bought a fine comb cause our mother used to make us sit down every Saturday morning, she'd wash our hair, put a newspaper on our lap and fine comb our hair to be sure there was nothing there that we'd brought home from school. So I started combing and there was a big one and I was screaming and all my friends came running to see what was wrong and I was so embarrassed and so angry to think that that was one of my last days.

i. You were ready to leave then boy.

s. I was ready to leave. Well of course then I didn't, I

graduated and went back in surgery.

i. That certainly was a problem I'm sure.

s. Oh there were lots of things. We shouldn't bring up the colored issue. If the boards were mostly white, -- the patients were very nice to us. If they were mostly black, they say isn't it nice they have a white maid waiting on them with their bath and so on. Which was degrading.

i. That was their way of paying back what happened to the when they went -- --

s. That's right.

i. But as students, it wasn't fair that you had to bear the brunt of it.

s. Well, they didn't think you know.

i. Well, okay we're getting to this piece about the class graduating. The last class that graduated from ITS was 1929. I have a document in our collection, Sign^l Pearson gave us a collection of memorabilia, from Miss Wheeler announcing to the students and the classes and the alumns that they were so excited because the University of Chicago had decided to start a generic bacalauriet program. And so as a result of that decision, the ITS was going to ^{phase}~~fade~~ out. The letter was dated 1926 and I said Miss Wheeler but may^{be} it was from Laura Logan. anyway the letter came out in 1926 and you graduated in 1925 and wasn't there as a student. But how did you hear about the closing of the school and what did you hear that you can share with me?

s. I don't remember how we heard about it. I suppose it was just a general rum^{or}. Miss Wheeler was retiring and they

doctor's lounge and their's a grandmother's clock. So I said that must be it. And they said, Oh no, that's not it because that's been there for years. You don't mind if I look do you? So I went over there and thank goodness you had the plaque because if that plaque wasn't there, they wouldn't have given it to me. And I went over there and saw the plaque and said that's it. It's just amazing. And it chimes so beautifully. Oh, it's a wonderful, wonderful clock. Did you say good bye to her?

s. I don't remember. I guess we did. She'd go on to conventions and she'd come back and tell us about the conventions she'd been to. We all had to go to the living room and she'd tell us all about it and you'd let me go looking like this. what's wrong with my daughters that they didn't tell me how I ~~anyone was angry while he was not~~ any ---- and I don't know if

i. I've heard very good things about her and I've heard the contrast between her and Laura Logan was sharp that no matter who came in after Wheeler would probably have a little trouble

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in our history center at the University. Every time I hear it chime, I guess goosebumps.

s. Well, you know it has a plate on it, for Miss Wheeler

i. Yes, from the class of 1925. You knew she was leaving and all chipped in

s. I think she had already left and Miss Logan was already there. She must have come in 1924 because our last year was with Miss Logan or a lot of it. We had teas once in a while and she'd do nice things for us. We had a yearbook, the first yearbook, I think they had them many years before, but we had the yearbook and the money we got from the yearbook, we bought the clock and it says in here that the money left over was given to the room at First Hospital for Nurses. We had that.

i. That's interesting because the plaque that's one there is down here on the bottom. When Signi Pearson gave us the collection to take care of at the University because she was afraid that these things would get lost, and so I said it would be lovely to have it and display things and the students could see it and learn a little bit about ITS. So we went over to the Cook County graduate school of medicine to pick up whatever was there and we took some books and whatever was there and brought it over. And then we had an open house. And Signi came with ^{Viola Strick} ~~Beella Strick~~ and they looked around and had a good time and just as she was leaving she said where was the clock? And I said, Signi, I don't know anything about a clock. There was no clock in the Cook County graduate school of medicine. She was very upset. There is a clock.

i. The next day I went over to the Cook County graduate school of medicine and I said that I want you to know that I'm in trouble because there's supposed to be a clock in that collection and I don't know where it is so you must have it. Oh, no, we don't have any clock. Then I look over in the corner where the doctors have their beautiful leather sofas and everything in the doctor's lounge and there's a grandmother's clock. So I said that must be it. And they said, Oh no, that's not it because that's been there for years. You don't mind if I look do you? So I went over there and thank goodness you had the plaque because if that plaque wasn't there, they wouldn't have given it to me. And I went over there and saw the plaque and said that's it. It's just amazing. And it chimes so beautifully. Oh, it's a wonderful, wonderful clock. Did you say good bye to her?

s. I don't remember. I guess we did. She'd go on to conventions and she'd come back and tell us about the conventions she'd been to. We all had to go to the living room and she'd tell us all about it and you'd let me go looking like this. What's wrong with my daughters that they didn't tell me how I should dress. There were so many ---- and I don't know if anyone was angry with her or not.

i. I've heard very good things about her and I've heard the contrast between her and Laura Logan was sharp that no matter who came in after Wheeler would probably have a little trouble just because Wheeler was so wonderful. But I think in addition, Logan was difficult from what people had said.

s. well, she never got the job at Chicago. Did she?

i. Not that I know of.

s. Well, we were all so glad of that because that's why she gave the school away.

i. You think that's what happened?

s. Well, that's what we all thought. Why she could twist the board around her fingers like that and maybe it was a smart thing to do I don't know. As kids, we didn't think so. But she had a very nice assistant, Miss Densford?

i. Oh, Kathryn Densford Dreeves, up in Minnesota,

s. She was a lovely person but she was her assistant so of course she had to be careful of what she did with us of course, and we used to get dates for her for the sorority dances. We had a sorority also.

i. Do you remember the name of it?

s. I'll look it up.

i. Do you think it's in the book? Cause we have something now called Sigma Theta Tau which is a sorority which started in the 20's which is a national honor society for nurses.

s. I'll have to go up and get my pin.

i. That might be Sigma Theta Tau because that's the honor society we have now and they did start in the 20's. You were telling me about setting up dates up for Kathryn Densford.

s. Once a year the soroeity would have a big dinner dance and it was usually at Edgewater Beach. Weren't they smart?

i. Yes you knew where to go.

s. course everybody wanted a date.

i. Oh she was beautiful.

s. Wasn't she lovely? She was a very nice person. Course

rolls and orange juice and milk and had to be back at the nurses home at 10 o'clock so we could go to bed to be for night duty again. So little things like that Miss Wheeler always did.

i. Very nice. So that must have been quite a switch when Miss Logan came in and saying that the school would close.

s. Well I don't thing we knew that at first.

i. Do you think she came in with agenda?

s. Probably, I don't know.

i. Do you think Wheeler would have known about it and that's why she left?

s. Probably. I don't know whether she was asked to leave or if she intended to leave. I don't know. I don't know who would know.

i. She was there the longest though as a superintendent.

s. I don't know other than the board who would have control. The doctors? I don't know. Maybe they were enamored by these gals.

i. It sounds like and I say I have no evidence except what people tell me, that this was an item that Logan introduced and it's like she had a certain program in mind that this school would ~~faze~~^{phase} out, the University of Chicago would ~~faze~~^{phase} in and that connection would be the lasting one. Course that did not happen. So without skipping a beat, the Cook County Hospital started a program in 1929.

s. Well, they had to have one and they'd built a nice home and she gave ^{our} home away. We would have had to rent then and of course it was old.

i. That was what somebody had mentioned that it would have been very costly to rennovate that building.

s. Oh, yeah.

i. That was part of the problem was an economic one after all we're heading into the depression at this point. So there was no saving it.

s. No, it needed a new home and we had a nice one I don't know if there now.

i. The Cook County one? Oh it's still there and in fact the top floor is where the nursing archives are and they have all these things up there including letters from Florence Nightingale.

s. Oh, good!

i. They have quite a collection. It's really remarkable. Let's see if we can wind up here. If you could make some comparison and obviously we're both biased but given what you learned about ITS once you got there, how do you think it compared to other schools of nursing in other parts of the country or anywhere else?

s. Of course Pres and St. Luke's are the only ones I could say anything about but Pres nurses felt they were very superior to us because they had private patients and we had all charity patients and that they were superior. We felt we were superior because of all the experience that we got that they didn't. We saw a lot of patients that they never saw. When I went to St. Luke's I realized it more because -- -- -- but everybody wore a bracelet, everybody wore a colored handchief in their pockets,

everybody wore rings. That was just -- against nurses attire. It seemed to me that when they took care of their patients, a lot of them of course had private nurses because they could afford it. The students it seemed to me were doing a lot of dusting and cleaning and doing all these things, not mopping floors, but doing all these little things that we never had to do. We had to learn to sterilize a bed and that sort of stuff. We had maids, scrub women, orderlies to do all these things and we did nursing. That was what I noticed and one of the things I got in bad about when I went to St. Luke's about the only question the superintendent asked me in the interview was if I was a good housekeeper. And I said well, I should cause my mother was an excellent one. -- -- from your standpoint am I a good housekeeper or not. At County we were good housekeepers cause we had to be. There was no excuse for anything. If they had all this help to keep the place clean and we had to put things to put things where they belonged, you couldn't just drop them -- -- --. I mean they way they keep their own rooms, I don't know how they learn to be neat. But that was the thing I noticed.

i. What happened with the private kind of thing when the depression hit though. Must have been a whole different experience cause the private patients couldn't afford private nurses any more.

s. Rooms and rooms were empty at St. Luke's and their most expensive one was \$20 a day.

i. Do you know how expensive it is now?

s. \$300 or more. The supervisors had to go to a meeting with all the doctors during all this depression business so I

said why don't they lower these rates and they said no, they'd never be able to raise them again. I said when things became good I should think they could.

i. So unrealistic. Well, I think we covered everything. Is there anything you would like to say or do you want to make any comment about what you think that nursing is involved with today that may be so different from what it was?

s. It was entirely different.

i. I agree with you. but what was that?

s. Other than hearing my daughter talk about it I really don't know. For instance she has to give IV's now and she said she'd never done that. She trained at St. Mary's of Rochester and she had never done that. She said it's putting too much responsibility with law suits, aids and all that gossip. -- --

i. I think the AIDS phenomena is certainly something that we in nursing and health care -- have to be concerned about. But there are parallels between this and what happened with TB and the way TB patients were treated. Very badly and nobody wanted to have anything to do with them. That whole thing. Where did I read that they were giving TB patients one way tickets to Arizona in the 20's and they set up tents out in the desert for them to just bake it out of them. If anything that would help them would be the sunshine. That was not a humane thing to do but they thought it was. We don't know how to deal with these things humanely as a society.

s. Course this is so terrible.

i. There's no easy answer and of course we don't have the

answers. I think nursing has gone through some dramatic changes.

s. Oh yes, but I don't know enough about it anymore. I am sure that I would be lost entirely. I know a few times Mary Lou and Ronnie have said why don't you go back after Dad died and I didn't want to and thought I should do some work but I didn't know what.

i. When did he die?

s. 72. fifteen years ago.

i. So you have been alone for a long time. How old were you when you started?

s. 18 or 19, I think I was 19 in November and went into training in January.

i. Well, things have changed dramatically in the operating room. There's the laser.

s. No I couldn't go to our hospital here because I would see Tim everywhere I looked and everybody would be telling me how badly they felt and I had that right here all the time. There still telling me they'll never get over it.

i. Cause this is where he ended up working.

s. Uh Huh.

i. Did you work in Ottawa as well?

s. No.

i. That's right you never worked after that so he did but he was obviously so good and well respected here.

s. A lot of people would tell me even before he was sick that their children would never be afraid to go to a doctor because when they wait in the waiting room, as he went by from room to room he wave to them and they'd wave to him and when he

went into his office while he's sit and hold them awhile before examining them. And they would never be afraid.

i. Was he a pediatric surgeon?

s. No.

i. General surgeon so he was everything especially in this area he have to take care of everything. That must have been very special.

s. And he'd never go to bed if he had some -- sick without going down to the hospital to see how they were. They'd say oh you could call down if you're tired and he'd say no -- ---.

i. He was sick a long time?

s. No. -- -- days

i. oh, I guess it's never a blessing but

s. Well, anyway it was good for him but rough on us.

i. sure it was unexpected. Well, it sounds like you had a blessed life.

s. Yes, we did. That's him right there. That's the picture that brought me through this.

i. Well, maybe you stopped working as a nurse but you raised nurses and made your contribution that way and supported your husband who did a great deal for health care so you did a lot.

s. Through out sororeity here, I started the school clinic.

i. Oh yeah, Tell me about that. See that's work, you didn't count that as work.

s. One time when I was up at home before I was married and

was working, I took my young neice to the doctor the same doctor that got me started in training, for her physical. I thought what a wonderful idea. Previous to that, children really didn't have to have a physical. But in Wisconsin they had to have one. It impressed me so much. But it had to be in the doctor's office. When we had our sororeity in here, I said Tim you know I think the thing to do is to start a school clinic and have it through the summer so all the children could have their physicals. Illinois was talking about making it mandatory, it wasn't. Instead of your office being filled up a couple days before school starts, why not have it in the summer time. So we called the other doctor that's here and the superintendent of the school and we all agreed. So through the sororeity we started the school clinic which is still in process.

i. So it's in the summer and it's preparing the new students before they come in the fall to get their shots and whatever else they need.

s. First grade, or maybe it's kindergarten now, and fifth grade and eighth grade.

i. And do they have nurses working there?

s. Yes and the sororeity.

i. Again you don't know if that Sigma Theta Tau?

s. No this one is Delta Theta Tau. It's a philanthropic sororeity.

i. But that is wonderful. You saw yourself as stopping work. But you weren't stopping, that's definitely nursing. That's wonderful. So what year was that, the start of the school clinic? The 50's?

s. Probably, at least 50 years ago. I couldn't tell you exactly.

i. I think the way it was set up earlier, either you were a nurse and you didn't marry or you married and couldn't be a nurse. But even though you didn't nurse because you got married, I think there are a lot of people made contributions which stemmed from their nursing experiences through the community in which they lived but nobody ever gave them credit for it.

s. No, cause you helped people. Your neighbors when they had troubles and needed care. you helped them.

i. But I think people like you did things on a larger scale like the clinic kind of things.

s. Like the Red Cross Blood Banks. We worked at those things too you know. Like the hospitals, we had pink ladies.

X
i. all that is important. And I think part of it has to do with being a woman's profession more than not, there are some men but very few, but part of that being a woman's profession we haven't gotten credit traditionally for what we've done. We either see it as voluntary kinds of activities that you don't get paid for and therefore it doesn't count and yet its so important. Especially for our students to understand that this is where they're coming from. I appreciate talking with you. Everyone we've talked to has given us more insight into what it was like. That's all we want to know. And the only way we can find out is by asking.

s. -- -- when I talked to her said don't forget to show her your grades from state boards.

i. You have those still? You probably did very, very well.

s. I had a hundred in three subjects, surgery, OB and --. But I said on my dietetics was only 78.

i. Dietary was my worst subject. And I didn't like surgery but Psych was my background, I had my masters in child psychiatric nursing. That always appealed to me cause I like talking to people.

s. We used to go in to Thursday night clinics, Did anyone tell you about that?

i. No.

s. In psychiatry when we were taking the course and the judge would come from the court house and the doctors would be the jury and they would bring in the patients. The poor patients -- -- --, and I remember one thought he was the devil and said don't come near me or I'll set you on fire. He wanted to jump in Lake Michigan cause he wanted to --

i Cause he was on fire.

s. They'd have to decide where he should go and what to do with these patients. And those were very interesting, sad but interesting. But I never wanted to do -- --.

i. It's a whole different kind of nursing. I think it's very difficult in this day and age because we have taken a lot of the patients who in the old days would have been institutionalized and put them on the streets without giving them the kind of care they need. So that's why we have this whole issue of homelessness. I think in Chicago alone, it's a conservative estimate that there's somewhere around 50,000 people

live on the street. Now what does that mean for our society? I think our society is measured by the way in which they take care of their people who can't take care of themselves. Just in Chicago, 50,000 people living in boxes.

s. It must be bad everywhere not just Chicago. I read somewhere how the English treat their old people. If they're living with their young married people, they can't be around during the day or in the evening if they don't get along. So they're what they call Grandmabash over there. So I tell my grandchildren Grandmabash me and we kid about that a lot. The poor things have to go out and sit on the city benches someplace and stay out until it's time to go to bed. They don't want them around the house.