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Sullivan, Jean interview for the Miami Valley College of Nursing and Health Oral History Project

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START OF TAPE 1, SIDE A

JEAN SULLIVAN

JUNE 10, 2003

DONNA MILES CURRY: If for some reason I feel like we're having technical problems I'll just stop a second and I'll check it but right now everything's running and you're going to ask a question.

CAROL HOLDCRAFT: Okay. We're here today, I'm the interviewer and she's the tech person and we're here today with our () professor Jean Sullivan who will be taking part in the Oral History of the College of Nursing and Health at Wright State University's Oral History Project. We're going to start just by asking you first of all Jean to tell us a little bit about your personal background and how you came to be at Wright State.

JEAN SULLIVAN: After a number of years of teaching in Arizona and California I returned to Ohio State in, or to the state of Ohio in the spring of 1977 and among the teaching position that I considered was an opening here on faculty at Wright State. And after completing the daylong interview process I decided not to take the position when Dean Torres offered it to me. And she insisted however that I review the NLN self study material before I make a final decision. So I took them home. Actually I think I said to her my decision is rather firm Dr. Torres; you offered me too little money. I had a better offer but she said no, no, no you must take the self-study home. I said I don't want to mail it back. Never mind you can keep it. Just take it home and review it before and then call me and make your decision. So I took it home and later that evening I read the document and three things impressed me. The first was the curriculum's visionary calling, particularly the emphasis on wellness. I'd had some experience with that out in California but nothing was as well developed as this and I was so impressed with that. The second thing was the philosophical coherents of the curriculum. I had been teaching for many, many years and I had seen lots of philosophies of Schools of Nursing and they were usually a page in the front of a book that nobody ever looked at. They just sat there you know. (Laughs) But this curriculum that she presented was really driven from a philosophy of what is nursing and I both liked the philosophy and I liked the fact that it really then drove everything that followed from it. And the last thing that really, really I think why I probably came was I could feel really in the materials, more than they were in print but there was going to be a constructual sophistication here that I

wanted to be part of. I thought that was something that needed to happen in nursing. We needed to quit being girls in desk caps who were told push the green button when the red light comes on and I wanted to be part of what I read. So, I called her back and accepted a teaching position of that summer quarter of 1977 and then I continued on until I retired in 1993.

CH: It was interesting that she seemed to have a sense that what it might take to convince you to change your mind was this document that was in writing that was a self-study.

JS: Her words to me on that very point were in her understated way, god forbid she should ever lavish a compliment upon you. She said "Jean I really think you could make a contribution here." She was pretty well insistent that I would come and work here. We both had a good chuckle because after the day long interview the faculty presented it's point of view with regard to my interview which again was an exhausting day long process and their comments, she read with me was we didn't interview her she interviewed us. (Laughs) Dr. Torres and I both had a good laugh because we thought it was supposed to be that way. (Laughs) I wasn't sure what I was supposed to do come hat in hand you know looking for the possibility of hopefully being employed? So, we had some fun at the close of the interview but I had pointed out to her that nothing I had seen up to that point. I had seen Dr. Torres' presentation in Chicago before. I was impressed with her, with her reasoning, her forcefulness and her vision and her commitment to that vision and those were the things that attracted me to her. And whatever it was she saw in me that attracted her to me. It was a good mix. We got along well and I was glad I came.

CH: Well good. Tell us then some more about what you remember about your early years at Wright State.

JS: Well again I think the big thing I would emphasize in those first few years the visionary, intavative quality of curriculum. And remember again it was 1977 I mean that was early, early. The implementation strategy for working out this vision seemed to need a lot of work. I saw a real gap between the dream and it's enactment. I thought because undergraduate teaching is what I'm about. I thought this is where I can work with her, this, she has had the vision and the dream that I have founded and I can make it happen.

CH: Uh-huh.

JS: So anything I can understand I can explain usually to the satisfaction of the hearer. So I thought I can get this at a level where it begins to become part of the thinking process of the

undergraduate students. So that's what I remember the excitement, the pleasure and the joy of doing that. You know making her thing happen.

CH: Right.

JS: Yeah. Dean Torres was a master at explaining, motivating and involving us in the curriculum as process, as a thing that was living and alive and happening and we were making it happen. She was just an extraordinary, a captivating speaker, a deep, a truly charismatic woman. So, it was always a pleasure. Her intelligence and humor made meetings just fun. They just were a pleasure to go to. And I remember feeling every day that I was learning and I was growing under her leadership. In 1978 I won the Departmental Teaching Effectiveness Award and in 1979 I won a fellowship in the Danforth Foundation and things seemed off to a really good start and I felt very happy here and very productive. I enjoyed my contacts with the School of Nursing faculty although I didn't share the growing zeal they felt for feminist issues and for assertiveness training. I just was not as enthusiastic about these things as they were.

CH: Uh-huh.

JS: During my years on the west coast, which were, nine in number I had already been exposed to and explored in considerable depth the perspectives and concerns that were new to my WSU faculty peers. To me this all seemed like yesterday's news and it all had a been there done that feeling for me. But I thought well this is good you know this is something that needs to happen for people it hasn't happened before for.

CH: Right.

JS: But I just didn't feel really that excited by it. I just kind of went through it and I had already understood it and taken it in myself the part that I thought I could use in my teaching and that. I really found the idea of sort of militantly forcing assertiveness training on the students, that didn't appeal to my sense of freedom they should have to engage these ideas if they had some merit and some significance. I don't like coercion in education.

CH: Uh-huh.

JS: And I felt that there was a growing element of dogmatic, narrow minded, no alternative positions allowed. No possibilities of contradiction in that aspect of what was happening and I saw that more and more as other faculty was added in the graduate program who were extremely active leaders really, in the development of the history of nursing and in other feminist perspective issues but it seemed almost that people were vying with each other in their

dialog. It's like I say that wasn't where I was at so I just got on with what where I was at which was working with the undergraduates.

CH: So, did you see them teaching that assertiveness training like as a part of clinical or as a part of lecture?

JS: They would spend about fifteen minutes on assertiveness training before lectures.

CH: Oh, okay.

JS: Students, now I could have this wrong, I don't want to say anything in error. So if I do please let me know.

CH: But you remember, whatever you remember.

JS: I think they had a required textbook. I remember having a workbook in assertiveness training that may have been a part of the student program. But I do remember teaching five minutes maybe, maybe it was a just a little tiny bit but whatever it was it was brought in and taught as part of the course work. Like I say as long as I could get the part that mattered and again I didn't, I'm not saying this might not have been very necessary. I hadn't been in the Midwest for years and my thinking was where it is now, the way things are now, women's self help that way, that freedom and the idea of digging your toe in the sand, batting your eyelashes and opening the top button of your blouse when you communicate with a male in order to get your point across.

CH: That wasn't part of- -

JS: It just wasn't, to me, I just didn't see the need to fix that. But on the other hand I was very open to the idea that there must be a need among people who had not moved in that direction for as fast as you did on the west coast. I still have to say though I don't like, it is personal relations, you transgress if you coerce in sense of style.

CH: Right.

JS: Different people, different strokes, different people handle problems and approach problems and solve problems together with males and females and that kind of a mix differently. I didn't like the idea that there was a way to do this and this is the way.

CH: Uh-huh. Good point. What were some of the challenges that you faced in fulfilling your role at Wright State?

JS: The biggest challenge I faced began in the spring quarter of 1980. The School of Nursing administrators entered into a bitter political controversy with the University administration. The outcome of this conflict was the resignation of Dean Torres, the resignation of

Dean Stanton, the resignation of all of the graduate school faculty members and the resignation of the majority of the undergraduate faculty during that spring quarter. These resignations were signed and official resignations. They were not empty boasts or threats. They were actually a plan of action. How and what kind of a challenge this presented to me can best be described, I think, by some of the persons who were directly involved and have heard the situation and me in it rather than me talking about it only from what I saw. For example, excuse me (Coughs) Dr. Andrew Kuntzman was appointed Assistant Dean for Administration of the School of Nursing after Dr. Torres and Stanton moved out of the administrators offices and into offices on a hall in the faculty area. His description of what then happened is as follows; and I want the quote in here, quote: "In the spring of 1980 Dean Torres and twenty-one other administrators and other faculty members of the School of Nursing resigned effective that June. Jean Sullivan was the first member of the seven remaining faculty to sign a contract for the 1980-81 academic year. At one critical time Jean was the only faculty member in the School of Nursing who was known to be returning for the next year. At that time a federal trainingship grant renewal was due. Acting Dean Jacobson and I asked Jean to serve as project director. Jean's early willingness to commit herself to a contract for the next year was critical to the receipt of these funds." Close quote. Acting Dean Jacobson described the challenge to me that spring of 1980 as follows; Jean was quote: "an enormous support to me as the acting dean in a very emotional and intense situation. She took a verbal and visible stand which was against the normative population at the time." To lighten the mood a little bit she came to my office one day, the last faculty meeting of the year was being held. Neither Dean Torres or I should say by that time Dr. Torres and Dr. Stanton, neither one would chair the meeting, one of the faculty members were to chair it, but they were going to be present as were the twenty-one faculty members who had resigned in support of their points of view. So, Dr. Jacobson came and banged on my office door, came to the door and she said, "Jean, I'm going to that meeting. I will not be a tolerant. I will go to that meeting no matter what they say or do to me." But she said, "I just wondered, would you walk in with me?" (Laughs) I couldn't refuse. How could I? So, we walked over together and as we stood outside the door we could hear the voices inside and I turned to her and she had, it was spring and she had a little yellow suit on and it's bright yellow and I turned to her and said I only hope that suit is bullet proof.

CH: This was the main university faculty meeting?

JS: Yes.

CH: The last meet- -

JS: Departmental meeting.

CH: Oh, departmental faculty.

JS: Yes, the last School of Nursing faculty meeting. All the faculty were in there waiting for her (Laughs) and for me. Well the good part of that was because we got giggling in the hall we walked in together giggling, laughing and it totally changed what could have been a very ugly experience for her and for me. I think everybody wondered what we were giggling about, what could we possibly have to be giggling about in walking to that deathly silence, tremendously charged atmosphere. (Laughs) We were sitting there looking at each other and every time I saw that suit I got to giggling and so did she. So, just to lighten up the mood a little bit but I hope it gives the flavor of those times.

CH: You mentioned Jean, just earlier Jean, that you felt like the resignations were a strategy. Could you elaborate a little more about that?

JS: I'm going to come back to that because I think I will but if I don't I would be glad to.

CH: Okay.

JS: Because yes I do and I think that's a well chosen word and good of you to pick up on it. Another challenge was presented when I was asked to attend the June 1980 convention, The American () Association Convention to assist with recruiting faculty replacements for the fall. Dr. Eleanor Koch, University Vice President of Student Affairs who represented the university in the School of Nursing's behalf described that challenge this way quote: "Hostility and obstructive behaviors were evidenced toward the WSU's representatives. Jean worked tirelessly and quietly with little or no recognition. Her actions contributed directly and importantly to the stability and growth of the School of Nursing." Close quote. Among the things that happened again to get a lighter note, it was very ugly but some of it, things are always funny in some way and we put up signs for a wine and cheese party in all the elevators and everywhere in our hotel because we had a suite and we were going to woo faculty. Well, someone went around and took the signs down. (Laughs) As fast as we went and put them back up one came around and took them down again. We were, Dr. Jacobson detailed us to stay, to take shifts with, to take care of the fliers- -

CH: Pictures of Wright State?

JS: Yes, pictures that we had in our booth for fear that someone might appropriate them or destroy them or something else might happen. We constantly had this feeling that there was going

to be a terribly embarrassing confrontation, which of course we didn't want because we were trying to represent the school as in a growth phase and a tremendous opportunity.

CH: Right.

JS: Dr. Jacobson had made up a bunch of fliers and we were to stand at the, she stood at the up going escalator in the state hall where the thing was. I was standing where they were going down. I said to her I can't do this. I can't hand out fliers; (Laughs) "excellent positions available at Wright State University". And she said watch me and she did. So I watched her and I thought anything she can do I can do. So, I'm standing there handing out the fliers and saying not quite as loudly as she, really more tentatively, "wonderful positions, well wouldn't you like to know about some positions that are opening up in the Midwest" and so on. At the top of the escalator there arrived Dean Stanton, Dean Torres and Dr. Peggy Chinn coming directly down in the escalator toward me with my fliers. (Laughs) So I, when they arrived I said "Would you like a flier?" They didn't of course accept one. I was just glad nothing worse than that, that you know I got terribly dirty looks but nothing was spoken and I was grateful for that because I had no wish to engage in that kind of thing and I didn't believe we were down there for that purpose. But it was a very intense experience. Poor Dr. Jacobson got a tremendous migraine and finally I told her that she should go to the suite and just stay there for a while and rest. My humor, I hope, does not clip the fact that it was--

CH: -- was very stressful.

JS: It was extremely difficult.

CH: Where you the only one that went besides- -

JS: No, Marge, you see what happened was some of the people, there were seven of us but I had signed my contract when Torres and Stanton were on premises along with twenty-one faculty who were leaving.

CH: Right. Sure.

JS: No one else did and when I approached them to see if maybe they might like to... (Laughs) No. They hadn't made up their minds.

CH: So they hadn't formally resigned with the faculty.

JS: That's right.

CH: But they had not signed their contract.

JS: They had not submitted formal resignations but to those people who had they represented themselves as considering it.

CH: Uh-huh. Did Marge go to that convention with you?

JS: Uh-huh. Marge.

CH: So she had by then signed a contract.

JS: As did several others of those folks because by the time that was ready to happen Dean Torres and Stanton were back in New York and the twenty-one faculty who had resigned were, had cleaned out their offices and were gone. So the school was empty and it was perfectly, you know you could sign six contracts. Who'd notice or care?

CH: Right. Uh-huh.

JS: So yes, Marge and I went together and she was splendid as always. Marge is a wonderful woman, wonderful woman, great presence and dignity in a very, very intense, potentially explosive situation.

CH: Uh-huh. Well, enough of that. Huh? Was that sufficient enough?

JS: Well, on a personal level I guess that was the school and I was trying to get that done. That was my part in it on a personal level. The greatest challenge of this period was the experience of what Dr. Andrew Kuntzman witness and described as quote: "intimidation and other forms of verbal abuse by the majority of Jean's colleagues." I never mentioned that and I wouldn't have mentioned it. I almost didn't put it in but I think it needs to be there. Those who did not attempt to intimidate or abuse me were silent bystanders while it occurred. I received no public support from any faculty member during that period. So it was a great challenge to stand alone, really alone for my convictions against the pressure the school administrators and my faculty peers. I think it would have been less painful if I hadn't had such deep regard and respect for Dr. Torres, for Dr. Stanton, for Dr. Chinn and I'm going to block greatness and- -

CH: Joanne Ashley.

JS: Dr. Ashley, I had such respect and affection. You know we had been out to dinners, to affairs. I went to an affair in Yellow Springs with Dr. Chinn and Dr. Ashley and had a marvelous time. Dr. Ashley and I used to like to go down to The Golden Lamb for dinners occasionally. It was not as if we had no relations outside of work or other than work or other than the situation and beyond that in the faculty I had the deepest affection for many members of the faculty. You

know it made it all the more painful. So I would say that was the hardest thing but I managed to do it and I wanted to be sure to tell you why.

CH: Good.

JS: I believed then and I believe now that it was wrong of the administrators and faculty to resign en masse in an attempt to close a nursing program which had a currently enrolled student body. For those students such a circumstance would be an undeserved disaster. I believed it was right to do all that I could to ensure that the presently enrolled students got the opportunity to complete their program of studies which so many of them were making heroic efforts and sacrifices to attend.

(Recorder is turned off and then back on.)

CH: Would you at that point had the opportunity arisen stayed with the school just long enough to complete the enrolled students or did you see keeping the school open and afloat for future recruitments?

JS: I think I'm going to answer that later but will you please not lose the question?

CH: Okay, I will.

JS: If I don't, I want to because it's such a good one. That's two that are just so good. You're right to it, right on target.

CH: It sounds like you'd thought it through.

JS: Yeah, I hope I'll answer those questions because both I wish to answer both ends rather than an either or answer but I want to elaborate a little.

CH: Okay, that's fine.

JS: That's all I wanted to say about you'd asked in contacting me to look at the early years and talk about the early years and I wanted to get it somewhere in the history of the school that something happened that I don't think very many people knew. When the new people came that fall they're not interested in that. It's all stuff. Who wants to hear about last year? That's not us. We're here to do what we're here to do. So and then that successive waves of and then when people returned certainly they weren't going to open it up. I mean it was let's get on with life you know make different decisions. Let's move on. So moving on kind of became an emphasis from then on. And with each succeeding dean and we had many succeeding deans.

CH: Right.

JS: Each one came in and wanted to move on after the last one. So there really never was any real interest on the part of anybody in looking at what happened and how it took place and what went down and who played what role and who chose what and who didn't chose which. And again the people who did sign in again, on again when the Dr. Stanton and Dr. Torres and the other had left I, you know I don't think they really wanted to talk about that spring either and their choice which was to not commit. The people who left committed and the person who stayed committed and they paid a price and I paid a price and I don't know the people who paid either price where particularly keen on having that explored. But I'm speaking for people who I've never asked, I've never inquired and never will and never would. That is something they may choose, may have incorporated in a presentation in the history what their positions where and how they felt at the time and they can much better speak for themselves. My point in speaking about this is only that there's good reason why this time, this incredible experience in this particular school in the Midwest has never really been investigated.

CH: Right. Did you have, this is just another question just to kind of clarify what you just said. You stated your position I think very clearly, Jean, in terms of your reasoning and your belief at that particular moment. Did you have the opportunity in your meetings, in your dialogue with faculty at that particular time to state that position?

JS: Yes in deed. (Laughs)

CH: Well I would have been surprised if the answer had been no.

JS: I think the comment that I made a moment ago, Dr. Jacobson's comment, it was a very emotional time for us. She took a verbal and visual, visible, verbal and visible stand. Yeah, I didn't think, I wasn't trying to persuade anybody. I really felt we were all going to make the choice we thought was right and I respected the choice other people were going to make. I was sad that they couldn't respect mine. It hurt but that's neither here nor there you just hope people will have respect for your convictions that you hold for theirs and I had respect for people who put their money where their mouth was so to speak. They committed to their convictions and I honored that and I hope that I respect that adequately but yes in deedy I did take a verbal and visible stand. I wouldn't have gotten in trouble with the head if I had just kidded about well I don't know if I'm coming back. I may or I may not you know which I could have done. But like I say I couldn't do that. I thought it was wrong and I needed to say so. Okay? Is that enough?

CH: Thank you.

JS: You're welcome.

CH: Just moving on what were you trying to really accomplish at Wright State?

JS: Okay. What I was trying to accomplish in 1980 and in the struggle of the next thirteen years is exactly what I see as today I visit the present College of Nursing. It's this college that I believed could rise from the ashes of the mass exodus of the administrators and faculty in the School of Nursing in 1980. I was told then if I didn't resign with the others that I would be ashamed to teach in the school that replaced the ones, the others were leaving and it's a tremendous satisfaction to me to see that prediction proved so wrong. I'm very proud to play the part that I did in meeting the challenge of those incredible events spring quarter '80 and all the challenges, which followed it, in the succeeding thirteen years. During those years I kept the following anonymous poem on my desk because it never got easy, not to the last day. So this is what I used to look down at every day when I need to quote: "No ray of sunshine is ever lost but the green which it awakens into existence needs time to sprout and it is not always granted for the sewer to see the harvest. All work that is worth anything is done in faith." Close quote. And I'm just really, really grateful that I lived long enough and it has been granted to me to see the harvest. The struggle to rebuild the nursing program in the years immediately following the events of spring 1980 was and I'm not exaggerating, I'm speaking very factually here very, very difficult. But when I look around here and I see what is here, even when I retired in '93 I felt this way but now I feel so much even more this way. It was all worth it. It was worth it. It was worth every minute of every difficult day that followed that cataclysmic event in spring of '80.

CH: So really working very hard to keep your ideal of what the nursing program and the undergraduate teaching should accomplish was really a mission for you at that point in your life.

JS: Yes. This goes to your question. I wanted there in Dayton to be a undergraduate program for nursing students of the quality and caliber of the one Dean Torres had begun. I wanted nursing to have this. My loyalty ranks this way; the profession of nursing which I have always considered the greatest privilege in the world to be considered member of, the program of nursing that Dr. Torres I think so creatively and inventively envisioned for nursing. In other words I felt my honor in the first was serving the second. And last the third but never really last students, the students who would be the nurses that would come behind me. So that was the hierarchy if you will of motivation that energized me and I think guided my choices in that incredibly pressured and painful circumstance.

CH: Very difficult time afterwards?

JS: It continued to be. It continued to be difficult in so many ways and again the changing deans, the new faculty coming in, trying to hold on to what was so good about what I read that night when I read the curriculum. Trying to keep that vision alive and trying to invite the new people who came in to reach out for it, to engage. People coming in always want to teach what they taught last, what they learned best and bringing them to recognize there's something here for you to grow into. Let go of where you were; reach out for what can so change the way you think about nursing. I had taught nursing process before I came here and I had dabbled, read for myself a little nursing theory but the whole idea that nursing is a conceptual endeavor as well as a physical one that emphasis no where in my undergraduate education, my graduate education, my experience in another university as a faculty member no where had I really seen that brought into such a vibrant, living, active, engaging process as I did here, right here, right here in Dayton, Ohio. (Laughs) And I wanted that in all the years that followed I wanted that to emphasize if I could as far as I could lend any emphasis to maintain that quality, that excellence. Does that make sense?

CH: Yeah, it does. Describe for us some of the interactions that you may have had and you can really select which people you would like to talk about, administrators, colleagues, students.

JS: Okay. My interactions with the School of Nursing administrators has universally been very positive over the sixteen years that I was employed. Dean Torres prior, prior I should note to my refusal to resign from the university in the spring of '80 described me this way. She said quote: "an outstanding teacher and an outstanding person who would be an asset to any system in which she was functioning." Close quote. Julia George who was appointed acting Assistant Dean for the undergraduate program when classes resumed in the fall of '80 described my efforts that year as quote: "working hard to be supportive to the large number of new faculty and to share her knowledge of the curriculum and to help with the continuity of the courses". Close quote. Dean Maloney who came after that commended me in the following years for the same effort. She said quote: "As well as moving the curriculum forward" which I appreciated her recognition of the fact that I wasn't trying to teach something like it was written in stone or a memorial to the previous deans or something but that I was trying to go beyond that, go in the direction it pointed to grayer and wider and deeper conceptual vision of what thinking nursing can be. And I appreciated that comment from her and Donna Dean, oh, Dean Lancaster in 1987 commented on my contribution

by saying that quote: "my loyalty to the school during good as well as rough times was a measure not only of commitment to WSU but of personal integrity." Close quote. I valued that comment highly because we often had dialogues about things that were, I was not always in support and that's difficult when dallying with the dean and you're a faculty member. And for her to make that statement in the face of the fact that we often had those moments of difficulty in our relationship. I think it's precious. (Laughs) It's always nice to have the approval of people who like you anyway but to have the appreciation and respect of someone who often thinks you need some revision to your thinking and or approach that's especially nice. Don't you think?

CH: Uh-huh.

JS: Yeah, I like that. Okay, Donna Dean twice acting dean of the school elected to co-author two publications with me. I think that was nice. In 1992 Dean Jean Swart recommended me for the professor of the year award given by the National Council for the Advancement and Support of Education. So, overall I would say my interactions with the administrators were largely if not, you know extremely positive. I worked hard and I think when you've got a job to do and you have somebody who works you welcome that. With colleagues, well in '78, '82, and '93 my colleagues in the School of Nursing joined the students in awarding me the annual Teaching Effectiveness Award. With the exception of the difficult period of spring 1980 I had very positive relationships with my colleagues during all sixteen years of my employment at Wright State. I really enjoyed helping the new faculty appreciate the unique elements of the curriculum and when some of the person who chose to resign in 1980 returned to accept positions on faculty once again I was really glad to resume our positive relationships. And to get some people back here who knew what, how we, what a good start we gotten off to and could be instrumental in what I cared about so much which was continuing the good parts, moving them forward. So I think by and large my relationships with the faculty were always positive. Interaction with the students; well the education of students always seemed to me to be the primary reason for the existence of the nursing program. Sometimes I thought that got a little obscured in the focus on career trajectories in the faculty but it always amused me because I used to think about that old thing about the church. You know here's the church, here's the steeple when we open the doors where's the people? Well if the students all got up and left what do we all do? You know. (Laughs) So, I always felt they were why we were here. I felt it was a privilege, really a privilege to be their teacher. In nursing education as I first experienced it in the early 1950's it was presented as an

obstacle course presided over by persons with negatively critical attitudes much like that of drill sergeants. I didn't believe nursing education had to be carried out that way. I believed the nursing teacher should care about each student as a unique person, respect their struggles and encourage their efforts. A faculty colleague once described my interaction with students this way "As a teacher Jean challenges the students to achieve their highest level of intellectual and performance capabilities. At the same time she is concerned with students as unique individuals who are maturing through the educational process." A student described my interactions this way, quote; this is the only student quote I'm going to include because it's the one I'll never forget. (Laughs) I loved it. "One of her high points is her ability to let you know you're low points without making you feel inadequate whether she was teaching in class or in clinicals I always left with more determination to achieve my highest potential."

CH: That's neat.

JS: Those words are really precious to me. They and other student appraisals like them over the years are the validation that I did what I set out to do. I became the kind of a teacher that I had wished to have when I myself was a student. So that's faculty, administrators and students.

CH: Yeah, that's great. Do you have any particular special memory of an interaction with a student? Something that just pops up. You don't have to remember the name or anything if you can't remember the name.

JS: Yes, I do. I think one that intrigued me a great deal. I never forgot it. I remember it now through us, I thought this was a remarkable student. She had been a ice skater with the Icescapades and she dressed very theatrically and when not on duty wore false eyelashes out to you know here and long blond hair. Let's just say that she was not, she stood out. (Laughs) She didn't look like the rest of the Wright State undergraduate class. A remarkable lady, she had a wide experience with life and wider then the other students. So, when she made this comment, she hadn't said anything to me before, I was much struck by it. I had done a presentation and concluded and she walked up to the podium and I'm shuffling my papers and she says to me "Well, the last idealist." (Laughs) I loved that. I thought that was so awesome. She sat me up and that isn't easy to do. (Laughs) My jaw strapped shut and all I could think at the moment was I'll have to meditate on that. (Laughs) Food for thought. So that one springs to mind. There's probably others but that, I never thought about that until you asked. Anything else now you want to ask before we get to the next one?

CH: Let's have you talk about your interactions with the wider Wright State campus community.

JS: Yeah, this is worth including.

CH: Uh-huh.

JS: In the spring of 1980 the university community followed the dramatic events of the battle of the School of Nursing administrators with the university administration. When classes, I think they thought it was like watching a mud fight between them, like mud wrestling. (Laughs) But anyway, they all were, it was the talk of the campus. When classes resumed in the fall of '80 I was one of the few nursing faculty who had not been newly hired. For a period of years there after I was asked to serve on university committees that required School of Nursing participation by someone who hadn't just come. This was a time of rebuilding not only of the nursing program but also its image in the university campus community. The task in participating university committees in the years immediately following the acrimonious conflict of 1980 was one of representing the School of Nursing to the campus community. So that's what I set out to do. The challenge was to overcome the negative impressions formed by some members of the campus community during their encounters with the embattled nursing school administrators and their vocal faculty supporters in that spring of '80. And what I set out to do was create a new impression in their minds. This is what a nursing educator is. Forget anything you thought before you met me. Now let's get acquainted. My contribution for example on the university faculty organization where I was in contact with many of the movers and shakers on campus was described as quote: "an influential and effective voice on behalf of the School of Nursing." Close quote. And I was described as quote: "able to explain in clear and concise fashion areas of particular interest to the school in a most positive light." Close quote. I continued to serve the school on various university level committees throughout my sixteen years at Wright State. One of the last of these and a very good experience came in 1992 when Dean Jean Swart appointed me to represent the school on the university quadrennial review committee. This was an especially appropriate and happy assignment as the years of my own service to the university grew to a close.

CH: Anybody in particular out of that wider Wright State campus community that you recall having interactions with?

JS: Oh yes. Dr. Charles Hardman, Dr. actually I don't remember his first name. I'm having a block on it. That's the bad thing, names. Jacob, he was ah- -

CH: Jacob Dorn? Mr. Dorn?

JS: Oh yeah. If you say the name it's easier. I see their faces but I haven't used them so I don't remember their names too well. I think the thing I would add here was some of the people I had to interact with, notably on the university faculty committee, the big one. I was also on the steering committee. Were people who had roles to play in the conflict of 1980 and one must assume they carried forward some animosity from those experiences or at least some negativity.

CH: Uh-huh.

JS: Defining that was a challenge and I was glad to have the opportunity though because I honestly felt so strongly that does not represent what happened, all that you saw. Channel 22 marching up and down the halls, all that, that's not who we are and all the political energy that was dedicated to that struggle. That's not who we are. And yet at the same time we are not who you think we are. We are not the women who took care of your money for your little boy when he was sick and oh nurses are so wonderful and sweet and good and lovely. We are your equals. We are colleagues and we will have respect on that level. We are not maternal earth mother figures on campus. We're not the girls on the hill to be patronized and teased and played with and toyed with and flirted with. We are professional women in a profession and we have a long distinguished and notable history. A history which was advanced by courageous, forward thinking plus seeing, visionary women who took great personal risks and with very little social support were on the scene and were there when we were needed. All the names that are a part of our history, all of the great women that we stand in line with those people and we are in the present day embodiment of them. Respect us, please. I respect you as a history professor. Respect me as a professor of nursing. You didn't need to be belligerent or provocative or combative or aggressive or negative in any sense because I found that, for example when I would come from clinical I had rush from clinicals out at the VA to come back in time for these meetings because you know they were always at the wrong time. I would always whip off my lab coat and wad it up, get my jacket straight and put myself out and come in to the meeting and pose in positive way and put my briefcase down the same way they put theirs down. It was always trying to project if you demean me you do it to spite me. I'll give you no support if you insist on doing so nor any encouragement and I bet you won't do it twice.

CH: So your interactions with the wider Wright State community did that happen more after 1980- -

JS: Oh yes. I had none before.

CH: Prior to that your interactions were within the school itself?

JS: Oh no, I, what happened was in 1980 there was no one when Dean Maloney looked around. Who could I put on these committees? Who did she have? She had a doctoral faculty, Dr. Praeger who we hired that June and I think she had Dr. Mixon and maybe another one but they had, they're not from here.

CH: They're new.

JS: I think to her credit she didn't look at the titles and degrees and that sort of thing first but looked to who could do the job and I could do what needed doing because you see the people in the university who had seen me stand up and hold on to what I had held on to for the school. They knew. They knew me. Eleanor Koch knew me. Other people in the university knew better than anyone in the School of Nursing what role I had played because the person who had witnessed it all went back to Lexington and took that piece of information with her.

CH: Uh-huh.

JS: So sending me out was I think a stroke of genius on her part. Not because it was just me but again it brought the continuity piece. It wasn't like this whole brand new school over there.

CH: Uh-huh. Right. The continuity was important to the credibility.

JS: There was only Marge Kinney, Grace Thomas, Joanne Cross, me and Julia George who had come back. She had gone and come back. That was the continuity. So I got assigned to all sorts of things to do that I would have never been assigned to otherwise by virtue of the fact that I didn't have the doctorate. So as soon as we had enough doctorately prepared faculty who also had some knowledge of the school and the program and it's curriculum and could represent us I was replaced. I never again served on university faculty committee. I did serve on university faculty but those were the ones where the dean felt I could be useful, expertise, things in the medical school, things related to gerontology that kind of thing but these big committees that the doctorally prepared graduate school faculty in the School of Nursing take responsibility for as soon as we got some I was you know happily sent back to my- - it was quite a load to continue teaching and carrying forward the ideas in the School of Nursing and then also be out

there in the university community. So I was not in that sense reluctant to turn over these responsibilities to these wonderful people who came because we had very fine people coming.

CH: But you were a very busy person at that time as you described it really in terms of continuing to teach a full time load, mentoring and orienting new faculty and attempting to keep things moving forward in terms of the curriculum as well as taking leadership roles on numerous committees on the university level.

JS: Yeah. I felt like the little boy with his fingers in the diaper. (Laughs)

CH: And I didn't mention the community. Did you feel that you had a role in 1980 with the community of nursing and the community of- -?

JS: Yes, I have some more.

CH: You have some more content on all that?

JS: Yes, that had to continue I mean you know you had to keep it all up. So it was I would say the most stressful thing I've ever lived through. Looking back I don't know how you do those things. It was exhausting but it got done. (Laughs) It got done.

CH: Let's move on and talk about the relationships with the community institutions, hospitals, agencies.

JS: Yes. In the fall of '80 I proposed to Assistant Dean Julia George the assistant acting dean then that the School of Nursing establish a geropsychiatric clinical practicum in a secured psychiatric unit at the Veterans Administration Medical Center. The field of geropsychiatric medicine was in its infancy at that time and I was eager for our program to provide learning opportunities in this developing field of practice. I went and had myself certified in gerontology, which was very new, and also I attended the first gerontological nursing convention in Florida. The joke that I had at the time, it was in January, those gerontological nurses know where to have their conventions. (Laughs) The only time I went to another convention it was in Detroit. (Laughs) I just felt it was so important. I had been involved with this on the west coast as well as with wellness but the wellness piece was picked up by another member of the faculty Joan Cross and she was moving forward so energetically in that direction I didn't think she needed my help. What I saw was that, what I saw on the west coast where I had done wellness interviewing and wellness assessment with aged people, gerontological clientele and I had focused parts of my adult psc [sic] masters degree in that direction as well. And you know the Andrick Foundation was out there and Irene Mortson-Bernside was my mentor in my graduate program.

CH: She's a noted author in gerontology.

JS: Yes. Yes. Early. Pioneer. The field was moved on whew on. But these were the people who established the idea that there was a body of knowledge and a unique need set for the older generation just like there was for pediatrics. There was no pediatrics at one time and there were no geriatrics in another and there certainly were no pycogeriatrics [sic] or geropsychiatric nursing. So I had been involved with that and I wanted to see it happening here because I believed it was a wave of the future and I wanted a program to get on board. So, beyond that also I was really eager to strengthen the nursing school's connection with the Veterans Administration Medical Center in order to open- -

END OF TAPE 1, SIDE A

START OF TAPE 1, SIDE B

CH: So Jean can you just restate what you just said?

JS: Additionally I was eager to strengthen the nursing school's connection with the Veterans Administration Medical Center in order to open up new possibilities for other learning opportunities there. I feel that is such a rich site and I wanted us to get in on the ground floor and get established there. So, in the early 1980's I served on the board of trustees at the downtown senior citizen center of the greater Dayton area. In that capacity I was called upon to chair the health committee of that agency. In that role I led the health committee in planning, evaluating and selecting a health service agency to operate a wellness clinic in the Biltmore Plaza, a downtown high-rise residence for the elderly. I could be wrong. I think that was a first in the Dayton community, a wellness clinic for the elderly in sight in any circumstance. It was a very exciting thing to do and I was very pleased that it got a good start and I hoped it would and encourage other people to see that as a thing to do. In the mid 1980's I worked with the chair of the WSU Department of Medicine Society in the School of Medicine and the dean of the United Theological Seminary to prepare and conduct a multidisciplinary course in ethics in an interprofessional context. This multidisciplinary course provided the nursing students with opportunities to work with WSU medical students and United Theological Seminary students as well as invited nursing, medical and pastoral community leaders in the exploration of applied ethics.

CH: Was that the first interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary course that your aware of at Wright State that combined the School of Medicine, School of Nursing- -

JS: That I'm aware of with that caveat because I'm most hesitant to say I did the first one because you don't know that.

CH: But at that point you weren't aware of one?

JS: I had no copy. I had nothing to pattern after. That was, as I grew out of I did my sabbatical in that period and I did it at the University of Dayton of all places. Everybody said oh you want to go somewhere else. I said well if it came my way I'd go to Sweden. (Laughs) But UD had what I wanted and I was only going to get a year at half pay and I had to pay for the tuition myself. So those were constraining factors and also I had my father who I was taking care of at that time. He was still alive and in a nursing home. So there were other reasons but principally the reason really was I knew I could get what I wanted. I just knew how to shake the tree. So I went over there and what I wanted was I wanted to get through their study in ethical problem solving and ethics. And I had the great good fortune to study with Dr., I'm blocking on his name again. It'll come. Anyway he was teaching a course, he was the dean of the philosophy department but he taught a course in law and ethics. This was fourth year law students and I was the only nurse who ever wondered in the background. (Laughs) And it was wonderful and I learned so much. And I also did two semesters with a moral philosopher in geriphiology. So it was a simple matter for me. I had no problems doing it. I loved doing it. Simply extractulating a body of theory and bringing it, bringing those parts and pieces and applications into the nursing end of it and into medical ethics and going forward. And I developed at that time an elective out of that which did a lot. We had a lot of fun with it. It was a good elective. Just a little elective in ethics and also I did research on that field in which I did a presentation. Donna Dean worked with me and we did presentations at the International Nurses Meeting. I think that was the title. Up in Columbus and presented our research there. I really felt like I needed far more grounding in ethics. I had been doing it on what I could figure out. So that was that. And out of that then came, grew this interdisciplinary. I approached the people involved and we went with the idea and it was wonderful. It really was. It was one of the most stimulating things I had the opportunity to do at Wright State. I felt it was a unique opportunity because, to sum it up so that the community leaders, one community leader pastor, doctor, nurse. For example Sue Fitzsimmons who was then VP for nursing participated. That's what I mean when I say nursing leaders in the community. Three of those people and then a mix of medical, theological and nursing students would meet in small groups and we would ask for them to give a presentation to get the groundwork and then

they would take the case studies to explore and then come back and share insight. And it was, I think, it was wonderful for the medical students because well duh, people have insight. (Laughs) It's a real eye opener for them and they said this. They said as much that probed them really, well duh, we want to know how you think and how good it was. But it was good for the nurses too. To see doctors in formation and to realize the limitations of their educational opportunities in an up close and personal way. I think gave them a very enriched perspective on how they could be supportive and useful in expanding and enriching and depending the physicians in a personal grasp of a situation. So I really loved doing that one.

CH: And one of the things just to carry it forward a little bit. We did undergo a curriculum redesign and you were still here when we were doing that work. One of the important points in that particular curriculum is of course in legal and ethical foundation which not every bachelorate program across the country puts that much emphasis to have a whole course for undergraduate students on legal ethical foundations and I think you had something to do with that course and making sure it had a prominent spot.

JS: Uh-huh. Yes. The students used to laugh because I would say to them you must when you're charting you must mentally begin every notation dear judge. (Laughs) I wanted them so much in the legislatress world we live in to be sensitized and aware of their responsibility to document both accurately and fully but at the same time to check your work. So that legal piece is just as meaningful to me as the ethical.

CH: Right.

JS: But on the other hand emotionally the ethical was more important in this regard. I really cared about the profession not losing its sense of the moral high ground. This is not just another way to make a living and if this is then you better use nurse in every sense of its context and anybody can bare the name. It's those who are in continuity, that are in moral, physiological, spiritual continuity with the people who lifted us out of desk caps and mops and very dampness and lifted us into the possibilities that we enjoy now today to make a difference in health care. To not, to not honor that, to not respect it, to not value it to say nursing is just well a pretty good living, well you know hey it beats selling cheese and the pay's less. That drives me, drove me beyond consideration. That is just, I think it's anathema and I did everything I could every day to represent to the students that you're a part of something extraordinary.

CH: Let's move on and just ask how your experiences at Wright State affected your career since then. We sort of got ahead of ourselves a little bit.

JS: (Laughs) My career since then. I should say I don't have any. (Laughs) It ended it.

CH: You're a retiree.

JS: That sounds a little bit uncourt. My years at Wright State came as the last of a thirty-seven career in nursing education. In 1992 I retired after sixteen years service at the university. In 1996 the Wright State Board of Trustees granted me the title of Professor Emeritus and I will always be grateful to the present dean Patricia Martin for seeing to it that I received this recognition. So that's how it affected my career. (Laughs)

CH: And I think you've enjoyed your retirement. You were saying since then the last ten years have been- -.

JS: Yes, I have. It really wore me out, Wright State did. (Laughs)

CH: When you tell about all you were doing you were a very busy, busy person.

JS: Uh-huh along with, we all have our personal lives to maintain and to devote what energy they require. Sometimes your life requires more and sometimes less your own family situation and your world, keeping your world outside Wright State happening. So I was really, really glad to retire. I was especially tickled that I won the Teaching Effectiveness Award that year.

CH: Neat.

JS: Yeah, I felt like I went out on the top of my game. The last class I taught was that illustrious and wonderful class I don't know what number it is now but the introductory class. I used, I told the students when I walked in up to the podium I said the name of this class is Everything You Ever Wanted To Know About Nursing Except How To Do It. (Laughs)

CH: Very good.

JS: They had their teeth set not to like it and to think it was stupid and whatever. I really put a lot of my heart into that last course because I knew it would be the last time I'd ever teach it. And they presented me with a beautiful plaque and flowers. So that was extremely touching. Like I say I was exhausted and ready to go and happy to turn it all over but on the other hand I did, I do cherish that fact that I did, the last day of the last class of the last fifteen minutes I put as much into it as I put into any I ever did. That's my career.

CH: Is there anything that we haven't talked about that you'd like to share with us?

JS: Well, one little thing. You haven't asked me; excuse me I have a little cold or bronchitis today. Forgive me. I thought you might want to ask me if I would do everything I did in the crisis of spring quarter 1980 in the same way if I had it to do over again.

CH: Good question. That would have been a good question.

JS: Uh-huh. And my answer would be yes. Name of an old hymn which includes something like these words and I don't have it perfectly but it goes something like this quote: "Once to every man and nation comes the moment to decide when right is on the scaffolds and wrong is on the throne." And spring of 1980 presented me with that moment in my life. It would have been incredibly easy to have gone. I didn't know the school would reopen in the fall even though I had signed a contract. I mean that contract could be rip and you know and I again was taking care of my father and actually support him. So I had to have a job. So I had during that spring quarter after I had signed on and I told them I assured Julia I'm only doing this and when I interviewed other places I pointed out that I may not be available in the fall because I may be returning to Wright State. I have a contract there, which I will honor if there's a school to teach it in. But you know I didn't know. Who could have thought with everybody leaving that there'd be anything here? So I had applied for two jobs in Louisville, Kentucky and had been very favorably received and you know had my positions lined up if the school tore up my contract and said just forget it. And it would have been easy then to go then. It would have been the easiest thing to do in the world. I wouldn't have been going for the reasons other people were going you know I would have gone because I thought oh my gosh it's going to be hell here in the fall. (Laughs) Even if there is a school, how and what are we going to do? How are we going to do this? Who will come? Who will be wanting to come after what has gone on here? So, it was very tempting but I didn't want to do it. If I really wanted to do it I would have gone ahead and done it because I could of. I interviewed during derby week in Louisville and had a wonderful time. (Laughs) It was a positive experience and they were very enthusiastic and one was a catholic school and I was a devout practicing catholic and I had always enjoyed being part of catholic education various times when I was teaching at diploma level. I just couldn't do that to the students. It wasn't right. So that's what I did. I came back. What helped me was I firmly believed and it wasn't just the students but it was in large. They were the embodiment. They were the human piece, the thing that looked back at me when I looked at them. But what helped me was to come back and to say no this is the choice I'm making. I'm going to come back. The Wright State University School of

Nursing I believed really was here to make through it's graduates a positive and substantiative difference in the way nursing was being practiced in Dayton. I did not think that Dean Torres and Stanton came to Dayton, Ohio of all places and put this thing in place and got this idea going to have it just fizzle out and die and maybe somebody else would understand nursing and see what they saw. They saw what I saw and maybe somewhere else they would do it. Surely somewhere else they would. Many did. They had. But why not here? Why should this effort die because of the what I thought in all honesty to be was a political struggle between the administrators of the university and the administrators of the School of Nursing. I did not see that had a direct relationship to the curriculum. I mean to the project, to creating wonderful young practicing nurses who would go out there in the community and turn this from a hand maiden diploma school mentality approach to practice into what is yet to come. What it could be. So that motivated, that was my energy. It was the students. It was the profession. Like I say the profession does not, has had a long history of people doing what they think is right. If I was wrong, I'm wrong but I believed it was right. So I wanted to get in line behind the others if they thought it was right in their generation, in their world, in their time. And I wanted to move the profession forward and I wanted to honor the students for their, some of them where making such efforts. They were, I knew them intimate, up close and personal and they were like divorced, single parents working three jobs, struggling. I had the most beautiful letter from one years later who had come in my office in hysterics. "They're going to close the school. They're going to close the school." Because again she had a daughter she was raising alone and she had no background or education. Almost all first time university students in their family working class people. And she said, "I can't believe they're doing this. I put everything in this. This is my hope that my daughter would have a better life. I could give her more." And so I told her you write the words my goals backwards on your glasses so that everything you look at here in the next two or three months you look at it in terms of what are my goals and your goal is to graduate from the School of Nursing. So get your mind on your theory. Get your mind on your course work. Get your mind on your practice of nursing and let all the rest of this stuff go squirreling around. It will take care of itself but you have what you need to get from this program. Well, she wrote me a couple years later, several years later actually. She was working at Cleveland Clinic and she was, had done her masters and she said my daughter and I have a very good life. She said I have a beautiful apartment, drive a good car, my daughter's in a good school. You know that was what it was

about in terms of the human, the one on one thing. So, yes, yes I would do it again. Now I hope I would do it again if I knew how hard it was going to be.

CH: (Laughs)

JS: I'm very; honestly I'll close with this. I'm very proud. I'm very proud of the part I played in ensuring the program's survival and this is why, why I'm proud that I did that. Because it's graduates now, it's graduates then that like it's graduates now they are making that difference. If this program is truly what it was ten years ago when I walked out the door and I believe it is then they're still out there making a difference every day in how nursing is practiced and that's worth surviving. That's worth saving.

CH: Beautiful. Thank you.

JS: Thank you. Are we off?

CH: Yes.

END OF INTERVIEW