

College of Nursing Oral History Project

Oral History Interviewee: Dan Kirkpatrick (DK)

Interviewer: Donna Miles Curry (DMC)

Date: February 1, 2021

DMC: “Today we are doing an interview for the oral history project for the CONH at Wright State University. Today’s date is February 1, 2021. We are doing this via Zoom as well as an audio recording. Present today are Dr. Karen O’Connell, a co-investigator with myself, Dr. Miles Curry. I am the primary interviewer. Our honored guest and interviewee is Dan Kirkpatrick. Thank you so much for agreeing to be interviewed and most of the time, of course, we will be focusing on you.”

DMC: “So Dan, why don’t you start off and tell us a little pinch about your background. You did share with us, thank you, your resume. How did you come to Dayton and particularly how did you come to Wright State?”

DK: “Well, a good question. I joined the Air Force, came on active duty in 1979. I had been a reservist since 1971, enlisted as an air medical evacuation technician. I went to nursing school while I was flying air evacuations all over the Pacific. When I came on active duty in 1979, my first assignment was Wright Patterson Air Force Base. I met my future wife on the first day I arrived. I was told to report to the nursing staff development for orientation and here it is 41 years later, 42 years later, and I am still reporting to her. But anyway, how I got to Wright Patt this last time, we had 3 assignments at Wright Patt in 2005, I got reassigned. I was stationed at the Air Force Academy Hospital in Colorado Springs. I was the chief nurse and the medical operations squadron commander there. And I got an assignment back to Wright Patt to be the Chief Nurse at Wright Patt Medical Center. That was an assignment I had asked for several assignments and finally got it. While I was there, I got involved with all the Chief Nurses in the Dayton area for the different hospital systems, Premier, Kettering, Greene Memorial, and also the Dean of the Nursing School, Dr. Pat Martin.

And it was about 6 months prior to my retirement and Dr. Martin said to me, ‘What are your plans when you retire?’ And I said, ‘Well, I have been offered other jobs, which I had been offered a job out in a hospital in Idaho (which I didn’t want to go to Idaho).’ And I said, ‘What I’d really like to do is teach.’ She said, ‘What do you want to teach?’ And I said, ‘Well, my clinical background is mental health and I’d also be interested in teaching some administration.’ Like I said, ‘I’d been a chief nurse. I was very fortunate. I got to be the chief nurse at four different Air Force hospitals which is pretty unusual. Usually, you get to get one, maybe two. I was the chief nurse at Misawa Air Base Hospital in Japan and Eglin Air Force Base in Florida, the Air Force Academy Hospital, and Wright Patt. My favorite job in the Air Force was being the chief nurse. I was also a Squadron Commander at 3 of those 4 places. I was a deployed group commander or hospital commander in 2003 when I got deployed to Kuwait. I was the hospital commander there and we ended up being the closest, largest hospital to the Iraqi border

so we got some of the first casualties of Operation Iraqi freedom. So anyway, I mentioned to Dr. Martin that I'd like to teach and she goes, 'Would you consider teaching at Wright State?' And I said, 'Absolutely.' And she said, 'What is your salary range?' And, I told her and she went, 'Oooh, I don't know if we can do that. We don't normally pay mastered prepared nurses that much.' And I said, 'Well, I have actually been offered jobs that actually paid more.' I said, 'See what you can come up with.' So, she called me a week later and she said she had spoken to the Department of Emergency Medicine, Glenn Hamilton, who was the chair of the Department of Emergency Medicine. They knew I had a background in Disaster Preparedness via the Air Force and she said, 'We've worked out a deal. We will each hire you half-time and we will each pay half of what you are asking so you can get what you are asking. You will be a half-time employee of the Department of Emergency Medicine for the Boonshoft School of Medicine and a half-time employee for the College of Nursing and Health, teaching mental health.' And I thought, 'That's great. The best of both worlds.' So, I did that for a year and at the end of the year, they both came to me, independently, and said, 'We'd like you full time. We want you to drop the other half.' And, so I mulled that over and it was teach mental health full time for the College of Nursing and Health or be involved in the development of the Calamityville Project, a disaster preparedness facility and I have to be honest with you, that sounded a lot more exciting.

So, for the next three years, I taught full time for the Department of Emergency Medicine. I dabbled in some things for Dr. Martin, nothing full time, but I helped put together the National Center for Medical Readiness Tactical Laboratory at Calamityville, commonly known as Calamityville. And so, I did that for 3 years, helped build the site where they are still currently located and they are still active. But I still had an interest in what was going on in the College of Nursing and Health. One of the psychiatrists I had worked with back in my second assignment at Wright Patt from 93-96 was now out at the Dayton VA and he commented to me one day and said, 'Hey, I heard that the School of Aerospace Medicine is moving up to Wright Patt which it was scheduled for. It was down at Brooks Air Force Base in San Antonio where I had actually gone to Flight School years before back in 1979. So anyway, he made a comment. He said, 'Why don't you consider developing a master's degree in Flight and Disaster Nursing and I kind of thought about that and I said, 'That sounds really interesting'. So I went and talked to Dr. Martin and she really liked the idea. So, she and I made an appointment with Col. Kimberly Siniscalchi, who at that time was at Wright Patt Air Force Base as the AFMC Commander. And we sat in her office for about an hour and talked about what a master's degree in Flight and Disaster nursing looked like. We kicked around some different ideas. She loved the idea and said, 'I am very interested in this and I will do what I can to make it happen'.

A week or two later it was announced that Col. Siniscalchi had been selected to be the chief nurse of the Air Force and that she would be moving to Washington, D.C. And I thought, that that kills it. She is gonna be gone and is going to be way too busy. Well, this will never happen. Well, it was only week after she got promoted to general (2 star) and she calls me up and says and 'Dan, this is Kim.' And I said, 'Oh, Kim Siniscalchi. General Siniscalchi.' And she says to me, 'I am Kim to you and you are Dan'. And I said, 'No, you are Gen. Siniscalchi'. 'Dan, are you retired?' And I said 'Yes.' 'Then you call me Kim. Because if you won't, I am going to continue calling you Colonel.' Some light hearted humor about it. 'Kim, what's this

phone call about?' 'I will be at Wright Patt in a month so I want an update of the master's program.' 'Yes, Ma'am you will have an update.'

So quickly, I got together with a bunch of other people, to get this together. Dr. Curry, I am sure you remember. We were scrambling to talk to different people. I knew the commander of the School of Aerospace Medicine. He and I had been squadron commanders together at the Air Force Academy and I am blocking on his name. Anyway, I talked to him about it. I talked to the folks at Calamityville about it and what we decided to do was come up with a masters that would be an adult clinical nurse specialist. And the first year would be all the adult clinical nurse specialist classes, advanced pharmacology, pathophysiology, those kinds of classes. The second year would focus on 1 semester of flight medicine type of stuff and the other semester on disaster preparedness. So that's what we came up with. And the disaster preparedness stuff mostly had to deal with getting speakers in who were experts on disaster preparedness, a lot of those were people at Calamityville. One guy, Jim Bruenberg, had started working at Calamityville. He had moved from New York City where he was a New York City fireman and he had worked at Calamityville about 2 weeks when the 911 occurred. And the New York City fire department called him back. And eventually, he came back to us and really knew what happened with 911. We had other people there, Jack Smith, who had been involved in a number of disasters, Hurricane Katrina. So, they really were the subject master experts on disaster preparedness. You might know Tener Goodwin Veenema, who wrote "Disaster Nursing and Emergency Preparedness." She is a nursing disaster expert. She has written several books on disaster preparedness and her textbook is considered the model of nursing disaster preparedness so I got her on the phone and talked to her. I had actually met her at a disaster conference about 6 months before so we used her book as the textbook. She was very willing, let us know how we can help, that kind of thing. So for the flight nurse part, I talked with people here at Wright Patt, we got several instructors for the flight surgeon course. And the guy who was the commander of the course, he taught a class of pathophysiology on flying, what happens different things that occur during flight, the altitude of flight, different things that occur during flight. 'I will be happy to lecture for your flight nurses in your program.' And he said to me, 'How much do you want me to "dumb down" what I teach the flight surgeons?' And I said, 'What?' And he said, 'Well, how much do you want me to lower the level?' And I looked at him and I said to him, 'I don't want you to lower it at all. I want you to teach the exact same course you teach the flight surgeons who are flight nurses.' And he looked at me and said, 'OK, that's what you are going to get' and he did. And they did great. They didn't have any problems with what he was teaching. We had another guy, Terry Correll, Karen, you might remember him. He was at the school of aerospace, a psychiatrist and what he taught was dealing with patients who become psychotic in flight, whether they are already psychotic and on meds or because of hypoxic issues or other stresses of flight, they become unruly. And he came over and talked about dealing with that. We had 2 nurses who had just retired or were still on active duty, Beth and John Hewing. I don't know, Karen, if you knew them. And they had both been flight nurses. They were a married couple. And Beth was an expert on dealing with OB emergencies in flight so she came and taught that section in the flight nurse course. She was fantastic. She talked about all those different OB things that I know nothing about. I am a psych nurse so if I have a problem with a flight nurse, I just ask them how they feel. Anyway, she talked about that. Her husband John

had been one of the air evac squadron commanders so he talked about the administrative side of dealing with flights and how flights are scheduled, the flight center at Scott Air Force Base and he talked about Eglin. The students were mostly active duty air force but we did have couple of civilians a couple of times and it really taught them about how the military air evac system worked. We also had people from Care Flight from Miami Valley come and give lectures about how civilian care flight worked. And we were able to work it out that Care Flight from Miami Valley allowed our graduate students to actually go on a couple of Care Flights and our military nurses had never done this so it was a novel experience for them. The civilian nurses, we took them out to Wright Pat and they got tours of C17's and I think by then we had C17's but they got introduced to how air evac works on the military side. So, I think they got a pretty good education.

And then at the end of the disaster semester I taught, after the first semester that we taught the graduate course, I had the person who was ran the undergraduate program came to me after the first semester and I am blocking on her name. Ran the undergraduate program for nursing? Carry or Sherri or something like that.” DMC: ‘Was it before Debbie Ulrich? Was it Candy?’ DK: ‘Oh, Candy Cherrington and she came me after the first semester of the master’s program and said, ‘Dan, I have a question for you, our undergraduate students in their last semester who have scholarships are required to take one more class and so they have to take an elective. The only electives available to them are Kayaking, Rock Climbing , and Zumba. So that’s the choices they had,’ .I said, ‘That doesn’t sound very nursing.’ And she said, ‘No, and that’s the problem.’ ‘Would you be willing to put together an undergraduate disaster nursing course elective class for 3 credit hours?’ I said, ‘Sure.’ So, we taught that and we taught that at Calamityville. It was one evening a week for 3 hours and it was packed. We had 30 plus students almost all the time and the students loved it because we gave a lot of what the masters students got; and we gave them some toned-down stuff. We had people from Calamityville come in and lecture them about different things. I had a guy who belongs to an Oakwood ham radio club. He came spent the entire evening with them and brought 30 ham radios with him. We taught the students how to communicate via radio in a disaster, which a lot of them had never done. So, they all learned how to talk on the radio, and they were all taught the phonetic alphabet and the last half of the class we scattered them around the building because it was evening and there was nothing else going on. We did a mini-exercise where they had to report their casualties on the radio, we had some at command posts. They all really learned about in a disaster how to talk on a radio. The critiques were always very, very powerful for that. They said, “We had no idea how that worked”. So, they learned that side. So, the culminating class, the graduate students, one of their requirements was, they had to put on a disaster exercise. So, I taught them how to organize a disaster exercise, all the different tasks that you have to do, all the planning. “Donna, you may remember this. All the stations we had set up. We had nursing faculty. I think you were part of this.... Out there at Calamityville and the undergraduate students were put into teams and went to each of the stations. One station was cardiac casualties, another was orthopedics, you know they had all different types of casualties that they had to treat. They were given first aid bags. One of the places was down in the sub-basement at Calamityville. Wearing a head lamp, they had to find crying-out patients. And we set it up where they had to literally crawl on their bellies to get back into it. We had IV stuff in their bag and we had an IV arm laying next to it. And they

had to start an IV on the IV arm by the head lamp. It was a team thing. So, they all came out of it saying if I could start an IV under those circumstances, I could start one anywhere. So, I think the class went extremely well. The critiques, not to brag, but a lot of students said it was the best class in the College of Nursing because they got to do fun stuff. They had tests that they had to take WebCT. The students did very well. So that was that course. Unfortunately, when Kim Siniscalchi was no longer the Chief Nurse of the Air Force, Dorothy Hogg became the Chief Nurse and Karen, you may remember her, and Dorothy had never been a flyer, had never been an air evac nurse. She did not see the value of having masters prepared nurses going to the 3 different flight squadrons around the world. And she stopped the students going through it. And because there were no more air force students, that killed the program. I will brag on Dorothy Hogg. She went from being Chief Nurse of the Air Force and today is the Air Force Surgeon General, the most senior Air Force Medical Officer, three-star general. The first non-nurse surgeon general, the first female Surgeon General and it's about time. But she has, to my understanding, done a very good job with that. But I still have in the back of my heart that she's the one who killed our flight master's program.

So, I finished up my career at Wright State, the last year or so just doing Psych classes and I had been to several different places doing psych. I first did it, the first year I was at Miami Valley, then I was at Good Samaritan, then the last couple of years I was at Dayton VA. The first summer I taught psych was the first summer right after I retired. They had me doing psych lectures and the clinicals at Chillicothe VA. That was back when we had that extension program at Chillicothe for students up here and I mean, I went from being the Chief Nurse at the hospital and 2 weeks later I am teaching psych classes and clinicals in Chillicothe. We did the class Wednesday evening, had clinicals on Thursday and Friday. I would drive to Chillicothe on Wednesday, teach the lecture, spend the night, and do the all-day clinical on Thursday, spend the night and do the all-day clinical on Friday and then come home. I did that the summer semester. I actually have great memories. The folks at the Chillicothe VA were fantastic. It was not a very nice VA facility, especially for psych. The staff was great. But the facility where the patients were was not very nice. They had one big screen TV that was so old and that's all the patients had for entertainment. So, when I got back to Fairborn, we collected money, we bought them a new big-screen TV and a couple of veterans and I drove it down to VA at Chillicothe and they put it up. I had a great experience doing that and I really, really enjoyed teaching, both for the College of Nursing and the School of Medicine. It was interesting for the Department of Emergency Medicine. I was considered on their faculty for the half year of the three years. I was the only nurse on their faculty. It was interesting going to their faculty meetings versus College of Nursing faculty meetings...a lot different but interesting."

DMC: "So how were they different?"

DK: "Well, I am going to say this, and I think you will understand. What's the favorite saying of what nurses do to nurses?"

DMC: "Backstab".

DK: “Well, we eat our young. Yeah, I saw that in the Air Force I got in several kinds of minor situations with nurses. Karen, you probably did this too. When became a Chief Nurse, I always met with the Senior Nurses and told them right up front, ‘If I ever catch you eating our young, you will no longer be in the position you are in. I will not tolerate that.’ And people got better. I did see some of that among the nursing faculty. You know, I was used to it so it didn’t bother me. I could tell some of the junior faculty were bothered by it. Some of the comments that were made, the way they were treated. School of Medicine, I never saw that kind of thing. It was more professional and it wasn’t a male/female thing. Because we had plenty of female faculty at the School of Medicine”.

DMC: “Would you classify the term they use now a lot is bullying? Would you classify the behavior that you might have seen in some of the meetings, maybe what they might consider bullying? Maybe what they might believe?”

DK: “I would consider it minor bullying. Not like some of boiling you out... I would classify it as minor bullying, but it goes back to ‘We eat our young.’

DMC: “Interesting.”

DK: “I honestly did not see that in the Department of Emergency Medicine. Now behind closed doors, I bet it went on. But you never saw that in a faculty meeting. There were disagreements, but they were more professional about their disagreements. It’s just what I saw. It was never bad in the College of Nursing. No one really picked on me. There were some faculty who were down for bullying others and those never gave me a hard time. I don’t know if it was because I was male and because I was an experienced nurse or whatever.”

“My last two years, teaching for the College of Nursing, I was also the mayor of Fairborn, so I don’t know if people, because we are in Fairborn... I had Dr. Hopkins (University President), and we had become friends. I was mayor the 4 whole years I was at WSU, and I met with him in his office quarterly to talk about the interaction between the university and the city. We never, ever, not even once, talked about the College or Nursing, nor about the School of Medicine. Neither one of us ever brought that up, we kept it strictly, the University and the City of Fairborn. Now, I maybe it was the fact that I was the mayor, some of the faculty thought I was off limits to harass. I don’t know. But I was never harassed. But I did see some other faculty and they would come talk to me and as a Psych nurse, people were always coming into my office, shut the door and say, ‘Can I talk to you?’

DMC: “And so Dr. Hopkins was the president of the university at that time, I just want to clarify”. “Oh, yes, he actually came down to my office one day, and you know that “Double Bowler” program that he had? He actually presented me with one. And I was totally surprised. I didn’t know what it was.”

DMC: “That’s great.”

DK: “He comes down to my office, knocks on my door, and I opened it up and said, ‘Oh, Dr. Hopkins.’ He said, ‘I have something for you.’ And he says, ‘This is something we give to faculty and or very engaged people with the community and so since you are the mayor, you are

certainly engaged, so here.’ And he hands me this pen. Karen, what it is, “He called it the Double Bowler because the Wright Brothers both wore bowler hats and it’s one of the logos for Wright State are these two bowlar hats, there’s actually a statue on the campus, a bench with 2 brass double bowlar hats, so he created this thing where people in the community who did a lot for the university got a double bowlar pen. And some of the local politicians, he gave to. Totally surprised me one day.”

DK: “Let’s see what other questions do you have? I thoroughly enjoyed teaching at WSU. I had the opportunity to work with some great faculty. Donna and I spent a lot of time talking about things. I got the chance, because of this master’s program, I spent a lot of time talking with Dr. Martin and Rosalie Mainous about it. Devon Berry was very active with me in things. I personally never had any trouble with any of the faculty.

DMC: “Good.”

DK: “I thought the faculty was great. Donna, you and I had a great working relationship”.

DMC: “So with Devon, were you working on the certificate? I was asking what you worked on with Devon. I know at one time I thought you were trying to come up with the National Disaster Certificate. Was that it?”

DK: “Yes, he was part of that. Sherri Farra and I were very involved. We actually drove back to DC and met with the A&E staff at A&E headquarters in Silver Springs and went and talked about it. Devon was involved in that. There’s another project that Devon did. We were in that Conference Room that he was kind of head honchoing. We spent a lot of time. I was on the active working group with him. You know, trying to think, but Devon was very helpful. He was a guy, and, you know, we would have guy talks, not about girls, but you know, he was very helpful. You, Dr. Martin. She is what got me into this...’What are you going to do when you retire?’ I am trying to think who else.”

DMC: “I tried that with Karen, but it didn’t work.”

DK: I actually proofread Sherry Farra’s PhD dissertation and helped her with some of the editorial things.”

DMC: “Oh, nice.”

DK: “I am trying to think of who else. There were a lot of faculty that I worked very closely with. The lady who was actually technically over the master’s program PhD and...

DMC: “Well, first was Bobbie Gray...”

DK: “Oh, no, it wasn’t Bobbie Gray. No, Bobbi was right across the hall from me. Bobbie and I used to play music loud between us. And I don’t know if you know about our hallway. Our hallway would always crank up the music. “In a gadda da vida” was always one of the favorites. We would all get out in the hallway and dance. Bobbi was heavily involved in that. I think this nurse was in the other hallway. She ended up technically being in charge of that master’s program because she had her PhD because I didn’t and they couldn’t put me in charge. Anyway,

she was very helpful. There were a lot of good people. Again, none of the faculty ever really gave me a hard time. That's one of the things I appreciate."

DMC: "Good, that's nice."

DMC: "Do you feel, obviously, you are never going to really retire, Dan? But do you feel?"

DK; "I am on thirty plus committees."

DMC: "That is so good. You are my role model. I think I only have about ten. So how do you feel like your experiences at Wright State have affected you in just your life? I was going to say your career, but we're all in this."

DK: "Well, yeah, getting deeper in the disaster preparedness. I was always in that term, when you are in the military, you do spend time doing disaster preparedness. Typically, you spend time out in the field, doing preparedness stuff. You get a lot and that really helped teaching that at Wright State because I learned a lot. And, interesting, several years ago, we were always getting people stopping off at Calamityville because it had become known throughout this area. There was a guy at Penn State University, Frank Ritter, has a PhD in Artificial Intelligence, and somehow, he got involved in Disaster Preparedness. He came to Cleveland, we talked for awhile and I don't know how we ever got on the subject but I said someday somebody needs to write a book on disaster preparedness that is meant for the average layperson or nondisaster preparedness medical person. When Covid first hit early last year, he called me up and said 'We are thinking about taking your idea of coming up with a book and putting it for Covid, coming up with a book.' Well, three weeks ago, he sent me the book. They have actually published the book, published in December 2020. He credited me for pre-editing it, which I did."

DMC : "Well, neat."

DK: "I found some typos in it, but under the acknowledgements, the second sentence, he goes, 'Dan Kirkpatrick provided numerous comments on style and correctness and provided the idea for this project years before this pandemic. So..'"

DMC: "How nice."

DK: "This is a book about the pandemic and I would urge you to consider getting a copy. It's fairly basic, but it's got some good stuff in it. What we really liked about it was at the end of every chapter, were a series of questions with answers, but things about the pandemic. Yeah, is it really important to wear a mask under these circumstances, etc.? They published the book in December 2020 and he sent me a couple of copies. But it is skills to obstruct pandemics and the primary author is Frank Ritter."

DMC: "How nice. Yeah, that would be a good workshop we should do for our District 10."

DK: "You asked me if teaching at Wright State helped me now and that is a good example. If I hadn't been teaching at Calamityville and teaching the disaster preparedness courses for nurses and non-nurses that book probably would have never happened."

DK: "I still do, I do a lot of work with veterans; I am on three different committees out at the VA for veterans and I am the chair for one of those committees. I could give you the list of all the different things I am involved in. I am involved in the Fairborn Historical Society so my mentor, Karen, on dealing with historical stuff is the lady at the corner of the screen here because of all the historical stuff Donna does. I am learning about that from you, Donna."

DMC: "Thank you."

DK: "And I have been the vice president of the group for the last couple of years, and we have elections coming up in March, and I have been arm-twisted. I am now the only person running for president for the Fairborn Historical Society. I will be coming to you more for ideas."

DMC: "I've got plenty." DK: "So, yeah."

DMC: "I know people in the archives at Wright State we should play with. This is great. Anything else that you would like to share with us about your experiences at Wright State? I think you've done a wonderful job of presenting, hitting all the points I would have otherwise asked you about. Anything else you can think of?"

DK: "Just the opportunity of working with a lot of people at Wright State. I don't know if you know Larry James over at the School of Professional Psychology."

DMC: "Uh, huh."

DK: "I met him right after I started teaching at Wright State. He gave a lecture and, Karen, I don't know if you know who he is. Retired army colonel psychologist. He was the army colonel at the Pentagon at 911 and he put together the first response teams at the Pentagon and then later the Abu Ghraib prison scandal in Iraq, he was the psychologist that got sent there by the Army back into Abu Ghraib to straighten it out and he wrote a book called 'Fixing Hell'. He had retired from the army and was on the faculty at Wright State and he gave a lecture about fixing hell, because it was a military term."

DMC: "Oh, that is great."

DMC: "So we are starting to have a bit of technical challenges I think. So, Karen, do you have any questions you wanted to ask Dan and hopefully he will stop, he is frozen right now."

Karen: "No, I think he has done a wonderful job, giving out a great amount of information."

DMC: "Great. Well, I am just going to stop the recording, but we can still visit."