

College of Nursing & Health Oral History Project

Date: June 27, 2017

Interview of Rosalie Mainous (RM)

Interviewers: Carol Holdcraft (CH) and Donna Miles Curry (DMC)

CH: Recording this interview with Dr. Rosalie Mainous for the Wright State University, College of Nursing and Health, Oral History Project. I am the interviewer today. I am Carol Holdcraft, retired Professor Emeritus, from Wright State College of Nursing and with me is Dr. Donna Miles Curry, also a retired Professor Emeritus from Wright State College of Nursing and it is our pleasure to have you with us today, Dr. Mainous. We are doing this over the telephone so we hope that all of us have good – can hear and understand one another.

RM: Well, I am talking on my cell so if we have a problem, I can always get on my landline; so just let me know about the quality of the recording.

CH: So far you sound really great. So let us start out Dr. Mainous, and just have you tell us a little bit about your background, how you came to Wright State, personal/professional background and how you came to Wright State.

RM: Okay, well let's see – I started out as an associate degree nurse and just continued to go back to school, finished Ph.D. in Nursing at the University of Kentucky in 1996 and then immediately turned around and did the neonatal nurse practitioner program. So, for many years at the University of Louisville I ran the neonatal nurse practitioner tract. At some point my boss left, the Dean, and the Associate Dean moved up to the Dean shift and then I was tapped to be the Associate Dean. That is how I got into that level of administration and when I left the University of Louisville, I was the Associate Dean for Graduate Programs and Research, so I had program side of house, as well as the research endeavors for the college. I had decided that I wanted to try a deanship, and I started looking on a national level and the recruiter contacted me and brought me in for the interviews and I wound up taking the position.

CH: Okay, and what year was that when you

RM: 2011.

CH: Okay, very good. So, tell me a little about what you remember about the early part of your time at Wright State when you first came. Talk a little bit about the kind of things you were doing and attempting to do there at Wright State.

RM: Well, I had some of my own goals, but then my boss had some goals for me as well and I started out with Steve Angle who was the Provost at the time. He hired me and he wanted me to grow enrollment. So, the first place I turned my attention was the RN to BSN program that had relative low enrollment and had a fair amount of resources. So, I started working with Dr. Ann Stalter who was the director of the RN to BSN program and basically, we rewrote a curriculum and put it forward and started growing the enrollment in the RN to BSN program. So that was the starting place and then I looked at the graduate program and there was a huge market, I thought, for Psych Mental Health Nurse Practitioners and we wound up developing one of those

tracts and then rolled it out and as far as I know, it had upward of 40+ students in it when I left, so it was doing very well. Then I had a physician down in Cincinnati who came up and met with me and said that there really was not a neonatal nurse practitioner program in the region, and would I consider starting one because I was a NNP and had run one successfully at the University of Louisville. I looked around and these programs were very expensive to run so I partnered with the University of Cincinnati at first to get the program off the ground; and we did and there was enough interest that after a period of time, we separated and now, at the time I left the University, we were running them independently. They had a program and WSU had a program as well.

CH: That sounds like quite an accomplishment to get that going as a partnership and then have it be strong enough to continue each individually. That sounds like that was going really well.

RM: I hope so. I think the Psych Mental Health Nurse Practitioner tract, of course, will always have the greater enrollment and will serve a larger patient population, but at the same time, there is an acute national shortage of Neonatal Nurse Practitioners, so we wanted to hit this mark as well.

CH: Very good. So, as you think about what you were doing, focus a little on the challenges of the job. What would you say were the greatest challenges that you faced as Dean?

RM: Well, I would say the fact that I had 4 bosses in 5 years, made it very difficult. I had Dr. Angle who hired me, and we worked very well together and then there was an interim, Dr. Sudkamp, then I co-chaired the Provost Search Committee that eventually, or actually promoted, Dr. Narayan and then we had Dr. Sudkamp back. I think there is probably going to be another change in leadership as the new President comes in and does what new Presidents do. That was the most difficult thing that when you get a directive from your boss to go and implement something, sometimes it takes a period of time to get it up and going and then we have to change direction because we have a new boss.

CH: Did you feel that they were going in different directions? Did they have—

RM: They were very supportive of me. I was able to get some resources for the college. I was able to negotiate and some of the other colleges weren't getting, so I felt good about that. Dr. Sudkamp served in that space twice; but even he had a different style between his first administration and his second administration. So, the 3 of them had their individual styles and priorities and where they wanted to go. So, the priorities changed a bit.

CH: So, the people above you were changing fairly rapidly so how about your college and the folks who were below you. Were you having changes in that aspect as well, or was that a fairly stable area for you?

RM: Well, we had some changes there as well. We had a change in the director of the DNP program, we had some tract coordinators or concentration directors, and we had a change in the associate dean role and actually went to a whole new administrative structure at that point in

time. I had requested department chairs but instead they gave me two assistant deans and one associate dean position.

CH: So new positions to write the job description for and then fill?

RM: Yes.

CH: What would you say that you were trying to really accomplish at Wright State? What were your overall over-arching thoughts about your legacy? What you would like to?

RM: I was blessed with getting a community that loved the University. It was a wonderful feeling. All the hospitals in town thought very highly of the graduates from WSU and all of them wanted to do more and be more involved. So, I saw an opportunity to collaborate in some very unique ways and sort of expand the reach of the college and build on the wonderful relationships that had already been established before I came, and we were having some very creative projects. We started the disaster program. We had the first, well the second in the nation dedicated education unit that was interprofessional. That was with one hospital system. We had a project, actually with every hospital or hospital system in the region of varying levels and scope, and just before I left, we had a grand opening over a simulation center at a local retirement village that was going to serve not only Wright State students, but was going to serve the nursing staff there and possibly people in the community that needed some basic training that we could offer collaboratively. So, we had some good experiences with the community and I think we expanded our reach and tried some projects that put us on the map nationally.

CH: Yes, It sounded like there were a lot of different things going on both within the university and then between the college and all of those affiliating community resources which, as you know, that the college was really founded having that as one of their overall goals. So, it sounds like you really continued that feeling of the college really being part of the wider community and really serving it. So, what – and those are all really positive things. Are there challenging aspects that you would say didn't work out as well as you would have hoped or things that you, as you look back upon it now, would see as challenges that you were involved with that you learned perhaps some lessons with or anything of that nature.

RM: I don't think it was any secret that, during my tenure there, that I had a less than satisfying relationship with the union; and I felt like we could have accomplished so much more and could have dedicated more time to teaching students and scholarship and further work in the community, had we not constantly had to fight battles internally with the AAUP (American Association of University Professors).

CH: Yes, and having been retired, I really wasn't in the thick of any of that sort of thing. There may be people who were aware of what was going on and have their opinions or their sides of what was happening but at this point, it is really your opportunity to talk a little bit about how you approached it from your perspective and I think that sometimes these history projects are such that you never know when in time someone else may take a look or listen about something so I really think that lessons learned or approaches taken that either seemed successful to you or unsuccessful to you can be a helpful. If you are comfortable about sharing that kind of

information, obviously without getting into sharing anything that is improper to share about personnel issues, I think that would be a good addition to the history.

RM: Well, I'm not going to throw anybody under the bus, and I am sure there is always two sides to every story as you know. What could I have done different? I guess I could have been probably some might have seen me as confrontational with the AAUP. Sometimes I didn't understand their rationale for some of the decisions they had and don't think I would ever work in a collective bargaining environment again. That part wasn't the most positive of experiences. I felt like there were a lot of goals that we might have reached that we couldn't reach because of that, but the flip side to that is that there are some outstanding faculty at Wright State who sort of rose above the fray and were able to continue to do great things. We had some really good outcomes while I was there in spite of some of these sort of conflicts that were going on in the background. It probably seemed a lot more pervasive to me from my office and it may not – it's likely that a lot of people didn't even know that there was some of the conflict going on that was going on. I think that is all I really have to say about that.

CH: I think that's fair to offer that kind of feedback. It interested me when you said that you would never work in another place where there was a union or collective bargaining. Was this your first experience being part of a collective bargaining situation?

RM: Yes.

CH: And I do think that our entire country sort of went through the unions as they came on board at a time when they were very necessary because of workplace safety issues and all sorts of things that were taking place and its sort is a roller coaster ride through history as how pervasive they are. Of course.

RM: Sure, sure.

CH: Are country, some of the political things in various states where they either fought against having that or not. So, it is hard to tell where we will all come out in the end. Whether unions and collective bargaining will turn a corner and have either more of an upswing or whether there is something that will be moving out –

RM: Frankly, women have benefited by being in the union environment and I'm not just talking about WSU but in a broader sense – in terms of pay equity. So, the unions have been good for women in some aspects and have done many many good things. There were just some things that I felt more sort of off-target and beyond sort of their scope and there wasn't much I could do about that. I made some hard choices and left and took another position.

CH: So, you are sort of hinting at the fact that the union experience may have been a large part of your deciding to seek a different type of role.

RM: That was a component. Another fact is that I met a man who lived in Washington, DC and I needed a job here.

CH: As Bill Clinton said, “I met a girl.” In that wonderful speech. You said that with that same sound in your voice. “I met a man.”

RM: yes, I’ve been married now for about 3 weeks now.

CH: Congratulations with that. Sounds like you are happy with that opportunity.

RM: Yes, yes – it all works out in the end.

CH: Okay, one of my other questions here is to have you describe interactions with, and we have sort of 3 categories of people. You have spoken a little bit about your interactions with administrators, meaning your specific bosses. Are there any other interactions with administration across campus or in the central administration that you would like to speak about?

RM: yes, I think, the only administrator I was speaking about before was the provost where I was a direct report. When I first came to WSU, I lived here by myself and I had never lived out of the state of Kentucky, I had never lived alone, I didn’t really have a network of friends in the area so I started an all female women’s leadership support group at Wright State and I invited all the female vice-presidents, all the female deans, eventually we included, after some of the personnel changes on campus, we included the head of HR, enrollment, and some of those people who were in those types of situations were mostly in the library. Anyway, we met monthly. It was a wonderful experience. They were a fabulous group of women, still supportive and still a tight knit group today. The Dean of the Business School just came to visit me a few weeks ago in Washington, DC, and stayed in my home. We keep up with each other, we council each other. Another one of the Deans that left and is now a Provost at University of Missouri. I’m working with some of her faculty on one of my committees. So, I am engaging with her at that level. There was a fabulous group of administrators on my level that were very supportive, and I miss them.

CH: So is that support group ongoing? Is that something that has outlived your tenure there? Do you know?

RM: Well, when I talked with the Dean of the School of Medicine and she said that after I left, it had basically fallen apart. So, I doubt that it continued, but it went strong for about 5 years, and we would meet either every month or every other month and we would rotate houses, of who would host it.

CH: Well, that sounds like it was something that was really a useful and helpful and kind of – that you started there and I’m sorry to hear that it, if it isn’t ongoing, I’m sorry to hear that it isn’t ongoing. Perhaps since WSU has a new female president, beginning in just a few days on the first of July, maybe some people will look around and say that this is a group that is needed again. It sounds like it was useful.

RM: yes. We had a lot of support both personally and professionally. I think there is maybe not rotating to each other’s homes, but certainly a woman’s leadership group on campus is needed.

CH: Yes. That is good. I might mention that if I ever have the opportunity and see what people say. It does sound really good to me, it sounds like something that is a good legacy and doesn't matter who is there at the time, but it could be helpful.

RM: Right.

CH: And so, you talked a bit about colleagues within the college. It sounds like those administrative people were really your colleagues you were talking about. What about students? Can you tell us a little bit about interactions with students while you were dean of the college?

RM: I got along well with the students, and I started the Dean's Student Advisory Board. We met a couple times each semester. We wrote bylaws and they were recognized as a student organization on campus. I got them space in the basement and there was a lounge in the basement, and we had our student organizations there. Had their room, all of their space painted and had a painting party. We brought an artist, who donated all of his time and painted all the space. They started doing – they were my eyes and ears. We had a representative from every cohort. We tried to have representatives from the graduate program and the doctoral program, but we weren't so lucky there. It was mostly undergraduate Dean Student Advisory Board. We raised money and they scholarships, they gave things away to needy families at Christmas time and they did a lot of good, and I enjoyed working with them and I think that has continued and the interim dean is working very closely with them.

CH: That sounds nice, that sounds good. That was always something that comes and goes. We would have students in leadership roles for awhile and they would graduate, and the next group wasn't nearly as interested in carrying things forward so students are always an interesting group. Did you start any new traditions within?

RM: Well, let's see. Yes, I did. I wrote a small grant that was actually part of AACN, which is where I work now. I'm trying to think of the name of the group that co-sponsored. They were putting on white coat ceremonies and I got a white coat ceremony funded by this group and they gave us pins and put that into place. Then because the funding ran out on that, I met with a team of students and said that I'd like to have something in this area to continue, but I'd like your input. We had talked about the problems we were having with academic dishonesty and plagiarism, and cheating going on. And so what the students did was they wrote a code of conduct and we put into place student induction ceremonies and we had this with every class. The students would come as they were joining us in their sophomore year. We had a reception, and the parents came. I spoke at each one and gave some comments about entering the profession and they all came across the front of the stage and signed the Code of Conduct, which then we were framing it at the College of Nursing and Health. As far as the induction ceremony, with the help of the students, and the emphasis on how important it is now that you are becoming a nurse to have the highest ethical standards. That was one piece I added.

CH: That is so important. That sounds like truly a legacy that if that continues, will be something to be proud of as in our society in general, I really think that we need to figure out ways to make sure that young people really look at what they are doing and what it means and take on the responsibilities in the professional roles when they enter the profession. I'm so

pleased to hear that as it sounds like something very nice. Even more significant than the symbolism of the white coat is that taking on of the oath and promise to be ethical in everything they do. So, any other interactions with the wider WSU campus community that you think might be important?

RM: Wider WSU campus community? Well, I think one of the things that I thought was a very significant thing going was we had a national disaster health consortium that we put together and Dr. Sherry Farra is the director of that; but we had a collaborative project that we worked with the National Center for Medical Readiness, we worked with the School of Medicine, we worked with Engineering, we worked with local First Responder groups and we put together this National Curriculum and carried out this program that was on at Calamityville where the National Center for Medical Readiness was and we wound up training people from 12 different states that came in for that program. The development officer and I wrote a grant, actually two grants and had that funded by a nurse who left an endowment to fund these kinds of projects. We got two different grants over the course of the time I was there to support this National Disaster Health Consortium that got recognized at the National level and we were approached by FEMA who wanted to adopt our modules and put them into the FEMA Training Handbook.

CH: That is very impressive. That certainly tapes right into our national needs in focuses doesn't it?

RM: Yes, I think so.

CH: How about alumni?

RM: Alumni? We when I first came, they did not have an alumni association. They had never had an Alumni Association, so we started, using the rules the university had for what was called the Alumni Society. We had a board, and they became very active and raised money for scholarships and had wine tastings and a lot of social activities for the membership. And I added an alumni speaker to graduation because I felt that was important that a member of the alumni group come and speak at graduation and talk about, you know, you are leaving school and now you become an alum, and this is what that means, and it has responsibilities. So, I added an alumni speaker, and we started an alumni society and we hosted the 40th anniversary while I was there. Was it the 40th or 45th Donna?

DMC: 40th and then next year we will do the 45th.

RM: So, it was the 40th anniversary celebration and it involved the wider community there. Then just before I left, we had started bringing in groups that graduated. Like we picked a graduation year and we the last group we had I think we had 12-14 people come in from all across the nation and we entertained them over the course of a weekend and got them to sort of reconnect with the university. We were going to try to do those annually and target a particular class.

CH: Okay. Are there any areas that I have not tapped into that you feel is important to talk about in terms of your experience at WSU?

RM: I can't think of anything at the moment.

CH: I always sort of ask that question because sometimes there is something that our interviewee has sort of thought about and we had not asked. This is you, opportunity if there is something we have not asked about that you think is significant.

RM: Well, we did go through two different accreditations while I was there and the first time through was baccalaureate and masters and found that going through that process we learned a tremendous amount and when the reviewers actually came, we had no citations and no recommendation, and it was basically a flawless review. I was so proud of the faculty and staff and all the hard work, and students, that they put forward in order to get us through that and then we were able to repeat that success about a year or year and a half later with the DNP program.

CH: Those are always real challenging things to organize particularly when you have not been there for a long period of time – so congratulations on those successful accreditation visits. I think people in the public aren't aware of how much time and effort and hard work goes into making sure that every little "T" is crossed and "I" is dotted and you know you really share the truth about your organization; but you do so in the way that allows them to hold onto those important accreditations.

RM: Right, right.

CH: Well, your career since WSU is very short since we are interviewing you soon after you have started a new job. So instead of saying what experience, how has your experience at WSU affected your career, let me ask the question, how do you think it will effect and what would you like to take with you from the WSU experience into the rest of your nursing career?

RM: Well, I will tell you I have been in this new job for about 5 months, and I am the Director of Academic Nursing Development, and it is a new position that they created for me. They had never had a dean work with this association, and this is an association for those people who when they listen to this 50 years from now (I guess) The American Association of Colleges of Nursing and the membership are schools and Colleges of Nursing and usually the Dean serves as the member that comes to the conferences but it has grown beyond that because now the faculty and Associate Deans come and that sort of thing. It is the voice for academic nursing and baccalaureate and higher education and the fact that I am a previous dean and previous associate dean has really helped me to be able to do this job and give a different perspective on the work we do here since they have never had a dean to work for the organization. My job sort of continues to evolve as they find out you know what I can do – what my skill set is. So, it is – I wouldn't have the job that I have today if I didn't have the experience and the background and training that I got at Wright State University.

CH: Very good. We really wish you the best as you move on through your career. I am very impressed having talked with you today and really heard you sort of summarize many of the accomplishments you were able to facilitate during five years of service. So, I thank you for that service and I think that many of the things that you told me about today, will certainly be the

kind of things that I hope the college will carry on. The good works and the collaboration with many different aspects of our nursing world and community here. Thank you very much with speaking with us today and sharing your insights.

RM: Thank you for including me and making me a part of this process and being part of the fabric of Wright State University. I appreciate it. Thank you.

CH: We are moving into a new era with a new college president so we are very hopeful as to how things will continue at WSU at this point.