

Interview with Julia McCatty Collymore, NP

First Black graduate of the Peter Bent Brigham Hospital
School of Nursing
with Sasha Dubois, MSN, RN and Catherine Pate,
Brigham and Women's Hospital Archivist
May 10, 2023



00:00:00:00 - 00:00:36:10

Catherine Pate:

I am Catherine Pate. I'm the Brigham and Women's Hospital archivist. Today is May 10, 2023. We're here in the Brigham Education Institute inside the Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston, Massachusetts, to conduct an oral history interview with Julia McCatty, married named Collymore, who was the first Black person to graduate from the Peter Bent Brigham Hospital School of Nursing.

00:00:36:12 - 00:01:12:13

CP:

That was in 1956. Joining us is Sasha Dubois. MSN, RN, NEA-BC, who is nurse director here for the IV Team and PCA Float Pool. Sasha serves as the President of the New England Regional Black Nurses Association and the Secretary of the National Black Nurses Association. All very impressive. I should mention that the Peter Bent Brigham Hospital was one of the four local hospitals that merged to create the Brigham and Women's Hospital in 1980.

00:01:12:15 - 00:01:42:01

CP:

Its School of Nursing was a famous and well-respected diploma school that trained young nurses here from 1912 to 1985, when the school finally closed. The nurses here and the nursing school are a big part of the history of the Brigham and Julia McCatty's experience was one of the milestones. So, Mrs. Collymore, thank you for agreeing to meet with us today and for doing this interview.

00:01:42:03 - 00:01:50:00

CP:

And I'd like to start way at the beginning, if you don't mind. Where were you born and where did you grow up?

00:01:50:01 - 00:02:04:15

Julia McCatty Collymore:

I was born in the South End of Boston, Massachusetts, and I did grow up in Boston. I was born July 30th, 1934.

00:02:04:17 - 00:02:08:13

CP:

Tell us about your family.

00:02:08:15 - 00:02:15:00

JMC:

I had a wonderful family. Both of my parents were Jamaican immigrants.

00:02:15:02 - 00:02:15:20

CP:

Really?

00:02:15:22 - 00:02:51:13

JMC:

Yes. And very active. My father was in the Merchant Marines and my mother was a housewife. When I was about two and a half, my mother said it's—and we lived in an apartment at that time—and she said, "We need to buy a house," which they did. We were not far from the apartment and the house was a ten room Queen Anne Victorian house.

00:02:51:15 - 00:02:52:13

CP:

Wow.

00:02:52:15 - 00:03:01:10

JMC:

Lots of memories. After a while, it turned into a business.

00:03:01:12 - 00:03:02:08

CP:

The house?

00:03:02:10 - 00:03:07:03

JMC:

The house turned into a business and I'll tell you why.

00:03:07:05 - 00:03:39:16

JMC:

We had a large kitchen. We lived on—the large kitchen was in the basement—we lived on the first and second floors and we rented out the entire top floor. We had a lot of musicians and a lot of Black musicians, mainly because no hotel would let them stay there. So, the people in the South End, where we were, they rented a lot of rooms to the musicians. I was close—where I lived

00:03:39:16 - 00:03:55:10

JMC:

it was close, because we were about two blocks from Symphony Hall. Everybody knows where Symphony Hall is, okay, and we had a lot of nightclubs along Mass. Avenue. And guess who lived around the corner from me? (CP: Who?) Martin Luther King Jr.

00:03:55:12 - 00:03:57:16

CP:

Wow. Did you meet him?

00:03:57:18 - 00:04:17:14

JMC:

I didn't meet him, but I would see him walking through the neighborhood because remember he was a student at Boston University. And so I would see him strolling through the—no! I mean, I was a teenager, I wasn't going to go up to him. You know, as a matter of fact, at that time, I didn't know who he was.

00:04:17:16 - 00:04:44:01

JMC:

My parents believed in education. So I did have a brother—I was a year and nine months older than him. I told you my parents were from Jamaica. My mother hadn't seen her mother for a long time. So, my mother took my brother and I to Jamaica, and we stayed there for six months. That was in 1938.

00:04:44:03 - 00:05:07:21

JMC:

And when I came back, my sister was born. (laughter) In 1939. So that should tell you something. But my parents were big on education. You didn't have a choice. You were going to get an education and you were going to continue your education. And so it was a ritual. "What are you going to do when you grow up?"

00:05:07:23 - 00:05:18:19

JMC:

What are you going to do when you grow up?" And I had said, "I'm going to be a nurse." I had nothing to go by. But I was about five, six years old. And I said, "I'm going to be a nurse."

00:05:18:21 - 00:05:19:16

CP:

Just like that you felt—

00:05:19:18 - 00:05:20:08

JMC:

Just like that.

00:05:20:08 - 00:05:21:00

Sasha Dubois:

You just knew.

00:05:21:00 - 00:06:19:08

JMC:

I had nothing—but my mother had bought me one of those doctor's kits, you know, for one of the holidays. But it never changed. I became a nurse. My brother was, I'll have to say, he was a born artist and he was discovered in kindergarten. When the kids were drawing sticks my brother was drawing forms. His kindergarten teacher—who also was an artist and wrote children's books—she picked up on that and she told my mother that he has talent. You need to get him into art school. So we had—in the South End there was—it was called the Children's Art Center. And so she got him in that and it was because he was very good. As a matter of fact, when he was in the seventh grade he did a still form. It was presented to the Museum of Fine Arts and he got an award.

00:06:19:10 - 00:06:21:01

JMC:

In the seventh grade.

00:06:21:02 - 00:06:22:10

CP:

And how about your little sister?

00:06:22:11 - 00:06:31:07

JMC:

My little sister, she was very shy. And, oh but backing up—they [parents] were into the arts. I had to take piano lessons.

00:06:31:09 - 00:06:32:14

SD:

Did you enjoy that?

00:06:32:16 - 00:07:01:01

JMC:

Ugh, I was kind of forced to it because my mother played the piano, and so she felt that I should play the piano. And I did. From grammar school through high school. My sister was very, very shy, but she was a dancer, so she took ballet lessons. She tried the piano, but she was—. We had a time with her piano teacher. You know [the] deCordova museum?

00:07:01:04 - 00:07:25:04

JMC:

So this was his cousin. He was very strict and she was very nervous, so she couldn't do that. So anyhow, she took ballet lessons. But she went to school. She went and she became a lab tech at Suffolk University. But she really never worked at [piano] because she was so shy. That was a little bit much for her.

00:07:25:06 - 00:07:29:06

CP:

So you knew from the age of five nursing was where you were going to go?

00:07:29:06 - 00:07:30:21

JMC:

That was where I was going to go.

00:07:31:01 - 00:07:33:07

CP:

No, nothing influenced that, you just—

00:07:33:12 - 00:07:53:16

JMC:

No, it was just something—. But and I'll tell you, when I went through high school—and I don't know if you had that when you went to school—you had a guidance counselor? And, you know, you had to kind of exit through her. When I went down for my interview, she says, "What did you want to do?"

00:07:53:16 - 00:08:07:06

JMC:

I said, "I want to be a registered nurse." And she said to me, "No, you can't be a registered nurse. You can be a practical nurse, (SD: LPN.) [Licensed Practical Nurse] but not a registered nurse."

00:08:07:08 - 00:08:08:18

SD:

And why do you think she said that?

00:08:08:20 - 00:08:10:01

JMC:

You know why she said that.

00:08:10:03 - 00:08:12:11

CP:

[To SD:] We were talking about this the other day—

00:08:12:11 - 00:08:44:22

JMC:

You know why she said that. So I ignored it because, you know, you've got to remember my background. Okay. Yeah. And I just ignored it. Anyhow, I applied to about three nursing schools. (CP: Peter Bent Brigham was one? No?) Peter Bent Brigham was not one of them. Mass General, Beth Israel, and Mass Memorial. Okay. And, you know, you had to take the entrance exam.

00:08:45:00 - 00:09:04:07

JMC:

Well, when I went to the interview—I'm going to synopsise—that all three of these interviews told me the same thing. You passed your exam. But I'm afraid we have our quota for coloreds. Okay.

00:09:04:09 - 00:09:05:14

CP:

A quota?

00:09:05:15 - 00:09:35:19

JMC:

Yes, "We have our quota for coloreds." So my father said to me, "Okay, you're not going to sit around here and do nothing for this year until you reapply." So I applied to BU [Boston University], went to _____(??) college, but I never finished because then I had reapplied to other nursing schools and the Brigham was one of them. And I had Lincoln, you know, in New York also.

00:09:35:20 - 00:10:04:12

JMC:

I had applied and I had gotten accepted to Lincoln, and my father wanted me to go to New York because he had relatives in New York. My mother did not. And they were having a little heated discussion (laughs) about my going to New York when the mail came, and there was my acceptance letter from the Brigham. And so I went down, I said, "Okay, I'm going to go to the Brigham."

00:10:04:14 - 00:10:05:08

CP:

Your mother must have been happy.

00:10:05:08 - 00:10:08:03

JMC:

Yes! (laughter)

00:10:08:05 - 00:10:33:07

JMC:

My mother was happy. And that's how I came to the Brigham, which, you know, the interview, acceptance, everything was wonderful. (CP: Oh, that's good to know.) I had no problem. And then when—I think it was in September, September of '52—when I had to go into the dorm, you know, the day, the first day—it's the first time I've ever been away from home, which was not a problem because I didn't live far from here.

00:10:33:07 - 00:11:02:23

JMC:

It was just a hop on the T and I was right here. What was nice about the dormitory, everyone had their own rooms and we were treated as adults. We didn't have curfews, you know, and I was accepted by everybody. It was a wonderful experience. You know, everybody'd come—sometimes I'd have six people in my room.

00:11:03:01 - 00:11:03:15

CP:

Sounds like you were popular.

00:11:03:18 - 00:11:27:13

JMC:

Oh, my goodness. They were on my bed. They were everywhere. But I had no problems. Now, this is—this I found interesting. The day when we put on our probie uniforms and you had to go on the floors for your assignment, and I'm walking down the hall, and this Brigham grad saw me coming and she's looking, she's looking at me.

00:11:27:15 - 00:11:32:23

JMC:

And when I approached her, she said to me, "What are you doing here?"

00:11:33:01 - 00:11:34:23

CP:

Oh, was this a nurse?

00:11:35:02 - 00:11:37:09

JMC:

This was a nurse, a Brigham nurse.

00:11:37:09 - 00:11:38:05

SD:

A graduate nurse.

00:11:38:05 - 00:11:56:10

JMC:

Graduate nurse. And she said, "What are you doing here?" I just looked at her—and I'm saying, you know I figured out—and I said to her, I said, "Well, I applied. I was accepted, and here I am." And that was it.

00:11:56:16 - 00:12:01:13

SD:

So when you were in high school, was there anyone else who wanted to be a nurse that were you were friendly with?

00:12:01:13 - 00:12:14:15

JMC:

Not that I know of. I had taken a college course and there were only eight of us in that course. And they were into other things, but I never knew.

00:12:14:17 - 00:12:19:00

SD:

So you were, you were on this guided path alone, essentially.

00:12:19:02 - 00:12:23:09

JMC:

And there were only two Blacks, no, three, in that class.

00:12:23:10 - 00:12:24:15

SD:

What high school did you go to?

00:12:24:17 - 00:12:26:10

JMC:

High School of Practical Arts.

00:12:26:12 - 00:12:27:11

SD:

Okay.

00:12:27:13 - 00:12:45:15

JMC:

Yeah. Which when I think back of it, that was not the high school that I should have gone to. And I kind of did it because I used to have to drag my sister everywhere I went. And I said the high school that I wanted was in that direction and I'm not going down there. (laughter)

00:12:45:17 - 00:12:49:17

CP:

When you applied, was there an interview process where you—

00:12:49:20 - 00:12:58:07

JMC:

Yes, with Miss Dorothy Vernstrom. Yeah. Very, very nice. Nice lady. No problem.

00:12:58:09 - 00:13:00:10

CP:

Did the subject of your race come up?

00:13:00:16 - 00:13:03:16

JMC:

None. Not one bit.

00:13:03:18 - 00:13:05:18

CP:

And nothing about you being the first?

00:13:05:20 - 00:13:13:10

JMC:

No, I had no idea. I had no idea. And no one told me.

00:13:13:12 - 00:13:22:16

CP:

From looking from your—I only skimmed it—but the student record, you wouldn't know that you were the first Black woman or that—

00:13:22:18 - 00:13:24:02

JMC:

No. No.

00:13:24:04 - 00:13:25:10

CP:

They just treated you like everyone else.

00:13:25:12 - 00:13:30:02

JMC:

I was treated, I was treated like everyone else.

00:13:30:04 - 00:13:56:13

CP:

I wondered—I was reading up on the history of the time period that you were in nursing school, and the headlines of the day had a lot to do with segregation and Brown v. the Board of Education to integrate schools by law. And I was wondering if you'd ever gotten the impression that anyone at the Brigham said, you know, that makes sense,

00:13:56:13 - 00:13:59:05

CP:

maybe we should we should start—

00:13:59:07 - 00:14:28:06

JMC:

I have no—I had no inkling. The only thing I can think of, after knowing Dorothy Vernstrom, she was really—and as a matter of fact, in my application and everything, you wouldn't get an inkling. See, if you noticed, there's no inkling, you know, that I was Black. But she was one of these Christian ladies. She was very, very religious, you know, single lady.

00:14:28:08 - 00:15:02:02

JMC:

No problem. And everything was wonderful. I mean, I didn't have any—of course there were funny things that happened to me. (CP: Tell us the stories!) I thought of this the other day because, you've kind of piqued my memory on some of those questions. I was a student and, you know how you got your—in the mornings, you know, you get the reports and this—I think it was D Main [patient ward].

00:15:02:02 - 00:15:26:18

JMC:

I'm not quite sure. C or D Main. And we were sitting at the desk and this particular morning I noticed this young lady kept coming in to visit this old man every morning and I keep noticing it, you know. So after report one day I went up to him and I said, "Oh, it's so nice that your daughter would come in and visit you every morning." (laughter)

00:15:26:20 - 00:15:31:15

JMC:

And he said to me, "My daughter! That's my wife! (laughter)

00:15:36:21 - 00:15:55:18

JMC:

So that taught me to be very care—I guess I was about 18, 19 years old. What did I know about decorum? You know. But it looked, I mean—you know? So I knew from then on how to conduct my questions.

00:15:55:20 - 00:16:10:15

CP:

I have read that back in that time period, nurses were often treated as second class citizens by doctors. The sexism was kind of rampant. Did any doctors treat you badly?

00:16:10:16 - 00:16:12:03

JMC:

No!

00:16:12:03 - 00:16:13:04

CP:

That's so good to know. (laughs)

00:16:13:04 - 00:16:43:10

JMC:

No, I didn't. They were wonderful. I didn't have any problems. And especially when I, after I graduated, you know—Well, I'll have to say this too, the last six months of our senior year you could work in any specialty that you would like. And I chose the emergency room because when you were going through—I knew it. I loved the emergency room.

00:16:43:12 - 00:16:45:23

JMC:

So no one in my class wanted the emergency room.

00:16:46:01 - 00:16:50:15

SD:

How many bays were there or how many—like was it a full ward at the time?

00:16:50:17 - 00:17:16:16

JMC:

Oh, this was, oh my god—remember the emergency room? You could enter from Huntington Avenue when the old building—and again, it was so away from the hospital. I think there were about four beds. You know, and I got very friendly—. Well It was nice because I was like isolated a little bit because, you'd go the Pike [main corridor] and you could come up in that section.

00:17:16:18 - 00:17:48:15

JMC:

And what was nice was the police that's supposed to be patrolling out in Brigham Circle, they would come in and sit with me. Because, remember, my name is McCatty, so they call me Mac. (SD: Yeah.) They automatically called me Mac. So I had my protection because there's certain things, things that can happen because—I remember I heard the door and when I went out, there was this guy there and he was cleaning his nails with a knife.

00:17:48:17 - 00:17:49:15

JMC:

Okay.

00:17:49:17 - 00:17:50:23

CP:

That could make you nervous.

00:17:50:23 - 00:18:21:13

JMC:

Right, because I had no protection. It was just me. And occasionally the supervisor would come down. So I was always glad to see them, you know, come in. But it was just an exciting place for me because you never knew what was going to come through that door and you had to be ready and able to—what to give them and what to set up for them, depending on what came through that door.

00:18:21:15 - 00:18:25:05

CP:

How did the patients react to having a Black woman as a nurse?

00:18:25:07 - 00:18:28:04

JMC:

It was like they never knew. I was just a nurse.

00:18:28:06 - 00:18:29:13

CP:

That is—that's good.

00:18:29:15 - 00:18:32:08

JMC:

I've never had that. I mean, I was just a nurse.

00:18:32:08 - 00:18:36:18

CP:

And nobody assigned you especially to Black patients or anything, did they?

00:18:36:19 - 00:18:38:04

JMC:

No. Why would they do that?

00:18:38:05 - 00:18:40:16

CP:

I don't know. You just hear these things. (laughs)

00:18:40:16 - 00:18:49:09

JMC:

No, I'm sorry, but, no, they didn't. You were assigned a patient, and that was it. You know, you carried out your duties.

00:18:49:11 - 00:19:02:10

CP:

It made me think of today. We have read articles about patients being especially abusive to nurses these days and being racist—. (JMC: Really?)

00:19:02:15 - 00:19:21:02

SD:

Yeah, it happens. It happens a lot. Sometimes you'd walk into rooms and a lot of times I'll teach, especially nursing students, or if you're orienting nurses—I mean, now I'm in management, but when I was a clinical nurse and I'd orient new nurses, I'd say, "Always make sure you go and you introduce yourself as a nurse," especially if they're a nurse of color.

00:19:21:04 - 00:19:27:16

SD:

Always introduce yourself as a nurse first. Don't just say, "Hi, my name is so-and-so." Always say, "I'm your nurse for today." Because if not—

00:19:27:16 - 00:19:30:15

JMC:

That was automatic. We did that in my day.

00:19:30:17 - 00:19:48:22

SD:

Sometimes people get away from that because as a nurse of color or as a Black nurse, sometimes people may not be listening to what's coming out of your mouth. And then—so if you assert yourself, then people may listen to you, but sometimes they may not. And oftentimes the patients may say, "Oh, well, who's my nurse for today?"

00:19:48:22 - 00:20:08:01

SD:

Or sometimes a physician may come in and still be looking for the nurse. And our badges—now we have—it says like RN or registered nurse on the bottom. And oftentimes—we've had several focus groups and conversations where nurses will say, charge nurses—you know, people running the floor—and they'll say they'll be in the room and the physician will be saying, "I'm looking for the nurse."

00:20:08:01 - 00:20:26:12

SD:

And she's like, "I'm right here. I've been here the entire time." So—or, we have a Float Pool now, and if the Black nurse will come up and she'll be in the Float Pool and they'll automatically assume that she's the PCA [patient care assistant] or the aide. Happens more often than it should.

00:20:26:14 - 00:20:51:06

CP:

Here's a question for both of you. Do you think that has to do anything with uniforms? Because nurses' uniforms back in the day labeled them exactly who they were. And nowadays everybody wears scrubs and then badges to identify themselves. I wonder if it just made it easier to identify your nurse, with the uniform and the little cap and all that.

00:20:51:11 - 00:21:23:16

JMC:

It shouldn't. It shouldn't, but I don't think so. Now, when I became—well after I had graduated, that was in 1956, I had to get a job and I knew that they were looking for a head nurse in the recovery room. And that's how I got into the recovery room. I worked there in the recovery room from '56 to 1959.

00:21:23:18 - 00:21:24:11

CP:

Ah.

00:21:24:13 - 00:21:33:19

JMC:

Okay. Of course, the anesthesia department was really in charge of the recovery room.

00:21:33:21 - 00:21:39:20

CP:

I found a few mentions of you in the newsletters. You're up in the upper right corner.

00:21:39:22 - 00:21:49:08

JMC:

Oh. Oh, my goodness! (laughter) Oh, my goodness!

00:21:49:21 - 00:21:51:18

JMC:

I've never seen that. Thank you for sharing.

00:21:51:23 - 00:21:56:13

CP:

Yeah, sure. But it says right there that you were in charge of the recovery room.

00:21:56:16 - 00:22:13:15

JMC:

Right. I was head nurse. And then I had shown you the picture when the Brigham celebrated their 45th anniversary. Right. And then we had the hypothermic blanket, and that's me, there, head nurse, Julie Collymore,

00:22:13:17 - 00:22:14:06

CP:

Oh, wow.



00:22:14:06 - 00:22:30:21

JMC:

that's Margie Toby [under the blanket], and that's— (laughs) and Mayo Johnson, who was like a heartthrob of all the nurses. And—I don't know if I can tell this story.

00:22:30:21 - 00:22:34:02

CP:

You can. We've got editing! (laughter)

00:22:34:04 - 00:22:48:03

JMC:

Because he's a handsome tall blond, you know, handsome guy, because a lot of nurses were looking for doctors to get mar—they wanted to marry the doctors. And it was interesting because, you know, they had the doctors' residence?

00:22:48:05 - 00:22:48:09

CP:

Uh-huh.

00:22:48:11 - 00:22:53:15

JMC:

Okay. And this was a nurse in my class. I will not mention any names.

00:22:53:16 - 00:22:57:03

CP:

Okay.

00:22:57:05 - 00:23:17:17

JMC:

Her family had sent her an electric blanket for Christmas or something like that. And Mayo was complaining about they didn't have any heat in the doctors' residence, so she gave him her electric blanket.

00:23:17:22 - 00:23:21:21

CP:

Oh— (laughter)

00:23:21:23 - 00:23:49:18

JMC:

I don't know if her parents know. (more laughter) He was one of the heartthrobs. So Mayo is there. Nice, nice guy. And Margie Toby is in the hypothermia blanket. She was one of my assistant nurses. Very nice. But see, we didn't really—if you notice, where I was working. We used scrubs. We had to. (CP: In the emergency room?) No, this is in the recovery room.

00:23:49:20 - 00:24:17:04

JMC:

See, I had this when—I shouldn't say scrubs. It was like the gown, the gown with the with the cap, you know. And that was a very—I loved working there. It was a very, very nice place. Everybody was nice. I had spoken to Carol [McGarigle, School Historian] this morning—when I talked to Carol, and I said, "Do you remember Adolph?"

00:24:17:06 - 00:24:18:07

JMC:

Do you remember Adolph?

00:24:18:08 - 00:24:20:06

CP:

I read all about Adolph [Watzka].

00:24:20:11 - 00:24:58:21

JMC:

Adolph. He was the orderly in the operating room. He was born in Germany. He never had to wear a mask in the recovery—in the operating room. He did what they call sterile breathing. I don't know if that was in the article? It wasn't in the article. He never talked. And if you saw him, he'd nod, you know, and then when he would come into the OR room himself, he did not have to wear a mask.

00:24:58:21 - 00:25:27:13

JMC:

He was the only one because—and I thought about this with COVID—his breathing was very shallow, only enough, never talked. And I thought with this COVID, that's something that people should take note of. But how many people knew about that? You see, but everybody knew Adolph.

00:25:27:15 - 00:25:30:18

CP:

Yeah. He'd been around since Harvey Cushing's time.

00:25:30:20 - 00:25:32:13

JMC:

Oh. He was a wonderful, wonderful—

00:25:32:18 - 00:25:35:13

CP:

Were you around when the Saudi Arabian prince came?

00:25:35:15 - 00:25:38:19

JMC:

Yes! Yes!

00:25:38:21 - 00:25:52:07

CP:

This I would like to know about, because we had a question not too long ago from the *Boston Globe*. Like, did he really, you know, bring a goat and sacrifice it? It was ridiculous. But I think that—

00:25:52:07 - 00:26:07:22

JMC:

No, that he did not do. (laughter) You know, Dr. Francis Moore? Okay. He had to go to Saudi Arabia when—because we had to go for a meeting. You know, people didn't come into the OR. We had to go for a meeting in the amphitheater.

00:26:08:01 - 00:26:09:07

CP:

Right.

00:26:09:09 - 00:26:22:00

JMC:

And he told us that this prince was coming because he had to have cataract surgery, because in Saudi Arabia they had these flies, they're called face seekers.

00:26:22:02 - 00:26:22:19

CP:

Ooh.

00:26:22:21 - 00:26:45:03

JMC:

And they were all over the—and they caused the cataracts. (SD: Oh, my.) And so this is how he was coming here. But the interesting thing is, with the Saudi Arabian men, no women can take care of them. So they had to scramble to find male nurses.

00:26:45:08 - 00:26:45:21

CP:

Really?

00:26:45:21 - 00:27:16:16

JMC:

Yes. And one of the male nurses, Jack Poppy—name came up—he was an OR nurse in the Brigham. So he was recruited. Now where they got the other male nurses from, I have no idea. But anyhow, I think they took almost the whole floor of A Main. I mean you—. (CP: That's what I read.) Yeah. They had. So Jack—when the prince had left—of course he got an expensive watch, you know, they gave him all these expensive things.

00:27:16:21 - 00:27:47:00

JMC:

And Peter Fuller, you know, Peter Fuller who was the dealer of Cadillacs—he was there on Commonwealth Avenue, Peter Fuller? He had a big Cadillac dealership and the Arabians liked Cadillacs. So Peter Fuller made quite a few pennies from these Arabians. But anyhow, Jack was saying that they came in at night. I think they came in at night.

00:27:47:02 - 00:28:04:08

JMC:

I think the surgery was at night when no one was around and Jack said, "I knew when they were coming because when they got off the elevator, all the clanking, clanking, clanking." Because his guards, they had swords.

00:28:04:08 - 00:28:07:04

CP:

Oh, I see.

00:28:07:06 - 00:28:09:02

JMC:

And they had their swords. Yeah.

00:28:09:04 - 00:28:11:22

CP:

I thought he brought three wives with him.

00:28:12:00 - 00:28:38:00

JMC:

Oh, one of the wives had some type of surgery, I forget, but she used our locker room in the OR. She used our locker room—heavily perfumed, you know, but I have no idea what type of surgery she had done. I don't know where they got the male nurses from, but Jack was one of them.

00:28:38:00 - 00:28:44:13

CP:

You know, I don't think we had a male nurse graduate from the Peter Bent Brigham School until 1969.

00:28:44:13 - 00:28:49:11

JMC:

Yeah, well, he wasn't, he wasn't a graduate of the—I don't know where he was—but in the—

00:28:49:11 - 00:28:52:15

SD:

Might have been a city-wide call. Might have been a city-wide call.

00:28:52:20 - 00:28:54:08

CP:

Yeah.

00:28:54:10 - 00:28:56:20

SD:

Like a city-wide call. They may have called male nurses from across the city.

00:28:57:01 - 00:29:04:12

JMC:

Oh, I see. Okay. Yeah, might have, they—because in '56, I mean, we're talking about the fifties.

00:29:04:14 - 00:29:08:07

CP:

I think the sheik came in '61.

00:29:08:12 - 00:29:11:01

JMC:

Okay. But this was not, this was—

00:29:11:01 - 00:29:12:12

CP:

That was earlier?

00:29:12:14 - 00:29:20:16

JMC:

Well I was (CP: Or did he come more than once?) here, because I was in the recovery room at the time because like I said, I had to attend that meeting.

00:29:20:22 - 00:29:23:15

CP:

But did you say you were here until '69?

00:29:23:16 - 00:29:38:12

JMC:

I was there. What I did, I was—from '56 to '59, I was head nurse in the recovery room and then I came back in '60 to '63 and I was an operating room nurse at that time when I came back.

00:29:38:13 - 00:29:45:21

CP:

That makes sense. Did you know Dr. HasSAN, the director of the hospital?

00:29:45:23 - 00:29:57:10

JMC:

Oh, Dr. HASsan. Yeah, as a matter of fact, his daughter Laurie was in my class. He was a pharmacist.

00:29:57:10 - 00:29:58:21

CP:

Right, he wasn't a medical

00:29:58:23 - 00:29:59:19

JMC:

No, he was a—

00:29:59:19 - 00:30:00:12

CP:

MD. He was a PhD.

00:30:00:17 - 00:30:02:18

JMC:

Sorry. I think you put something in here? [Referring to school yearbook.]

00:30:02:20 - 00:30:17:04

CP:

Oh, don't worry about that. That's just a tag. Yeah, he spoke fluent Arabic. He's of Lebanese descent. So I always thought that was probably why the king of Saudi Arabia chose to come here.

00:30:17:06 - 00:30:24:01

JMC:

I don't know why he chose—see here's Dr. Hassan's— [pointing to yearbook picture] See?

00:30:24:07 - 00:30:25:17

CP:

That's his daughter?

00:30:25:17 - 00:30:26:15

JMC:

That's his daughter.

00:30:26:20 - 00:30:28:01

CP:

So it was pronounced HASsan?

00:30:28:02 - 00:30:29:09

JMC:

Hassan.

00:30:29:09 - 00:30:30:12

CP:

All right, now I know. (laughs)

00:30:30:12 - 00:30:34:14

JMC:

She was in my class.

00:30:34:16 - 00:30:43:00

CP:

Now, when you took classes here, were any of the classes in the Harvard classrooms?

00:30:43:00 - 00:30:50:06

JMC:

No, we didn't go to Harvard. We went to BU and that's where we took organic chemistry.

00:30:50:09 - 00:31:08:21

CP:

Oh, that's interesting. [JMC: growls.] (laughter) She turns up her nose at organic chemistry. All right. How long were the classes? I mean, you spent a certain amount of time in classroom and a certain amount of time on the floor. Right? For your training? Was that like 50/50?

00:31:08:21 - 00:31:16:11

JMC:

Right, but the majority of it seems like—the majority of our classes was almost prior to us going on to the floor.

00:31:16:13 - 00:31:21:01

CP:

Right. So, like the first year and a half, two years in classroom?

00:31:21:03 - 00:31:23:12

JMC:

Almost a year and a half. Two years, Yeah.

00:31:23:14 - 00:31:25:05

SD:

How long was your program?

00:31:25:07 - 00:31:41:20

JMC:

Three years, because we went on affiliations, you know. Remember, we went with affiliations—Boston Lying-in, Children's Hospital, and Boston Psych. You know, on Fenwood Road? Yeah, that was the only time I wanted to leave training.

00:31:42:01 - 00:31:45:13

SD:

Yeah. And, you know, that's no longer here. They've, like, ripped all that down.

00:31:45:14 - 00:31:46:16

JMC:

Oh, they did? No, I didn't know.

00:31:46:17 - 00:31:52:14

SD:

Mass Mental, so they ripped all that down and Mass Mental is now outpatient facilities.

00:31:52:14 - 00:31:53:08

JMC:

Oh, it's called Mass Mental now?

00:31:53:10 - 00:31:56:03

SD:

Yeah. So it's all outpatient facilities.

00:31:56:03 - 00:31:58:01

JMC:

Ooh, I had to live there.

00:31:58:01 - 00:31:58:16

SD:

Yeah.

00:31:58:18 - 00:32:01:19

JMC:

And during my training and oh my god—

00:32:01:21 - 00:32:05:22

SD:

So the Brigham has built two additional buildings where Mass Mental used to be.

00:32:05:22 - 00:32:12:04

JMC:

I remember there was one patient that was in, I guess in those days they called it “in the hole.”

00:32:12:06 - 00:32:13:19

SD:

Hmmm.

00:32:13:21 - 00:32:38:18

JMC:

And he had to have—I guess they wanted to give him electric shock. So they brought in six state troopers—
(SD: Wow.) and you know, the state troopers, how big they are—to control him, to get him down there. And
I’ve seen things like—I know one day I just—because you had to have keys to get in and out—

00:32:38:20 - 00:32:40:01

SD:

Mhmm.

00:32:40:03 - 00:32:49:18

JMC:

and I took my key and as I’m walking out, almost running, I said, “Tell them I’m leaving!” You know, it was—

00:32:49:20 - 00:32:50:17

CP:

[__??]

00:32:50:19 - 00:32:53:07

JMC:

“Tell ‘em I’m leaving.”

00:32:53:09 - 00:32:56:12

CP:

Oh, gosh. Did you ever meet Carrie Hall?

00:32:56:14 - 00:32:58:03

JMC:

She wasn’t around when I—

00:32:58:05 - 00:32:59:19

CP:

She was pretty old by then.

00:32:59:21 - 00:33:07:18

JMC:

Yes. I didn't meet her because Dorothy Vernstrom was the director of nurses then. And Shirley Egan was the assistant.

00:33:07:20 - 00:33:10:05

CP:

Yeah. Then Shirley Egan took over after Vernstrom.

00:33:10:06 - 00:33:11:10

JMC:

Yeah.

00:33:11:12 - 00:33:28:18

CP:

I just wondered, because Carrie Hall seems to be this sort of goddess to nurses, at least from the alumni I've talked to. And they had a whole exhibit up about her near Carrie Hall, *Hall*.

00:33:28:20 - 00:33:30:15

SD:

Yes. (laughs)

00:33:30:17 - 00:33:32:21

CP:

The hall by Carrie Hall— (JMC: Yeah, they do it. Yeah.)

00:33:32:21 - 00:33:50:12

CP:

Anyway, they had a—it was up for 20 years or something. And so I didn't know whether Carrie Hall and her thoughts and ideas permeated the school by that point, or if you didn't have much, you know—anybody saying, "Carrie Hall said to do this or Carrie Hall said to do that."

00:33:50:12 - 00:33:53:05

JMC:

Yeah. No, I didn't have that.

00:33:53:07 - 00:34:07:15

CP:

Carrie Hall was the nurse, I believe, the first person to have a nursing school that required young women to have a high school education in order to apply for nursing, which was a big step in 1912.

00:34:07:17 - 00:34:09:00

JMC:

Oh, yes.

00:34:09:01 - 00:34:30:21

CP:

Because in 1912, I read that only 7% of kids in the country had a high school education. So that was huge. And then she changed the curriculum to be more like college. And that sort of started the march towards the professionalization and the higher education of nurses. So we kind of revere

00:34:30:21 - 00:34:32:13

JMC:

Yeah, I guess so.

00:34:32:16 - 00:34:34:04

CP:

Carrie Hall for those advances.

00:34:34:06 - 00:35:30:17

JMC:

I had her picture. [It] was given to me by Miss Vernstrom because when I had—of course I worked at several different types of hospitals for extra money and all. And I think—trying to think—it was way back because I had worked also in the operating room at Mount Auburn Hospital. I worked there as an operating room nurse from '64 to '67, and then I was a staff nurse '68 to '70 at Boston Lying-in, which is where my children were born, at Richardson House, and also then from '72 to '76, I was staff nurse—

00:35:30:17 - 00:36:08:05

JMC:

I went to Tufts University because one day when I was shopping—I had lived in Medford at the time—guess who I met shopping? Dorothy Vernstrom, (laughs) yeah, who was the Director of Nurses at Tufts Health Service. (CP: Did she recruit you?) Not at that point because I wasn't—I had gotten very sick at one point and I wasn't working, and then one day when I was taking my daughter down to the Eliot-Pearson Nursery School—my husband said at the time, "See if you can find a job while you're down there."

00:36:08:10 - 00:36:32:02

JMC:

Because I was antsy, you know, because I always worked. So, when I dropped her off at Eliot-Pearson School and I went over to the Tufts Health Service—at that point, Miss Vernstrom was interviewing a nurse for someone that was leaving. So I just left my telephone number, but by the time I got home, she was calling me. She says, “I want you down here.”

00:36:32:04 - 00:36:51:23

JMC:

So I went and I stayed there. And this was from, oh my goodness, 1972 to 1976. And then see, after that in '76, that's when the Brigham had their nurse practitioner program.

00:36:52:01 - 00:36:55:18

CP:

I was just about to ask about—you attended that. That was I one of the earliest—

00:36:55:22 - 00:37:05:06

JMC:

Yeah. It well it started in '72. Okay. And this one was in 1976 and it was sponsored by HEW.

00:37:05:08 - 00:37:07:09

CP:

What's HEW?

00:37:07:11 - 00:37:17:19

JMC:

Health, Education and Welfare. And see this was—do you have this? Yes. There you go, there you go. And there I am.

00:37:17:20 - 00:37:32:09

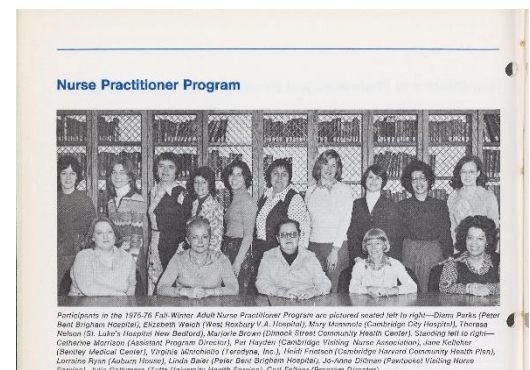
CP:

There you are with the old necktie blouse. (JMC: Pardon me?) You have the tie around the blouse. Very seventies. (JMC: Oh yeah.) (SD: Back in style.) (JMC: Yeah.) (laughter) They are.

00:37:32:10 - 00:37:37:11

JMC:

And that was—I loved that program.



00:37:37:13 - 00:37:42:17

CP:

I should have said that at the beginning when I introduced you, that you were Nurse Practitioner, retired.

00:37:42:19 - 00:37:47:09

JMC:

Yes. No, not a problem. Not a problem.

00:37:47:09 - 00:37:50:02

CP:

How long did that training take?

00:37:50:04 - 00:38:18:12

JMC:

Oh, that training was just almost a year. And it was a very interesting—I loved it. We were taught by physicians. We were taught by physicians, and I'll tell you this story. This physician had assigned us a paper, you know, write about—so I think I wrote one on mononucleosis because I was in college health, and I got an A on the paper.

00:38:18:13 - 00:38:47:04

JMC:

So my director slash mentor saw it and said, "Oh, good job, Julia. Do you mind if I have a copy?" So, no problem. About year and a half, maybe two years later, there was something—I was in my office—and there was something in that paper of value that I needed. And I—my original was at my house—and I said, Oh, he's got a copy of my paper.

00:38:47:06 - 00:39:06:00

JMC:

So I called him up and I said, "Do you still have my paper that I wrote?" "Yeah." I said, "Well, can I take a look at it?" I said, "I just want to take a quick peek. There's something I need to find out about it." So I went to his office and he hands me my paper. Face sheet—

00:39:06:02 - 00:39:35:01

JMC:

my name is missing. He had removed my name and put his name in. (SD: Wow.) (CP: That's so sleezy.) Okay. Well, you know where my respect for him went? (CP: Yes. Did you call him on it?) Okay. I said, "You removed my name from my paper! What happened to my name?!" And he said, "Oh, sorry about that, Julia. I'll fix it." Well, I'll tell you, if you think he fixed it

00:39:35:01 - 00:39:36:04

JMC:

I've got a bridge to sell you.

00:39:36:04 - 00:39:37:20

CP:

Had he published it under his own name?

00:39:37:20 - 00:39:41:17

JMC:

That's what I'm wondering, if he published it or gave a lecture on it.

00:39:41:17 - 00:39:42:20

SD:

He probably did.

00:39:42:21 - 00:39:47:18

JMC:

Because I spent time at Countway [Library of Medicine] doing my research on this paper.

00:39:47:19 - 00:40:17:04

CP:

We can find out. If he published it, it'll be out there. I've heard of that happening with mentors and mentees that they will take your name off and put their name on, or they'll put their name as the first writer. (SD: It's unfortunate.) Yeah. It's not a good practice in my opinion. I've seen relationships come apart because people—Well, I'm the boss and you work for me and so you get to give me your work and I get to claim credit.

00:40:17:04 - 00:41:03:07

JMC:

Oh, he took my name right off. He removed the A and the doctor had—you know—believe that? And, [laughs] that's, that was my experience. But it was very nice. [the Nurse Practitioner program] And I don't know if you know anything about college health, New England College Health Association? It's called NECHA. It's New England College Health Association. And all the colleges meet, all the colleges in New York, I mean, in New England and our director of nurses at the time—she was the vice president—and then she had to retire.

00:41:03:07 - 00:41:13:18

JMC:

But she wanted someone from Tufts on the board. So guess who she nominated? Me.

00:41:13:20 - 00:41:16:08

CP:

Congratulations.

00:41:16:10 - 00:41:18:14

JMC:

No. That's not my cup of tea.

00:41:18:16 - 00:41:19:22

SD:

Why not?

00:41:20:00 - 00:41:55:19

JMC:

I am not a political person. You have to attend meetings. I had to go. Not only do I have to take care of my patients, once a month, you have to travel to whatever college it was. And it was—I did it for about a year and a half. Then also, if you are member of NECHA or New England College Health Association, you automatically become a member of what we call ACHA, American College Health Association, which includes all of the colleges in the United States.

00:41:56:02 - 00:41:56:23

SD:

So you'd have to go to the national conference?

00:41:57:03 - 00:42:24:19

JMC:

So we'd go every May, which was wonderful because I got to travel. I went to San Francisco, Colorado, Arizona, you name it. And so, but it wasn't, you know, the board wasn't—it was okay. I mean I—they nominated me because I knew everybody on the board, (laughs) so why wouldn't I be nominated to be on the board?

00:42:24:21 - 00:42:30:09

CP:

Did you have any particular friends that you made at school that you stayed in touch with?

00:42:30:11 - 00:42:57:02

JMC:

No, that's the thing. I was friendly with everybody. You know, sometimes we'd go to each other's houses, and Ruth Purinton—it was the first mountain I've ever climbed and the last one. (laughs) Mount Monadnock, because she was from New Hampshire. That was not like my cup of tea.

00:42:57:04 - 00:42:59:10

CP:

Did you go to the graduation ceremony?

00:42:59:12 - 00:43:02:09

JMC:

You know, I've got a blank on that.

00:43:02:10 - 00:43:04:16

CP:

You hold the little candle?

00:43:04:18 - 00:43:08:06

JMC:

Oh, the candlelight ceremony. Yeah. We had that.

00:43:08:09 - 00:43:09:23

CP:

You know, you make a little pledge—

00:43:10:00 - 00:43:10:09

JMC:

Yeah.

00:43:10:10 - 00:43:10:23

SD:

Your pinning?

00:43:11:02 - 00:43:12:00

JMC:

Yeah. Yeah.

00:43:14:15 - 00:43:17:03

SD:

Who pinned you? Who put your pin on?

00:43:17:05 - 00:43:20:10

CP:

Was it Miss Vernstrom?

00:43:20:12 - 00:43:26:15

JMC:

I think so. It's so long ago, my god, you've got a good memory.

00:43:26:17 - 00:43:30:00

CP:

She seems like she was a sort of a mentor to you.

00:43:30:00 - 00:43:38:12

JMC:

She was. She was. And like I said, she was the director of nurses at Tufts, so she kind of took me under her wing.

00:43:38:12 - 00:43:41:11

CP:

And so she left the Brigham to go to Tufts?

00:43:41:13 - 00:43:53:19

JMC:

She left it when she retired, and then she went to—and she's the one that gave me when she retired from Tufts—she gave me a framed picture of Carrie Hall.

00:43:54:01 - 00:43:54:18

CP:

Ahh.

00:43:54:21 - 00:44:09:13

JMC:

Oh. Which I gave to Anne Gebhardt [Alumni Board] for the alumni. (CP: So that may end up with me.) Yeah, maybe you have it. Yeah. So this is about like a 9" by 12".

00:44:09:15 - 00:44:11:04

CP:

I have a lot of pictures of Carrie Hall.

00:44:11:04 - 00:44:13:14

JMC:

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

00:44:13:15 - 00:44:28:18

CP:

We should probably move on from school to your career trajectory. I know you were on staff for the Brigham for a while until '59 and you moved on to somewhere else after that?

00:44:28:20 - 00:45:05:22

JMC:

After '59—and then I was in the operating room from '60 to '63. Sixty-four to '67 I was an operating room nurse at Mount Auburn Hospital. And then remember, Boston Hospital for Women? You know, and also then '72 to '76 I was staff nurse at Tufts University and then I became a nurse practitioner. And in between, for extra money because my son was going to school, I needed extra money,

00:45:06:00 - 00:45:21:11

JMC:

I worked at the off-hours clinic at MIT. I worked there for a short while. And then, do you know Charles Circle Clinic?

00:45:21:13 - 00:45:21:23

CP:

No.

00:45:21:23 - 00:45:54:03

JMC:

Never? Oh, you haven't heard of Charles Circle Clinic? Well, that was kind of an interesting place. That was the abortion clinic. Okay, but when I worked there I told them—because GYN was my specialty when I was at Tufts, because, you know, those girls, they wanted a woman, but we took care of everything. And may I backup? When I was—

00:45:54:05 - 00:46:23:09

JMC:

Well, I was a nurse practitioner. Of course, I had a big GYN practice. And we did sports physicals. We took care of the faculty. Also we did annual physicals on the women from Buildings and Grounds. They were immigrants. They didn't speak English that well and they knew nothing about their bodies.

00:46:23:11 - 00:46:46:09

JMC:

I noticed that and we were very friendly. They would come in and they talked to me and I said, you know, I'm going to start a women's health class for these women, which I did, and I discussed it with them. They were happy about it, but they had a boss that was a tyrant. They were scared to death of him.

00:46:46:11 - 00:47:06:10

JMC:

"He won't let us do it and blah, blah, blah." I said, "No, I'll make a call" and I called him and he said, "Well, if you're going to do this for the women, what are you going to do about the men?" And I said, "That's not my problem. I can refer you to a physician if you'd like to speak with him."

00:47:06:12 - 00:47:18:22

JMC:

And he's still giving me grief. So I said, "Thank you very much." I hung up the phone and called his boss and he thought it was a great idea. So then I called him back.

00:47:19:00 - 00:47:20:12

JMC:

And guess what? (laughter)

00:47:20:14 - 00:47:35:12

JMC:

Once a month they're going to brown bag it. It'll be on their lunch hour. They will not miss work. And it was great. They enjoyed it. So I did that for a while.

00:47:35:15 - 00:47:38:08

CP:

Did you have a specific name for this clinic?

00:47:38:10 - 00:47:55:09

JMC:

No, it's just a women's health clinic, you know. And I gave them handouts—and I talked to them—so that they could tell their children. Somebody could interpret for them if they couldn't understand.

00:47:55:09 - 00:47:59:14

SD:

Generational wealth and health. That's really important.

00:47:59:15 - 00:48:19:17

JMC:

Right. Oh, and then Charles Circle Clinic—when I worked at Charles Circle, I let them know I will not have anything to do with the abortion side. I'm just there for the GYN. And I had a lot of students from Boston College because you've got to remember, Boston College is not going to give any birth control talk.

00:48:19:18 - 00:48:42:15

JMC:

So I had a large population coming to this clinic for their birth control, and I took care of a lot of prostitutes. (laughter) I had one gal, she was hurrying me, hurrying. She was all dressed up because her client was downstairs in the car waiting for her.

00:48:42:17 - 00:48:55:13

CP:

(laughter) Oh, my gosh. Oh, my gosh. So you were a nurse practitioner. You focused on OBGYN. Was that after nurse practitioner or before?

00:48:55:15 - 00:49:01:09

JMC:

No. GYN. (CP: GYN, not OB. GYN.) No, GYN yes. (CP: Sorry.)

00:49:01:11 - 00:49:02:00

SD:

Like women's health.

00:49:02:00 - 00:49:07:03

CP:

This is when Sasha should start talking because I know nothing about medicine. (laughs)

00:49:07:03 - 00:49:35:19

JMC:

Yeah, I did that—primary health care to the students, the faculty, the employees. And of course, I had to do complete physical exams and GYN. I had same students, I had the protocols, and birth control counseling and, diagnosis and treating of the sexually transmitted diseases. That was a—

00:49:35:23 - 00:49:48:19

CP:

Now, do you nurses have to just start working in a new area or do you have to go to special training to do GYN? Because you went from the operating room to the—

00:49:49:01 - 00:50:04:07

JMC:

But we had training. We had training. We were trained by physicians as well. And then we also attended classes in clinicals. You know, how to do the pap smears and look for genital warts and how to treat them. You know what to do, yeah.

00:50:04:09 - 00:50:06:23

CP:

So you had ongoing training throughout your career?

00:50:07:01 - 00:50:08:04

JMC:

Oh yeah. (SD: That stuff never stops.) Yes.

00:50:08:06 - 00:50:10:14

CP:

It never stops. All right.

00:50:10:16 - 00:50:14:09

JMC:

Teaching never stops.

00:50:14:11 - 00:50:32:06

CP:

Did you ever do any other, you know, formal—like the nurse practitioner program? Did you take any other specialty classes or—because I don't know what they would be, but I know Sasha has 300 letters after her name—

00:50:32:08 - 00:50:35:13

SD:

(laughs) Oh, like any like board certifications or anything like that?

00:50:35:14 - 00:51:01:17

JMC:

Yeah. Yeah. *No. Well, we had to keep up. You had to attend classes to keep up your certification and they're expensive. Harvard's classes—we're talking about \$500. Okay? And you had to and we're able to write prescriptions for narcotics. As soon as I retired, I relinquished my narcotic license, you know? Yeah.

*[*Editor's note: Mrs. Collymore recalled after the interview that she had volunteered on a battered women's shelter hotline for which she received six weeks of training.]*

00:51:01:19 - 00:51:03:15

CP:

Did you ever teach?

00:51:03:17 - 00:51:42:15

JMC:

It's an ongoing thing. You know, when you say teach, it's not like a formal class. I gave a lot of lectures. I gave a lot of lectures because—especially like when you go away, American College Health Association, they may assign you a diagnosed illness to talk about. And then when Tufts hosted, then I gave lectures on certain subjects in gynecology and how to treat and things to look—that type of thing.

00:51:42:16 - 00:51:57:17

CP:

One of my questions is, memorable events or memorable patients or other medical professionals that you worked with that maybe you could share a good story about if you remember them?

00:51:57:19 - 00:52:19:06

JMC:

I don't have really memorable people, because like when I worked in the operating room, I got to know everybody and they were all great. As a matter of fact, I had to have a hip operation. I had Dr. Henry Banks. I don't know, if you know, him? And Dr. Leroy Vandam (CP: Yes!.) who is the head of anesthesia.

00:52:19:07 - 00:52:28:19

JMC:

Brilliant man. I don't know if you knew that the Brigham had to cover the anesthesia department at Nantucket Hospital.

00:52:28:22 - 00:52:29:06

CP:

I didn't know that.

00:52:29:12 - 00:52:55:13

JMC:

Every year, every summer, an anesthetist went to Nantucket Hospital. Dr. Vandam was an artist—you knew that. And isn't that funny? I found a Christmas card that he had sent me, 1978, of a scene that he had done down in Nantucket.

00:52:55:14 - 00:53:01:13

CP:

Three of his paintings are up in the anesthesia department. (JMC: Oh, it is!) Yes.

00:53:01:15 - 00:53:08:18

JMC:

Kathryn McGarry, I don't know if you know her. She was one of the nurse anesthetists at the Brigham. But he was brilliant. Yeah.

00:53:08:20 - 00:53:09:20

CP:

That's wonderful.

00:53:09:20 - 00:53:11:07

JMC:

Yeah.

00:53:11:09 - 00:53:17:07

CP:

Sasha had a couple of people she wanted to ask you about. Right? That you thought she might know?

00:53:17:09 - 00:53:21:00

SD:

Did you know an E. Lorraine Baugh, by any chance?

00:53:21:02 - 00:53:27:01

JMC:

That—B A U G H? (SD: Correct.) She was a member of my church.

00:53:27:02 - 00:53:44:01

SD:

Yes. Well, she now lives on the Vineyard. She's retired. She started the New England Regional Black Nurses Association. She's a co-founder of the National Black Nurses Association. But she ran Lena Park. She ran Lena Park, the community center? Yeah.

00:53:44:03 - 00:53:45:06

JMC:

Yeah. Oh, I've heard of that. Oh, for heaven's sake.

00:53:45:06 - 00:53:47:12

SD:

And so you went to the same church?

00:53:47:14 - 00:53:50:18

JMC:

I knew her brother. You remember what her brother's name was?

00:53:50:20 - 00:53:52:10

SD:

No, but I can find that out. But she—

00:53:52:22 - 00:53:54:19

JMC:

I think it was her brother. Middleton?

00:53:54:21 - 00:53:57:12

SD:

Yes. She was in the Air Force too. Yes.

00:53:57:14 - 00:54:03:16

JMC:

No kidding. Oh my goodness.

00:54:03:18 - 00:54:09:02

CP:

Was there anyone else that you can think of?

00:54:09:04 - 00:54:12:22

JMC:

I didn't know her that—I knew—we weren't that close, but I knew exactly who—

00:54:13:03 - 00:54:29:16

SD:

She so she's—Yeah, she's still—. Or Joanne Prince by any chance? Yeah. Because she's, she often—I went to church with her when I was in nursing school. She often would say how proud she was of me because she would say “When I was in nursing school they didn't allow me to be an RN, I could only be an LPN.”

00:54:29:16 - 00:54:30:20

SD:

So in our chapter she—

00:54:30:20 - 00:54:31:14

JMC:

See.

00:54:31:14 - 00:54:43:21

SD:

She often tells that story about how she was only allowed to be an LPN. I went to Simmons for undergrad and even some of the nurses that went to school in the seventies and sixties—I was just at Black alumni reunion—

00:54:43:21 - 00:54:47:17

JMC:

All the way from 19—? My god.

00:54:47:19 - 00:54:48:12

SD:

So, yeah—

00:54:48:14 - 00:54:49:21

JMC:

1950.

00:54:49:23 - 00:55:07:22

SD:

Mrs. Prince is about 90 and some of the women that were at Simmons, they're in their sixties and seventies, and they were saying how even when they were in school, not even that long ago, they said they started with five, then they were three that only could make it, and then they were encouraged to go to different majors.

00:55:07:22 - 00:55:16:07

SD:

So like the same stories, unfortunately, still keep coming up. So we're still we're still, we're still fighting the good fight.

00:55:16:09 - 00:55:18:13

JMC:

Wow. I'm surprised.

00:55:18:15 - 00:55:34:23

CP:

But how is it—how has it improved? I mean, you two have 50 years apart in your training. And I'm curious to see what the differences are. Are there things that have worked out and things that haven't?

00:55:35:03 - 00:55:40:23

JMC:

Now, isn't that funny? Now, that was the only problem that I had was with that

00:55:41:01 - 00:55:43:18

SD:

Mm-hm.

00:55:43:20 - 00:55:53:03

JMC:

guidance counselor and also these women that interviewed me when the three nursing schools that I had applied to—

00:55:53:05 - 00:55:57:07

CP:

Oops, we have a quota. (laughs) Unbelievable. But they don't do that—

00:55:57:10 - 00:56:01:19

SD:

They won't say out loud that there's a quota but there, you know, there might be other roadblocks.

00:56:01:19 - 00:56:08:21

JMC:

That was why I was declined because they had their quota of "coloreds."

00:56:08:23 - 00:56:13:14

CP:

And did they ever say how many people that was?

00:56:13:15 - 00:56:24:03

JMC:

You know, who asked? You know, I wouldn't think to ask that question at that time. I was only 18. You know, I'm being exposed—

00:56:24:05 - 00:56:28:14

CP:

Did you walk out of the room after they said that to you, like furious?

00:56:28:16 - 00:56:36:12

JMC:

Of course. No, not really furious, but confused. Because that was my first exposure

00:56:36:14 - 00:56:37:04

CP:

Yeah.

00:56:37:06 - 00:56:39:02

JMC:

to something like that.

00:56:39:04 - 00:56:48:21

CP:

So that, you would say, was sort of overt prejudice. [To SD:] Are you thinking that these days it's more underground prejudice in a way?

00:56:48:23 - 00:56:54:21

SD:

Well, I would say sometimes it is, and sometimes it's not. I think in the last couple of years—

00:56:54:21 - 00:57:05:22

JMC:

I would think they have more control, too, because I'm just wondering if a suit could have been brought about something like that. Probably they cover themselves.

00:57:05:22 - 00:57:23:11

SD:

Yes, they don't, they don't outright say, you know, we can't let you in because of X, Y and Z. But then there's different barriers that they may put up or they may not show you the same resources or, you know, they may see that you're having trouble, but they may not say, oh, there's a tutoring session over here, or, there's this, there's that.

00:57:23:16 - 00:57:44:09

SD:

They may say a blanket thing in class. Oh, everybody has the same access to this. But if you're a first-generation student, you don't know where to go to the learning lab. You're not going to go there. You're not going to ask for that resource, especially being a first-generation student, a Black student, especially if you're—you don't want to be labeled as dumb or anything like that.

00:57:44:11 - 00:58:02:05

SD:

But if the other students are going, then they're going to go get the resources because they were conditioned to say, okay, I'm going to go ask for those resources, and then you end up falling behind. And those are some of the same stories that we see all the time. So what we find now in a lot of nursing schools that makes students of color successful is pipeline programs.

00:58:02:05 - 00:58:16:00

SD:

So, mentoring programs that make sure that there's nurses or people that look like the students so that they can see that there's something on the other side. Make sure that there is success on the other side of that.

00:58:16:02 - 00:58:27:06

CP:

In the training, 50 years later must be much more intense. You have to have your bachelor's degree where in 1956 you just needed a high school diploma.

00:58:27:09 - 00:58:53:22

SD:

So not necessarily. Actually nursing school has many entry points. There's not many diploma programs left in the country, but people can still start as licensed practical nurses. And there are still associate degree programs like Roxbury Community College is still an associate's degree program. But obviously we try to encourage people to bridge over to a bachelor's program because bachelor's programs are associated with better patient outcomes.

00:58:54:00 - 00:59:22:07

SD:

Obviously, the bigger teaching hospitals promote starting nurses with bachelor's programs. But we also know that that also creates some barriers because it creates a less diverse workforce. So right now, depending on what study you read, Black nurses comprise about 6 to 9 percent of the nursing workforce. So if Black people across the country are about 13 percent, we are underrepresented compared to the national population.

00:59:22:07 - 00:59:43:10

SD:

So, if most of us are only able to get an associate's degree because of money and barriers, then we have to figure out ways to make sure that that's equitable. Do we look at some of the associate's programs and bring people through and look at how we can get people into their bachelor's programs? We need to figure out how we can open those doors, because we can't keep saying that we have nursing shortages and keep doing the same thing.

00:59:43:12 - 00:59:45:06

CP:

Right.

00:59:45:08 - 01:00:15:16

JMC:

Right. I'm just learning about the practical learnings on some of what are they teaching now. Because like when I was talking to Carol—we were talking about this—and she said, "It's not nursing anymore." You know, as we—and I'm just wondering about the practical things because I know everybody's got specialties now. If you have a problem with the IV, they'll call somebody. (SD: Right.)

01:00:15:17 - 01:00:53:09

JMC:

You know, and when I think back when I was very sick—I was at, I think it was the Deaconess—and the IV had run dry. I woke up and I'm gasping and I've got all this froth and I'm like, look at the—there's all this air running into my veins, right? And I put on my light and this nurse—she was a degree person—and I'm gasping and pointing to the—.

01:00:53:10 - 01:01:18:08

JMC:

She says, "Oh yeah, that's how these IVs are." And I'm saying "Miss" between [gasps] "if you don't clear—" She didn't know how. So between breaths I'm telling her how to fix it. She took it out and I said, "Don't you dare put that back."

01:01:18:13 - 01:01:19:13

SD:

Hmm.

01:01:19:15 - 01:01:27:16

JMC:

And so this is what I'm wondering. You know how—. You can't always call someone.

01:01:27:18 - 01:01:28:19

SD:

Correct.

01:01:28:21 - 01:01:33:20

CP:

A specialist, you can't always call a specialist. You need more generalists. Yeah?

01:01:33:22 - 01:01:48:22

JMC:

See, so I'm wondering what's going on. And now—I had to go into—I'm a patient at Lahey Clinic—and the nurses walk around with their computers. (SD: Mm hmm.) But does anybody put their hands on patients anymore?

01:01:48:22 - 01:01:57:20

SD:

So that's the hard part. So a lot of our charting is no longer on paper. It's all on computers, on tablets and phones.

01:01:57:22 - 01:02:29:06

JMC:

Yeah. Because I had a friend who—she says, what was delaying us now—because they've changed everything—you have to put everything on computers now. And it kind of delayed her from doing what she has to do. But that was one of the things that bothered me was the practical parts of things. It just kind of like amazed me, you know, compared to what I was taught.

01:02:29:08 - 01:02:49:21

SD:

I would say, I would say—. So, I think in nursing school it definitely is—You know, you have your didactic learning. Then you go to clinical and then you, say, you have your 160, 200 hours of your senior practicum.

That's pretty standard. And then usually people have their three, six, nine, depending on what kind of unit they go to.

01:02:49:21 - 01:03:10:04

SD:

And I know in the emergency department they have somewhere between like a year or 18 months of orientation. But yeah, but most the average unit has about like a 12-week orientation. And new grads, they have a residency in general, which has about a year. But that's if the hospital has the resources to have it.

01:03:10:06 - 01:03:28:07

SD:

But oftentimes it also depends on who the learner is. So if the nurse is taking their orientation seriously and they realize that this is people's lives in their hands, then they have to realize the gravity of what this is. I think also too, when you're—as a nurse, you're always a teacher and you're always a learner.

01:03:28:09 - 01:04:02:08

SD:

You also have to realize—and I think as nurse educators, you have to remember—that the more technology we're putting in people's hands, we have to remember that there's still people inside the bed. And that's the hard part. I think that's the industry, and I think society, is struggling with as a whole. It's really, really difficult because while it makes us more efficient—. So like we have a new—these phone systems where the entire IV team—there's six people on in a day so everybody can be on a group text, everybody can say, okay, this person, Mrs. Jones, needs a line on 10A. Mrs. Smith needs a line.

01:04:02:08 - 01:04:21:18

SD:

And then if one person misses, the other person can help and everybody's on the same page. People don't have to check each other's beepers. All that stuff is gone to the wayside. So that makes them more succinct. However, they're always like this [mimes face to screen] if they're not paying attention. So, they have to—and then when they're in the patient room, they say all the time, "The phone's beeping,

01:04:21:18 - 01:04:33:12

SD:

beeping, beeping." They always have to make sure it's not somewhere visible because it's very distracting, especially if they're trying to have a line, place a line. So they have to be more mindful to make sure it's not—

01:04:33:12 - 01:04:34:09

JMC:

Times have changed.

01:04:34:15 - 01:04:38:21

SD:

It's very, very difficult. (JMC: Times have changed.) It's very difficult.

01:04:38:23 - 01:04:39:18

JMC:

Oh.

01:04:39:20 - 01:05:05:01

CP:

Well, I think this interview will help a lot of researchers in the future study that change over the past 60 years. They'll get it a good story from you about what it was like for you going to school in the fifties and interacting with patients and then having Sasha here to say, well, guess what? This is what it's like now.

01:05:05:03 - 01:05:11:15

CP:

(JMC: Yes.) But we know that you are one of the pioneers, at least here at the Brigham. (SD: Definitely.)

01:05:11:15 - 01:05:13:13

JMC:

(laughs) I love the Brigham.

01:05:13:15 - 01:05:18:21

CP:

That's so good to know. I was a little afraid you'd tell me that somebody was mean to you or something—.

01:05:19:03 - 01:05:37:00

JMC:

No! This is the thing. And the doctors were—oh, I had such great times with the physicians, especially the—and it's interesting. Like I said to you, they were all very nice. And they end up calling you by your first name, you know, because at the time you didn't do that.

01:05:37:02 - 01:05:38:08

SD:

Yes. Nurse, assistants, staff.

01:05:38:10 - 01:05:49:02

JMC:

I mean, it's just like when I went to Tufts, you would say Doctor so-and-so, and then he'd say to me, "Just when we're in front of somebody otherwise, you know, call me Dick. (laughter)

01:05:52:04 - 01:05:57:19

CP:

So you had children while you're pursuing this career. You had to raise kids. That's a lot of work.

01:05:57:20 - 01:06:19:04

JMC:

Yes. I have a son and a daughter. [Points to them off camera.] But I kind of had help because—especially when we had the conferences for the American College Health Association. I had to leave town, but my sister lived in town and she was wonderful. And then, of course, when they got older, they could take care of themselves.

01:06:19:08 - 01:06:22:10

CP:

And they both grew up to be in the medical field?

01:06:22:12 - 01:06:43:03

JMC:

My son—he's raised his hand—my son is Night Supervisor of the Respiratory Therapy Department at Mass General, and he's also an ECMO specialist. And my daughter is a teacher. Yes.

01:06:43:05 - 01:06:49:14

CP:

Very good. So when did you decide to retire?

01:06:49:16 - 01:06:56:23

JMC:

Oh, I was—that was in '97.

01:06:57:01 - 01:06:57:20

CP:

'97.

01:06:57:20 - 01:07:33:10

JMC:

I retired in 1997 at 62. It was getting physically a little much, you know, with (____??). But I had joined the St. Luke's Medical Guild at my church. So we ran clinics and I also was my church gardener, which I did for 30

years. And I was also the church receptionist. And one of the first things I did when I retired, I became a patron of the Boston Symphony.

01:07:33:12 - 01:07:35:17

JMC:

Okay.

01:07:35:19 - 01:07:41:05

CP:

So after retirement, any medical involvement or volunteerism?

01:07:41:07 - 01:07:42:17

JMC:

Not really. Not really.

01:07:42:17 - 01:07:44:12

SD:

You went back to the arts.

01:07:44:12 - 01:08:04:02

JMC:

I went back to the arts. And I did a lot of traveling. I had a very good friend and every year, right after Thanksgiving, two weeks, we were in Barbados. We did that for ten years straight.

01:08:04:04 - 01:08:13:04

CP:

Is there anything else you wanted to tell us about your time at the Brigham or your career that we didn't cover?

01:08:13:04 - 01:08:32:19

JMC:

No, I think I think we covered just about—let me just take a peek [at notes]. I really—I loved it. I loved it. Knew everyone. The only problem I had was that one nurse that asked me what I was doing there.

01:08:32:21 - 01:08:34:18

CP:

But it sounds like you put her in her place.

01:08:34:18 - 01:08:35:15

JMC:

I just—

01:08:35:16 - 01:08:36:23

JMC:

I just told her—

01:08:37:01 - 01:08:39:06

JMC:

You know, I have no problems doing that.

01:08:39:08 - 01:08:42:11

CP:

No, I can tell. (laughter)

01:08:42:13 - 01:08:48:21

JMC:

I had no problems doing that. I think, you know, I think I'm fine. I don't—

01:08:48:23 - 01:08:51:02

CP:

All right. Well, I'm sure if there's—

01:08:51:03 - 01:09:09:11

JMC:

You know, I like I said, I do my gardening and I'm a reader, you know, I'm a reader. Oh, the other person that I met when I was in the recovery room. [To SD:] I think you're too young to remember him. [To CP:] Do you remember Frank Avruch?

01:09:09:13 - 01:09:11:12

CP:

Yes!

01:09:11:14 - 01:09:12:07

JMC:

Yes. Bozo!

01:09:12:07 - 01:09:13:08

CP:

Bozo the Clown.

01:09:13:08 - 01:09:13:19

JMC:

Bozo the Clown.

01:09:13:19 - 01:09:16:05

SD:

Oh, okay. I know who that is. Obviously, never met him but—

01:09:16:05 - 01:09:17:12

CP:

(laughter)

01:09:17:14 - 01:09:32:08

JMC:

Bozo the Clown. He was out—and I saw him lying on the stretcher and I'm saying "I know you." So we had a little chat, a nice little chat. And then he ended up talking to me as Bozo.

01:09:32:10 - 01:09:37:16

CP:

Of course he did. That was his thing. I'm surprised you recognized him without the nose.

01:09:37:18 - 01:09:47:12

JMC:

Well, because he had done other things, you know, on television. So you couldn't help but recognize him.

01:09:47:14 - 01:09:52:08

CP:

Oh, that's great. I think that—

01:09:52:10 - 01:10:23:00

JMC:

And I'm still gardening. I'm still reading. I kind of stopped the symphony when the COVID came and because I'd had trouble walking you know, when I'd park. It was nice because after a while you could reserve your

seats. And I also had first balcony, first row. So we all met—the same people. If I didn't show up, "Where were you last month?"

01:10:23:02 - 01:10:24:07

JMC:

We're all very friendly. Yeah.

01:10:24:08 - 01:10:27:17

CP:

Sounds like you did the perfect retirement.

01:10:27:19 - 01:10:46:14

JMC:

Yeah. I'm happy. I have great neighbors. We walk. We're a group when we walk. The 93-year old, she went with her daughter, but the rest, one has a walker, and the two of us, we have canes. So everybody looks out for us.

01:10:46:18 - 01:10:51:02

JMC:

We stop traffic when they see us coming. (laughter)

01:10:51:04 - 01:11:01:12

JMC:

Oh, I thank you very much for thinking about me and bringing this forward. Sasha, it's nice hearing what you're doing. I'm proud of you. (SD: Thank you.)

01:11:01:13 - 01:11:14:20

CP:

Thank you very much for doing this. I'll be in touch with you and Gary and Janine [her children] about any photographs you might have that I don't have that we can we can put in the archives

01:11:14:21 - 01:11:15:11

JMC:

Okay.

01:11:15:11 - 01:11:17:22

CP:

along with your oral history.

01:11:17:22 - 01:11:18:16

JMC:

Okay.

01:11:18:18 - 01:11:20:17

CP:

I really appreciate it. Thank you so much.

01:11:20:19 - 01:11:23:01

JMC:

You're quite welcome.

01:11:23:03 - 01:11:24:10

CP:

Thanks Sasha. Thank you.