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Ruth Hunter

Ruth Hunter '51

Illinois Wesleyan University

Meg Miner

Illinois Wesleyan University

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Oral History Interview with Ruth Hunter
The Ames Library, June 9, 2010

Meg Miner: Hello, my name is Meg Miner and I'm the Archivist here at Illinois Wesleyan and today is June 9th in 2010. We are in Ames Library on the fourth floor and I have here today with me Ruth Hunter who's gonna talk to us about her experiences as a student here, so Ruth if you could go ahead and give me your full name and your affiliation with the university, we'll get going.

Ruth Hunter: Well, I'm Ruth Marie Hunter and I graduated from Brokaw Hospital School of Nursing in 1951 and I worked there for 28 years.

Meg Miner: That's a good long time.

Ruth Hunter: And I worked 25 years of the years of it in surgery and worked other duties.

Meg Miner: Okay. Well how is Brokaw Hospital School of Nursing affiliated with Illinois Wesleyan?

Ruth Hunter: They were—joined them for educational courses way back when I don't know—when the thirties maybe—and then we always came for anatomy, physiology, psychology, nutrition, and I can't think of other—sociology—all those main courses the first year and that's how we came to Wesleyan, walked the six blocks everyday.

Meg Miner: Is that right?

Ruth Hunter: Yeah...[laughs].

Meg Miner: Down Franklin?

Ruth Hunter: Down Franklin Avenue.

Meg Miner: Down Franklin, alright.

Ruth Hunter: But Nurses' Home—Nurses' Home, which is called Mercherle Hall now, was of course on Virginia, so you had a block to get over to that and you few. Sometimes you had ten minutes from the time you left duty 'til you got to class.

Meg Miner: Oh my goodness, so you were working in the hospital—

Ruth Hunter: Yeah.

Meg Miner: And studying—

Ruth Hunter: Not—

Meg Miner: There as well?

Ruth Hunter: Oh yeah.

Meg Miner: Okay.

Ruth Hunter: Because, see, we had to work for our board.

Meg Miner: Okay.

Ruth Hunter: See, we were there, we were living at Nurses' Home and for the first four months—lets see, yeah—first four months we only went to class at the hospital and Wesleyan, but then we started working floor, so we had to work floor duty and put in—what, it's a seven, six-day week—we had to put in—what, what's six days?...[laughs]. We worked—

Meg Miner: How many hours—

Ruth Hunter: Yeah.

Meg Miner: You mean? How many hours did you work in a day?

Ruth Hunter: Well, eight.

Meg Miner: Eight, eight hours.

Ruth Hunter: Eight hours.

Meg Miner: Okay.

Ruth Hunter: Forty—we had to put in 48 hours a week in order—because we were still on six-day weeks and we didn't get a five-day week until 1952.

Meg Miner: Oh my goodness.

Ruth Hunter: And that's when we went—everywhere—1952 we went to a forty-hour week.

Meg Miner: And that was after you graduated...[laughs].

Ruth Hunter: And that was after I graduated.

Meg Miner: Lucky you.

Ruth Hunter: Lucky us. And of course we got our room and board and our eats and, you know, and they furnished our uniforms and that in that three years.

Meg Miner: So the coursework that you were doing at Wesleyan then had already been established before you got into the program?

Ruth Hunter: Oh yeah.

Meg Miner: Or that was new?

Ruth Hunter: No—

Meg Miner: It was already going?

Ruth Hunter: It was all—

Meg Miner: Okay.

Ruth Hunter: Way back. Evelyn Lantz could probably give you the date that Wesleyan and Brokaw went together. I don't know.

Meg Miner: And Evelyn is an alum of the same year that you are?

Ruth Hunter: No, no, no.

Meg Miner: No.

Ruth Hunter: She's nineteen-thirty—

Meg Miner: Oh dear.

Ruth Hunter: No, no, no '42.

Meg Miner: Okay.

Ruth Hunter: No, she's before me.

Meg Miner: She's way before, okay.

Ruth Hunter: Yeah.

Meg Miner: We'll have to talk to her too.

Ruth Hunter: Yeah and see then she of course—when it was in the five-year program if I remember right.

Meg Miner: But yours was four?

Ruth Hunter: Three.

Meg Miner: Three.

Ruth Hunter: Ten-hundred and ninety-six days.

Meg Miner: But who's counting?

Ruth Hunter: We did.

[Meg Miner laughs]

Ruth Hunter: We did.

Meg Miner: That's great.

Ruth Hunter: But one of—well, if you want memorable things—is one of the memorable things I was thinking about the other day was the—September 7, 1948. That's the day we entered nurses' training at the Nurses' Home and they—and we went in—we were told to report in the

afternoon, so when we got there to report with our luggage—and we didn't have fancy luggage, we just had luggage and we were lucky to have an alarm clock.

Meg Miner: Oh my goodness.

Ruth Hunter: And eventually I got a radio but, you know, but you just had nothing because you just had a closet that you put everything you owned in plus some dressers drawers but—and so we went in and they had the tea and all the hospital employees came over and they Miss-ed us, you know, Miss This, Miss That, gosh, you know, I had never been where everybody was Miss This, Miss That, you know.

Meg Miner: Very formal for you?

Ruth Hunter: Oh, yes.

Meg Miner: Yeah.

Ruth Hunter: And then that day and then they took us to supper and that—one of the junior classmates and all that—but the next morning then they met with us and then they had the meeting and the director came in and that and the thing I'll remember about that meeting was she stood up and she informed us that when anyone entered the room, we were to stand, you know, for the class. Then—and then she informed us that yesterday we were girls and today we were ladies and we would act like ladies from that day forward...huh? There was twelve of us I think.

Meg Miner: Oh my goodness.

Ruth Hunter: Yeah, twelve of us, and all our mouths flew open, you know...[laughs].

Meg Miner: What did you think that meant? What did she—what was she expecting of you?

Ruth Hunter: I mean I couldn't act like a girl anymore. I had to be grown up, I had to...[laughs].

Meg Miner: That was that.

Ruth Hunter: And that was that.

Meg Miner: What was the director's name?

Ruth Hunter: Mrs. Gallagher.

Meg Miner: Okay.

Ruth Hunter: And then we came—maybe she—no, she was just an instructor, I can't think of the woman—Mrs. Scott was director.

Meg Miner: Okay.

Ruth Hunter: And I don't remember her first name but anyway, Mrs. Scott was the director and Mrs. Gallagher and there was a Miss Elder—no, Jean Elder, she was not married then—I forget who the other instructor was or, you know, at the hospital because somebody had to be with us on the floors, when you're the instructor, you know, and you first started and that, and then we

were dismissed and told—and one of the juniors brought us down here to Wesleyan to register and we registered in the Memorial Center and that. Then we went to the bookstore and got all our books. Then we walked back and then I don't know what happened with—

Meg Miner: With an armload of books.

Ruth Hunter: With an armload of books because we took fifteen hours the first semester plus all the studies at Brokaw.

Meg Miner: That's amazing.

Ruth Hunter: Ahh, you know.

Meg Miner: And so the faculty were at the Brokaw Hospital, the nursing faculty?

Ruth Hunter: No, doctors taught us at the—

Meg Miner: Doctors.

Ruth Hunter: And the nurse's instructors, you know, taught us down there. Either doctors—but of course we had a professor. And who was—Dr. Holmes was President of the—Wesleyan—

Meg Miner: Wesleyan.

Ruth Hunter: At that time and Dr. Holmes also taught—Doctor of Psychology but there were two Dr. Holmes.

Meg Miner: Ohh.

Ruth Hunter: And, of course, most of our classes were with the P.E. majors, you know, the football players and that and when we went to this psychology class with Dr. Holmes, he said, "Well I'm going to inform you big guys in this class that you better get your work in because you're not gunna pass," but he said, "There's not one student nurse in here if they hand in their work, will not pass." Ohh...[laughs]...that was an eye-opening—

Meg Miner: Oh wow. What do you think he meant by that?

Ruth Hunter: He said he—and he told us a lot later—he never been—never flunked a student nurse because, first off, he knew how hard they had to work and all the hours they had to put in because somebody in his family, I think, was—had been a student nurse. But he said, "You guys have time to go out here and loaf and play basketball and do all that," but he said, "those gals do not."

Meg Miner: And how did your classmates take that news?

Ruth Hunter: Well, we all said, "Oh good, maybe we'll make it in this class."

[Both laugh]

Ruth Hunter: But the hardest class for me was anatomy and physiology.

Meg Miner: Yeah.

Ruth Hunter: And that was really hard...[laughs]...but anyway—but otherwise I was never a real—I was never an “A” student.

Meg Miner: Uh-huh.

Ruth Hunter: But I—well, I was average or a little above.

Meg Miner: Yeah.

Ruth Hunter: It depended on the subject.

Meg Miner: Yeah.

Ruth Hunter: But then I don't—I can't hardly—I remember a lot of things happened, you know, during the three years but the next highlight I really remember was June 11, 1951.

Meg Miner: Okay.

Ruth Hunter: And you know what that was? Graduation day.

Meg Miner: Graduation.

Ruth Hunter: And guess who took part in Wesleyan's graduation?

Meg Miner: Who?

Ruth Hunter: Us, Brokaw. We—

Meg Miner: Well sure, of course you—

Ruth Hunter: We did.

Meg Miner: Was that new then?

Ruth Hunter: No.

Meg Miner: Oh.

Ruth Hunter: They'd done it before.

Meg Miner: Oh, okay.

Ruth Hunter: They'd done it before but—

Meg Miner: I was gunna say, I'd hope so.

Ruth Hunter: But we were different and everybody knew we were different because we had white uniforms on. For graduation we had to buy all—all of us had the same uniforms, you know, and that, long-sleeved and then—and of course we had our caps on—we were—and our

white shoes, white hose. We were fully dressed. Then we wore our capes with the one shoulder thrown back.

Meg Miner: Yes.

Ruth Hunter: And then we led the processional, of course, the campus wasn't like it is now, you know, at all, but we led the processional all over the campus before we went to the—what is the—what's in the building now, the old gym?

Meg Miner: Mhmm, it's the Hansen Student Center.

Ruth Hunter: Okay.

Meg Miner: Yeah.

Ruth Hunter: And we led to the door and when they got us to the door, we stopped, and then everybody lined up and then, you know, the last one in the line came in first to—

Meg Miner: Oh, really?

Ruth Hunter: To the hall, so we stood out there in that hot sun for ages. It was like—

Meg Miner: In those wool capes?

Ruth Hunter: And in wool capes.

Meg Miner: Oh my.

Ruth Hunter: And then when they finally got our turn to go in, they sat students, but they sat us in a group on the floor somewhere and the sun shone on every one of us...[laughs].

Meg Miner: Oh my goodness. So you were inside the gym?

Ruth Hunter: Oh yeah—

Meg Miner: Oh.

Ruth Hunter: The whole graduation, and then we—parents and that were invited and whoever, you know, for the students too, you know, from Wesleyan students. Well then if there was empty seats, they let the public in and we—and I had—and when I—I was really shocked because when I—the old neighbors from the old neighborhood, there—I don't know how many were standing outside, you know, when we got up there. I thought, "How are they going to get in? They can't get into graduation." Well, some of them did because there was seats empty, you know, and that, and the gym was packed and then when we walked through, they gave us our back to the diplomas because, see, we didn't get our diplomas until September. Matter of fact, I had been sick during the nurse training, so my date of graduation was October 15th.

Meg Miner: They post-dated it—what, did you have courses to make up or—?

Ruth Hunter: No, I had time to make up—

Meg Miner: Okay.

Ruth Hunter: Because I had my appendix out and I had pneumonia—

Meg Miner: Oh dear.

Ruth Hunter: And until we were seniors, we didn't have any sick days.

Meg Miner: You took your anatomy studies too much to heart.

[Both laugh]

Ruth Hunter: But we didn't have any sick days—

Meg Miner: Okay.

Ruth Hunter: Until we were seniors. We got two weeks vacation every year in the two years—

Meg Miner: Uh-huh.

Ruth Hunter: But otherwise we had nothing until we were seniors. Then when we were seniors they gave us—I forget how many days—and I would've been 'til the first of November—

Meg Miner: Wow.

Ruth Hunter: Probably, but then you'd see they keep track and you had to make up all of these days and I was, yeah—no, one other classmate was longer than I, but we had those ten and, of course, in those days too when we were students, you had hours, you didn't work eight hours, you worked like seven hours—seven to eleven in the morning and seven to eleven in the evening.

Meg Miner: Mhmm.

Ruth Hunter: And, you know, those hours.

Meg Miner: Oh yeah.

Ruth Hunter: Or that.

Meg Miner: That's a hard schedule.

Ruth Hunter: And then if you were in the diet—then you had to be six weeks in the diet kitchen and do special diets, you know, not the regular, the special diets. That's six weeks, so that meant you had to get there to do breakfast, then you went home between if you had time, then you came over for lunch, then you could go home to the Nurse's Dorm in between if you had time to get supper.

Meg Miner: Oh my goodness.

Ruth Hunter: You notice I always say dinner and supper, I'm from a farm.

[Both laugh]

Meg Miner: Is that the distinction?

Ruth Hunter: Oh sure.

Meg Miner: Ohh.

Ruth Hunter: We were never raised with lunch. I was—I don't know how old I was before I heard of lunch.

Meg Miner: That's funny.

Ruth Hunter: It was always dinner.

Meg Miner: So the people who were holding your diploma then was actually the hospital? It was—

Ruth Hunter: Yes.

Meg Miner: Hospital time you were making up?

Ruth Hunter: Yes.

Meg Miner: Not like your coursework?

Ruth Hunter: No.

Meg Miner: Okay, and where did you start the processional? Where did it start off from? You said it ended at the gym for commencement.

Ruth Hunter: Well, the building's gone but it was that building that burned and then we used the first floor—

Meg Miner: Mhmm.

Ruth Hunter: And the basement forever.

Meg Miner: Mhmm, that was Duration Hall.

Ruth Hunter: Oh yeah, okay.

Meg Miner: Okay, so where the big arch was, everybody started there?

Ruth Hunter: Kind of there.

Meg Miner: Okay.

Ruth Hunter: But—

Meg Miner: And then you went all over campus?

Ruth Hunter: We walked all the sidewalks, we were by the library, Presser Hall.

Meg Miner: Did people—were people out there—

Ruth Hunter: Yeah.

Meg Miner: Applauding? Was it like a parade or something?

Ruth Hunter: Well it was kind of like a parade.

Meg Miner: Oh.

Ruth Hunter: Because a lot of people, they—most of them waited down by the gym, you know—

Meg Miner: Mhmm.

Ruth Hunter: I mean because they didn't realize it but there was a few, like the neighbors, you could—see, the way it was then, there was neighbors right on the border.

Meg Miner: Yeah.

Ruth Hunter: And, of course, they were all out looking and, you know, and that.

Meg Miner: That's nice. So it was—did it feel like a good reception?

Ruth Hunter: Oh yeah. It was—it was—

Meg Miner: It seemed like it would be a very—

Ruth Hunter: It was great.

Meg Miner: It would feel important.

Ruth Hunter: And it was and the students didn't act like they do today, I'll clue you. They were very formal. They didn't have crap on their—you know, stuff on their things. They were dressed properly. The fellas didn't have a suit jacket on but the girls all had dresses, you know, hose, I think if I remember right, and the fellas were all dressed with shirt and tie but they didn't have their jackets on, you know, because it was so hot and, of course, they didn't have paper ones then, you know, it was them heavy cloth ones and that, and then the day before, they—Wesleyan had the tea for all the students, you know, for graduating and it was the first time that Wesleyan had ever invited the student nurses graduating and their families to the tea.

Meg Miner: Oh my goodness.

Ruth Hunter: I don't remember where the tea was, maybe it was in Memorial Center, I don't know.

Meg Miner: Do you know why they did it that year?

Ruth Hunter: We don't know and then some of them got invited later, afterward, and we always thought it was to do with Mrs.—because, see, the time we graduated, Mrs. Gallagher was Director of Nurses and her—of course her daughter had taught at, you know, in the gym, I mean the P.E. and we think maybe that—and that was her first graduating class that she'd ever got through school, Mrs. Gallagher. She had taught and I don't know what else she'd done, I don't remember, but it was the first time she ever started with one class—a class and we were it and then got us through and so she was always kind of proud of herself. I remember if—I showed you the pictures on my book I think.

Meg Miner: You did, you have some wonderful pictures.

Ruth Hunter: Yeah, some day you want them?

Meg Miner: I'd love them. They would be great. I think they would be great additions to the university.

Ruth Hunter: Yeah, well, someday.

Meg Miner: Someday, whenever.

Ruth Hunter: Someday, I'm still looking at them.

[Both laugh]

Meg Miner: Well that's an important thing I think. That's the great thing about photos is they can help us—

Ruth Hunter: That tea, we were invited, of course we all dressed up—boy!...[laughs]. And even my brothers dressed up and...

[Both laugh]

Meg Miner: Well how did the other students treat you at—the non-nursing students? Do you feel like you were part of the campus?

Ruth Hunter: No.

Meg Miner: How do you—how was it different?

Ruth Hunter: It was different because we were fine but then when we took nutrition class, which was straight through Wesleyan, like you go Franklin and walk straight through the campus and over on the other side was the big white house and that's where they taught nutrition.

Meg Miner: Hmm, in a house?

Ruth Hunter: In a great big house.

Meg Miner: Okay.

Ruth Hunter: Wesleyan owned it, I don't know.

Meg Miner: Yeah.

Ruth Hunter: Maybe they didn't, maybe they rented.

Meg Miner: Yeah.

Ruth Hunter: Because they used to rent houses around here—

Meg Miner: Yeah.

Ruth Hunter: For students but anyway, and I don't know how—if it was two weeks, three weeks—well anyway, after we had entered, we had—they wouldn't let us just wear our street clothes to nutrition. They told us that we had to have a white jacket or something. Well, none of us had money for that and so we went home and we went back to the home and told Mrs. Gallagher and she said, "Well, just wear your uniforms but not your cap," you know, your—boy, when we walked through the campus—"There goes those student nurses!"

Meg Miner: People would say things to you? Students would say things to you?

Ruth Hunter: Well not really bad but—

Meg Miner: Yeah.

Ruth Hunter: They—we were just—like we were, you know, "Just don't touch them."

Meg Miner: Hmm.

Ruth Hunter: And that, you know, I mean it was just kind of different.

Meg Miner: Hmm.

Ruth Hunter: And then we had to go to invocation every week too.

Meg Miner: Mhmm.

Ruth Hunter: Well that was six blocks to walk but we didn't—we wore our street clothes then and that—and that—oh, and so we had—and we said, "But nobody else has ever done that." "Well, it's just good for you," so...[laughs].

Meg Miner: So it became part of your routine.

Ruth Hunter: Yes...[laughs].

Meg Miner: Did you feel better when you weren't in your uniform? Did you feel like you blended in more in the campus or did you still—?

Ruth Hunter: No, not really. They did—they knew the twelve of us, the student body wasn't that large, and they just knew us.

Meg Miner: Mhmm.

Ruth Hunter: And the next class, one gal had gone to Wesleyan, so she was treated a little different in the next class but they felt—everybody after also felt the same once they wore the uniform...[laughs].

Meg Miner: Hmm.

Ruth Hunter: And that—“Oh, there’s that student nurse.” “There’s them student nurses.”

Meg Miner: That’s interesting. Do you feel part of Wesleyan now?

Ruth Hunter: Yeah, I’ve always kind of felt because I took courses here and one time—one year here, Kenneth Dye was teaching anatomy and physiology and I knew him when I was a kid. He had served in World War II and how he ever got home I don’t know. He had to crawl for days, so then he—his plane was shot down.

Meg Miner: Oh dear.

Ruth Hunter: And his plane—and he—and if he’d walk, they would’ve seen him and he was able to get food from people and that and crawl at night because if he walked that would, I guess—be hit or, you know.

Meg Miner: Oh dear.

Ruth Hunter: And I knew him and the minute I saw him I said something to him and he says, “How would I know you?” and I said—I told him about my—he knew right away when I told him about, you know, my parents and that and he said, “Oh, I remember you, you were a little kid, weren’t you?” “Yeah...”

[Both laugh]

Ruth Hunter: Because we’re from—well, my mother was from McLean originally.

Meg Miner: Uh-huh.

Ruth Hunter: My dad was from Southern Illinois.

Meg Miner: Uh-huh.

Ruth Hunter: And that’s a story too.

[Both laugh]

Meg Miner: Do you want to tell me it?

Ruth Hunter: Well, yeah, if you want to hear it.

Meg Miner: Well, sure.

Ruth Hunter: My mom was—lived out on a farm on the road to Waynesville in McLean and my father was from Greenville, Illinois and in 1922 he came up to shuck corn with people from Greenville called Slupianek.

Meg Miner: Is that a family name?

Ruth Hunter: Yes.

Meg Miner: Oh my goodness.

Ruth Hunter: And the son still lives in McLean, and he came and he shucked for the Slupianeks because he had moved up here to McLean and he shucked corn for the Slupianeks, well then they got through—that's by hand, you know.

Meg Miner: Mhmm.

Ruth Hunter: This way—

Meg Miner: Oh yeah, oh yeah.

Ruth Hunter: Which I shucked many an hour—

Meg Miner: Tear it off.

Ruth Hunter: Many a time but anyways, so he went to—got through and he says, “Well why don't you go to that man over there. He needs—he's not through shuckin' corn. I'm sure he'll hire you and that,” so my dad went over there and shucked corn for him and that and that's—that was my grandfather and they met and my mom and dad met and that was 1923. My father went home—went home after corn shuckin' and came back—he came back to visit and then he came back in the summer—yeah, in the summer—and, of course, he visited because he had the—and the only transportation he could get from Greenville—he had to go to Litchfield—no, not Litchfield, oh I can't think of the town on 51—Vandalia.

Meg Miner: Oh, yeah.

Ruth Hunter: Vandalia.

Meg Miner: Mhmm.

Ruth Hunter: Then he had to catch the Interurban. You ever heard of the Interurban?

Meg Miner: I have heard of it.

Ruth Hunter: Okay, that's the only way he could get here and then he'd have to ride it back and forth. I don't know how he got from Greenville to Vandalia because it's a little ways apart and he came—but in October he came back and they got married—

Meg Miner: Oh my goodness.

Ruth Hunter: On Halloween, thirty—October 31st, 1923, and they had the wedding at the house and my mom laughed and said later, “Just think, we had chairs in the house and we made all the people who attended the wedding stand up...” [laughs].

Meg Miner: Why is that?

Ruth Hunter: I don't know, they didn't think anything about it, I guess...[laughs].

Meg Miner: Oh my goodness.

Ruth Hunter: And then they went to—my dad went to get the marriage license. He got one place and when they got married they figured out that it wasn't right, so he had to go get the second marriage license...[laughs].

Meg Miner: So they got married twice?

Ruth Hunter: No, they didn't marry. They just...

Meg Miner: Just kidding.

Ruth Hunter: Yeah.

Meg Miner: [laughs]...That's a great story. So that's how they got up here.

Ruth Hunter: That's—

Meg Miner: And they stayed in this area.

Ruth Hunter: That's how my dad got up here.

Meg Miner: Yeah.

Ruth Hunter: And then they went back to live for a year down in Greenville and my mother—my dad didn't like Greenville anymore—

Meg Miner: Oh.

Ruth Hunter: Because it's poor farming. They only have two crops out of every five years still to this day.

Meg Miner: Oh my goodness.

Ruth Hunter: So—and his folks were farmers, my grandpa and grandma, but I don't remember my grandmother because I was a year old when she died.

Meg Miner: What made you be—want to be a nurse?

Ruth Hunter: I don't know because I—when I wasn't even in school, I remember I wasn't five years old because—I musta been five years old—because I wasn't even in school and I'd tell my grandma, "Grandma, I'm gunna be a nurse," and that.

Meg Miner: Well there ya go.

Ruth Hunter: And then I went and then, of course, my grandmother—I was eight years old when my grandmother died. I never knew my Grandfather Reeves but I don't know what did it or anything but I just always knew it.

Meg Miner: And was Brokaw the only hospital you could train at around here?

Ruth Hunter: No, no, I could've—I knew I didn't want to go to St. Joe.

Meg Miner: Okay.

Ruth Hunter: So I went to Mennonite and Lena Maxwell was the Director of Nurses and that and Mom and I went there to find out if—you know, what the opportunities were and that.

Meg Miner: Mhmm.

Ruth Hunter: Because we'd always—as a family, everybody had always gone to Mennonite, you know, for patients and everything.

Meg Miner: Right.

Ruth Hunter: And—but after I talked to—after we went to talk to her and that I said, “Mom, I don't want to go there,” and Mom says, “I don't want you to either,” so we went to Brokaw. Mom—I—of course my mom didn't drive, so I drove and I went to Mom—went to Brokaw and the reception was entirely different.

Meg Miner: Hmm.

Ruth Hunter: They said, “Do you want a tour of the hospital? We'll tell you all about it and we'll tour the Nurses' Home,” and I said, “No, I don't need a tour of the Nurses' Home,” and they said, “Why?” I said, “Well,” and I named the student, I said, “there's a student nurse I went to high school with and her mother and our mother are—my mother is best friends and I've been over there because I have taken her home.” Because one time I took Mom to this friends house and she was there ready to go back to nurse's training and she had to walk about six, eight blocks, maybe more.

Meg Miner: Hmm.

Ruth Hunter: I said, “No, I'll just drive you,” and that, so I went in with her and she toured and I'd been in a couple—three times with her, so I knew what it was like, what living was there.

Meg Miner: Mhmm.

Ruth Hunter: And then—but they toured, they welcomed us. It was just entirely—and they said some...and then the application—“Here's your application. Go home, fill it out, and we'll let you know” and that and I thought, “Oh, yeah. What do I do now? I probably won't make it.”

Meg Miner: Hmm.

Ruth Hunter: Guess what? In a few days I got it...[laughs].

Meg Miner: You did. Oh my goodness. That must've felt great.

Ruth Hunter: It was, just like when I got my—you know, went to Chicago for my RN Exam.

Meg Miner: Yeah?

Ruth Hunter: Day and a half you had to go to Chicago.

Meg Miner: How long was that after graduation?

Ruth Hunter: Well, soon as you could—

Meg Miner: Okay.

Ruth Hunter: Arrange the date.

Meg Miner: Okay.

Ruth Hunter: So mine was the last day of October. I got out the 15th, of course, I had already applied, you know, you apply when—as soon as you can, and on the last day of October and the first day of November I took it in 1951 and I had to go to Chicago. When I got to Chicago I called and called and I couldn't find a hotel room, you know, I thought, "What I am gunna do? Because I've got to spend a night."

Meg Miner: Yeah.

Ruth Hunter: No, I had to spend two because it was so early in the morning on the first day, full day, that I knew I couldn't catch a train in Bloomington at 4:00 a.m. and—

Meg Miner: Sure.

Ruth Hunter: So I thought, "Well, the junior class—some of the members of the junior class are at the Research and Educational Hospital at PEDs, so I called up—so I called one of the classmates and I said, "Would you arrange or tell them you're gunna have a guest on, you know, the two nights?" and they said, "Sure, just come on," so when I got to Chicago, I got the "El", I'd learned, I'd been there three months—

[Meg Miner laughs]

Ruth Hunter: In the summer, you know.

Meg Miner: And you stayed with a former classmate then?

Ruth Hunter: No, they were juniors.

Meg Miner: Juniors, oh current—

Ruth Hunter: They weren't my classmates, they were juniors.

Meg Miner: Oh my goodness, okay.

Ruth Hunter: They were juniors and, of course, we knew each other because we were—lived together, all of us.

Meg Miner: Yeah, yeah.

Ruth Hunter: And so I stayed with them and, of course, I knew how to get the “El” because I had spent June, July, and August in Chicago in PEDs there.

Meg Miner: That was the final portion of your studies?

Ruth Hunter: The final portion.

Meg Miner: Okay.

Ruth Hunter: And that, so I called them up and they said, “Sure,” so when I got there, of course, I knew the housemothers because I’d just been there, you know.

[Meg Miner laughs]

Ruth Hunter: “Oh, you’re here,” “What are you doin’ here?” “You comin’ back?” I said, “No, I’m just gunna stay a night with my friend, you know, the classmates.”

Meg Miner: Perfect.

Ruth Hunter: She said, “Well, you’ll be—” —they—we—the house had a peak, you know, and like an attic—that’s where the student nurses stayed.

Meg Miner: Oh, great.

Ruth Hunter: The other help—“But you’ll have to stay on the second floor,” and she said, “Do you know where it is?” I said, “Sure.” She says, “Well, go up there and tell them that you’re staying.” Well, the gal that I was really kind of good friend with, well she was kind of—got to be a friend of the family later—She says, “I’m not gunna stay up there. There’s another bed. I’ll sleep down with you,” so—

[Both laugh]

Ruth Hunter: So we slept the two nights and that.

Meg Miner: So you didn’t have to stay in the attic then?

Ruth Hunter: No.

Meg Miner: That’s a fair trade—she found you a place to stay.

Ruth Hunter: Yeah, so I didn’t know what I was gunna do. I really didn’t and one—some gal—two gals had to go clear to the suburbs, you know, to get a place.

Meg Miner: Wow.

Ruth Hunter: But anyway—and when you took the exam, the Medical-Nursing, it was ninety questions, none of the questions are wrong, you had to pick the most right, the best right, best of the right one.

Meg Miner: Oh my goodness.

Ruth Hunter: The best right one because they were all right answers.

Meg Miner: Hmm.

Ruth Hunter: Ninety questions, sixty minutes.

Meg Miner: Oh my goodness.

Ruth Hunter: You didn't read long, you know, of course, I had studied, so I had a pretty good idea on a lot of the questions. We had this big review book.

Meg Miner: Mhmm.

Ruth Hunter: And we studied that after—as we got out of nurse's training and that and a lot of those questions were in there.

Meg Miner: Oh, that's great.

Ruth Hunter: But it went well and then they were changing in 1951 to '52 to computers to grade them. Well, guess what? It broke down, so I didn't get my certificate until after January of '52.

Meg Miner: Oh no. Did you have to wait that long to find out that you'd passed?

Ruth Hunter: Yeah.

Meg Miner: Oh my goodness.

Ruth Hunter: And how you knew if you passed or flunked, the envelope was the size of the certificate, you know what I mean?

Meg Miner: Ohh.

Ruth Hunter: If that came, then you knew you'd passed. You didn't even have to open it.

[Meg Miner laughs]

Ruth Hunter: But if the little envelope came.

Meg Miner: Uh-oh.

Ruth Hunter: Uh-oh, you knew you were on the way back.

Meg Miner: Did it have a high fail rate, the test?

Ruth Hunter: Well, I don't know because—

Meg Miner: Do you know how your classmates did?

Ruth Hunter: Well, all my classmates passed.

Meg Miner: Yeah.

Ruth Hunter: But the next class down didn't. They—two or three of them passed and two of them were “B” students, I never did figure out—they were “B” students.

Meg Miner: Hmm.

Ruth Hunter: But they flunked.

Meg Miner: Hmm.

Ruth Hunter: But it was an experience. Oh, and between, while you're taking the exam—so we finally complained because they'd brush us. They had nuns with their frock on or, you know that, walk in between the aisles. Well, there was—the aisles were so close that they brushed you and that was a distraction.

Meg Miner: That is, yeah.

Ruth Hunter: So we went and complained and so they just walked around but I don't know how you could cheat because you were so busy.

[Meg Miner laughs]

Ruth Hunter: You had this pencil that had lead in it.

Meg Miner: Mhmm.

Ruth Hunter: You know, and you had to keep reading.

Meg Miner: Mhmm, the time pressure.

Ruth Hunter: Yeah. “Well, you've got ninety questions and sixty minutes. You may start now.” Hrrmm, boy the old bell rang. “God it can't be,” but I was through so I didn't have to worry.

Meg Miner: So what did you do after you got your certificate then?

Ruth Hunter: My RN's license?

Meg Miner: Mhmm, mhmm.

Ruth Hunter: Well, I just kept working at Brokaw.

Meg Miner: So you stayed at Brokaw the whole time?

Ruth Hunter: Yeah, I stayed at Brokaw.

Meg Miner: Okay.

Ruth Hunter: Because, see, the thing is with me, I had to go to pediatrics nursing after all my classmates had theirs. I had to go with juniors, which was fine, I didn't care about that, but it was my last three months of training.

Meg Miner: Mhmm.

Ruth Hunter: My classmates were getting married. I didn't get to attend their weddings.

Meg Miner: Mmm.

Ruth Hunter: You know, or any of that. They worked together, they were taking their vacations.

Meg Miner: Mmm.

Ruth Hunter: You know what I mean?

Meg Miner: Mhmm.

Ruth Hunter: And I went up there and I was up there one week before I had to come home to graduation and the tea.

Meg Miner: Mhmm.

Ruth Hunter: That's the last time I have seen some of them.

Meg Miner: Oh my goodness.

Ruth Hunter: And some of them, a lot of them, you know, are dead. There's only—one, two—four of us dead, no, five of us still alive.

Meg Miner: And that's because you had to make up the time for your illness?

Ruth Hunter: I didn't make it up. They just—they couldn't find a time to get me to Chicago.

Meg Miner: Oh, okay.

Ruth Hunter: That three months. The training three months affiliation that we had was at Bartonville, at Peoria State at Bartonville, Illinois Medical—Mental Hospital.

Meg Miner: Okay.

Ruth Hunter: Oh, I had a ball there.

[Meg Miner laughs]

Ruth Hunter: Yeah, because like in recreation they had a—we had—our team recreational and then when you got to there—and then they'd have the night. When I came home to Brokaw from being there three months, I couldn't go to a movie because we—at Peoria State, they had all the latest movies for the patients.

Meg Miner: Oh.

Ruth Hunter: And how we'd get to see them, we'd pick up patients, we'd be assigned and we'd go to the different buildings and pickup residents and walk them to the movie and then Friday

night—one night was dance night. Boy, when you danced you didn't know if you were gunna jig, you were gunna—the alcoholics were the greatest to dance with.

[Meg Miner laughs]

Ruth Hunter: They were perfect. They could waltz, they—

Meg Miner: And this was part of your job, was being there with them?

Ruth Hunter: Yeah, you could volunteer. You didn't have to go to that one.

Meg Miner: Uh-huh.

Ruth Hunter: But everybody went—well, most all the student nurses went because you had a ball.

Meg Miner: Yeah.

Ruth Hunter: Some would jig, some would run. You did whatever they did...[laughs].

Meg Miner: That's funny.

Ruth Hunter: But the—

Meg Miner: Why do you think they were the most fun?

Ruth Hunter: Well, I don't know. They were just patients and—

Meg Miner: Yeah.

Ruth Hunter: That. And we had one judge and when we went and took him from building to building, the—always the other way was home.

Meg Miner: Uh-huh.

Ruth Hunter: Always home, so you had to watch him because he would, he'd turn around and, you know, start walking home.

Meg Miner: Ohh.

Ruth Hunter: But when you went to a door—we had to learn this—when you went to a door, he always opened the door for you and he would not go in until you went in, so you just went in a turned immediately around.

Meg Miner: To make sure he didn't go the other way?

Ruth Hunter: Yeah.

[Both laugh]

Ruth Hunter: But I was there at Christmastime at Peoria State and we had a ball. Well, I did but the patients did too because we—I've—we sacked before Christmas Day—we helped the students and, well, the help did, personnel too, but most of the students, because there was—what, I forget how many students of us worked because they were from all over the state, you know—

Meg Miner: Mhmm.

Ruth Hunter: —students affiliating.

Meg Miner: Mhmm.

Ruth Hunter: And we sacked 600 pounds divided up and sacked for each individual patient, 600 pounds of peanuts.

Meg Miner: Oh my goodness.

Ruth Hunter: So, you know, we—I don't know how we did it. Now—

Meg Miner: That was their big treat?

Ruth Hunter: That was a big treat.

Meg Miner: Yeah.

Ruth Hunter: But then we also had candy for them.

Meg Miner: Aww.

Ruth Hunter: And the personnel, especially the doctors, of course, the patients smoked in those days—

Meg Miner: Mhmm.

Ruth Hunter: So the doctors bought a carton of cigarettes for every patient that smoked.

Meg Miner: Hmm.

Ruth Hunter: And then on Christmas Day, because we weren't gunna have a family dinner anyway at home, so I just volunteered to work because we had had ours the day before back at Bloomington, you know, back at Towanda really.

Meg Miner: Mhmm.

Ruth Hunter: And so I volunteered and I was glad I did because—and all of us that did volunteer for that day—we didn't have too.

Meg Miner: Mhmm.

Ruth Hunter: The student nurses—we all were so happy we did because it was—it was just a delight. Everybody was happy, you know what I mean?

Meg Miner: Mhmm.

Ruth Hunter: All of the residents and we had, of course, some upset times because that—of irritation of the holidays, you know, with the mentally ill.

Meg Miner: Oh, sure.

Ruth Hunter: But anyway, they—and they gave them candy and that but every—if the family they knew—if the family brought a gift for each, you know, resident—but if they didn't, the state had a gift, so we had all these gifts to pass out and boxes of candy and when I came—went—came home from Peoria State, from all the candy that was given to me over the holiday, I had a grocery sack full of candy.

[Meg Miner laughs]

Ruth Hunter: My brothers loved me.

[Meg Miner laughs]

Ruth Hunter: They ate it, I'm not kiddin', and we—you always, regardless what was offered to you, you always—box of candy, "Please have a piece." You always took one regardless, even if you knew you wouldn't eat it, but you always took it, you didn't eat it there. It was just—you didn't. "Well, I'll eat it for later," "I need this for tonight's snack," or—but you always took, you didn't refuse and that, but the only thing that happened—during Christmas...[laughs]...we ate in the dining room—we ate in the dining room of where we lived.

Meg Miner: Mhmm.

Ruth Hunter: Which was nice. We didn't have to go to the big dining room and we ate but the patients served us.

Meg Miner: Oh.

Ruth Hunter: Or picked up the dishes. We went through the line to get our food and anything else you needed like water and then we had dessert. We had the ice cream desserts twice a week, the sundaes, whatever you wanted.

Meg Miner: Ohh.

Ruth Hunter: Well they, you know, they'd come and get your order and that. Well, either—I don't know if it was the day before, it wasn't Christmas Day, it was before—anyway the residents—a couple residents got upset. Well, we were eatin' our lunch, guess what? Plates started flying!...[laughs]

Meg Miner: Oh my goodness.

Ruth Hunter: Of course we—of course they grabbed her right away. They grabbed the—

Meg Miner: Yeah.

Ruth Hunter: Especially the one and that and...[laughs]...so you never knew.

Meg Miner: It was never a dull moment.

Ruth Hunter: No, but the food at R&E and the food at State was a dream. We all gained weight.

[Meg Miner laughs]

Ruth Hunter: But when you order at ice cream day the sundaes, you could have whatever you want. You could have whatever ice cream they had, then you could have anything you wanted, syrup, peanuts...[laughs].

Meg Miner: Oh my goodness.

Ruth Hunter: Anything—you could have two dips, ten dips, you know.

Meg Miner: Oh my goodness.

Ruth Hunter: But on—in Chicago, now, R&E, the Sunday night is what we really liked—well, they had good food all the time—but Sunday night was the night of sandwiches and they'd set out just trays and trays of stuff, you know, the mixes.

Meg Miner: Yeah.

Ruth Hunter: Ham salad—

Meg Miner: Oh—

Ruth Hunter: Chicken salad—

Meg Miner: Sure.

Ruth Hunter: And you could have all you wanted to eat. Then the ice cream comes for—like this.
[Motions hand]

Meg Miner: Oh my goodness.

Ruth Hunter: You know, big around, so between you—

Meg Miner: Big as a softball.

Ruth Hunter: Yeah, a ball.

Meg Miner: Or a baseball.

Ruth Hunter: Yeah, oh yeah, they were big cups, and you—and in those days, we probably would eat maybe four, five sandwiches, six.

Meg Miner: Oh my goodness.

Ruth Hunter: Oh, yeah, we all ate like horses.

[Meg Miner laughs]

Ruth Hunter: Well the residents and—the interns and the residents, when they go through the line and we had spaghetti, they would give them automatically two big plates of spaghetti just—and our plates were big.

Meg Miner: Mmm.

Ruth Hunter: But that's how we ate at all of—I gained ten pounds.

Meg Miner: Oh my goodness.

Ruth Hunter: At R&E in Chicago.

Meg Miner: And now you're saying R&E—

Ruth Hunter: “E”.

Meg Miner: Those initials, so what do they stand for?

Ruth Hunter: Research and Educational Hospital.

Meg Miner: Okay, thank you.

Ruth Hunter: And it's on—well, it was the back of old Cook County.

Meg Miner: Okay.

Ruth Hunter: On Wood and I can't tell you the other street now and we and—and that.

Meg Miner: Okay, I just want to make sure I understood—

Ruth Hunter: Yeah—

Meg Miner: What the initials were for.

Ruth Hunter: There's a Psychiatric Illinois...Neurologist—no, Neurologist, no—well anyway there was a psychiatric hospital right by us too.

Meg Miner: Mhmm, mhmm.

Ruth Hunter: Right there and we would take shortcuts through there—

Meg Miner: Mhmm.

Ruth Hunter: To go to the “El” and that.

Meg Miner: Hmm. So when you came back to Brokaw did you have a specialty? I mean you worked in PEDs and you worked in psychiatric—

Ruth Hunter: No, we didn't have PEDs. We—

Meg Miner: Did you just do general—

Ruth Hunter: Yeah, we had general.

Meg Miner: On the floor or—

Ruth Hunter: There's, see, those... was to get our diploma because there was no PEDs—there's no PEDs per say at Brokaw. Well, nobody—hospital, you just take care of the babies that are all on the floor, you know.

Meg Miner: Mhmm.

Ruth Hunter: Not the—but OB was separate.

Meg Miner: Mhmm.

Ruth Hunter: But when I came back I knew I was going to night duty because that was the only job left for me.

Meg Miner: Hmm.

Ruth Hunter: I—if I could've—if I had been there that three months, I could've maybe picked but I liked night duty, so—

Meg Miner: Good.

Ruth Hunter: I did go night duty but then I—got so after nine months I couldn't handle it because—because, well, I just couldn't get enough sleep.

Meg Miner: Ohh, hard adjustment.

Ruth Hunter: And then I went to days and I worked and when you work days that meant anywhere from seven in the morning to eleven o'clock at night.

Meg Miner: Hmm.

Ruth Hunter: And so you would have—you'd work and finally we—I convinced the supervisor and the other gal that worked and we would work a week, four days—well, not four days straight because you never knew if—but we would work—work three to eleven more than one day.

Meg Miner: Hmm.

Ruth Hunter: Then, of course, before you had your day off, you always worked 'til eleven—

Meg Miner: Hmm.

Ruth Hunter: If you got off at eleven. Then you had to be back at seven and then you had your day off.

Meg Miner: Hmm.

Ruth Hunter: And I tell you—

Meg Miner: That is—that's incredible.

Ruth Hunter: And the time you'd get off and I'd be home it was probably midnight and then I'd have to get up...[laughs]...I hardly got to bed 'til it was—

Meg Miner: Oh my goodness.

Ruth Hunter: But, you know, it went along like that.

Meg Miner: Well, being at Brokaw for as long as you were, you probably saw other Wesleyan student nurses come through. Did you ever interact with them?

Ruth Hunter: We didn't—see, in my day, there wasn't any other Wesleyan student nurses.

Meg Miner: No?

Ruth Hunter: No, the student—in 1962 was the first time there was a—Wesleyan nurses.

Meg Miner: Right, but—

Ruth Hunter: Student nurses.

Meg Miner: Right, but they were coming to Brokaw for work, for training, right? Weren't they? I mean, weren't they doing practical clinical—

Ruth Hunter: Well, after '62.

Meg Miner: Yeah, yeah.

Ruth Hunter: Then I saw them, sure.

Meg Miner: Yeah, so I was just curious—

Ruth Hunter: Oh yeah, I saw them.

Meg Miner: What you thought about the—how the program changed, if you have any observations because you were there for a good long time.

Ruth Hunter: Thirty-one years—

Meg Miner: Yeah.

Ruth Hunter: Totally.

Meg Miner: Yeah.

Ruth Hunter: Thirty-one years totally, three and twenty-eight.

Meg Miner: Right.

Ruth Hunter: No, see, you took all the courses, you know, like OR, operating room was three months, OB was three months—you did all this.

Meg Miner: Mhmm.

Ruth Hunter: But after I was on—and then I, after in June—no, September—August I mean... '59... was it August, yeah, I think it was August—in 1952 then I transferred to days and then I worked 'til the next March on the floor duty, you know.

Meg Miner: Mhmm.

Ruth Hunter: Then my classmate, her husband enlisted in the Air Force and that left an opening in OR—

[Meg Miner laughs]

Ruth Hunter: Operating room, or surgery.

Meg Miner: Uh-huh.

Ruth Hunter: And so then I went to work and then I was there twenty-five years.

Meg Miner: Oh.

Ruth Hunter: Then I went to Central Services and worked for two and a half.

Meg Miner: What does that mean—

Ruth Hunter: That's—

Meg Miner: Central Services?

Ruth Hunter: That means everything that has like surgical instruments and—

Meg Miner: Ohh.

Ruth Hunter: Has to be cleaned.

Meg Miner: Okay.

Ruth Hunter: All the supplies for the floor they have to come get.

Meg Miner: Mhmm.

Ruth Hunter: You know, and packs for surgery and—

Meg Miner: Mhmm.

Ruth Hunter: Well, special catheters, just main—

Meg Miner: Mhmm.

Ruth Hunter: Equipment. That was what it was.

Meg Miner: Okay.

Ruth Hunter: And you'd distribute it and that, so I did that...then I left, well, Brokaw Hospital's having a lot of problems, so I left and I was the thirteenth RN to resign.

Meg Miner: Oh, in what space of time?

Ruth Hunter: Well, in a short time, '77-'78—no, maybe '78-'79.

Meg Miner: What did you do after you retired?

Ruth Hunter: After I retired?

Meg Miner: Mhmm.

Ruth Hunter: Well, for—I loafed a year and then the next five years and eight months I went to the nursing home everyday to take care of my mother.

Meg Miner: Oh dear.

Ruth Hunter: And I was a volunteer at the nursing home because I did everything every—the employees—the patients—no, not patients—residents thought I was employed there.

Meg Miner: Mmm.

Ruth Hunter: Because I was always waiting on them—

Meg Miner: Yeah...[laughs].

Ruth Hunter: I was doing this, I was doing that, you know, and the activity director, I helped her a lot because—and Delmar, which you met—my brother.

Meg Miner: Mhmm.

Ruth Hunter: He used to preach once a month for a long time and then it got so it didn't work out, so he, you know, but—so I did that. I don't know, I've just done things, traveled, of course, Delmar and I after my mother's death, we go to Florida five months a year.

Meg Miner: That's nice.

Ruth Hunter: Yeah.

Meg Miner: Yeah.

Ruth Hunter: We have a manufactured home down there.

Meg Miner: That's great.

Ruth Hunter: The winter...that's terrible.

[Both laugh]

Meg Miner: Winter up here?

Ruth Hunter: No—here?

Meg Miner: Yeah.

Ruth Hunter: Down there.

Meg Miner: Ohh.

Ruth Hunter: It was the worst winter Florida had had since 1948.

Meg Miner: Oh, this past year.

Ruth Hunter: This past year. We've never left a yard...brown.

[Meg Miner laughs]

Ruth Hunter: Our yard was literally dead.

Meg Miner: Wow.

Ruth Hunter: And we had three torrential rainstorms and the last one had hail with it, flooding.

Meg Miner: Oh my goodness.

Ruth Hunter: Yeah.

Meg Miner: That's unusual.

Ruth Hunter: Yeah.

Meg Miner: Hmm.

Ruth Hunter: So I don't now what the summer's like because I don't think Delmar's called down there to see because we—a man next door takes care of while we're gone.

Meg Miner: Oh, that's nice.

Ruth Hunter: And he looks after things and—

Meg Miner: Mhmm.

Ruth Hunter: Nothing's happened or he would call.

Meg Miner: Good.

Ruth Hunter: Then we just lock the door and walk out.

Meg Miner: [laughs]... Well, that's a good deal.

Ruth Hunter: But—so, I don't know. I have a lot of memories of Brokaw and a lot of the memories of Brokaw—especially the surgeries, how many things I helped first.

Meg Miner: What do you mean?

Ruth Hunter: First laparoscopy.

Meg Miner: Ohh.

Ruth Hunter: You know, the buttonhole surgery.

Meg Miner: Uh-huh, you did the first one over there?

Ruth Hunter: I helped with the first one and, you know, and Dr. Brown—obituary—he was the first—it mentioned that in his obituary.

Meg Miner: Hmm.

Ruth Hunter: About—he was the first doctor to do a laparoscopy—

Meg Miner: Mhmm.

Ruth Hunter: At Brokaw, and I read it and I said to Delmar, I said, “Guess what?! Guess who was the nurse that helped him?!”

Meg Miner: Who was the first nurse—you weren't mentioned.

Ruth Hunter: And—nope—well, his—I know his wife and everything but she, you know, they just...

Meg Miner: Sure, yeah.

Ruth Hunter: And I helped with the first angiogram.

Meg Miner: Oh my.

Ruth Hunter: The first myelogram, the first hip prosthesis.

Meg Miner: Hmm.

Ruth Hunter: This was—most of this was in the '70s.

Meg Miner: Oh my goodness.

Ruth Hunter: And that, and in the old days, the x-ray people weren't trained to do anything and Dr. George Irwin was the radiologist and the nicest, softest-spoken doctor you—or person you ever wanted to meet.

Meg Miner: Hmm.

Ruth Hunter: And he said, “Do you think I’m gonna stand down here and—with personnel not knowing what they’re doing or if something happens. I want somebody to help me,” so I don’t know how I would get elected, but I would get sent to x-ray.

[Both laugh]

Meg Miner: Well because you knew what you were doing.

Ruth Hunter: I guess.

[Meg Miner laughs]

Ruth Hunter: But anyway, so I—and I—and I had—well, I did at the end, as long as I worked in surgery, a lot of ENTs, so some days I’d see twelve children.

Meg Miner: What’s ENT?

Ruth Hunter: Oh, Ear, Nose, and Throat.

Meg Miner: Thank you.

[Ruth Hunter laughs]

Meg Miner: Gotta remember you’re talking to an unschooled person here...[laughs].

Ruth Hunter: Yeah, it makes a difference whether you’re a professional—

Meg Miner: That right.

Ruth Hunter: RN and—

Meg Miner: So is that—

Ruth Hunter: You know what RN stands for I hope.

Meg Miner: I do.

[Ruth Hunter laughs]

Meg Miner: Yes, thank you...[laughs]...Registered Nurse.

Ruth Hunter: Yep, registered nurse and I’m not an LPN either.

Meg Miner: Right.

Ruth Hunter: And when people walk up to me and say, “I’m a nurse,”—“Are you an RN or an LPN?”—a lot of difference between the training, you know, LPNs, one year nine months.

Meg Miner: Oh my goodness.

Ruth Hunter: One year one—nine months of the year.

Meg Miner: Well you had considerably more than that and took a difficult exam.

Ruth Hunter: Yeah.

[Both laugh]

Ruth Hunter: We all did, but it was, I don’t know, been a lot of memories, you know.

Meg Miner: Well are there other ones that you would like to share with us or you wanna...end there?

Ruth Hunter: Let’s see...of course, I enjoyed PEDs, you know, Pediatrics in Chicago, because we had a lot of kids—children.

Meg Miner: Mhmm.

Ruth Hunter: You know, and they were sick because we had the cream of the crop. We didn’t have—we did have one appendectomy while we were there because he was the head doctor’s son but we didn’t have any—we just had Celiac’s Disease. That’s that little one where the girl about five pounds, six pounds—

Meg Miner: Ohh.

Ruth Hunter: And they’re old—

Meg Miner: Mhmm.

Ruth Hunter: No teeth.

Meg Miner: Mhmm.

Ruth Hunter: You know, and that, and all—and that, but the thing is everybody knew when I was around where all the colored children were.

Meg Miner: Mhmm.

Ruth Hunter: They would—sometimes—they were—I don’t know why they always clung to me.

Meg Miner: Yeah?

Ruth Hunter: Even though I wasn’t assigned to them, you know, and sometimes I would have...[laughs]...I would have one on each knee—

[Meg Miner laughs]

Ruth Hunter: One here and me trying to chart or do my work around...[laughs].

Meg Miner: Everybody's sitting on your lap.

Ruth Hunter: And maybe one standing in between my knees but—and we had the greatest—and the thing was we didn't get treated first too hot good because the instructor had to work the summer and some of the other people had to work the summer because they had never had a class of student nurses during the summer at R&E.

Meg Miner: Oh really? Huh.

Ruth Hunter: And—because all of us were there—because me and the student—five student nurses from Southwest Community, yeah, Southwest Community Hospital in Chicago were like me trying to get out by the first of September or soon, so they—and they had us all there. There was thirteen girls and two fellas.

Meg Miner: Hmm.

Ruth Hunter: And they had—now I don't know where they stayed, oh, did they—I forget where they had to stay. They stayed away because there was no place for fellas to stay...[laughs].

Meg Miner: Oh my.

Ruth Hunter: So they came in everyday and there was the fifteen of us and so many of us were trying to get out of nurse's training. We'd spent our three years, we wanted out.

Meg Miner: Yeah, so the instructors didn't like to work over the summer?

Ruth Hunter: They didn't. We got informed by the head instructor that taught all the courses that she was only there because we were there.

Meg Miner: Mmm.

Ruth Hunter: [laughs]...And then she—and so one day she had a meeting and she says, "The attitude of you students are terrible," and we—and the one gal from Southwest Hospital, Community Hospital, said—and she was very outspoken—she said—she put up her hand, she said, "Yes," she said, "Did you every think how your attitude is toward us?"

Meg Miner: Ohhh.

Ruth Hunter: "We think it stinks!"

Meg Miner: Oh my.

Ruth Hunter: And she goes, "Not that bad," and we go all—shook our head yes, and she was a little bit different for the—'til the end.

Meg Miner: Well, that's good.

Ruth Hunter: And I don't know what happened—what happened if we said the wrong things but the Director of Nurses came to Chicago one day and we only saw her tail feathers but we never did find out why she came because she had talked to our directors, you know, the...people, so I don't know if they complained about us—

Meg Miner: Hmm.

Ruth Hunter: And she came up to see about us but we never got to talk to her, but we did know she was there because I went to get my mail and I saw the fan of her tail feathers.

Meg Miner: Yeah.

Ruth Hunter: And I thought, “Oh god, I wish I could reach her,” and that, but she went through the doors and I, you know, I couldn't get to her.

[Meg Miner laughs]

Ruth Hunter: Because—and that. Later I did say to her, after I graduated, I said, “What were you doing in Chicago?” She said, “Taking care of business.” That's—

Meg Miner: That's all she needed to say.

Ruth Hunter: [laughs]... Yeah.

Meg Miner: Oh my goodness.

Ruth Hunter: But—and we were in another department because they were adding onto R&E and we were in another division, another—we were kind of shoved—PEDs was kind of shoved into a part that wasn't being used—

Meg Miner: Mhmm.

Ruth Hunter: Because they were adding this building, which later became the pediatric ward—thing, and guess what? Next to us, a door separated, was OB. It was nothing for one of the kids, when we weren't watching them, to open because they couldn't lock it, see.

Meg Miner: Oh goodness.

Ruth Hunter: I opened the door—uh-oh.

[Meg Miner laughs]

Ruth Hunter: So one day I went into there and they were having delivery and I thought, “That little boy has got to be here somewhere. I know he came in here.” I looked in and there he is in that delivery room and they hadn't even noticed him!

Meg Miner: Oh my goodness.

Ruth Hunter: So I just went in and grabbed him and went out. I don't know if they ever knew I was there or not...[laughs].

Meg Miner: They were busy.

[Both laugh]

Meg Miner: That's great.

Ruth Hunter: Just things like that.

Meg Miner: Oh my, that's wonderful. What a wonderful—

Ruth Hunter: Then we'd get on the "El" and go down to Chicago's Chicago Theatre. We saw Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis and Nat King Cole that summer.

Meg Miner: Oh my.

Ruth Hunter: Went to plays, you know, because it was ninety-eight cents, yeah, we could go down to the "El", get on the "El" and go down and it was ninety-eight cents and—could we go in the Theatre?—I think we could because it was ten like ten to—we could go in the Theatre, Chicago, and they had stage shows too and then we'd get—ninety-eight cents I think it cost us, of course, we didn't have any money.

Meg Miner: Yeah, that's a lot of money then.

Ruth Hunter: Yeah.

Meg Miner: Yeah.

Ruth Hunter: And we'd go to the stage show and we would find out when the—because the stage show—and they'd roll up the screen, you know, you ever been to the Chicago Theatre?

Meg Miner: Nuh-uh.

Ruth Hunter: Oh, it's a—I'd like to go again but I've just never been back but they would roll up the screen, then the platform would come out with the stage show.

Meg Miner: Ohhhh.

Ruth Hunter: It was a band like Nat King Cole—

Meg Miner: Oh my.

Ruth Hunter: Would come out, and then you'd have the movie, you know, they'd roll back and then the screen would come down and then you'd have the movie and then you'd—of course you had to see the stage show again before you left.

Meg Miner: Wow, that's quite an evening.

Ruth Hunter: That, no, we didn't go out in the evening.

[Meg Miner laughs]

Ruth Hunter: It was in the day because they started at noon.

Meg Miner: Oh gosh.

Ruth Hunter: Oh yeah, and State-Lake was across the Theatre from there and I forget what they had but they had all these different places and I saw Ford—what was the three, the two guys and that Ford?—oh, they played guitars and she sang—ah, Ford was—

Meg Miner: Tennessee Ernie—

Ruth Hunter: No.

Meg Miner: Ford? No.

Ruth Hunter: I can't think but one of them have recently died.

Meg Miner: Hmm.

Ruth Hunter: But, oh, we loved that because they played guitar, they'd never been to Chicago.

Meg Miner: Hmm.

Ruth Hunter: I can see the guys because he's [makes humming noise], had long hair.

Meg Miner: So this would've been in '52-'53?

Ruth Hunter: No, '51.

Meg Miner: '51.

Ruth Hunter: Fifty-one.

Meg Miner: Okay, sorry, before you were graduated.

Ruth Hunter: Yeah, '51 is—summer '51.

Meg Miner: Right, yeah.

Ruth Hunter: But we went many a time after that.

Meg Miner: Oh.

Ruth Hunter: My mother and a friend—well, one night after I graduated, an old neighbor friend of ours and Mom and I were walkin' down State Street after midnight.

Meg Miner: Hmm.

Ruth Hunter: Safe as could be.

Meg Miner: Yeah.

Ruth Hunter: People greeted you.

Meg Miner: Yeah.

Ruth Hunter: We had gone to Chicago to—oh, shoot—to a stage show at one of the theatres and then we went other places and then we saw Big Country was on at State-Lake and so we decided we wanted to go see that and we'd gone to one of these famous restaurants on State Street and ate and then we went there and that, so we were walking down and you didn't feel afraid at all. People would greet you and that, and then we went to the big parking lot on Jackson and something and that...drove home from Chicago, didn't have 55 in those days.

Meg Miner: Yeah...[laughs].

Ruth Hunter: We had to come through Cicero.

Meg Miner: All the little routes.

Ruth Hunter: Mhmm.

Meg Miner: The state routes, yeah. Hmm.

Ruth Hunter: And we used to go every Thanksgiving—for a long time—every Thanksgiving to Chicago.

Meg Miner: From here?

Ruth Hunter: Uh-huh.

Meg Miner: Your family?

Ruth Hunter: From Bloomington, yep, Mom and I and Delmar. My dad never went anywhere. He always knew all the news but—and he stayed home.

Meg Miner: Hmm.

Ruth Hunter: But anyway...[laughs].

Meg Miner: Well, if you don't have anything to add—

Ruth Hunter: I don't know what else.

Meg Miner: Then I think that's—I thank you so much for your time and sharing—

Ruth Hunter: You're welcome.

Meg Miner: These memories with us and we'll look forward to—

Ruth Hunter: I don't know what else to tell you.

[Both laugh]

Meg Miner: We'll look forward to hearing more from you some day. Thanks so much Ruth.

Ruth Hunter: You're welcome.

Meg Miner: Okay, bye.

Ruth Hunter: Bye.