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## Jayne Gmeiner interview for the Miami Valley College of Nursing and Health Oral History Project

Carol Holdcraft

*Wright State University - Main Campus*

Jayne Gmeiner

*Wright State University - Main Campus*

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START OF TAPE 1, SIDE A

JAYNE GMEINER

NOVEMBER 15, 2006

CAROL HOLDCRAFT: I'm here in my office and we are getting our equipment started with the recording devices.

JAYNE GMEINER: Okay.

CH: And Jenny's here and Donna Curry's here but going to leave as soon as she gets us going.

JG: Okay.

DONNA MILES CURRY: Hi Jayne.

JG: Hello, Donna. How are you?

DMC: Pretty good. I've got to go write a grant. These are things that are important you know.

JG: (Laughs)

DMC: Okay, we're good. They're good to go. I'm the techno queen you know.

JG: There you go.

DMC: Have fun.

JG: Thanks Donna.

CH: Jayne, we really appreciate your willingness to talk with us about the Oral History, on our Oral History Project. So, I'm going to start just by allowing a little bit of recording to take place as identifiers that says we are here today in my office doing another interview in our Oral History Project of the College of Nursing and Health. And we're talking today on the telephone with Jayne Gmeiner who is an alumni of Wright State College of Nursing. And in the room with me is Jennifer...

JENNIFER HARDING: Harding.

CH: Harding, who is our graduate assistant and we are recording and I'm Carol Holdcraft and it is November the fifteenth, two thousand and six.

JG: Sounds correct.

CH: Okay. Jayne, did you get the materials in the mail?

JH: We'll be mailing them.

CH: Oh, you're going to be mailing them out. One of the things that we will be mailing out to you is our release form and essentially what it says is that you'll have the opportunity to review the transcript on the interview that we do before you sign the release form and then obviously if there's any corrections that you would like to make or need to make at that time we will do that and then you can sign the release form. And it just specifies exactly what the Oral History Project is and how we are going to be maintaining and using the results of our Oral History interviews.

JG: Okay.

CH: Um, so we actually selected you as one of the members of our community to talk with today because we've been really starting with the origin of the School of Nursing and moving our way up through our history a little bit and you were selected for one reason because you had been a registered nurse, a graduate of a diploma program, Miami Valley School of Nursing, back in the time frame that we're currently looking at in our history and then elected to come back into Wright State to enter and complete your bachelor's degree and your master's degree here and obviously have continued to have relationships with the college as an alumni and also in your position at Miami Valley Hospital over the years. But today we'd like to focus just a little bit in this interview on talking with you about those early years. Some of the things that you remember back from the timeframe as far back as when you were in your diploma program at

Miami Valley School of Nursing on up through your student days.

JG: Okay.

CH: So, we're going to start with the question of really asking you to tell us just a little bit about your personal background and how you came to be first of all a student at Miami Valley School of Nursing and then later as you moved on to earn your degrees from Wright State.

JG: Okay. Well, back in nineteen seventy-seven when I was looking at different nursing programs I really utilized, my guidance counselor actually at school who did not serve as a very good resource when it came to talking about the diploma versus the BSN track. The knowledge base at that time for the guidance counselors was not very strong. So, actually I went and interviewed physicians in the area about where they felt there were strong nursing programs of nurses that they had worked with and at that time the very strong recommendation from the physicians in that area was Miami Valley School of Nursing. At that time the BSN was just starting to become an option for graduated in "rural Ohio". They did not and could not articulate the value of the BSN over the diploma program which was probably fairly unfortunate at the time but that point in time that was kind of my reference point in choosing the diploma program. At that point I really had no nurses as a reference point in my family that lived in the State of Ohio. I had an aunt that was a nurse that lived in New Mexico but really did not know the programs within the Ohio region. And since I kind of ran into a stopping point with the guidance counselor I chose that route and basically chose Miami Valley because it came strongly recommended from the physicians in the area.

CH: Uh-huh. And that's really interesting. If we stop for a moment and really look at the timeframe. Wright State School of Nursing graduated their very first class of graduates in the Spring of nineteen seventy-five.

JG: Right.

CH: That was a very small class. I believe it was around ten or twelve students. And then it was only in the spring of nineteen seventy-six that the first regular size or larger size class of graduates graduated. So at the time frame that you were looking for information they were really, BSN's in the Dayton area and particularly from Wright State were pretty scarce weren't they?

JG: Exactly.

CH: So, it's not surprising that there would be physicians not having much or any awareness about that.

JG: You know that was my sense because I was really weighing Ohio State versus Miami Valley School of Nursing at the time. Actually at the end of my first year I went to Ohio State because I was going to transfer to their BSN program and had been accepted under the requirements that I would repeat anatomy, physiology and chemistry.

CH: Interesting.

JG: And that was my stopping point since I had just spent the last year being successful in those courses and you know at that time that looked like a mountain to overcome again although you know you can go through all kinds of different things. But I chose at that point not to transfer due to having to repeat what I thought were the major courses that I had worked very hard to do very well in.

CH: Right.

JG: So, you know that was kind of the stopping point at that point.

CH: This is kind of in a side questions but I do know that Wright State took some basic courses to Miami Valley Hospital.

JG: Yes, all of those were offered from Wright State University.

CH: And so you actually had earned university credit for those courses.

JG: Exactly.

CH: So even then there was still this sense from Ohio State University that Wright State was somehow an untried sort of an entity as far as...

JG: Right and you remember those courses. I mean they were taught by Katie Mechlin. They were courses that were shared with the med students. At that time the med school was also very new at Wright State University, It was very lateral course work.

CH: Right.

JG: I think again it was the newness of the med school and the newness of the nursing school that led to the non-transferability with Ohio State.

CH: That's interesting. It's a really unique perspective that we hadn't learned yet so far so I appreciate your sharing that. So, at the end of your first year in the diploma program you still were weighing and looked at this opportunity perhaps for a transfer into a BSN program and at that point you considered Ohio State but didn't consider Wright State it sounds like.

JG: Right.

CH: And do you recall your reasoning or your thoughts there?

JG: Um, probably where my heart has always been is some day to be an official buckeye. You know it was more The Ohio State University and all of my spirit there.

CH: The reputation.

JG: You know that would be the most honest thing. And I wanted the campus life.

CH: Okay.

JG: If I was going to leave the diploma program what I was really looking for was a campus life and at that point Wright State really was still growing as a campus.

CH: Absolutely, at that point Wright State was pretty much considered a commuter campus.

JG: Right.

CH: Very few people lived on campus.

JG: And I still would have had my expenses for apartment and you know all of those kinds of things and I had friends from my high school that were in Columbus at Ohio State. So, there would have been some rooming in capabilities.

CH: Okay. So, you didn't go ahead with that opportunity and you stayed in the diploma program and graduated.

JG: In nineteen eighty. And that summer knew that I was going to go ahead and pursue my bachelor's so I began my senior year starting a dual track beginning some of the psych. and soc. and starting the English and some of those other things so that I would get some of those prereq's out of the way for the BSN program.

CH: Okay. So, you were really a student who knew that even though you were earning a diploma and obviously chose a highly recommended, strong diploma program in this area you seemed to know at that point that you wanted a BSN degree.

JG: Yes.

CH: And tell us a little bit about how you came to know at that point that that was a goal that was important.

JG: I think with the organization and at the time you know just really observing the leadership structure. At that point I really didn't know what I was going to do whether it was going to be teaching, a clinical practice, or an administrator. I didn't know any of that I just knew that I could see as far as the future and that the BSN, at some point, we don't know when yet would be the entry into practice. And I wanted to be as prepared as possible to be positioned you know for that entry into practice and I did not ever want to be told that because I was diploma grad I wasn't going to be eligible for a job down the road.

CH: Okay.

JG: So, it was really to me to hold the highest credential to allow for me from a career standpoint to be real flexible.

CH: And so it sounds like you started then immediately even before you earned your diploma to prepare yourself to make that transition into and move into a BSN program.

JG: Yes.

CH: So, tell us a little bit about what that experience was like, being a graduate and sitting for your state board and then coming into Wright State because at that point while you had taken credits at Wright State you became officially, probably a nursing student at some point along the way.

JG: Right. Yeah, from a, I don't think the program is nearly as defined as it is today. We were in a BSN track which you know was an RN/BSN track which was, I think, better than it had been even, you know I don't even know when you graduated your first BSN track students.

CH: Yeah, I'd have to look to see also.

JG: Because I was a graduate in 1985 I think it was a humbling experience. You know as a registered nurse practicing I felt like the clinicals were unique! I remember when was at Good Sam and when I went there as a student they wanted to utilize me as a staff taking care of patients and carry a full assignment and then actually work with the LPN's of the area. And I felt that that was not the correct utilization of where my time needed to be as far as a learning student in a student role. So at the time I talked with my instructor that really what I was seeking is an alternative experience as taking care of patients and taking care of the load, I was doing that in my full time job.

CH: Yes.

JG: You know I didn't need to repeat those experiences and the instructor was very



appreciative of that and then we started working with other kinds of experiences of working with some of the educators and they didn't have a lot of clinical specs at that time but working with people that were not directly at the bedside. I just felt like they didn't know what to do with that RN who was a nursing student and to differentiate what those clinicals were about. And I think that evolved over time with the BSN track.

CH: Yeah and so it sounds like your faculty member was sort of evolving to learn that as well.

JG: Exactly.

CH: And you had to advocate for yourself a little bit to have that happen.

JG: Right.

CH: Okay. So that's interesting. Now, you're talking about having graduated from the diploma program in nineteen eighty.

JG: Uh-huh.

CH: And as we've done the oral history we've talked with a number of people about the events that occurred in nineteen eighty at the Wright State School of Nursing. What was your perception or your recollection of being a student in nursing and a new RN practicing of what was happening at Wright State in the School of Nursing?

JG: To me it just felt very chaotic. I developed a support group within the RNs that were in the program and we really made a pact that we were going to get through this together. We were going to help support one another because there weren't a lot of answers at that time it appeared from the faculty or the chairs to help you. So, our goal was to work together as a group and we were going to support each other to get through it. And that's what I remember. I remember humbling experiences which makes you grow just don't know how prepared they were to deal with a different level of learner who had gone through some of the basics and had

gone through the boot camp to get through the diploma program and had the license. I just think at that time they were finding themselves with this new niche that they had created.

CH: Right and it was interesting because we interviewed some graduates from our very first class the other day and the very first class that graduated actually were made up primarily of RNs who saw the writing on the wall and knew they wanted a BSN and had been doing their own advising towards getting the appropriate prerequisites and course work out of the way and then when the program actually opened were given the opportunity to test out of the first and second years of the nursing course work to be able to just take the final year of nursing course work to graduate. That was some of the same things they were saying. I believe that they didn't have a lot of good answers to their questions and people didn't quite know how to deal with them as learners.

JG: Honestly as a diploma grad at that time I really felt like a second rate citizen. And Carol you know my commitment over the years to this organization and Wright State and so obviously I've evolved and gotten over it but I really felt that there was somewhat of a labeling if you came in as a diploma grad into that program that you just weren't quite on the same level. Now that was my perception and I worked through it, and finished the program but that's why I say I just used the word humbling experience.

CH: So humbling is a very politically correct word. Are you, to be more blunt about it are you saying that you felt demeaned occasionally?

JG: Yes.

CH: Okay and so I think those are important concepts just to bring out in terms of your perceptions of that time.

JG: It was really to me the bachelor's degree was a lesson in futility and learning and dealing with ambiguity. And I learned from all of those things because it was very unstructured.

There was really no point person or at least there didn't appear to be a point person with answers. So again, you formed your own survival skills to get through the system.

CH: Uh-huh. And as a group did you find that the group ever went together to ask the questions or confront any of the administration?

JG: I think there was a little fear of retribution if you made too many waves.

CH: Okay. So really rather than doing that you...

JG: Sucked it up and got through it.

CH: Uh-huh. And so as you think about those early years at Wright State, can you specify what were the challenges and what you were attempting to accomplish for yourself.

JG: For me, I wanted to really learn the theoretical framework because that was definitely the missing component of the diploma program and really fine tune if there was some things I could fine tune with physical assessment skills and things like that. I was a critical care nurse at the time. I was working in ICU and CICU became certified during that time period as a CCRN and I really felt that was not a strength for Wright State to help me with that level of development. So what I really honed in on is more the theoretical framework and you know discussions from that standpoint. And you know trying to make the most out of those situations. Does that help?

CH: Yeah, I think it does. So the challenge for you was to take what was offered at Wright State and where you already had a strength and not necessarily go with that strength but go with what you perceived as being available.

JG: Wright State's strengths.

CH: And at some point as you were earning your bachelor's degree or maybe before you started did you set the goal for yourself to go on to graduate school?

JG: Yes. I was really tracking, seeing what my colleagues were going through that you know at that time a lot of our leadership team was working on their master's degree and trying to

manage that with a family. And I saw first hand experience of what that was like balancing so I had made a career decision to try to track that right away so that I would have that credential and have that backing prior to starting a family. So, I just went right back and kept moving forward.

CH: Uh-huh. And that's apparent from looking at when you graduated, when you were an alumni from here that you, once you got started moving you really moved through and completed the master's degree very quickly.

JG: Yeah, in two years and working full time.

CH: And working full time as well, yeah.

JG: Yeah.

CH: So, tell us a little bit about what the experiences in the graduate program were like for you.

JG: Actually they were much better. I felt like once I had that BSN, that level of you being treated as professional rose at a different level. I felt like the theoretical framework, they seemed to be a little bit more settled there and structured. If my memory serves me correct that was the Jeanette Lancaster era. There seemed to be, I mean the administrative track seemed to be well glued and moving forward. And my graduate experience was much stronger, felt like it was much more colloquial and very productive.

CH: Okay. And that timeframe you also mentioned Jeanette Lancaster and that was the timeframe that she was here but also that was the timeframe of the initiation of the collaborative agreement between...

JG: In nineteen eighty-six correct?

CH: Yes. And so were you aware of that as a staff nurse working?

JG: I was very aware because Sue Fitzsimmons had provided lot of information. And with being a diploma grad from Miami Valley School of Nursing obviously there was a lot of chatter. I

mean I was not directly involved obviously at my level at that time because I was a clinical nurse at the bedside in CICU. But we were very much made aware of the progress towards that collaborative agreement during that time period.

CH: Uh-huh. And so obviously the hospital connection to Wright State was supportive of the direction you were moving towards.

JG: Right. And I was very fortunate that I had some excellent mentors. Dottie Rye was the Chief Nursing Officer at that time at the hospital and you know for whatever reason I had made connecting points with her along with even Sue when she came on board about the importance of the graduate degree and that collaborative agreement. So it just, everything kind of glued together in regards to getting through the program and having the resources around you to help you. You know we even know who people were in the community or beyond the community to help you with clinicals and I also had some nurses at the bedside that were working with me that were going through graduate degrees at other schools. So we built a bond also.

CH: Uh-huh. So, Miami Valley at that point in time in terms of the environment as a hospital, is there a way that you could characterize what seemed to be going on with nursing at that point?

JG: I think the emphasis of being aware of what the education can do to help the work environment. I think in, you know if you remember in the late eighties which would have been the eighty-nine, ninety time period we were going under another nursing shortage, what we thought was a nursing shortage not compared to what it is today. So, just a lot of emphasis on education, being prepared, changed management, shared governance, you know all of those things that you learn about in school was really amplified here also. So that just continued to make you thirsty for knowledge and thirsty for knowing more.

CH: It sounds like a real synergy between your career pathway and your educational pathway at that point.

JG: I hope so. I think so.

CH: Okay. Can you talk a little bit, as a student, you talked already, I think, about your interactions with faculty and administrators as a BSN student but as you think about being a graduate student and you said it was a little bit more positive relationship, do you remember any interactions that you may have had with School of Nursing administrators or faculty members?

JG: Yeah, I think I was very fortunate. Betsy Frank was my thesis chair and just was a phenomenal individual. Donna Dean was a part of the administrative faculty at that time and Donna was on my thesis committee. Again, a great mentor, a great connector of kinds of relationships, had a really good relationship with people back here which really helped us, helped me quite a bit. I'm trying to think who; I would say those two individuals primarily were my main focus.

CH: Uh-huh.

JG: I mean that really helped me keep focused.

CH: Right. As we're talking to people, obviously many more people would have the opportunity to come in contact with you but what we remember in an oral history are those people who made a difference.

JG: Right.

CH: Okay. And what about the wider Wright State campus or college community? Did you have any interactions or recollections back to the wider campus in terms of faculty or administrators or other students?

JG: Um, Glen Graham was fabulous for statistics and that would have been, I can't remember if that was right when I, for the graduate program or the end of my bachelor's degree.

CH: And possibly you could have done either. You might have gotten...

JG: And I don't remember at this point. I'd have to look at my transcripts. I mean I enjoyed the philosophy classes. I enjoyed the sociology classes because I enjoyed that type of course work.. But I would say from a mentor standpoint both Betsy and Donna were solid people you could go to and just bounce things off of. And quite honestly I would not even tell you if they even taught me a course, you know they were just there as resource people and there to kind of track you and keep you honest.

CH: Uh-huh. So, as you think back now about your Wright State experience, how do you think that Wright State affected your career since that time?

JG: Well, I have made a very fundamental focus to stay really connected with the college since I graduated. One, because I think it helps us fulfill a wonderful mission here within the organization I'm involved in. Two, I think it fulfills a great mission within the community to be able to prepare nurses for our future with that BSN. So to me it's been something that's been really important to me so I've tried over the years to stay connected whether it's been adjunct faculty work or serving on advisory counsels or serving on committees or Sigma Theta Tau involvement. And again in the role of my current job it's you know something that's our pipeline. It's our future so now in my current role it's not only a focus of me personally but it's focus for me professionally and that's going to help this organization be able to stay the steady course for the next twenty years. So, those relationships to me are going to help the community, help Miami Valley Hospital, help Premier Health Partners, and be a direct outcome to patient care. So, back in nineteen eighty-seven I didn't know that but I knew I wanted to stay involved in some way. But as the course of events have occurred over the last nineteen years I can see all of those things have helped me to be able to, I think, have pretty good relationships with not only you and Pat but all of the faculty out there by staying connected.

CH: Right. And just describe for the record your current position and your role.

JG: Sure. Currently I'm the director of Center of Nursing Excellence. And in that role I have the relationships with the universities along with the contracts with the universities, all the student placement here through the organizations coordinated through our department. I'm also responsible for magnet standards and that attainment and sustainment here at the organization, our Joint Commission regulatory compliance in regards to nursing practice, our nursing research program, our performance improvement initiatives and all the nurse sensitive indicators, along with our palliative care programs and then all the initial orientation for the patient care team members, along with leadership development and kind of ongoing development that involves retention and recruitment.

CH: You said that very well. That's an overwhelming job succinctly described. Very nice. As we come to the end of our time of talking about your involvement and your history at Wright State, Jayne, are there any things that I haven't asked that you think are important to reflect on and talk about?

JG: You know the only thing and I really, it's really the focus to me in the beginning of the program where Dean Torres, to me, featured the nursing was really a community health nurse.

CH: Yes.

JG: And I think where the struggling act was for us RN's when we graduated is we were acute nurses who took care of patients in hospitals. And maybe part of the factor of what happened in the beginning is we may have been challenging where Torres saw nursing going. And that's why we may not have fit in the round hole or the square peg in the beginning because we may have been challenging where she saw she wanted her nursing program to go. And you know from a history standpoint I think that's kind of fundamental to where the beginning was probably a



little tough. when diploma and non-traditional BSN students were enrolled into the program it's making that fit and making it fit in the right way. And I think over the last twenty-five years a lot of evolution has been made to know that there's a role for the acute nurse, the community nurse, the administrator, the clinical, the advanced practice nurse and that they all have roles all over the place. There's niches in all of them. I think that would be my only thing. I think a lot of that turbulence was created by a very forward thinking person that was probably three decades ahead of her time.

CH: In terms of looking at health care moving into the community and the focus on health and the focus on autonomous practice for nursing which you know we've obviously seen many of those things actually occur and be acted out much more so but at the time those were pretty revolutionary concepts.

JG: Exactly. And I just think everybody, everybody's a big word but there were many people struggling conceptually with that and how everybody fit into that role. So, I think that's what a lot of us diploma going there for BSN kind of fell into that not quite shown where the roadmap was to get us out and get us graduated.

CH: Right. And somehow the additional thing which we've heard on occasion is that the perception from the students perspective that they weren't being valued or that their knowledge base or where they were coming from was not appreciated or valued seems to have been a communication issue that was real apparent in those early years.

JG: Yeah.

CH: Because if it's perceived that way you know whether it was intended that way or not if it was being perceived that way it was a communication issue.

JG: I just don't know quite...we were a different animal and just did not quite know what to do with that animal. And the skills labs at that time were not as sophisticated as they are today

so for me to enhance my critical care skills, that wasn't going to happen. I had to do that in my environment.

CH: Right.

JG: So again technology has improved things in regards to that over time.

CH: Uh-huh. One other thing that comes to my mind that we didn't really talk about but that I've had some thoughts about, I know that in nineteen eighty when a large number of faculty resigned from the School of Nursing that many master's prepared faculty members who lived locally in this area and didn't want to go seeking jobs elsewhere found jobs in the clinical arena in the hospitals around the area. And I believe Miami Valley was the location that some people settled into. Do you recall that particular event as something that being employed at Miami Valley Hospital you were aware of and noticed?

JG: Well Carol again with me being a novice nurse in an ICU and CICU environment at that time I was, and going to school usually two to three courses a quarter, I pretty much was, believe it or not focused on me and getting through the shift. My sense of awareness at that time was not, I just did not have that political awareness or that savvy to pick up on some of those other things. So, I can not, I think by nineteen eighty-five I had developed more of that astuteness but at that time I wanted to get my boards passed and I was just at a different point in my life getting through school and working and getting a lot of skill assimilation in a clinical care environment.

CH: I can certainly appreciate that.

JG: Taking care of open hearts and balloon pumps and that kind of stuff.

CH: You were one busy person at that point.

JG: You know that was my focus but I really was not as aware, I know that I had friends that had graduated in eighty from the nursing school out there and I knew there was a lot of stuff

going on out there but it didn't hinder me enough to move outside of Dayton to go to school.

CH: Uh-huh. Well, I think that you've really given us some very interesting information as we've talked about your history and your particular perspective as a student and alumni of Wright State and we really do appreciate you taking time to participate in this.

JG: No problem. Now Joanne are you a nursing student or a...?

JH: I'm a graduate student.

JG: Oh, it's Jennifer.

JH: Yes.

JG: Sorry about that. So you're a graduate student in nursing?

JH: Yes. I'm in the acute care pediatric nurse practitioner track

JG: Well good for you. I wish you good luck. How much longer do you have?

JH: I have a year and a half left.

JG: Okay. Well I wish you the best.

JH: Thank you.

JG: And Carol if there's anything else or if you have any follow up questions or there's gaps just don't hesitate to give me a call back or email me. Okay?

CH: I appreciate that. What we'll do with this is we will go ahead and have the interview transcribed and once we've looked at it to get rid of obvious errors and spelling and transcription we'll send you a copy, give you a chance to read through it and you can mark if you think the transcriptionist heard something different than what you said or what you intended to say. You have that opportunity to correct it and we will get you the consent form and then you can send all of those things back at that point.

JG: That'll be perfect.

CH: Okay.

JG: All right, thanks.

CH: Thank you very much.

JH: Thank you.

JG: Take care.

TAPE ENDS