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This is June 16, 2010. I am interviewing Sir. Mary A. Would you for the record say your name, where you went to nursing school, why you chose the school you did and your experiences.

Well it was way back on Christmas Eve in 1971 that I was stationed at the Mercy Hospital and at that time I was assigned to the Business Office and the Accounting Office also. Well on Christmas Eve, anybody that is in the hospital really has to be there because in those days they would clean out the hospital as much as possible so people could go home with their families. Well we had a midnight Mass on Christmas Eve and as a person I cannot go to bed say at 9:00 and get at 11:30 for Mass, I have to stay right through. So a few of us that were able, we would go around the floors and visit the sick people that were in the hospital at that time. I found it almost like a second vocation to me to do that, going into some rooms where people would be so happy to see a visitor and I said to myself, what am I doing downstairs behind closed doors, counting other people's money and sending out bills when I should be up here on a one-to-one with a person? I couldn't get that thought out of my mind. It just nagged and nagged at me so I finally got up my courage to ask my superiors if there is any chance I could change my ministry and they were very much in favor of me going into nursing. Well my hope was...I was 42 years old and I did not feel I could handle an RN program, especially for an Associate Degree at STCC. I thought maybe I could go to be an LPN, as long as I was somewhere in the nursing field. Well they did not go along with my thought. They said well, it is going to be hard for you either way, go for it. Go for your RN and try it and if it doesn't work out, we will take it from there. So I did, I had a very close friend of mine, Sister Elizabeth R. and then Sister Mary O. and, of course, Mary O'Leary a friend of mine from Holyoke ...they all were teaching there at STCC. Not that it made any difference because I was just like one of the others, no favoritism on their part; however, I was able to enter the class in 1972 I believe it was and it was very, very wonderful. We had graduation and went for State Boards...I hope I'm not rambling.

*No you're not, you are doing fine. It's exactly what we need.*

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So I did pass the State Boards, it was the first time, thank The Lord and...which was a miracle in itself I feel.

*Interviewer: How so?*

Well because of my age and my...you know I just was so foreign to the medical field. It was amazing to me that in the class there were mothers and there were older...not older but young kids who had other things on their plate to think about. I had no other obligations, nothing. I just had to go to school, do my studies and I had no other assignment. It was hard to keep up with these photographic memories of these nurses but anyway, to make a long story short, I succeeded and I took a summer position at our infirmary taking care of our Sisters before I...well actually I was waiting to hear the results of the State Boards because at that time we took them in July and you had to wait for that little white envelope to come. If it was a small envelope, it was all set. If it was a long envelope, it was an application to take them over again. So you always knew before you opened the envelope whether you passed or not.

*Interviewer: New York State did it a little different...it was one size for all.*

Well Massachusetts it got...I mean this was your license in there...well temporary license I believe. However...so because of the wait to hear, I didn't want to apply for a job in a hospital so I worked in our infirmary for that summer, which was very very beneficial to me and so then I...after I heard from the State Boards, I worked at the Providence for...wait a minute, I'm probably wrong on that...I'm sure I didn't go to the VNA right away because I didn't start there until '84 I think. Well maybe, it could have been. However, I worked at the Providence and then I worked at the VNA and I stayed there until 1988 when I went on a sabbatical in New York and then I came back in May of '88 and they asked me to be the Coordinator of this institution here...

*Interviewer: The Coordinator of...*

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The Mother House...the Providence Mother House.

Interviewer: *That was before it became...*

Providence Place. We had more Sisters, we had no lay people. We had very few...we didn't have any lay nurses, they were all Sisters. I'm sorry, we did have...we had Pat P. was in the infirmary there. She was in charge. So then I decided to...with encouragement, to go on for my BSN because I already had the AD. So I tried to...I took a few courses at AIC but it just didn't click with me, so I tried The Elms but The Elms would not take my chemistry course grades. I needed to get a B or better before they would accept it. If I had gotten lower than a B there or if I got it...but not in the nursing program, that would have been fine. Well anyway I said I'll have a nervous breakdown if I have to take three courses of chemistry over again, so that was goodbye to Our Lady of the Elms. I applied to St. Joseph's in West Hartford and that was a wonderful experience, wonderful. It was just hard to explain after all these years now that the belongingness that I felt there. An older person, again, with younger kids and they watch out for you like they were watching out for their grandmother. So anyway I did graduate...

Interviewer: *Was that a four year program then?*

Pardon?

Interviewer: *St. Joseph's was a four year program?*

Yes, but...

Interviewer: *You went with...they gave you credits?*

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I was there one semester and I had...they transferred 89 credits. A few from AIC and all my credits from STCC, so I was considered a senior with all those credits and I'm there one semester. I'm not saying it was a piece of cake but I know it was what I needed. I graduated with a BSN there and I don't know whether the education bug bit me or what, but anyway I said, well I'm going on again. So I went in for a Master's at St. Joseph's and I got my MA in Human Development Gerontology and that's it for as far as education except for other courses I have taken right along.

Interviewer: *Can you for me think back to the years at STCC and any particular classes, patients without names, events or some things that you remember that had meaning for you?*

At STCC. ?

Interviewer: *Where did you go for your...were they affiliated with Mercy then?*

I went to Baystate.

Interviewer: *Baystate. And what was the experience like at Baystate?*

It was very good. As I say, I lived here at the Mother House and the person in charge of education at that time told me that I had to move to St. Luke's Home if I was going to...see I'm backtracking a little. I said well why do I have to move to St. Luke's Home? Well you know too many of the faculty and...I said transportation would be no problem but no, they said you don't want any of the other students seeing you riding with the faculty, so you either go to St. Luke's Home or forget STCC. So I moved to St. Luke's Home and I would be going up the street with my books and my purse and my lunch and just who would stop and give me a ride to STCC? The faculty. So they drove me right into the faculty parking lot...fine, no problems at all, but that was that person's...

Interviewer: *Perception.*

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Yes. Yes. How did I get on that...

Interviewer: *You were talking about some of the experiences...*

Oh the experience. Well that was one because the faculty...as I say, it was...it was good that I knew them on two levels. Teachers, their administration, and friends and instructors. I enjoyed my experience at the Wesson Maternity very much so. That was interesting because I was living at St. Luke's...that's what I was getting at, and so I had no transportation to get there one day to Baystate...or Wesson Women's I guess, and so I called for a taxi. Could I please have a taxi come to St. Luke's home to take one of the Sisters to the Wesson maternity? (laughter) How it sounded to them, but anyway, that's what I was...that was always an in-house joke. I just...I liked the whole sense of belonging and the interest that was shown to help me be successful in what I was trying to do. I really truthfully cannot think of anything...any one experience. Now maybe later I will, but nothing really sticks...stands out in my mind except that it was the basic sense of belonging and peace where I felt that it was a good move that I had made, but you always had that State Board hanging over you. When I got to St. Joseph's, there was no State Board to worry about and so you just...it was wonderful. The Master's Program...well after all I had been through, it was like a piece of cake. It was very very interesting and I would stay overnight if I had a night class and then a morning class. They offered me hospitality in the convent down there, Sisters of Mercy, which was wonderful. I tried to pay them but they wouldn't accept. They said they could never...they could never repay the Sisters of Providence for teaching...we had a Sister who taught...it was not ceramics, a little higher up than that...china...and so they taught Sister Mary R. I remember the name, and she would come up here and she would spend time with one of our sisters who taught her her craft and so they would never take any token of appreciation at all. Let's see...

Interviewer: *How about your experiences when you were brand new and you were waiting...when you were working at the Infirmary. How did it feel to be out practicing as a nurse at that point?*

Scary.

Interviewer: *Scary?*

Yeah.

Interviewer: *How so?*

Well I guess I didn't feel that comfortable with...you know the IV's and the pumps and...catheter is fine, no problem with catheters, but to set the whole timing and the dosage, it was scary. When I was first assigned to the Providence...I don't mean assigned...yeah, hired, they put me in ICU. Well that was a big mistake, they should never have done that. I don't think they knew how little experience I actually had and they put me in ICU.

Interviewer: *What did you do?*

Pardon?

Interviewer: *How did you handle that?*

I did the best I could but then I just said I can't do it, I can't do it. I was better off on the floor, the regular med surg floor.

Interviewer: *It is a specialty.*

Very...and we had a charge nurse and she was...she ran a tight ship, she really did, and...but very very methodical and so we weren't...Yvonne K. and I started in the same...we both had the same experience but we left there...we didn't leave the hospital,

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we left ICU and I think they were just as glad that we did. I mean I was very much relieved not to be in that, you know, critical situation at that point in time.

Interviewer: *After you graduated, which nursing experience...was it the hospital, home care, which one do you feel...your fondest memories?*

The home care.

Interviewer: *How so?*

I enjoyed the VNA very much. I really did.

Interviewer: *What in particular?*

Um...being able to just go in and be present to them. Sometimes, you know, they just have to know someone is coming to take your blood pressure and just sit there with them, you know, they would be alone...alone all the time...most of the elderly. Also, part of that job...see I was assigned to Team 3 and that included Longmeadow, East Longmeadow and part of Forest Park. I lost my thought...I lost it.

Interviewer: *Well let's see if we can find it. You were talking about your experiences on Team 3 and the area you went to. Was there something specific in there that...because you were on Team 3, was there something specific that you were thinking of?*

Oh I know...part of the assignment for the Longmeadow area was to be the school nurse for St. Mary's in Longmeadow. Well that was not every week but it was very three weeks or so you would go in. You would do the height and weight and eye checks and well, you know, the kids...the first or two or three would come in and they would go out and they would tell the rest of the kids...when the dog jumps over the table, then you say this and they knew all the answers at the end of the line so it was...but the height and

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weights were alright. Well anyway, at that point in time Monsignor Devine was there and he thought that instead of paying the VNA for a nurse to come in and do this, he took one of his parishioners to do that and they wouldn't have to pay tuition for their kids at school, which made sense. I was very happy when that started because it was just like an adjunct to...oh I have to get to the school, you know, when am I going to have time and then it's the charting and it was an interruption in their routine because they had their plans and I would have to take the kids out and they would get out of class for an hour or so. Well some of the teachers weren't happy about that, so it was wonderful really and I was glad that he thought to give a mother an opportunity to save tuition money by doing the same...you know, and so it gave me more persons to have on a caseload. But I did, I did like home nursing and I still do.

Interviewer: *Are you officially retired?*

Well I would say semi...I'm still working down at our new Mary's Meadow, but I'm not doing nursing, I'm doing pastoral care and I also have charge of the chapel, so it's kind of a one-on-one with the people that are there. Our own Sisters are there plus we have many lay people...um...and It's good to be just...as they say, don't just stand there, do something. They say don't do something, just stand there, you know, so it is good just to be able to sit and listen to them because it's...it's not easy for them to be out of their own place. Or even people here, I mean just to know you have to sell your home, it's tough. It's tough, so they just need someone to recognize that they are alive...and to remember their names. Somebody said that to me once, how do you remember all their names? I don't know, I just do.

Interviewer: *Well a name is important.*

Oh absolutely and it's nothing that I try, because sometimes there would be one person that I have a mental block with that I cannot remember the name, so then I either say it ten times or write it down or something. I make myself...but most of the time I don't have that problem and it makes them feel good to know that we know their name.

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Interviewer: *Okay. Is there any other experiences that you can think of that you want to tell at this point?*

Um...well...I think it was a happy time in my life and it still is, it still is. I don't regret it at all, but the experience of just being able to make a decision when you are in home nursing. You can say well I am going to call the doctor right now and, you know, they probably...oh really? And then they get action...you are able to do something special for them...make an appointment where they would be hemming and hawing, you know, well I don't want to bother him. The nurse in the office might think I'm pestering her and all that, so if the nurse calls then there is a different level of communication and the family is relieved 'cause what they wanted to happen, happened.

Interviewer: *You are an outside authority.*

Yeah. Even to cancel an appointment, that's hard for some people to cancel or postpone...change an appointment. It's very hard for them to do that on their own. Oh they might get mad, he probably won't let me come back and...you know. I'm really not sure if this is what you are looking for.

Interviewer: *This is fine. This is fine.*

I really can't think of any specific experiences, although at St. Joseph's when I was...I had to take organic and inorganic chemistry. Well anyway, the professor there...I went to him for extra help, I had to, because it was like alphabet soup to me...um...so one of my friends who lived in Longmeadow, she had this workbook and so she says why don't you take this, it's true or false, multiplication and fill-in's. So that was good, I did use it a lot and so then it came time for the final exams and he had gotten some sort of a doctor award or something, so he really wasn't...he had to go overseas or something, so he wasn't too prepared for the final. So when I went to him he said, why don't you do this and didn't he take out the same book that I had been studying in. (laughter) He said if I

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were you, I would just study this...not the Krebs cycle...no way. That's was I was focusing on, the Krebs cycle...just check this out. Well it was the very thing I had been focusing on for...you know, to get accustomed to chemistry. So then when I told him that afterwards, he said...my mother had died around that time and he said, you know, I said to somebody, I am going to ask Sister if I could go and find her mother's grave to pray at her mother's grave because that was the last thing he thought was going to have happen, that I would be studying what he was going to present as a final exam. So I did good on the finals. Not so good on the quizzes but it was alright.

Interviewer: *You passed the course.*

Absolutely. Absolutely.

Interviewer: *That's what counts.*

With a lot of blood, sweat and tears though. It was funny though at the time.

Interviewer: *Yeah it was.*

So I didn't get that grace from STCC, they were very possessive of all their exams and...

Interviewer: *Nursing has to be.*

It has to be, that's right.

Interviewer: *Absolutely.*

But if he ever knew that that's what I had been studying, I think he...I don't know...as I say it now, why didn't I say that to him? I don't know. I didn't.

Interviewer: *Well...*

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I didn't.

Interviewer: *You didn't have to.*

No.

Interviewer: *You studied that on your own. What he did...so why should you be penalized for what he did?*

Yeah. Yeah.

Interviewer: *Okay. Well I am going to say thanks and let's see how this went, okay?*

Sure.

END OF TRANSCRIPTION