

Saundra Obie B. Clemmons, RN '67, BSN, MSN, FNP

My name is Saundra Obie Clemmons. I entered Lincoln Hospital School of Nursing, in Durham, North Carolina, in the fall of 1964, straight out of high school, as Saundra Paulette Obie. I graduated in 1967 as Saundra Obie Best.

I was born about sixty-five feet from where I currently live, in Person County, North Carolina, to Bernard Chester and Chestina Tuck Obie, the oldest of seven children. I was delivered by a lay midwife, Miss Florence Wade. There was a sister born two years before me, however, she died at the age of three months, so by default I became the oldest child.

I grew up on a farm in Person County, where we raised tobacco, corn, wheat, and soybeans as major crops. My father tried other crops as well, such as cucumbers and peanuts. We also raised pigs, chickens, ducks, and dairy and beef cows for our own use. I grew up fulfilling the role of a son until my brothers came along and were big enough to help. I also assisted my mom with cooking, washing, canning, and caring for the younger children as well as working in the tobacco and corn fields.

I attended an all-Black elementary school (Bethel Hill, then North End), Person County High School, and Lincoln Hospital School of Nursing (LHSN). In high school, I was a member of the National Honor Society, the Future Nurses Club, and was the feature writer and photographer for my high-school newspaper (*The Panther*). I enjoyed reading, writing (including poetry), and participating in French and Home Economics classes. I graduated in 1964 as salutatorian of my class.

Although Dad only went to the eighth grade and Mom only to the tenth, education was important to my family; in fact, my mother got her GED and associates degree in criminal justice after I left home. All of the children completed college. There are doctorates (including MDS), three master's degrees, and numerous bachelor of science degrees within immediate and second-generation offspring.

Church was also a big influence during my years growing up. We attended Sunday School each Sunday, walking two to three miles, one way, to church. Church and God continued to be important during my years at Lincoln, from participating in weekly Vespers to attending local community churches such as St. Joseph African Methodist Episcopal and White Rock Baptist.

During the time that I was in high school (1960-1964) career choices were limited for women, especially in rural schools. One could be a teacher, a nurse, or a secretary. I believe I chose nursing because of the influences of my mom, my grandmother (Nannie Paylor Obie), two Black public-health nurses (Mrs. Kathryn Lawson and Ms. Albright), and Mrs. Salome Jeffers Miles, my eleventh grade homeroom and English teacher and Future Nurses Club advisor.

I chose LHSN after being denied entrance into the Women's College of Greensboro, North Carolina, supposedly for not having taken geometry in high school. Because I wanted my siblings to go to college, I felt an obligation to get out of the way, so as not to be a burden on my parents. I applied to a two-year then three-year school. I don't regret attending and graduating from Lincoln because the school and classes were small and therefore we received more individualized attention. There was a sense of family among the graduates that continues today through our biannual reunions.

At Lincoln we were taught by Mrs. Lucille Zimmerman (LZ) Williams and our various instructors how to be professional in our dress and appearance and in our actions. They taught us to be the best nurses we could be and to be patient advocates. A sense of integrity was instilled in us. We were shown how to be well-mannered young women.

My career has been filled with various positions. I graduated from LHSN on September 13, 1967. I went to work one week later at Sibley Memorial Hospital, in Washington, D.C. For three months I worked on the GYN unit. Other positions include: Staff nurse at the Veteran's Affairs Medical Center, Washington, D.C.; emergency, intensive care, and mobile intensive care nursing; supervision (head nurse and house supervisor), Quality Assurance/Improvement; JCAHO Coordinator; special projects and clinical nurse specialist at Person County Memorial Hospital, in Roxboro, North Carolina; and a joint clinical instructor appointment with Person County Memorial Hospital and Piedmont Community College, also in Roxboro.

While working full time at Person County Memorial Hospital, I attended Piedmont Community College, in Roxboro, North Carolina, and North Carolina Central University (NCCU), in Durham, where I earned the bachelor of science degree in nursing in 1983. I continued my studies at the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill and obtained the master of science degree in nursing in 1989 and entered a post-master's family nurse practitioner (FNP) program, graduating in 1995. From 1995 to March 2000 I worked part-time as an FNP, Board Certified with Person Family Medical Center and Beckford Medical Center, in Henderson, North Carolina. While at NCCU I received the Allegra Ward Award for perseverance, and I was a Robert Wood Johnson Scholar (with a full scholarship) at UNC-Chapel Hill.

On March 6, 2010, I began employment at North Carolina Board of Nursing, in Raleigh, North Carolina, as an investigator. Since that time I have attended National Certified Investigator Training and have become certified. My position there involves investigating allegations of violations of the North Carolina Nursing Practice Act. This may involve site visits, chart reviews, medication records and system audits, licensee and witness interviews, writing reports, and testifying at Administrative Hearings. Additionally, I conduct investigations with various other boards and agencies, such as the Medical Board, Pharmacy Board, local police, the military, and the State Bureau of Investigation.

It has been a desire of mine to be elected to the Board of Nursing, but I never imagined that I would be employed by the Nursing Board. This opportunity came about through networking and through the grace of God. Even though I am happy with this opportunity and my job, I still miss direct patient care and working in the clinical areas. I have worked at the board for a little over ten years and anticipate being there for several more years.

I am a member of various professional organizations, including the American Nurses Association, the North Carolina Nurses Association (NCNA), the Chi Eta Phi (XHO) Nursing Sorority, and the Sigma Theta Tau Honor Society. I have been very involved, holding various offices on a district level, in the NCNA. I have also held several offices at the chapter level in Chi Eta Phi, Rho Phi chapter.

I remain involved in church activities at Prospect Hill Baptist Church, in Roxboro, N.C., including Usher Ministry and the Choir Ministry, and I am the assistant financial secretary. I am also the leader of the Health Ministry and over the years have coordinated health fairs for the church with the Help of some of my Lincoln and Chi Eta Phi sisters.

I can, truthfully, say that I have had a blessed life and career. I owe it all to God and my training at Lincoln Hospital School of Nursing in Durham, North Carolina.