
Joan Miller Martin Jones Mathews, RN '62, BSN, MSN, EdD

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1998 Distinguished Nursing Alumnus of North Carolina Central University In Recognition for Excellence in Nursing Practice, Education, And Research

I, Joan Delores Miller, was born on April 24, 1937, in Traphill, North Carolina, in Wilkes County, the third child and second daughter of Pearl Campbell and Thomas Calvin Miller. I lived with my maternal grandparents and extended family on a sixty-acre farm. My mother worked for a family in Elkin and my father was a hotel cook. They came home on Wednesday and Sunday afternoons, respectively, and went back to work early Monday morning. I would be excited on Saturdays when we would go to Elkin to shop, visit our parents, and go to the movies. Sundays were spent at church and visiting relatives and friends. Social activities included gancing, dancing, debates, picnics, and holiday parties.

Education was emphasized in my family, as several family members were teachers and ministers. I began my education in a one-room school in Traphill. Because eight grades were taught in this room, I listened to the lessons for all the students and was able to pass two grades in one year. This school closed, and from fifth grade until my graduation in 1954, I attended Lincoln Heights High School in Wilkesboro. As class valedictorian, I gave my first major public speech from memory; no notes could be used.

During my freshman year at North Carolina College at Durham (now North Carolina Central University), I became interested in nursing and decided to transfer to Lincoln Hospital School of Nursing. My goal was to work as a federal government (AID) nurse in underdeveloped countries. In my junior year at Lincoln I withdrew because married students were not permitted to attend. In 1958, I received a diploma from the Durham School of Practical Nursing and ranked first in academic achievement in my class. I was employed on the Obstetric Unit at Lincoln Hospital. Lincoln Hospital School of Nursing began admitting married students and I re-enrolled and graduated in 1962. During the graduation ceremonies, I received two awards: the Excellence in Leadership Award and the Most Technically Competent Award. I received a commendation from the North Carolina State Board of Nursing for being one of two applicants to have the highest score (714 of 800) in obstetrics on the RN licensure examination in 1962. I was working on the Medicine and Surgery Unit at Lincoln Hospital when Mrs. L.Z. Williams, Director of the School of Nursing, smiled and said, "Good Morning, Mrs. Martin, RN," and I realized that I had passed the State Board of Nursing Examination (the school received the scores before the graduates did). I was elated; I was a registered nurse! Thus, my career as a nurse truly began.

As the requirements for various career paths in professional nursing changed, I made changes as well. I continued my education as I changed positions in nursing. I obtained a bachelor of science degree in nursing in 1965 from North Carolina Central University; a master of science degree in nursing in 1971 from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; and a doctorate of education in curriculum and teaching in 1997 from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. I retired in 1999 from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro as Clinical Associate Professor in Nursing, returned in 2000 as Adjunct Assistant Professor in Nursing, and was reappointed to serve in this capacity until 2011.

My experiences in nursing include visiting assistant professor in nursing, University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 1984-1997; assistant professor in nursing, North Carolina Central University, Durham, N.C., 1970-1984; instructor of medical-surgical nursing, Lincoln Hospital School of Nursing, Durham N.C., 1966-1968; public health nurse I, Durham County Health Department, Durham, N.C., 1965-1966 and the summers of 1969, 1971, 1972, 1974, 1975, 1979; staff nurse, medical-surgical and gynecological nursing at Duke Hospital, Durham, N.C., part-time, 1980-1983, and Watts Hospital, Durham, N.C., May 1973-August 1973; staff nurse, medical-surgeon, gynecological nurse, and emergency nursing at Lincoln Hospital, Durham, N.C., 1960-1965, 1968-1970; and private duty nurse, part-time, Duke Hospital, Durham, N.C., 1976-1977.

During my career I have enjoyed working with students in classes and in various organizations, especially the nursing sorority. I am one of the beta sponsors for the Sigma Chi Alpha Beta chapter of the Chi Eta Phi Sorority at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro and have held this position since its chartering on February 27, 1999. I was also beta sponsor when Phi Beta chapter was chartered in 1971 at North Carolina Central University and served in that position until I moved to Greensboro in 1984. I have maintained mentoring relationships with many of my current and former students. Many send me announcements of their promotions, educational pursuits and successes, and personal and family achievements.

Lincoln Hospital School of Nursing emphasized participation in civic, professional, and community organizations. Lincoln Hospital was closely associated with and received support from the community. I embraced this behavior as demonstrated by my role in professional and community-service organizations. Among these organizations are the following: NCA&T State University School of Nursing Advisory Committee, North Carolina Association of County Boards of Social Services (vice president, 2010-2012); Guilford County Board of Social Services (vice chair, 2006-2007) by Guilford County Commissioners for two terms (1/4/01-6/30/07); American Nurses Association; Gamma Zeta Chapter, Sigma Theta Tau National Nursing Honor Society; Lincoln Hospital School of Nursing Alumni Association (president, 1964, Ms. Lincoln Alumni 1976). Chi Eta Phi Nursing Sorority; and life member of the NAACP. I have held positions in these organizations, such as president and committee chairperson. I have published articles in several journals and have completed a master's thesis and a doctoral dissertation. My public speaking has occurred in settings such as graduation ceremonies, civic and religious programs, and workshops.

Other awards and recognitions include educational scholarships, academic achievement awards, leadership awards, induction into Colden Chain and Santa Filomena honor societies, citizenship awards, a Nurse of the Year for District 11 award from the North Carolina Nurses Association, and being nominated in 1991 for the M.L. King Service Award and Excellence as an organization advisor at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. In 2009, I received Soror of the Year award from the South East Region, Chi Eta Phi Sorority for my contributions and leadership in nursing and the community. Since 1994 I have sponsored the Woodrow Jones Nursing Scholarship at North Carolina Central University.

I am describing the makeup of my family because I taught nursing using these different names. Students I taught at Lincoln knew me as Mrs. Martin, at North Carolina Central University as Mrs. Martin and later as Mrs. Jones, and at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro as Mrs. Jones, Dr. Jones, and Dr. Mathews. In 1956, I married Joseph H. Martin and had a Lincoln baby, Joseph H. Martin Jr. My son followed me into the health profession and is currently a physician in Atlanta, Georgia. Joseph graduated with honors from Howard University (Phi Beta Kappa) and received his medical degree from Duke University. Following my divorce from his father in 1980, I married Rev. Woodrow Jones Sr. in 1983 and moved to Greensboro, N.C. Reverend Jones died in 1994 following a two-year battle with cancer of the brain. In 1999, I married Louis H. Mathews, who is a retiree from the U.S. Air Force and U.S. Post Office. One of my nursing mentees, Lt. Colonel Elmontenal C. Allens, MS, RN, has adopted Louis and me as his parents.

As I stated at the beginning of my description of my nursing career, it really and truly began at Lincoln Hospital School of Nursing. Lincoln Hospital School of Nursing made it possible for me to have an interesting profession in nursing. I was able to be a leader in nursing and other organizations because of my excellent

mentors and the support from colleagues and family to fulfill the predictions of the awards and recognitions received.