

# Judy Southern Oral History

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EM: My name is Emma McMantis we are in Wilmington NC conducting interviews at the Public health association conference it is October 28,2010

EM: What is your name

JS: My name is Judy Southern

EM: Okay and where did you grow up

JS: I actually grew up in Columbus County uh in a little place called Delco NC

EM: Why did you decide to become a nurse

JS: Well probably the reason most people say I wanted to help people and my initial thinking was I am going to go to the mountains and help the poor people in the mountains

EM: Um where did you go to nursing school at and when

JS: I went to Watts Hospital School of Nursing in Durham I graduated in 1976

EM: Incan you relate your education to aspects of public health

JS: Okay actually I didn't have very good advisement nothing was wrong with Watts um I didn't know it was going to be important to have your BSN at the time I went to Watts for 3 years and graduated and that was with my diploma in nursing along the way in my nursing career I wanted to get my BSN I just wasn't located at the right place to do so in 1982 I graduated with my bachelor of science from Campbell University my husband was there getting his degree to be a minister so I got that while I was there and then just recently I graduated from UNC Chapel Hill with a masters in Public Health

EM: And why did you decide to become a community health nurse

JS: Well actually it wasn't planned that I would do that I had worked in the hospital setting for about 11 years I stated my family and I had two little girls and the health director was actually a member of the church that my husband was a minster at he came home and said that he had found me a job where I could work Monday through Friday that I didn't have to work nights and weekends like in the hospital so I said well okay that is not what I was looking for but I became a public health nurse and loved it from the beginning and have been doing it about 23 years

EM: And you told me a little bit about your first job where was that located and what was your positon there

JS: Okay my first job was in Whiteville NC in Columbus County in the health department and I was a TB nurse that was the first position I had and actually the year I did TB I had the largest number of cases in that county that they had had in a long time it was one of the larger cases we had in the state we had 26 TB cases in that year and 8 of them were children

EM: and what is your current Position

JS: I am the director of nursing of clinical services at the Gilford County Department of Public Health in Greensboro

EM: Do you have a most memorable story about community health nursing

JS: Well I have a lot of stories well the one I will share will be about when I became a TB nurse in Columbus County there were um well Columbus county is a very rural county I would go out and find a lot of the TB patients this was before we had directly observed therapy and I had to go out and find them and give them medicine because they were not compliant and one man I know I had to hunt him down and he was a little bit transient and he stayed at a boarding house that was in poor condition I would find him walking across the street I would open both doors and I would tell him to drop his pants and give him his shot where ever I could find it was hard to find so when I would find him I would give it to him where ever I was I went into tobacco fields and gave people their shot drew blood I had this one man that I had to go down this long long long road about a mile it was real bumpy holes all in the dirt road and I get all the way down that road to his house and he would meet me sometimes he didn't have any water but he would take about 10 pills and just swallow them and I would have to get his blood where I could get him and he was very interesting too some of the homes I visited in had dirt floors or holes in the floor so that was

my beginning in public health so I learned to love it and I learned to help people and that I could really make a difference in their life it was a little different from hospital nursing because I would just see them and never see them again a lot of the people I followed in public health I saw them through many pregnancies I get to see their kids at school as a school nurse uhh you could see that you possibly had made a change influenced their lives

EM: If you had it to do all over again would you be a community health nurse

JS: I sure would I wish I had gotten into it sooner however I've been doing it for 23 years and I love it and I love teaching new nurses about community health and the importance of public health and I think it is a great field to be in

EM: And is there anything that you would like to share with future community health nurses

JS: well I know that the culture has changed and the world is changing you know we have all kind of technology uh public health may be done in a different way in the future but I think if we always connect with our patients and people we will always going to make a difference and will always need public health nurses

EM: Anything else you would like to say

JS: NO thank you

Alright thank you