

EBL: Okay. Today's Friday, November 12, 2010. My name is Ethan Brooks-Livingston. I'm at, uh, the Watauga County Health Department in Boone, North Carolina interviewing long-time Watauga County Health Department nurse Sandy Hagler. So, Sandy, I have just a few questions for you--well, a number of questions for you...

SH: Okay

EBL: And just to get started, I thought we could talk about, uh, your roots, all the way back.

SH: Okay.

EBL: Back in the beginning. Uh, well, back in the beginning...uh, what year were you born?

SH: 1948.

EBL: Okay, and where were you born?

SH: In Bristol, Tennessee.

EBL: Bristol, Tennessee. So how far is that from here?

SH: Maybe an hour, and fifteen minutes.

EBL: Maybe an hour, not too far. So still in the mountains, certainly?

SH: Right, right.

EBL: When did you come to live in Boone?

SH: We, my family is originally from Boone. I think my father was there working, looking for work, or something when we were born. My sister and I, we're, I'm a twin.

EBL: okay.

SH: And, so I think we came back, here, shortly after that.

EBL: okay.

SH: I don't remember anything about growing up anywhere else.

EBL: Okay. Now, Phoebe did mention that your sister is also a nurse.

SH: Yes, yes.

EBL: So you're twins and you're both nurses?

SH: Mm-hmm.

EBL: That's pretty unique. Well, are your parents still living?

SH: No, they're not.

EBL: Where...they were living here?

SH: Mm-hmm.

EBL: Okay, in Boone?

SH: Yeah.

EBL: Okay. Well, tell me a little bit about your father's job when you were a child.

SH: Well, now my father worked...he was, I guess, considered a laborer. And they just worked wherever they could. I remember once he worked in the slaughterhouse, and um, he did construction--those type positions.

EBL: Okay. What kind of training did he have?

SH: Nothing--he, no. I don't..not that I'm aware of.

EBL: How far did he go in school?

SH: I think he graduated from high school.

EBL: Uh, so he had to kind of move around from job to job? What...

SH: Mm-hmm

EBL: So his primary days when he was working would've been....he would've covered the Depression, certainly.

SH: Right.

EBL: So it was hard for anybody to find a job.

SH: Mm-hmm. It was. And I think maybe that's why we ended up in Tennessee. There was a program through the government. I can't remember exactly the name of it, but it was TWA or something like that, that found jobs for people during that period. And I think...

EBL: Maybe the TVA, the Tennessee Valley Authority, that was working on...

SH: Mm-hmm. They were working on some things.

EBL: A lot of the dams in East Tennessee.

SH: Yes. Mm-hmm. And they provided, uh...

EBL: Well, what do you remember about how your dad felt about women working?

SH: I don't think he had any problems with it. Probably happy to have some help. I don't think he had anything negative, or there<sup>9</sup> were some negative problems.

[laughter]

EBL: Right. Well, tell me a little bit about your mom.

SH: Um, my mom was um, she worked outside the home too, doing different jobs. But she was the um, she was in charge. She set all the rules. She did the spanking. She did the cleaning. She did about everything, really.

EBL: Uh, you said she worked outside the home. What kinds of work was she doing?

SH: She did light cleaning jobs. I remember she worked for a church. She would clean at the church, and a bank. And things like that.

EBL: Okay. Ah, was, were either of your parents in positions where they were supervising anybody else's work.

SH: Mm-mm, I don't think so. Mm-mm.

EBL: Uh, did uh, your mother's job influence your decision later in life to start a career?

SH: Not that I'm aware of...I just don't think it did.

EBL: So her's was probably more out of economic necessity during that period of time.

SH: Mm-hmm. It was, oh yes.

EBL: So you have one sister?

SH: No, I have three sisters, and had two brothers. One of my brothers has passed away.

EBL: Okay. That's a pretty large family.

SH: Yeah, there were six of us.

EBL: Okay. Were there any other family members that you were close to, other than your parents? Spent a lot of time with, maybe?

SH: I had an uncle that lived in Jonesville, down in Elkin, down in Yadkin County, I guess. I spent a lot of summers with them, because I liked to. And they had about thirteen children.

EBL: Oh, wow. So I guess your family was small in comparison.

SH: Oh, yes. Ours was very small, but I liked being with that big group, so I spent a lot of time down there.

EBL: Okay, so let's talk a little bit about medical care when you were a child, and growing up.

SH: Mm-hmm.

EBL: How did your family feel about trips to the doctor when you got sick?

SH: We just went. We did use public health, but we went to the doctor if we were sick. They just took us. ✓

EBL: Do you think that was common among people in your community?

SH: Mm-hmm. Yes.

EBL: People did go to the doctor?

SH: Oh, yes. Especially they took the children. I can remember that.

EBL: When you, before you got to the doctor, who took care of you when you were sick?

SH: My mother, or my grandmother.

EBL: When would they have made a decision that you needed to go to the doctor?

SH: Uh, I'm not sure. I guess if you ran a fever, or if you didn't get better in certain periods of time. I'm thinking that's probably what they would use. I'm thinking.

EBL: And that would've been in the 1950s, so...

SH: Mm-hmm.

EBL: Do you remember any nurses from your childhood?

SH: Not a one. [laughter] No. And, I, you know, I've been through the questions, and I'm like, I can't remember the doctors or the nurses, or any relationship between the doctor or the nurses, or, no. They didn't impress me, I guess. [laughter]. I don't remember one.

EBL: When you did go to the doctor, what, uh, can you describe any doctors that you do recall, just kind of people they were. Were they, were they all men? Or...

SH: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. And they were all white, of course. I mean, we would've been shocked had there been any other race, 'cause that's just what we were used to. But from what I can remember, they were all very nice to us. I can remember being in the hospital a couple of times when I was little, and the doctors and nurses were just, they were very nice. You get a lot of attention if you were in the hospital.

EBL: Do you recall why you went to the hospital?

SH: One, I had a hernia repaired, and I guess I was four or five. And the other one, uh, we had a little wood stove in our, my mom's, in the kitchen where she--I don't know if she did some cooking on it, but, [laughter] I got caught on fire, so I ended up in the hospital for a couple of days. But it was nothing serious.

EBL: How about any of your siblings--did they ever have to take trips to the hospital?

SH: Well, I don't remember in the, actually in the hospital. I remember once my sister got a bee or pea or bean or something stuck in her ear. [laughter] She had to go. It seems like, this is really going back, but, my oldest sister---for some reason there was some, um, fears of polio, that maybe she had contracted polio, but she had not. I don't know why they had thought--maybe it was during the period when it was going around, but she didn't, hadn't contracted it.

EBL: Were you and all of your siblings born in a hospital?

SH: Mm-hmm. My younger sister was born in an, it's kinda like a, I don't think it was a hospital, it's like a clinic. Ah, I don't know if they did their deliveries there, or what. But I can remember the building's still standing, and that's where my mom said she was born. I don't know why she would've been born there, unless it was a maternity clinic or something.

EBL: Okay. Well tell me a little bit about your, uh, experiences during elementary school. Do you remember what school you...

SH: Oh, yeah. Mm-hmm. We went to the same school all through all the grades, up until um, the twelfth grade, and that's when schools were integrated.

EBL: What year was that?

SH: Sixty--I don't know why I'm thinking it was sixty-six, is when the schools were integrated.

EBL: And that would've been in Watauga County?

SH: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. And that was, up until then we had always had our own school and our community.

EBL: Okay, and what was the name of your...

SH: Watauga Consolidated School

EBL: Watauga Consolidated

SH: You could probably find some stuff on it, yeah.

EBL: Well, tell me about what it was like, well--how big was your school?

SH: It was small, um, there were two big rooms. And that was for grades one through four, I'm thinking, and five through eight was on the other side. And then the basement is where they had high school. And there was, I don't know if there was fifty of us. Probably...maybe, altogether, so, that's all we'd ever known. And then, maybe early sixties, they did build us a new school. And that was much larger, we had a lot more room, and it was nice. And I remember in the old school though, the guys had to do, um, keep bringing wood and coal and stuff to keep the fire going. But, [laughter], which was nothing unusual, because, you know, that's the way we were at home too.

EBL: Mm-hmm.

SH: But when we got to the new school, of course, it had uh, just regular...

EBL: Central heat?

SH: Central heat, I guess, yeah.

EBL: So you went to school with the same people all twelve grades?

SH: Mm-hmm.

EBL:

Okay. Well, when you were in high school, what kind of student were you?

SH: Very serious. And I always worked. There's not many people that grew up in my generation, in our school that didn't take schoolwork very seriously. Just about everybody did. It was a competition-type thing.

EBL: Why do you think that was?

SH: I don't know. I don't know, but we, there was a lot of competition. We, if there had to be--I don't know, everybody just wanted to be on top. I don't know. But we were serious.

EBL: What was your best subject?

SH: Probably English, and math, probably.

EBL: Well, tell me a little bit about what you were like as a teenager. What did you like to do for fun?

SH: We, uh, we spent a lot of time learning new dance steps, watching, um, American Bandstand, going to dances. We like to go on, we'd walk, forever. There was not a lot to do back then. So we'd walk maybe to Howard's Knob, which is on top of Boone, or we'd walk over to Winkler's Creek, or just a bunch of girls and guys...and we like music, and dancing, and that kind of thing. And, um, we had a lot of school dances, and things like that. But I was always probably the one to, if we had a dance, or something major went on to write about it, to write a poem and put everybody in it and that kind of thing. We all got a bit kick out of that.

EBL: How involved were you in different clubs and programs in school?

SH: Everything that we had, everybody was in. You didn't have much choice. You know, you could choose, you just, you were a part of everything. We had dance groups and debate teams, just whatever we did, everybody had to be a part, you didn't have much choice.

EBL: What was Boone like in the 50s and 60s?

SH: I guess we were so sheltered in our, where we lived, in our community, that we didn't know about people outside our community, not until we were teenagers. I mean, as far as we were concerned, that was the whole world right there. It was very warm, you know, you had your grandparents, your older folks, and teenagers, and just everybody growing up together. Just very warm. And I guess most people really just didn't care for desegregation because it kind of broke our community apart because the school, like the church, was the central point of the whole community, so when the schools integrated, that really, I think was a big jolt for our community. It kind of took away a lot.

EBL: What do you remember, any other, any sentiments maybe from white people during that day about the process?

SH: Not until we were teenagers. I don't know if we just didn't have much contact with white people, but I think our parents just sheltered us so that we, we just didn't know any different. I mean, things were just the way they were supposed to be, and until we got up to where we were teenagers that we could question, you know, we would question that and really see what was going on around us. But, and I think it was the same way with all races in this, you know, it was just, everybody was segregated, kept their children in their communities. Then, all of a sudden, they're trying to put us all together, but of course by then, we are teenagers by the time the school, the school integrated, and we're ready to graduate.

EBL: So it was your twelfth grade year?

SH: Uh-huh.

EBL: I imagine that was quite a shock.

SH: It was quite a shock, it was, it was.

EBL: What, did you end up going to the Watauga County High School?

SH: Yeah. Watauga High. The one they just finished doing the new one. That was the first year of the old one.

EBL: What happened to your old school, that was brand new?

SH: It was, someone purchased...oh, it...we wanted to keep the school in the community. We tried to purchase it, the community, from the county, or town. I don't know who we were trying to get it from. But they would not let us keep it. So it went to two or three different groups have been it. Now I think it is WinWay, a program for troubled youth or something like that.

EBL: When you were in high school, what were your plans for the future?

SH: I don't remember having any, other than writing. I thought I probably would just write when I grew up, have children, just like my mom and dad. Just not...I didn't think about it in those early, early high school years.

EBL: Did any of your plans have a plan, a very set plan for the future, in high school?

SH: I don't know, I don't remember. I don't remember us going beyond our environment, just right there where we were in that moment. Of course, we all did go different directions, you know when we grew up. But then, we weren't...just kinda in that little nest, I guess.

EBL: Well, tell me a little bit about when you did decide to continue your education and start your nurse training---when was that?

SH: Well, I wish I could say that I'd always wanted to be a nurse, but it just had never dawned on me, anything about nursing. I was taking classes, maybe at ASU. I had taken some here and there. I don't know how I found out about the nursing program at Caldwell. It sounded good, but it never crossed my mind that I would want to be a nurse until I just got started in it. And I liked it, I've been doing it all my life. Either at work, or at home, it's always been in that same position.

EBL: When, uh, how old were you, or when did you actually start thinking about taking classes to start nurse training? I'm trying to get a sense of what you were doing in between high school and...

SH: Probably, um, nineteen, maybe twenty, I was probably that age.

EBL: Nineteen or twenty?

SH: Uh-huh. Somewhere in there.

EBL: So it would've been around the late 60s?

SH: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

EBL: So not too long after high school?

SH: No, because I wanted to do something, I just didn't know, didn't know what.

EBL: Before we start talking about your nursing career, which I'm very excited to hear about, I'd like to learn a little bit about your family life since high school, your adult family life.

SH: Right.

EBL: Tell me a little bit about that.

SH: Well, I have a daughter, and her name is Cathy. I've been married, but I'm divorced, and have been for a long time. I have that one daughter and two grandchildren. And right now, presently, my twin sister and her husband live with me. They're both, well, my sister is disabled, and he's about disabled, too. So they live with me, and I'm getting ready to retire next month.

EBL: Congratulations!

SH: I'm excited about that.

EBL: I'm sure.

SH: And so, we have a lot of people in and out of my home. We have a lot of visitors, people coming in and eating with us, or just watching t.v. and talking, so that's good.

EBL: Alright. Well, when you married, how old were you when you got married?

SH: Probably about eighteen.

EBL: Okay. What was your husband doing at the time? Was he employed?

SH: Probably just like me, no, and just not sure which way to go.

EBL: And he was the same age?

SH: Yeah, not much older.

EBL: How long were you married?

SH: A couple of years. About two years.

EBL: So in the process you had made the decision to start thinking about nursing?

SH: Mm-hmm. I had heard about Caldwell. Caldwell wasn't that big at that time. You know it's a much bigger school. And back then it was up here, you know, in Watauga County, it was bigger down in Caldwell. And I don't know how I found out about it, but I decided, well, I'll try this. Then my sister and I decided and a cousin and sometimes we would take classes. I travelled Lenoir and the mountain and back together, and that kind of thing.

EBL: Did your family support your decision to become a nurse?

SH: Mm-hmm. Sure.

EBL: Well, how did they feel about the career of nursing? Did they see it as a career, or...

SH: Yeah, they thought...they saw it as...my dad thought it was...he just laughed everytime we, you know, after we became nurses, he just thought we were still children, and he thought it was funny, but they were very proud of us. They were.

EBL: Okay. Well, tell me a little bit about your training at Caldwell.

SH: Okay. Well, of course we had to take some, you know prerequisite courses, and some we'd already finished at other places. But the nursing, probably was the best part of it. The actual going into the hospital, working with people, and learning as we went. That we did like. My sister, me, my cousin, and we were kinda together all the way through some of it.

EBL: Now was this a diploma program, or what kind of program was it?

SH: No, it wasn't a diploma, it was, it started out as LPN, and then if you decided you want to go on, you could go on to the RN and then the BSN thing came from Winston-Salem State, but Caldwell was the Associate Degree, I guess, was what it was.

EBL: Okay. Where were African American nurses getting their training? Were there a lot of your classmates that were also African American, or ...

SH: Oh, they were all African American, but I don't know, well, maybe one or two that did go into nursing. Two others other than my sister and my cousin, and they went to Caldwell.

EBL: Okay. At Caldwell, what was your, who were your classmates?

SH: Oh, God, it was varied. Mainly female, mainly white, and some from Lenoir, you know, Hickory, Boone, Blowing Rock. Just people from different areas. Good experience.

EBL: What did you think of Winston-Salem State when you were thinking of starting your career?

SH: I didn't give Winston a thought because it wasn't accessible like Caldwell. You know, Caldwell was close, you did most of your classes here. Even though you did have to travel, it wasn't far as Winston. It wasn't an option.

EBL: So you lived here in Boone while you were doing your training?

SH: Mm-hmm.

EBL: Where were you doing those clinical rotations you were telling me about?

SH: Um, we would go to mainly Caldwell, here at Watauga. We would have to do some in Jerutha Dicks, for you know, mental education, you know, psychiatric rotations. But the most, we did here in Boone. We did have to go to Caldwell for some things, for some rotations.

EBL: What did you enjoy most about those?

SH: The rotations? Probably I liked the OB better. I just...I saw as many births as I could, spent as much time as I could. But after I finished, I didn't, I wasn't interested in actually working in OB, but I did enjoy it during the time.

EBL: Do you remember any stories from those days of training, maybe something that made you really feel like this is what you were supposed to be doing, or maybe something that scared you?

SH: I loved geriatrics, too. And I've spent a lot of time in nursing homes. There's just something about that age group, which, I'm about to get there myself, but I really enjoyed that rotation probably better than anything once I got out of nursing [training] because we didn't really do a geriatric rotation during training.

EBL: Who were your professors, your teachers at Caldwell?

SH: Um, I remember Nancy Haas, from Boone, one of our clinical supervisors, and Sarah McDonald, she was another. And they still live around here. I can't remember any of the Caldwell names, really.

EBL: So they were mostly women that were teaching?

SH: Mm-hmm. They all were women.

EBL: Were they all white, also?

SH: Mm-hmm.

EBL: Did you ever have any African American nurses teaching or supervising?

SH: No. Well, when I was doing my...we were working on our BS. Some of the nurses from Winston taught those classes. And they were black. Some, a couple black, a couple white.

EBL: So, were you working on that degree also at Caldwell, or did you go somewhere else?

SH: No, that was through Winston-Salem State. They had, I guess, a satellite program up here. You could do it all through Watauga Medical Center.

EBL: How long did that take?

SH: Could've been a year, a year and a half.

EBL: In addition to the Associate's Degree that you got?

SH: Mm-hmm.

EBL: So I guess your actual degree is from Winston-Salem?

SH: Right.

EBL: What do you remember about the kinds of equipment, technology you've had to learn to use?

SH: Well, nobody uses the oral thermometers anymore. We, as a matter of fact, we've got some here. Um, I'm trying to think...blood pressure cuffs, of course, we had to do that, and starting IVs, and of course it's all easier now. Back then, you had to just gather up everything you needed, and now everything comes in kits, and that's a lot easier. I'm trying to think...but that was, I really didn't, I never did like the part of doing IVs, doing invasive things to people. I just didn't care for that. But of course, you had to. But it wasn't one of my favorite things.

EBL: Do you ever remember, since you've always been a nurse here in Boone...

SH: Mm-hmm.

EBL: Do you ever remember having to deal with somebody who was, who had some sort of stereotype of medicine, or nurses, or just didn't want to deal with it?

SH: No. Now, I know there were times like, when I worked at Blowing Rock Hospital at one point, and they had a lot of people that had weren't alcoholics, but they were close to it. And they had a lot of those people at that hospital, and that was challenging, because you had to do, you know, it could be physical sometimes. I remember one time one woman slapped me. My cap fell off. That kind of thing. [laughter] But that was not that person, that was the alcohol.

EBL: So you mentioned the cap, tell me a little bit about the uniform that you had to wear when you first became a nurse.

SH: Oh, gosh. Well, you had to wear...and back then, everybody did wear dresses or skirts. It would be rare to see somebody in pants. Of course, that's changed. But we had to wear a cap.

EBL: What did your cap look like?

SH: A little white box with black trim [laughter]. Nothing I was real excited about... at all.[laughter]

EBL: Did it have anything that signified your school on it, like where you received your training?

SH: Caldwell, yeah. It did, it did. And I think, seems like the LPNs had grey stripes and the RNs had black, or something like that.

EBL: Do you remember any, during those days of training, either at Caldwell or when you were working on your BS degree...

SH: Mm-hmm.

EBL: Do you remember having a mentor of any kind? Someone that really, that you really looked to for advice, or...?

SH: No. Probably my sister or my cousin. The three of us were together through all of it, it was probably one of them if anybody. But no, we didn't know any other nurses or have the privilege of having somebody we could go to. You know, so, we just went to each other.

EBL: Would you say there was a pretty strong heirarchy between the trainers and the trainees?

SH: Oh yes. Mm-hmm.

EBL: Rigidly enforced?

SH: Rigidly. But if you had an instructor that really liked you, that could make all the difference in the world. And um...

EBL: Did you ever have that experience?

SH: Uh-huh. Of instructors that really liked me, and I know people that she didn't like, and she made life real hard for them. But luckily, my sister and I, we always stayed on the good side of...[laughter]

EBL: How do you think you managed that?

SH: I don't know, I don't, I really don't know...because, um...I really don't know how that turned out like that.

EBL: I'm sure hard work had something to do with it.

SH: I don't know. I don't know if it was personalities, or that kind of thing.

EBL: Well, moving on from your training, was that the last degree that you got, the BS?

SH: Yes, I've taken some training here since I've been working at the Health Department. I do Communicable Disease, so I've had to do a lot of training for that. And immunizations, and that is constantly changing, so yeah, I've had to do more since I've been here.

EBL: So that's your area of specialization here?

SH: Uh-huh.

EBL: Okay. Tell me a little bit about that, what that means to the layperson.

SH: Okay. In Communicable Disease, if there is a test in your county, say, for instance, um, I know right now, we've got, I've got about five chlamydia cases, all on the same day, they all came in at the same time. But other than STDs, we do have to investigate foodborne illnesses, bloodborne illnesses, pertussis, you know, whooping cough. Everything that is communicable has to be investigated and reported and put in the computer and sent back to the state. So that takes up a lot of my time. And then the immunizations, which of course, is a public, is a Health Department--you have to do childhood immunizations, and we do adult travel vaccinations. We have a lot of that because of Samaritan's Purse is right here, so we do a lot of travel.

EBL: Do you see many students from ASU, or do they typically just go to the health clinic at school?

SH: Occasionally you will see them in some of our clinics here, like family planning. Or, every now and then OB, maternity. And I see a lot with, through travel, because usually around the spring of the year, everybody's going on a trip, so we're doing a lot of students during that time.

EBL: Well, I'd like to know a little bit more about your first job. How did you get your first job, and where was it?

SH: I think my first job was at Glen Ridge, it was a nursing home. I'm thinking that was my very first one. And it was working on the floor, doing meds and um, just being in charge of everyone on your floor.

EBL: Was that a nursing home here in Boone?

SH: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Glen Ridge. But back then it was Watauga Nursing Center or something like that. I'm thinking that was my first one. And I really did like it. I think, I don't even know why I left. But you can get in a nursing home, with the elderly, you can get very attached, and burn out pretty quick, so that may be what happened to me. Because you would

just kind of fall in love with some people, and when they die, it's hard, just like a family member.

EBL: Why did you take that job? Did you have any other opportunities?

SH: There's never been a lot of options up in the mountains. There's only three or four, really...Blowing Rock, and of course, Watauga Medical Center, and the nursing home, so there's never been a big variety of options for nurses here.

EBL: So the jobs were pretty competitive, I guess.

SH: I would think so.

EBL: How long did you stay at the nursing home?

SH: Oh, gosh, I stayed there a long time. Hmm...I can't remember exactly how long I was there, from the time I started, until I...I think I just left after a while and went to Blowing Rock. You know nurses just have a tendency to just go from place to place. [laughter] Blowing Rock and back there again. And I got a job opening at ASU, and I think that I had gotten my, no I hadn't gotten my BS, but at ASU, I went to work there in '81, and worked there for about eleven or twelve years.

EBL: What were you doing at ASU?

SH: I was working in Student Health with students. I worked nights, and after a while, I just really wanted to work days. And ended up coming here.

EBL: What kind of job were you---you said you were working nights, what did your job involve?

SH: At night, at ASU?

EBL: Mm-hmm.

SH: If students came in sick, or injured, or anything like that, or intoxicated [laughter]. But I did that, almost twelve years.

EBL: Who were your, when you were back at that first job, who were your coworkers? Do you remember? Like, were they women, or were they African American?

SH: Mm-hmm. There was both black and white females. We had, always had a male or two, male nurse, black or white. Orderlies, aides, that type thing. And usually the nurse was in charge, and everybody worked under that nurse. That kind of thing.

EBL: Were there many men in your classes, when you were at Caldwell?

SH: No. Very rare. I can remember one. Of course there's been others since then. Back then, it wasn't really considered a male job. Males weren't that interested, or something.

EBL: Do you think there was any difference between white men and black men, so far as interest-level goes?

SH: No. I can remember one black guy. Since I've been out of school, of course I've worked with black and white guys.

EBL: So after you left ASU, and you worked there for eleven years and you came here to the Health Department?

SH: Mm-hmm.

EBL: Have you been doing the same kind of job here always, at the Health Department?

SH: Yeah. Well, I have done some different types, like more patient contact, like working in the clinic, or OB or family planning or primary care. But now, I'm mainly doing these two things.

EBL: Have you supervised anybody while you were here?

SH: Mm-hmm.

EBL: Who were you...?

SH: My last supervisor, not the one I have now, we were good friends. And I was in charge when she was not here. And then when she left for good, I guess it was close to a year I had to assume the responsibility of everything here.

EBL: Are you still in charge? You've got a supervisor now?

SH: I've got a supervisor now. When it was decided they were going to hire a supervisor for this area, I decided I didn't want to do that, I'm going to go ahead and retire, so that's what I'm doing.

EBL: Well, throughout your career, have you seen a lot of changes in technology that you've had to cope with?

SH: Oh, God, yeah. Oh yeah. Having a computer, number one. I don't know how anybody could make it these days without a computer, and the access and your work, there's just so much less paperwork. The paperwork--it would be crazy if you had to do it all by hand the way we used to do. That I love. I don't know how anybody could live without a computer. [laughter] And of course, at the Health Department, you're not doing actual patient care, where you're doing baths and helping with this and the IVs and all that. We don't do that in public health. I'm sure even that's changed in hospitals. I know it has, just from visiting people. I

don't think nurses are as caring as they used to be. You know, just really looking out for the whole patient. It's more like just do what I gotta do and just get out of here. You know what I mean? But when I was first nursing, it was totally different. The way you looked at your patient was totally different. This was my responsibility. And now it's more shared responsibility, but nobody's taking that, that overall "I'm looking after this person."

EBL: Why do you think that's changed?

SH: I don't know unless there's more specialization in nursing and in hospitals. You know, there's just so many, but it doesn't seem like there's one person that, you know, is responsible for this one person. It's just divided up, if that makes any sense. I would like to see it go back to nursing being more caring, and taking more time. I know, you know, it's a business anymore. It's not like it was. When I first started, we could do...we had time. And we just took time with our patients, tried to see to all their needs, and now, it's just like nobody cares whether you live or die, that kind of thing.

EBL: What---you know, you always hear that nurses are more caring, there the ones that spend more time with patients...

SH: Mmm-hmm.

EBL: What were, how do you see that working with doctors? Are nurses more caring than doctors?

SH: Well, than doctors, definitely. You know, they stick their head in for maybe five or six minutes and they're gone. You know, the patient's there the rest of the day in the hospital, if they are in the hospital. So of course the nurses should have more time with them. But I've visited people in the hospital where I know they go for hours without anybody even sticking their head in the door, which would have scared me at the time. I want to know what my patients are doing, and I'm like, if I haven't seen you in three or four hours, I'm nervous, I don't know what I'm going to find when I go in the room. But nobody, it seems it's not a big deal anymore.

EBL: How did you learn that kind of an ethic, about really caring about your patients?

SH: I think it was from the instructors. I think they had a lot to do with it, just kind of hammered it in. This person's your responsibility for as long as your assigned to them. And this is, you know, you need to take care of them. If they need something, you make sure they get it, call whoever needs to be called, or whatever. But this is...and I took that so seriously. And the same way with this job. I feel like the whole county---I'm responsible for, in a way, as far protection, protecting them from communicable diseases, making sure they get their shots. I think maybe too much at times, I have overdone it. I do. But I really feel like somebody needs to be responsible for people. You know, they're just running around doing everything, getting into this and that, and...so the buck stops here. I'm going to help you, and that kind of thing. Or try to.

EBL: Well along with the question about doctors, what has your working relationship been like with doctors through the years?

SH: Very good. Very good. Of course there's nurse practitioners now, too. But it's more of a teamwork and I like that, you know, they respect me and I respect them and know where to draw the line. But it's been more of a "this is our patient, we're going to do the best that we can for them." Or "what's wrong," "let's figure out what's wrong," and how it can be solved. It's always been a working, good working relationship. And of course, there's more female doctors now, too.

EBL: Has that changed the dynamic of the working relationship?

SH: I think so. I think so, and the nurse practitioners and female physicians, they don't get as threatened by nurses that know a little bit. They just can work better, like as a team. Doctors get a little bit, you know...they want to be the "Great White Fathers." But that era's going too, and they know it.

EBL: So there maybe in the past was definitely more of a hierarchy?

SH: Mmm-hmm.

EBL: Have you always worked with white male doctors?

SH: Mmm-hmm. Never any black.

EBL: Never anyone else? Why do you think that is?

SH: I don't know. It's just that other races have not had the opportunities, maybe to go to school, or just never thought of it...

EBL: Maybe the region we're in, also?

SH: Yeah.

EBL: Especially in the mountains?

SH: It's the mountains...the poor, mountainous region.

EBL: How have you...we've talked a little bit about the technology and how relationships with other nurses or doctors have changed, how have you seen training for nurses change? I know we've talked also about how many modern nurses seem to not care as much, or people that have gotten their training in recent years seem to not have that caring aspect...how else has their training, maybe on a more nuts-and-bolts kind of aspect...?

SH: Well most nurses it seems are specialized and they're really good in that one thing that they do, whereas in the past nurses had to try to be good in all areas instead of...you were more

general. Now it seems to be more specialized. And I really admire the nurses....my sister is disabled, so we've been in and out of Winston and Charlotte hospitals, so I do observe the nurses. And I admire their knowledge in that field, but it seems like that's all they can do for you. If it's anything else, you've got to get somebody in another field. Specialist, you know, that kind of thing. It's kind of like with doctors. I think that's kind of hurt us. I think we've needed to get back to the medical home, that theory where you've got one doctor with sets of nurses that's looking out for you. You know, if you need to go to a specialist, then they refer you, but it all comes back to that medical home, for the patient. I'm hoping that that's the way things are going. Because I think that's good for patients.

EBL: Has there ever been a medical kind of a home here?

SH: Uh-huh. Well most people in this area have their own, their own private physicians. And that's the ideal. This is your doctor, you go to him, and if he thinks you need something, he sends you out. But it all boils down...everything comes back to that one doctor. And it's not so divided. It's just all one doctor that's responsible for this person. I like that, and I hope we'll get more and more...it is going back to that. There are a lot of specialists in Boone, but most people are referred by their family doctor, that's what they call them.

EBL: Or a general practitioner...

SH: Mmm-hmmm. That's the family doctor.

EBL: How else has nursing training changed, other than the specialization? Maybe the equipment...what equipment have you learned to use?

SH: Well, I haven't used a lot. In public health you don't use a lot of equipment. Like sono machines, of course we use those. And blood pressure cuffs...I mean everything has changed. And I still like the old stuff, but...I'm trying to think of what else. I can't think. Because we're not in the hospital. We're not out in where you're going to be delivering babies or helping with surgery or that kind of thing. So hopefully you'll get more of that from the girls down the mountain, in Winston and places like that. But public health, we have a certain, set thing that we do too, but they're not actually using the equipment on patients and that kind of thing. Especially mine. Mine is more of a, a broader thing. Not centering that so much on one person, but on a group of people. ✓

EBL: Okay. Tell me a little bit more about public health. We've talked about the communicable disease aspect...why else would someone come to the Health Department instead of, say, go to their family doctor.

SH: Well, a lot of people...because number one in the past, it's been cheaper to come to the Health Department than to go to a private physician. But now it's getting to the place where it's not. It's just as expensive here as it is anywhere else. That, in the past, that's been the main thing, probably, the financial aspect of it. And I don't know now, of course we don't have as many patients as we used to when it was cheaper. Now that people have to pay, they're going to

their private physicians more so than the Health Department. Number one, the Health Department doesn't have hospital privileges. If somebody's sick and they need to go in, you know, we don't have that, so...

EBL: What would you do with somebody in that position, they would just have to go to the emergency room on their own?

SH: Mmm-hmm. We'd send them, refer them, let the doctors on call know they are coming, but as far as taking care of them in the hospital, we couldn't do that. And that's okay because there's lots of hospitals, now, here in Boone, so it's not like people won't have a doctor because they will.

EBL: How big a community of African American folks do you see coming in the Health Department?

SH: Probably the least amount of anybody, you just don't see that many blacks in the Health Department. More hispanics, more whites, but very, very few blacks. And I don't know why, unless they just like the concept of their family doctor. And you know, that's who they go to, take their children to the pediatricians and that type thing, but...even for immunizations, we don't see many blacks.

*Interesting!*

EBL: What would you say are some of the, maybe African American-specific challenges in healthcare today? Would you say that there are any, or what's facing this community that needs more attention?

SH: Hmm...This community has, grew up with a lot of bad habits, because of, you know, all the people around us, not just necessarily black--I'd say it's all around us, smoking. Because it was so cheap and grew right here in the state, and a lot of it was grown here. That's been a problem. And eating habits...but I think people are getting more educated as they age, and a lot of the ones that didn't now, of course, have passed away. But the others, I think, know. They know better about eating, smoking, all those kind of things. I don't know if there's any needs outside, I mean, other than what's in the rest of the community, town, county. I don't know. There's not a lot of obesity. I think, high blood pressure is a problem that's um...

EBL: What about immunizations?

SH: Most people keep their children immunized very well. Now some of the older ones may not. They may be in need of some. But they want to hear it from their doctors. I don't know why African Americans have not utilized the Health Department as some other races have. I don't know--I've never been able to figure that out. But they haven't. Even when they become pregnant, even though we have a great maternity clinic right here, and I've heard some of the doctors in the community say that the maternity patients get better care at the Health Department than at the private physicians' offices. But still, the blacks want to go to a private physician. I don't know why. I don't know why that would be.

EBL: Are you a mentor to anyone here?

SH: I would like to think I am to several. [laughter]

EBL: What's your relationship like with these people?

SH: I really like most of the people that I work with. But the thing of it is, most of the people that I started working with have already retired. So I'm like an older nurse with a lot of younger ones. There's some older than me, but not many.

EBL: When would they look to you for advice, or for how to do things?

SH: About every day. Because of what I do, in that field. Now if it's something in maternity, they'll go to those nurses, or family planning. But if it's immunizations--I usually get those questions. And communicable disease.

EBL: If you had a young black woman that came to you, wanting advice on nursing, if she should consider it as a career, what would you say?

SH: At the Health Department?

EBL: In any capacity?

SH: In nursing? Oh yes, I think it would be a great profession!

EBL: How would you encourage her?

SH: I would tell her to get as much education, general education, and then see what really interests her, and to specialize. See, now I'm talking for it now. But I really do think it's important to be really good at what you do. Do as many as you can--specialize in...I mean, if you're young, just get as much education as you can. Even though the more education you get, the more it takes you away from patient care--you've got to consider that too.

EBL: Are there any other stories or anything that you would like to mention that...maybe some crowning moment of your career?

SH: I don't know of any crowning moments, really I don't. I have enjoyed working, nursing. And I probably, just because I'm retiring from here, I probably won't just quit work. I'll probably do something else.

EBL: Did you ever consider anything else, when you began your career as a nurse? Before you began your training, did you ever consider another career?

SH: No, I didn't. I wonder what time it is?

EBL: It's just a few minutes after five.

SH: Oh, I see.

EBL: Well, what's in the future for you, now?

SH: Oh, it's exciting and a little scary, it is, because I've never been not working. So I probably won't just quit, I'll go do something else. I just want to get out of this position and just look at something else. I've always wanted to write, so I'll be doing a lot of writing. I'm a crafter, knitting, crocheting...I'm doing that all the time. And then, of course I've got my sister to take care of too, and her husband.

EBL: Do you think you'll stay connected to nurses

SH: Probably. Probably with nursing. I'll probably end up doing something, if it's just volunteering, like at a free clinic or somewhere.

EBL: What is your relationship been with other nurses, maybe not exactly where you're working [now], over time?

SH: Oh, I have so many good nursing friends. Most have retired, like I say, or are getting ready to.

EBL: Are these people that you went to school with, or just friends you picked up?

SH: No, just friends I have worked with, people I have worked with here and ASU--I still have a lot of friends there, and out in the medical community I know a lot of people. And I've had to have a relationship with them because of communicable disease, I need their help so bad to fill out forms, I need to get the information. So I've met, and I have a lot of friends in the medical community. The Infection Control Nurse at Watauga Medical. And I learned early that it's good to get into a good friendship, you know be on first-name basis with everybody because you need their help. And not just that, I like them too. You know, we have meetings together occasionally and things like that. So, I have lots of nursing friends.

EBL: Well hopefully you'll be able to stay in touch with those people and you can go on trips together...

SH: And do things...yeah.

EBL: Well I think that's all the questions that I have.

SH: Well I've enjoyed it.

EBL: Is there anything you wanted to add?

SH: No. I just think nursing is a great profession and I'm glad to see that ASU has this program that they have, the BS--or have they gotten the master's yet?

EBL: I think...I'm not positive on that. I'm in history. But I think if they haven't, then it's probably in the works.

SH: History is one of my favorite subjects, too, by the way.

EBL: Oh, alright.

SH: Anything back...I was cleaning out my desk because I have so much stuff to get ready, and I was reading online, it was about this old woman that is an heiress and she's 104 now, and it had her life story, and it was just so interesting I printed the whole thing off, like maybe one of these days I might write something about this. I just love history, and my sister, and my daughter does too. We like the idea of restoring old homes...

EBL: So preservation, also?

SH: Yes, we love it.

EBL: What's your favorite era in history, any particular time period?

SH: Let me see. Whenever I'm writing, like I've done a lot of writing about things that happened in this county, say in the 30s and 40s, and I've just written, like, fictional autobiographies with some people and events. Stories that my dad...

EBL: So, Depression era? Go ahead...stories that your dad...

SH: That my dad told us when we were little. And I've gone back and researched them and found that they were just about like he told us, but kind of fictionalized a little bit.

EBL: Do you remember any of those stories that he would've told you?

SH: Oh yes. He told us about the Horton boys. And when I write, I try to respect the families, even though most of the families are gone, now. These, there were two guys that were killed, and it's always something tragic, I'm afraid. I think this was in the 30s. One was a bootlegger or something...anyway these two guys got killed. And a lot of the black people had to leave the area for a while because they were afraid because black guys had shot a white policeman, or something. But it didn't kill him, but it, you know, it was just bad. It was bad. And I've had four or five, five or six that my dad told us when we were little, that I've gone back and researched and....

EBL: Was he telling them as true stories?

SH: Mm-hmm. Oh yes, they were true. I've just fictionalized the characters around the events.

EBL: Sure.

SH: But the events were actual happenings.

EBL: So these stories he was telling you...why do you think he was telling you stories about, maybe things...

SH: Something like that?

EBL: Something in your community that would've been scary to deal with?

SH: I don't know.

EBL: Do you think it was maybe cautionary?

SH: I don't know. I don't know why, his reason. But most of the stories I write about came back, came from him, when we were little.

EBL: Maybe your interest in writing, do you think that came out of your love of being, your English classes, maybe?

SH: I don't know. I've been writing since I was in second grade. So it's just...I don't know. I don't know what impressed me, but I love the written word. But I've been doing it all my life. Not professionally, or publishable, just different things, like...

EBL: Just for your own enjoyment.

SH: Mmm-hmm. Growing up and writing stories about a dance. And there for a while, I was writing obituaries every time I turned around. But I didn't enjoy those too much. It's always something...a lot of writing.

EBL: Well on that note, I have a lot of writing ahead of me, and I appreciate this interview.

SH: Do you want this?

EBL: Sure, I'll take that with me.

SH: I didn't finish.

EBL: Oh, that's okay, that's fine. I appreciate your help.

SH: Mmm-hmmm.

EBL: It's been really great to hear your stories.

SH: I appreciate yours. It's been nice going back, yes. Do I need to date this? Do I need to do anything else to this?