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Patricia Maro DeHart

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Kelsey Duinkerken

Thomas Jefferson University

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November 25, 2015 – Patricia Maro DeHart (DN 1977) speaking with archivist Kelsey Duinkerken at Thomas Jefferson University in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

*Guide to abbreviations:*¹

KD: Kelsey Duinkerken

PD: Patricia DeHart

{CG} cough

{LG} laughter

{BR} breath

{NS} noise

- partial words

-- restarts

PD: So my name is Pat DeHart and I graduated from Jefferson's diploma school of nursing in nineteen seventy-seven. I was born in Philadelphia. I love Philadelphia, and um, so one of the reasons I picked Jefferson, it was in my favorite city that I had visited, and also, uh, I had a brother who went to medical school here. And my father also graduated from medical school in nineteen fifty six. So we had a Jefferson family tradition. In addition to that I am married, I have six kids, twelve grandchildren. We'll have fifteen by May. And I've had a just a terrific career since I attended um Jefferson. I felt that they really, really prepared me for the world and uh, for a different and diverse career. And so, anyway, that's just a little bit.

KD: Wonderful!

PD: Mm hm.

KD: OK. So could you tell me how you became interested in nursing and why you decided to come to Jefferson, maybe in a little more detail than you did?

PD: OK. So, I became interested in nursing when I was in high school in Cherry Hill New Jersey. I volunteered, uh, at a nursing home when I was fifteen in the summertime. And basically was just giving trays to patients and helping them open their containers. And I saw that, you know, I had um, a good connection with the patients. So the following summer I got employed as a nurses' aide. And I spent the summer taking care of patients who were in a nursing home and attending to their physical needs. And basically that's where you can really um ascertain whether or not you can take it. And um, be involved with, you know, blood and guts and, and dealing with difficult people who are sick. So, um, that spurred my interest. I started looking for nursing schools. Visited a couple of nursing schools in the Philadelphia area because I wanted to um, be in Philadelphia. And at the time, um, Jefferson's diploma, um, school was one of the top rated programs in the nation. So, I applied for early admission, received it, and I

¹ Transcription rules are based on the University of Pennsylvania's February 2011 Transcription Guidelines: http://www.ling.upenn.edu/~wlabov/L560/Transcription_guidelines_FAAV.pdf

really got to enjoy my senior year. Um, I have a, a long tradition of Jefferson graduates. My father graduated in nineteen fifty-six. First one in his family to graduate from college, and he became a family practitioner and he had a practice in Philadelphia and then moved over to Cherry Hill New Jersey, which is where I spent the bulk of my childhood. And then my brother went to, my older brother went to Bishop Eustace. After that Saint Jo's. And then he went to Thomas Jefferson Medical School and he became an internal medicine physician, um, with a practice located in the Cherry Hill Voorhees area.

KD: Alright. Wonderful. Could you tell me about your time at Jefferson as a student, what that was like?

PD: So, the -- how the program was structured is, it was a thirty-three month program. So you went through the summer with just four weeks off. And it was awesome. The first week that you were in school, um, they took you to what they call the lab. They taught you how to make a bed. And then, the very next week you were in the hospital, just making beds all day long 'til you got really great at it and it was that hands-on repetition, highly supervised environment, which I think really helped to make you feel confident right away um, in the hospital. Um, they told us at the beginning that probably only half of our class would graduate because of the rigors of the academics and also because, um, you know, a lot of people really hadn't had a clinical experience prior to coming to school so they weren't really set on whether or not it was for them. And that in fact did happen. And so we had um only two males in our entire class. Well we lived in the dormitory on um, at Eleventh and Walnut. And it was fabulous. It's, it was, it was just, uh, you just can't even picture it in this day and age, but um, uh, men were not allowed off the first floor. We had a house mother. She buzzed in. She would buzz us and tell us we had um, a guest in the lobby. And we had to come down to the lobby. But no one was allowed in our room except for move-in day and move-out day. No uh, guests of the opposite sex. We had uh, that afforded us a lot of time for studying and also for bonding with our, you know, friends, roommates. Um, one of the things that I really loved about it. First of all, um, the meals were catered by Stauffer.

KD: {LG}

PD: So I gained the freshmen fifteen in the first two months because the food was so good. So I really liked that. And um, I eventually I modified it and got the weight off. But we would, um, we had um, a big sister who was a -- um, there was just a three year program, so the third year, um, um, students, they were assigned to the first year students to pretty much show us the ropes and if we had problems and to mentor us. And I think that was also a critical part of the success. That if you got frustrated or you had trouble making in-roads, that your big sister would help you navigate through um, um, you know, both the hospital and, and the academic experience. So, we went to class and, um, at the time we always had uniforms. We had these little pink and white uniforms. And um, blue, um, sweaters. And for some of us who were lucky to purchase or get from our big sisters, we have some of the original wool capes. Um, um, that um, they discontinued when we got there, but our big sisters still had them. So um, that was, that was just a, a glimpse. We had a lot of activities. We had a little basketball team, we had cheerleaders. Um, we used to sunbathe on the roof of the building. Um we had um, just a lot of ceremonies there. We also had a kitchen on each floor or so. Um, gals would take their turns at making different, um, items. They would bake up there, they would learn to cook from their roommates, etcetera. And um, we had a, just a great time. And this is back in the day when there was no cellphones.

There was one phone on each floor. And so if your boyfriend called the floor you would be on the phone until someone nudged you to get off who was waiting for a call. So it was pretty much um, uh, a very good environment. A good way to learn to share and not be selfish. We had um, one bathtub in the entire floor.

KD: Wow.

PD: And then a shower room. Um, with um, toilets. And then each bedroom had, um, two nurses assigned, and um, of course, back in that time there was no bathroom linked to your bedroom at all. It was down the hall. You showered down the hall. So, um, we went thirty-three months straight except for four weeks off in the summertime and a week at Christmas, and a couple days at Easter, but it really afforded us a great opportunity to bond. I am in very, very close contact with several, I call them my hall mates. Um my roommate and I still really, really close. We're really enjoying watching our kids have grandchildren, and um, and her, her maiden name is Cooney, and I still call her Cooney after all these years. It's hard to believe I'm out of school thirty-nine years. So I've been a nurse for thirty-nine years. So the clinical experience was really great. Um, I recall even, um, when we went through the maternity, um, portion of our training, we were assigned um, four or five women to follow for their pregnancy. And then when they went into labor we went to the hospital and we were there for their delivery. So we got to see the patients, um, all the way through. Uh, a couple of times they had emergencies. Either snow emergencies or etcetera, where they didn't have enough staffing. Uh, they called over to our dorm, and we all got out of bed, got dressed and we went over to pinch hit, um, in the absence of, of staff, um, you know at working as nurses' aides. Not giving medications but certainly you know to, um, prop up the force. So, we had a lot of fun exploring the city.

KD: Mm hm.

PD: Um, P C P was a pharmacy school. Um, they had mostly male students and just a couple female students. Sort of the opposite of ours, and so they hosted a lot of parties for us, and we had a lot of fun. Uh, we also had a lot of off-site, um, places that we went to get, gain experience. We went to the Lutheran Home and also, um, P P C was Philadelphia Psychiatric Center. We all have a lot of really great stories there where um, you know, we spent a lot of time lighting cigarettes for patients, back in the day when um, that was thought to st- to um, help patients to relax. And, and, so um, some things stayed the same, but um, many things have changed over the years. But our nursing education has just been, was terrific here, and um, thanks to a bestowment of one of our nursing graduates, fifty percent of our tuition for all advanced degrees or certification is reimbursed by our school of nursing. And uh, that tradition has been passed down to our children and grand-children, and great-grandchildren, if they go to Jefferson Nursing School then they'll get fifty percent off their tuition as well. So it's, um, Jefferson's really encouraged us to, to move on, uh, and get advanced degrees

KD: Mm hm. Great. Do you have any other memories or thoughts about classes while you were at Jefferson? Uh, specific students or professors, or just what it was like being on campus, the culture of it?

PD: Well I think everybody was afraid of Miss Zarella. Even though I know she was a sweetheart underneath, but um, you know, we had um, several of our instructors who, um, we were really close

with. Um, Dee Heckenberger. I still, I sit on the board with her, to this day. Um, she was one of our instructors. Um, but um, Sue Soraruf, she was our pediatrics instructor. She made a huge impact on me personally. Took a real personal interest in the students and, in helping to shape who they were and where they wanted to be, um, afterwards. I think the instructors were very dedicated and, um, many of them stayed on faculty for a long time to come.

KD: Any other thoughts or memories before we move on from Jefferson?

PD: Um, Vivian Caceres is a O B G Y N instructor, and a couple of years ago I walked into my church and there she was! {LG}

KD: {LG}

PD: I had not seen her in over thirty years, but we recognized each other right away and that was, that's the kind of bonding that even students created with um, uh, their instructors. So it was really great. Um, we did not have any difficulty getting extra help from our instructors after hours. So that was, it was just a great experience. It was very inexpensive. The first year was only eight hundred dollars.

KD: That's crazy.

PD: And the alumni paid for our room and board. So, um, even at the time we graduated it was only twelve hundred dollars. And that was in nineteen seventy-seven. So, it was um, just a huge blessing to be able to come here.

KD: And so what was your first position once you graduated? Where did you work?

PD: So, uh when I graduated I went to West Jersey Hospital, which was in Voorhees New Jersey, and I took a, a med surge position because I felt I could gain the most experience there. I ended up moving more to um a post-op surgical wing of that unit because I really loved seeing the patients progress every day. They had a tube removed, they got a little better, and it was uh very encouraging um, to help them move along. I then took a position as an O B G Y N nurse, um, for um, a large group from Jefferson. Drs. Kendall, Goodner, and Grover. And I worked for them for eleven years while I raised my family, because I'd have off weekends and holidays. And from there I went to work with, for Bristol-Myers Squibb. They had a O B G Y N division and they hired me initially in sales, but um, through my twenty-four year career there I um, I obtained a business degree, and I became a trainer, an account executive, a government operations director. And so I was able to use both my business and my um nursing background in the pharmaceutical industry. Um, you know, just to direct physicians and health plans uh, to use the appropriate drug in the appropriate patient. So um, had a great career there, and a lot of development. And then when it was time to retire from working sixty hours a week I decided to go back to nursing. I had been in the diabetes franchise at Bristol-Myers Squibb, um, later in my career, and I thought that was a really good place that I could make an impact. Um, when I left Bristol-Myers Squibb, when I retired from Bristol-Myers Squibb I went on to, um, Virtua, and I was hired as a diabetes educator. And after seeing a thousand patient hours I um, took my C D E boards.

KD: And what are those?

PD: Certified Diabetes Educator Boards.

KD: OK.

PD: And I passed them and so um, I am a nurse and I am also a certified Diabetes Educator. And I see patients one-on-one in Camden, and um, encourage them to take better care of themselves. Mm hm. So, I, I think that Jefferson set the floor to aspire to get additional education and degrees and continue to use your talent to give back. And um, you know, based on the education that Jefferson provided for me I won, um, Outstanding Patient Experience while I was at Jefferson. I continued to win, um, awards at Bristol-Myers Squibb, and I think a lot of it was due to the um, organization, the critical thinking skills that Jefferson developed in me, and I now work for Virtua um, Center for Diabetes and Nutrition in Moorestown New Jersey and also in Camden. Last year I won nurse of the year for best nurse for Patient Experience. So, I really feel like Jefferson shaped my whole career and um, set the floor for success in my life.

KD: So you said you're still involved with Jefferson in some ways. Could you tell me more about that?

PD: So, Jefferson um, School of Nursing has one of the most unique alumni programs um, anywhere. First of all, we have a luncheon every year, and we have over a hundred and fifty, uh, alumni, that attend the annual luncheon the first Saturday in May. Um, every year. And so, the support from our nurses is really incredible. The program officially ended in nineteen eighty two, um, due to the fact that um, in order to achieve a more professional status we went to a baccalaureate program at Thomas Jefferson instead of a diploma program. But um, we have great support from our alumni. And we have an alumni board, and part of their responsibility, the alumni board, is to, um, take care of nurses who, from our group, who may have needs. So we financially support them if they have physical needs. And in addition to that we um, provide fifty percent tuition reimbursement for any course related to nursing that they take. And, so we encourage people to go back and, and not have, um, financial, be a barrier. I've been on the Board almost eight years, but I attended Board meetings prior to that, um, when I was able to with my positions, either my positions at Bristol-Myers or my nursing positions and, um, we get together, um, five times a year, um, as a Board, and vote on various issues. Monitor -- we have fiscal responsibility for our trust and also our operating cost and um, we provide a bulletin to all of our alumni every single year whether they come to the luncheon or not.

KD: Mm hm.

PD: That's mailed to them. It gives them an updated, um, picture of what has gone on in the past year, with many of our alumni who submit pictures and articles. And um, when they publish, when they're published or they receive awards we also update that if we get the information in time. So that's like a really nice part. One of the other things we do is we provide flowers for our, um, our senior nurses. And so, um, at um, Christmas time and their birthdays, um, our older senior nurses receive flowers from wherever they are. So as soon as our, their -- as soon as our, the families notify us that their parent has moved or, um, you know is living in a different location we adjust the address and we continue to provide contact updates and send them flowers letting them know that we um, are thinking about them. So what else is on your list?

KD: Um, has anybody else in your family become a nurse? Any children, or anybody else?

PD: I have, um, {CG}. So I have three children, three step-children, and nobody has gone into the nursing profession. We have teachers, police officers, um, business people, but no one thus far has gone into, um, nursing. But they all know how much I've enjoyed my career. And so now we're going to the next level. Fifteen grandkids by May and hopefully one of them, at least one of them would afford themselves to a, um, very generous program from um, our Jefferson Nursing School. Our alumni.

KD: Do you have any advice for current or future nursing students?

PD: I think the best advice whenever anybody approaches me to mentor them or to, um, talk to them about nursing is to, before they enroll in school, is to go and work in a, um, a nursing home. They're easy positions to get in the summertime, um, as a nursing aide. And you will know very, very quickly if you have the heart for this. Um, people who are sick are often cranky. They're not at their best. And it really gives you a snapshot very early on as to whether you're going to be able to handle and encourage grumpy people. And in addition to that, um, to see if you can, um, really hack some of the physical things that you have to encounter. And everything that you can really encounter in the first week in a nursing home, um, most of, some of the most unpleasant things that, that you encounter just in that one week. So it will really level set you as to whether this is a great fit for you.

KD: Mm hm. Alright. So before we move on to your scrapbook and your yearbook, do you have any other thoughts or memories or recollections, anything else you'd like to talk about that hasn't been brought up yet?

PD: Um, let me see, um. I think that we had, just a unique opportunity because we all lived together in a college-like environment, yet we also worked together. We had, you know, if you're in college, your roommate, um, may be pursuing a different venue. You come and go and see each other on a very transactional basis. We ate, we slept, we studied, and we worked together. So, um, we were fairly, um, inseparable over that time frame. So I think that was a unique experience that has really produced these long lasting friendships. Uh, um, some of my hall mates I talk to um, every week, certainly every month. We um, enjoyed hallmarks in each other's careers. We've been in each other's weddings and so, um, those types of tight bonding are just unusual in this day and age. And so, that brings back so many fond memories of, um, of, outings. We used to work at the theater, at the Forrest Theater. We would um, be the ushers just so that we could see the shows. We went to Rocking Horse at night after we studied to get ice cream, and uh, so we really benefited from being able to walk to a lot of the local places and, um, really enjoyed the city in addition to our nursing education.

KD: Mm hm.

PD: So I'd like to add that. So I brought with me today a couple of things.

KD: Alright.

PD: So first I brought my scrapbook. And, which is yellowed.

KD: Alright. So it starts out with your commencement program, it looks like.

PD: And, and we had, um, probably about eighty-eight graduates. We started out with about a hundred and fifty students in the program, but by the third year that's what we ended up with.

KD: Mm hm.

PD: And, um, Jefferson made it a big family event. We had a lot of invitations that um, people were allowed to come too. My maiden name was Patricia Ann Maro. And so.

KD: Oh, OK. So it looks like you won the Caroline B. Brown award.

PD: Yes.

KD: Very exciting.

PD: And that was for, um, outstanding ability at patient care. And I loved that award because that was, um, that was something I was good at. Hands-on care of the patient, encouraging them. And so, uh, I was good at that.

KD: Oh, that's adorable.

PD: The next page is a picture of my roommate Cooney and I in our -- her name is Eileen Cooney McDevitt, and um, she comes to the alumni meetings as well and we go out to lunch afterwards in the city. But she was a terrific roommate. And then I have pictures on our capping ceremony.

KD: Mm hm.

PD: Of all sets of roommates.

KD: Oh, really?

PD: Who were on my floor.

KD: That's fabulous!

PD: So these gals are all.

KD: It's great to see the pink and white uniforms and the caps as well.

PD: Yes. And um, you know, we used to, we used to have to soak our caps in, in starch.

KD: Mm. Mm hm.

PD: Stick a light bulb in the top to make it pop and the press um, the wings so that they would stay up and they would stay crisp. But when you were in the hospital everybody knew that that was a Jefferson cap. Nurses were always identified by where they went to school. Um, these are just some casual shots of some -- we used to have a lot of pizza parties.

KD: {LG}

PD: Uh, in the dorms. And um, this is Debra Mulnick. She used to make, bake goodies for us all the time. This is actually somebody even in the bathroom. And so, I had some other pictures in here too. Um, this is just, these are just pictures that my family took on our graduation, so that's what that is.

KD: Oh great.

PD: And then, let's see what we have over here. This is the picture of um, saluting. Um, we'd make an arch.

KD: Oh, the rose arch.

PD: We'd make a rose arch, and this was our graduating. This is the arch of roses. Everybody absolutely loves that.

KD: Mm hm.

PD: Um, and then these are just various friends and family members who came um, to the ceremony and we had a party, of course, afterwards.

KD: Of course.

PD: So it was really great. This here is a copy of my boards.

KD: Hm.

PD: Uh, in the past you took your boards and then you had to wait for two months for them to send you a letter in the mail. So you um, were working as a graduate nurse, but you weren't officially licensed yet so you were working under the auspice of another um, registered nurse. This is my.

KD: Nursing diploma.

PD: Nursing diploma from Jefferson that they award to you on June fourth of nineteen seventy-seven. OK. This was the, uh, line up for our.

KD: Oh, for commencement.

PD: For commencement. And um.

KD: It's amazing you still have that!

PD: And it's so interesting because everybody wanted to go to commencement back there. We were so proud we could not wait to go to commencement. And I know a lot of people skip their commencement now.

KD: Mm hm.

PD: Um, and that was the seating arrangement. And so that's a little picture of.

KD: Oh, that's great. I love it!

PD: The scrapbook that I've kept all these years. And the other thing I have is.

KD: Oh, it even has your name on it! The yearbook. That's great.

PD: Our yearbook from seventy-seven. You can see my kids got ahold of it when they were little.

KD: Mm hm. Well. That happens.

PD: But um, my roommate and a couple of my friends, we, you know, as soon as we got email that even helped to, um, further connect us. But, um, basically they went over the faculty, the specialties. We had some formals.

KD: OK.

PD: Um, and we had a lot of activities. Um, being in the city just afforded us so many opportunities. Um, to work here. Many of us worked at Rite Aid, up on Market Street.

KD: OK.

PD: Um, dusting shelves and restocking products. And of course, we had a lot of funny stories. You can see from this color picture, um, this was actually in the winter.

KD: Mm hm.

PD: And um, and this is a picture of our class. You can see back then people smoked.

KD: {LG}

PD: {LG} And they drank a lot.

KD: Yeah.

PD: Because they worked hard and they were blowing off steam, but um.

KD: Did you find that you had a lot of free time?

PD: No, we did not. We did not.

KD: OK. Because you had a lot of activities, but.

PD: We had a lot of activities, but they were, um, at night time, and they were after you um, finished your work and your clinicals.

KD: Mm hm.

PD: And um, if you, if you did -- you just had to stay with your clinical until, you know, you passed it. So, um, a lot of the staff that made an impact on us.

KD: Mm hm.

PD: Um, you know, are called out in these sections here. These team leaders, and um, they really helped to -- this is Susie Soraruf. Um, I, I remember she lived in Kennett Square and just what an impact that she made on me, in pediatrics. Um, even though I didn't end up there. This is Vivian Caceres. She's the lady that now goes to my church.

KD: Mm.

PD: She was my maternity and my obstetrics, um, instructor. And so, um, you know, these are our formals. And then, but more importantly, you can see here we had parties.

KD: Mm hm.

PD: This is us, this is the dorm room.

KD: Very fun.

PD: Just hanging there. We used to have the Frank Sinatra Christmas special on, um, from November first.

KD: {LG}

PD: {LG} 'Til December twenty fourth when we were allowed to go home. And um, so anyway, we had a basketball team, and we had cheerleaders, we had a yearbook staff, we had a student council.

KD: Were you involved in any of these groups?

PD: Um, not in the athletic part. But um, helping with the student council, helping with, um, some of the activities that we had. These were our house supervisors who were there around the clock. We were never unsupervised. Everything, you know, we were locked in.

KD: Do you remember which house supervisor was yours?

PD: Yeah, they were all ours.

KD: Oh, they all were. They rotated.

PD: Because they were there twenty-four hours.

KD: Sure.

PD: But, um, um, Mrs. Houle she used to announce over the speaker, um, "Miss Maro. You have a suitor in the house." {LG} And so everybody knew that your boyfriend was there. Um, we had a lot of fun on the roof. As soon as the summer broke out we got the baby oil out.

KD: Mm hm.

PD: And we all went up to the roof in our bikinis and we got a suntan up there. Um, these are other pictures of us, you know, doing our wash in the basement, and um, these are some class officers. And then these are our casual shots.

KD: Oh, this is wonderful!

PD: Yeah. So, um, they had asked us during our casual shots, you know, just to talk about our, and um, you know, some of the, some of the special moments that you had. And they photographed us with our roommate, which I thought was really a great idea.

KD: That is.

PD: Yeah. And by senior year, even if people didn't have like the perfect roommate situation, um, they either made an adjustment or they um, they started to get along with the roommate great enough that they, you know, became friends over time. So, um, I thought that was, you know, I thought that was a great part. And then uh, towards the end they just gave you um, you know, contact information and a lot of, just you know fun and casual pictures of things that we did over time. We used to sing into a spoon while the music was on in the hallway, etcetera. So, over time there were several of us that get together. Either at the shore or in Brigantine. Or, up um, in Philadelphia when we come up, we'll call, connect. And of course with cell phones and email we have um, even been in tighter contact with each other. So, it's really been , it's been great. It's like having -- it's my Jefferson family.

KD: Great. Any other thoughts or recollections?

PD: I would, I would really encourage people to come to Jefferson. I think it's fantastic. It's, you know, one of the top, um, universities for health care, and um, there are so many things -- the thing I love about nursing is, you know, I started out in med surge. I morphed my way into O B G Y N. I went into the business side of medicine, for many years. I went back into diabetes. And um, with the um, the talent that God gave me and also the expertise that Jefferson lent me I feel like I'm really using my talents to help people and to encourage them to take um, better care of their health. And it's amazing when you go to the reunions. There's nurses that are eighty and ninety and ninety-five and they're still driving and vigorous, and um, still walking about the city. So um, a lot of our nurses stayed here. We also have a very interesting group. It's the Harrisburg group. So we had a large, um, sending from Harrisburg over the years, that area. And so they have their own, um, satellite meeting and they meet every other month. They have a speaker and a luncheon and anybody who lives up in that area attends, and um, they all come down in a huge van for the luncheon every year. So it's really um, um, a very sweet connection, that um, that Jefferson afforded. Even just having a satellite, um, organization.

KD: Yeah.

PD: So that's pretty much it.

KD: OK. Well thank you so much for sharing and thank you for bringing these. This is so great to see.

[End of recording]