

INTERVIEWER: So this interview is between Beth Baugus-WellMeier and myself, Laura Madden. Today is Monday, June 13<sup>th</sup>, 2016, and we're meeting at Piedmont College in Beth's office to discuss Beth's memories surrounding her time as a student at Georgia Baptist Hospital School of Nursing in Atlanta Georgia. Okay, so the first question is, describe the thought process that you went through in your decision to become a nurse.

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: Honest to God, um, I had worked as a nurse's aide at Georgia Baptist when I was in high school. So my mom had graduated from Georgia Baptist, and she was actually a head nurse on one of the floors there. She was actually friends with, like, Joanna Greene.

INTERVIEWER: Where were you from originally?

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: Decatur.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, so close by.

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: When I'm getting ready to graduate from high school I'm like, I don't know what I'm going to do. I thought my best friend and I were going to travel to California together, and Mom said, No, you're not. You're going to school, and you're going to go to nursing school. If you don't like it you may transfer, but you will not quit." And so she got the application for Georgia Baptist and I filled it out and I got accepted, and I lived there the first year.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, so you weren't a commuter the whole time.

BETH BAUGUS-WELLEMIER: I lived in the dorm the first year, with Jane Eckert.

INTERVIEWER: Oh okay. I remember Jane. I do remember Jane. She's fun.

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: She was fun. We were very, very different but she was fun. She was smart as a whip.

INTERVIEWER: So you lived in the dorm. So what made you decide to commute after that first year?

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: Um... this is a hard truth but... that last Fundamentals class I had Ann Patterson as a Fundamentals instructor. We had this huge Care Plan we were supposed to do, with all the rationales and everything. I spent one night doing it. So, I failed it, and so I failed the class. So I laid out for six months, and when I went back I stayed at home because emotionally it was hard living in the dorm, but fun, but very hard. And

so it was better for me to stay at home, and I was actually a better student, once I went back. More mature, more focused, and I wasn't sneaking out of the dorm at night, going to Georgia Tech. [laughs]

INTERVIEWER: Had that been a problem before?

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: Yeah, and Krispy Kreme down there on Ponce de Leon.

INTERVIEWER: It had some good proximity to a lot of things.

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: Yeah, it did.

INTERVIEWER: So how did you – other than, you were able to focus better at home – how did you feel - were there differences in being a commuter as being a living in the dorm student?

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: When you're in the dorm, you're much more connected. You're more connected with all the classes, the students and all the classes, and you're more connected to the hospital because you can go over and research patients at any time. Um, it was just an easy way to get things. As a commuter, you had the commuter room on the second floor and... you just had those students. And you had to be more focused and more organized because you didn't want to be driving back and forth from Decatur, so you had to. I spent a lot of time, they had this small desk in the commuter room, or small table, and the coke machine, and we all spent a lot of time around that, studying and talking and –

INTERVIEWER: You probably bonded with those students.

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: Yeah, I actually did. I actually bonded better with them than I did with some of the people on the floor. I don't know why, but I did.

INTERVIEWER: So, in that commuter room it was all classes, right? It wasn't just your class, you had juniors and seniors?

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: Everybody.

INTERVIEWER: Did that help you, do you think? Did the juniors and seniors provide you with some insight?

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: I don't remember that, I remember just... more of a consoling kind of thing. Like when things would not be good just – yeah, been there, done that, it'll be okay, that kind of thing. It was... like when I lived in the dorm, we would get together

and study. But the commuter room – you did study, but you were more independent, but you had people coming in and out, and they could commiserate with whatever was going on. As a commuter you didn't go up into the dorm.

INTERVIEWER: Not at all?

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: No. Not really. Because, like, I had friends that I had – like with Jane, and – did you know Debbie Anderson, and Kim Kelly?

INTERVIEWER: I know Kim Kelly.

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: Kim and I went to high school together, too, and they were now a year ahead of me. So I was a little embarrassed, but at the same time I'd made friends in my class, but you just didn't go up there. You didn't belong up there.

INTERVIEWER: Right. That's sad, that it was almost like two different –

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: It was two different groups, but once you're on clinical, in class, you didn't have that. But once class was over, once clinical was over, you had that separation. Because when I lived in the dorm, we'd run off of clinical and go upstairs to the TV and watch General Hospital [laughs].

INTERVIEWER: I remember doing that, yes.

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: So we, you know that was just part of it. So yeah, it was a lot of fun.

INTERVIEWER: How was it, though, coming back into a new class?

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: Um, the teachers made it easier. I don't remember if Ann Patterson was – she was still there. She was very supportive.

INTERVIEWER: She left during my senior year. She left in eighty or eighty-one.

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: Yeah, she was very, very supportive. Then Joanna Greene was friends with my mom, and she was very supportive. Sarah Huddleston? Sarah and my mom were very good friends. They had gone to school together at Georgia Baptist.

INTERVIEWER: What year did your mother graduate?

BETH BAUGUS-WELLEMEIR: Fifty-two. Actually, I wear her pin.

INTERVIEWER: Oh that's her pin that you wear. I thought it was, that was yours, but –

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: No, it's hers. I have my pin on my badge that I wear at the hospital.

INTERVIEWER: I think that's so nice that you have her pin.

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: I love this pin. The teachers made it, they never made me feel like I was just a screw-up, you know, they were very good.

INTERVIEWER: It's nice that they had the two classes. Did you start in the June class?

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: I started in the June class and I graduated in the March class.

INTERVIEWER: So it's nice that they had that, so you could repeat –

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: Yeah I only had – I laid out six months, but that was a good six months for me. It was very eye-opening and growing, for me.

INTERVIEWER: The next question, you kind of already answered, is why did you choose to attend GBH?

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: Well, Mom had a lot to do with it, but one of my best friends went to Crawford Long at the same time, and I had friends... I don't think Piedmont was still going then, but I had friends that –

INTERVIEWER: They were about to close.

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: I think because Georgia Baptist kind of felt like home? Because I had grown up there. I was born there, and then –

INTERVIEWER: Oh my goodness –

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: Mom was always working there so we would go after church to have lunch with her on Sundays when she was working. And then I was a nurse's aide there so I – it was a very small community, and I just felt part of it.

INTERVIEWER: So did you consider any other programs, like a baccalaureate –

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: I did. I actually applied to Texas Women's and was accepted, but the truth was, going from Decatur to Atlanta was hard enough. I can't imagine going to Texas. I don't think I would have survived that.

INTERVIEWER: You know back then there was a push then for baccalaureate degrees, just as it is now, so were you aware of that? Did that have any bearing?

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: They talked about it when I was in nursing school. I never thought about it going in because all the nurses I knew were Georgia Baptist nurses or Grady nurses, or Crawford Long nurses. That's just all you had in the area. They talked about it when I was in school and how – they kept saying, you know, that by the 80s it was going to be the entry level, and it just never came to pass and things changed. It never bothered me to not get my bachelor's. Um, I had management positions. I had teaching positions. I was a clinical expert – due to experience. And it never – I never even, though Mom kept saying you've got to go back to school. You've got to go back to school. I never did. Then when I did go back to school, I was fifty, and I did an RN (registered nurse) to MSN (Master of Science in Nursing) bridge.

INTERVIEWER: Oh you did, okay. So that's from Walden.

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: Yeah. I just did not see the point in going bachelors and then master's. Had I quit halfway through I would've had nothing.

INTERVIEWER: Right. That's the problem with those programs.

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: But it was good and I liked the program a lot. The way they did the classes, it was good for me.

INTERVIEWER: Explain how your classes and your clinical experience were structured when you were at Georgia Baptist.

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: The way I remember them, and you may be able to help me with this –

INTERVIEWER: I don't know [laughs].

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: - is we had clinical. You didn't have that much clinical the first semester. You had lab stuff with bed-making, all of vital signs, but once you started in clinical . . . if I remember correctly it was three 8 hour clinical days. Was that right?

INTERVIEWER: Uh huh, and then you had –

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: You had class on Mondays and Fridays –

INTERVIEWER: And clinical Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday –

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: Yeah. Monday was a long day in class, and Friday,  
I think you got out by like 1 or 2.

INTERVIEWER: But nobody was there [laughs].

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: No. [laughs]

INTERVIEWER: Was that the way it was in your class?

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: Yeah. Once it was out, you were gone.

INTERVIEWER: In my class, people didn't even come for the  
mornings sometimes.

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: No, I did not miss class.

INTERVIEWER: Oh good. Okay.

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: I missed class one time as a freshman. I was living  
in the dorm, and – what was her name. Was it Linda Johns, she was the school nurse?

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh, yeah.

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: She actually came looking for me. It was like, “are  
you sick?” I didn't feel good, yeah. She goes, “well you need to come see me if you're going to  
miss class.” I never missed class after that.

INTERVIEWER: Maybe it was, if they had a Friday afternoon– I  
know there were a lot of times that – my roommate and I were – it was like a mass exodus Friday  
around noonish –

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: Well there was – once class was out, I remember  
because not all of us had cars, but when I lived there I would go sit out front on the steps and  
wait for my mother or father to come get me. It was like, you've got to come get me on your  
lunch hour. Don't leave me here. I never stayed on the weekends.

INTERVIEWER: Never? Even when you lived in the dorm you never  
stayed?

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: Never stayed on the weekends. It was depressing. I stayed one Friday evening because Debbie Anderson and I did something, but coming back to that dorm was very depressing. Did you live in the dorm?

INTERVIEWER: I did. Well, I was from Florida. So I never went home, except on breaks. I was there all weekend.

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: I thought it was depressing.

INTERVIEWER: It was. It was quiet though, and I got a lot of studying done, and I worked as a tech.

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: I never worked in nursing school. I am very grateful to my parents for that, because I don't know how students do that.

INTERVIEWER: It's hard. It's how I survived. That's how I bought groceries. [laughs]

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: God, I remember eating downstairs in the cafeteria. I think that's where we learned how to eat fast.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. Do you still eat fast?

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: Yes.

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: Very fast. I'm sitting there waiting for my husband, always. Yeah because you have to run off of the floor, run to the cafeteria, and get back to the floor in time. They were – you had to be punctual.

INTERVIEWER: Yes, you did.

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: But yeah, I thought it was great. I had cried a lot there. But looking back on it I have – I thought it was a great education, and I don't think, I don't know... nursing's changed. I still believe in the basic premise of nursing, and Virginia Henderson, you know. That's what it felt like we learned, was how to take care of people.

INTERVIEWER: The caring aspect of it, and the fundamentals of it.

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: That's why I think I like critical care. Though you have a lot of technology, I'm still there with my patient. I'm at the bedside more than I'm not at the bedside, and I'm taking care of the family, and . . . that's one of those things you only get with experience. I do think I got a lot of great experience at Georgia Baptist.

INTERVIEWER: All right, so . . . how about the hierarchy among the students?

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: What impacted me was going from one level to the next. It's like when you got your blue stripe, and your black band. Those were big deals.

INTERVIEWER: How did your class get their blue stripes?

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: My blue stripes – I want to say it was just at a dinner. I don't think it was a big – I think it was a dinner, if I remember correctly, but I don't remember that one as much as I do the black band, because that was a big formal dinner. I had a really good friend of mine from high school that had – was going to the University of Texas, and I called him and asked him to come back to town. We never dated. We were just good friends. He came back to be my date.

INTERVIEWER: Well, that was nice.

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: Yeah. So it was a lot of fun. It was a big deal.

INTERVIEWER: It was a big deal. Ours was at the Biltmore.

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: I can't remember. It was downtown. I just can't remember where it was. But yeah, and capping was a big deal.

INTERVIEWER: Where was your capping?

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: At the church. At, yeah, we wouldn't have done it at a Catholic church.

INTERVIEWER: It was usually at – ours was at Decatur, First Baptist Decatur – at Wieuca Road, or Second Ponce –

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: I think it was First Baptist over there on Peachtree, going towards – I think it was –

INTERVIEWER: Did it have orange carpet?

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: I can't remember that.

INTERVIEWER: The only reason I remember that is because that's where I got married and I didn't want to get married in the sanctuary because it had orange carpeting [laughs].



BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: That's funny.

INTERVIEWER: Talk about capping. What was so special?

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: Just getting the cap. I still love my cap. I mean, I had my cap there. I still love it.

INTERVIEWER: Do you miss wearing it?

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: No, but I was proud when I wore it. I was very proud to have it. When we graduated, you know you got the pearl button instead of the button from your school uniform.

INTERVIEWER: I had forgotten about that.

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: Yeah, we had to put the buttons on. Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: I'd forgotten. I still have mine but it has – you're right, it does have the button from the uniform. I have the one with the pearl button.

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: Yeah. I have -

INTERVIEWER: I have it at home, but the other one is in my office

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: I used to complain to my mother all the time about having to put my buttons on it. She goes, "we had to pleat ours and put the belt around it, so shut up." It's like, okay.

INTERVIEWER: - always had it worse –

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: Yes, always had it worse. Yeah and she was like, "and we had to staff the hospital at night." Well I don't doubt that. We provided a lot of free labor for that hospital.

INTERVIEWER: We did. Yes, we did. Okay, so describe how the instructors at GBH (Georgia Baptist Hospital) facilitated your acquisition of nursing knowledge and skills.

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: They led by example. They were all good clinically. I was always afraid of not being able to answer their questions. I always went into clinical very well prepared. It wasn't just having an index card of medicines. I knew what my patient took, and I knew what it was and the side effects and everything. I had to have it in my head. You did have to know it. You had to know the diagnosis. You had to be able to talk

about the lab work that went with it. They just – they sort of exemplified what nursing was, or is. I just remember them always there and showing... but –

INTERVIEWER: You know they weren't always there but it seemed like they were.

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: They were always on the floor.

INTERVIEWER: They were.

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: They were always – almost like they were watching over you. God forbid if you didn't do it right. They always could catch you. I don't know why. But – you just felt secure, but you had to know it. There was no faking it with them. None at all. They were good, though, I mean, and they were kind, like Shirley Rawlins? She was great. Is she still there?

INTERVIEWER: She still does clinical.

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: Oh does she really?! And Joanna Greene– I guess she retired?

INTERVIEWER: Dr. Gunby and I were just talking about her, because she graduated in '71. Did you realize that? Didn't she seem so much older?

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: She did.

INTERVIEWER: She graduated in '71 and she said she still works for Atlanta Medical Center in, I want to say, quality assurance. She hasn't been able to contact her in a while.

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: Wow. She was... those are two I remember, and Ann Patterson.

INTERVIEWER: I saw her not too long ago.

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: I remember, Dr. Gunby was working on her master's, when I was there. I remember her I guess it was fundamentals. She did a lecture on pain, and I still remember that. She was... she was good.

INTERVIEWER: She was in a motorcycle accident.

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: I read about that.

INTERVIEWER: And her pain lecture is even more amazing because she's experienced it.

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: Yeah, I remember her doing that, and her talking about that was her master's thesis.

INTERVIEWER: And her dissertation –

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: I actually wrote about her, my first year working on my master's, as someone who . . .

INTERVIEWER: I do the same thing.

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: This is weird [tearing up].

INTERVIEWER: That's okay, no, listen. I do the same thing. I'm worried that I'm not going to be able to present this whole dissertation because I'm going to cry through the whole thing.

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: But I actually wrote about her because she's – even then, she – has had an impact on all of us. Oh well. OK.

INTERVIEWER: So tell me – so what about some of the specialty classes, like Peds–

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: Oh my God. Psych. Oh my god. Jean Remy was my –

INTERVIEWER: I had her too –

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: Oh my God. I hated – I loved her. She was so good –

INTERVIEWER: At Georgia (Regional) Mental Health Institute –

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: Oh yes. My mother worked out there at the time. She had left Georgia Baptist for a while and she worked on the medical unit of that hospital. We worked on the – I think it was the DeKalb Clayton unit, and the first day I walked in, I got in this little hallway that the nurses' station was here, and there was a locked door. I get up against this locked door and this big old guy with organic brain syndrome comes up and starts patting my hair, and talking, "How pretty." That door opened, and I left. I had driven there, because we didn't live far from there and I had an old green Maverick. I got in that car and I drove home.

Mom happened to be home that day. I told her I'm quitting nursing school. I can't do it. That's horrible. I'm quitting. Jean Remy followed me.

INTERVIEWER: She did?

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: She followed me home. It must have been the end of the day because she couldn't have left other students. Maybe she didn't follow me, but she came to my home that afternoon, and talked to my mother, and you know called me down and - it was fine after that. I hated that. Hated that class.

INTERVIEWER: You were locked in there?

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: It was just a hallway. It was a short little hallway where the locked door, and then you walked into the nurse's station. He just happened to get between me and the nurse's station. So yeah, I remember that.

I remember playing volleyball with, you know, a lot of schizophrenics. That was very interesting. I remember doing Peds (pediatrics) at Scottish Rite. I had worked as a nurse's aide at the old Scottish Rite in Decatur when it was a one floor building. You had the girls' ward and a boys' ward. They were open wards with, like, maybe twenty beds. You had children in the body cast, and you would have to flip them –

INTERVIEWER: For the scoliosis, or were they –

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: They were in body casts from, like, shoulders to mid thigh with the cutout for their genitalia. It may have been for scoliosis. It was an orthopedic hospital, and so I worked there as a nurse's aide. Then when I was a nursing student went to the brand new Scottish Rite over there near Northside.

So, I hated Peds actually. I didn't like Peds at all. Psych I didn't like. I loved med-surg, except for neuro and ortho. Those were not fun. I didn't like those at all.

INTERVIEWER: How about Grady. Did you have any clinical at Grady?

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: Yes, the SICU (surgical intensive care unit), and their surgical ICU (intensive care unit). Yeah, so it was that last rotation, the last advanced med-surg class. Then I went to Grady; rode an ambulance with Grady.

INTERVIEWER: How'd you like that?

INTERVIEWER: Very eye-opening because I was so young and so naïve, and the places you went into . . . the paramedics were – or whatever they were, I guess they were paramedics – they were very protective, very helpful. I could never have worked in the SICU there. I never could have worked at Grady. It was a little too – basic, in your face. It was just – there was nothing pretty about it. It was just an old hospital.

Did you do labor and delivery at Grady?

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: No, I did labor and delivery at Georgia Baptist. My first delivery, the nurse had put me in the room with this mother, and it was like her fifth child. The nurses were coming right back. They went to do something. But the woman’s like, “Oh my God!” – and I look down and here is the head. All I could do was scream. I didn’t know what to do. So all I remember is yelling for somebody to come help, ‘cause I couldn’t have done anything. The baby would’ve ended up on the floor.

INTERVIEWER: I had a very similar experience. I don’t know where the nurses were-

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: They didn’t leave but for a moment but it was just –

INTERVIEWER: At that moment –

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: It felt like forever. That was at Georgia Baptist. I didn’t do . . . I did the normal nursery at Georgia Baptist. Almost everything was at Georgia Baptist.

INTERVIEWER: How did you feel about that? Do you think you’d have gotten a better experience if you’d gone other places?

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: No. I think Georgia Baptist was big enough and diverse enough that you got a lot of experience. The only thing, looking back, is that you talk to, like Maria Fisk. I loved Maria Fisk. She worked at Georgia Baptist not too long after she got out of school. She had a bachelor’s degree and they appealed to her, self, you know, ego, and made her a head nurse of a unit, when she had like a year’s experience. But looking back on Georgia Baptist, there was a lot of inbreeding. Everybody was a Georgia Baptist grad, the head nurses, the Director of Nursing, the Nursing Supervisor – everybody was a Georgia Baptist grad. But they were damn good nurses. I remember – oh it’s just been 10, 15 years ago – I was taking care of a patient here at Athens Regional and the husband of the patient came in and he was a retired physician from Atlanta, and I said, “oh yeah, I used to work there.” He goes, “Where?” I said, “Georgia Baptist.” He goes, “Where’d you go to school?” I said, “Georgia Baptist.” He goes, “My wife went to school there. There’s not a better nurse around than a Georgia Baptist

grad.” I was like, yeah. When he left, what did the wife say? She was laughing and she said something about Georgia Baptist had the reputation of having such wonderful, pure nurses, and she goes, “And that really wasn’t true!” [laughs]. Talking about how nurses could party. We did have an excellent reputation. I met many physicians who were like, “A Georgia Baptist grad can handle anything.” We were presented with everything, and we did handle it.

I look back on that education as great. It really was. It was a lot of fun, a lot of heartache. I remember a lot of laughing that turned into tears, because that was the hysteria building, but it was still good.

INTERVIEWER: What events do you remember, any events occurring while you were in school at Georgia Baptist that helped make you a better nurse?

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: No, not particularly – I mean it wasn’t like I had someone die in the family or that made me see things differently. It was more... My mother had a huge influence on me, and she held me to a higher standard. I don’t remember anything really specific.

INTERVIEWER: Describe any extracurricular activities you were involved in while you were at Georgia Baptist which contributed to your knowledge development as a nurse. [Pause]. It was probably hard as a commuter.

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: Well, I’ll be real – I enjoyed – I never have been one for extracurricular, and I had friends that were at Crawford Long. So I spent a lot of time over there which was in walking distance of Georgia Tech, so we... I knew how to have a good time. So that was my answer.

INTERVIEWER: That’s your answer.

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: I have looked back at times and thought I wish I had done that. I wish I had taken advantage a little bit more of what was there. I did not. But I had a good time. I had a real good time.

INTERVIEWER: Let’s see, we already talked about this, but what experiences do you remember occurring while you were there that contributed to your enjoyment of your time at Georgia Baptist?

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: Um, just the friends. The people there... the people are really what make things. You know, it’s like in my career now, I have two jobs that I love, but it’s because of the people. School was the same way. It’s because of the people, and the ability to connect with those individuals. It was just... looking back on it, I don’t know, I – it

was just a lot of fun. It was hard work. You studied all the time. But it was fun. I didn't think it at the time.

INTERVIEWER: No. Nobody does.

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: But you know, I do remember when I was – this was just very memorable. When I lived in the dorm we had someone that was setting fires. You know, at the long end of the hall – I lived on the short end of the hall, and on the long end of the hall there was a laundry room and she – cause it was all girls up there – she would pile up clothes and usually an iron, and so we would have smoke filling the hallways –

INTERVIEWER: - and ruin those clothes –

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: Yeah. Ruin the clothes – but then all the fire alarms would go off and we would have to evacuate, and it was like midnight, 1 a.m., you had class the next morning and so you're hanging out in your pajamas out on, what, Ponce de Leon? No, Boulevard, with all these firemen around. It was never flames, it was always just smoke, but I think she did it two or three times before she got caught. She was not really a bad person. It was just maybe her not being able to cope and wanting to get out.

INTERVIEWER: You've already done a little bit of this. Describe some of the struggles you encountered while at GBH?

BETH BAUGUS--WELLMEIER: No, I mean, I can't think of anything else.

INTERVIEWER: Tell me about your education and your career after graduating?

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: I went straight to work at Georgia Baptist, in the surgical intensive care unit. I worked there for a year. I met a friend who graduated about the same time I did, from Brenau, and she started talking about travel nursing. So we traveled together to Hawaii, and lived there for a while, and then came back. I was able to work part-time back in the surgical ICU. Then I went to California.

INTERVIEWER: What years did you, after you came back?

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: I worked there – I graduated in '80 and I started working there, and I did not leave until '88. But I was part-time. But I was actually – they appealed to my ego also after I came back from California and got married and I was the head nurse of the surgical ICU, which was the hardest job I've ever had.

INTERVIEWER: I worked in the CCU (coronary care unit), which was right next door. Started there in '82. I graduated in '81, then I went home and lived in Florida and came back and worked, so we worked there at the same time.

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: Yeah, did you know Nelda Floyd?

INTERVIEWER: The name's really familiar.

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: She was the head nurse before me and – oh God there was a friend, I'm terrible with names – but I was friends with the head nurse of the CCU then [skip] because I was head nurse of the surgical ICU. I can't remember her name.

INTERVIEWER: When I started it was a guy, Terry. Then there was a woman.

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: She was the first person I ever met that had a CCRN (Critical Care Registered Nurse).

INTERVIEWER: That right? I remember when they hired Gwen Bramlett. Remember Gwen?

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: Actually yes. Gwen Bramlett went back and got her master's degree –

INTERVIEWER: Yeah she was the first one that I had ever known that had a master's degree.

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: Yeah, and she ended up the educator at Athens Regional for about a year.

INTERVIEWER: She passed away, didn't she?

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: I didn't know that. Did you know Janet Fargo?

INTERVIEWER: That name's familiar.

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: Actually, she may have taught at Georgia Baptist for a while. She was my night charge nurse. She had Raynaud's real bad, and ended up progressing to scleroderma, and then died, but she went back and got her master's. I thought she taught at Georgia Baptist for a while, but then that would have been probably in the late '80s, early '90s.



INTERVIEWER: That's interesting. So you worked there then you came here?

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: Then I came here. I worked at the VA (Veteran's Administration) or a while, and then I came here to Athens, worked through an agency at Athens Regional, and then I took a position as the Assistant Unit Director of the Neuro ICU –

INTERVIEWER: Which you don't like neuro!

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: No. I lasted a year. But it was a great place and I sort of knew what was happening, and it was a good positioning. They were starting an open heart program, and I became the first unit director of that program. I worked with Vince Mathey and was over that unit for about 12, 13 years. Had a great unit. It was a great, um – we were in the top one hundred hospitals for a few years running. It was awesome. Then I left that and started working weekends, and I've worked weekends ever since.

INTERVIEWER: What made you decide to go back to school?

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: I did go back to school and got my master's, and my parents were living with us at the time, and Mama kept saying, "What are you going to do? You gotta – are you gonna do something with this?" I said, "Yeah, yeah I think, and maybe I'll get a job in the education department at Regional, or . . ." She said, "Well, you know, think about it." Then I had to do this project for one of my professors and I thought you know what, I'm going to submit that. Part of it was with a résumé . . . I submitted it to Linda Scott and I got the job. I think I was lucky getting that job, because . . .

INTERVIEWER: This job?

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: This job. I just - I think it was the right place at the right time because now when they are looking for positions it's – they're really stressing DNP, Ph.D. and I'm like there's no way – I'm 58 years old. I am not going back to school.

INTERVIEWER: You can stay here until you retire.

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: I hope.

INTERVIEWER: The whole decade of the seventies – I don't know if you remember when the Vietnam War ended in '73 and there were all the gas wars and the stagflation. The economy was bad. Politics, there was Nixon's resignation and then we had Carter. I think we had Ford, and then Carter. There was a lot of kind of political and economic

upheaval during that time. Did any of that influence you becoming a nurse, or you going to Georgia Baptist, or jobs after graduation?

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: I don't think I knew enough for it to affect me. That's one thing my mom said was – when I couldn't decide and she goes, "Well you're going to nursing school. If you don't like it you can transfer." But – that whole thing – but she said, "You will always be able to take care of yourself, regardless". Still, to this day, I love nursing and I'm glad I'm a nurse. I respect nursing, but the truth is, there's a lot of self-preservation. You know, nursing does allow you to take care of yourself and your family. You're not dependent on anybody else. I've been married for 36 years.

INTERVIEWER: Tell me how the education that you received at Georgia Baptist facilitated your transition into nursing practice.

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: Yeah, I do feel like that when I graduated I actually could have gone onto any floor and functioned at Georgia Baptist, with minimal orientation. I could have taken care of patients with minimal supervision. I went to the surgical ICU, and thank goodness they had a great critical care program. I think I was prepared. It was not on-the-job training. I knew what I was doing, when I got out of school . . .

Now students don't. They need a lot of help when they get out of school. I have issues with that. They say simulation is good and I'm old school, but you have to do what's available, and you don't have the hospitals available. There's a lot of competition and it's hard. So you have to make the best of other situations, and simulation's one of them. I'm just not a good simulation instructor. I'm going to have to learn.

INTERVIEWER: You need a niche, that's for sure.

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: Norman's [Norman Olsen, co-worker at Piedmont College] great at it. I wish we could clone more Normans.

I think nursing is a practice profession. It requires doing it, to really learning it. It requires learning how to really touch people and get in their space and be comfortable with it, and make them comfortable with what you're doing, and you can't teach that on a dummy.

INTERVIEWER: You need human interaction.

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: I had a student – I still precept for other schools at Regional, on the weekends – and I had a student who was graduating, from Brenau, and . . . she had, this was her senior practicum, so she was going to be with me. She had a lot of hours she had to do, like three hundred and something. But – she had never touched a patient.

All of her clinical had been either simulation or observation, so . . . and we ended up – she ended up going very far, with me teaching her, but I even had to teach her how to touch people. It was . . . very eye opening, how observation just doesn't cut it. Simulation doesn't cut it.

INTERVIEWER: That's one of the strengths I think, that –

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: All those programs, you know, a diploma program. It focused on nursing. We were lucky in that we had a lot of the core, too. We had good, strong college courses that backed us up.

INTERVIEWER: We did. We didn't have enough to get that degree.

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: No, and these kids are getting a degree in, what, eight semesters? We were in school, what, twelve quarters, and it was all nursing? We got a damn good education.

INTERVIEWER: Yes we did.

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: Looking back on it, it's much more than I probably would have told you at the time.

INTERVIEWER: It's easier looking back on it.

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: Because you do remember the good times. You really do. I just wish I remembered the names of people. There are some people I still remember. There's um . . . other, I'm glad they were there.

INTERVIEWER: I don't even remember Freshman Chemistry, so my classmates we had lunch last summer, and they were talking about it.

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: I remember that class [freshman chemistry].

INTERVIEWER: - just about killed them, and I thought, I don't remember taking Freshman Chemistry.

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: We had two Chemistry classes.

INTERVIEWER: Apparently we did.

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: We had an organic and an inorganic. Organic Chemistry, for some reason I rocked with that. Inorganic Chemistry was hard as heck for me. I don't remember her name, but I remember that class, and I remember Miss Tribble was [pause] –

INTERVIEWER: Miss Tribble was anatomy.

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: Anatomy.

INTERVIEWER: Anatomy and microbiology.

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: Doing that cow's heart and what was that other thing we did. Was it a cat?

INTERVIEWER: I think it was a cat, yeah because one of my roommates we called her Josie, Josie and the pussycats.

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: For me it was Jane Eckert and Debbie Anderson and Beth Baugus, so ours was ABE.

INTERVIEWER: "A-B-E" that's cute.

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: Remember that Sociology teacher?

INTERVIEWER: Mrs. Poole?

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: Yes. She was nice. That religion teacher who wore the orthopedic shoes?

INTERVIEWER: Mrs. Duvall? She had polio.

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: Oh did she? OK. I didn't notice her walking differently.

INTERVIEWER: It was because she had the shoes. One was...

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: Built up? I never noticed that. Um, she was an interesting person- Then we had counselor, she had big hair.

INTERVIEWER: Mrs. Trueblood.

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: Yeah. I remember what they looked like.

INTERVIEWER: They always looked perfect.

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: Always. Very small. Everything was in place. Yeah. Who was our English teacher?

INTERVIEWER: Miss Mitchell?

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: I thought she was mean. Maybe not. Maybe just to me.

INTERVIEWER: I think there would be others who might say that.

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: She was tough. I'll be honest with you, it wasn't until I took two more advanced English's that I learned how to write.

INTERVIEWER: I don't remember that. You remember the pharmacology?

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: Yeah. He spent all the time and he didn't like M&M's. He didn't let his children eat M&M's because they looked like pills and he didn't want his children to be thinking it was OK to eat pills.

INTERVIEWER: I don't remember that.

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: He wore his lab coat and he always spit.

INTERVIEWER: He was from the Mercer pharmacy school.

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: - spit. Yeah we had that chaplain school across the street, too.

INTERVIEWER: We did the some kind of classes... ethics classes?

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: Maybe... I liked them. They were very down to earth. Nice people. It was fun.

INTERVIEWER: That's the end of my questions. Do you have anything else you want to say?

BETH BAUGUS-WELLMEIER: I can't think of anything. Those were good questions.