

INTERVIEWER: So this interview is between Marcia Hammock Hancock and myself, Laura Madden. Today is Wednesday, June 22nd, 2016, and we're meeting in my office in the college of nursing, and we're discussing Marcia's memories surrounding her time as a student at Georgia Baptist Hospital's School of Nursing in Atlanta Georgia. Okay, so the first question is describe the thought process that went into your decision to become a nurse.

MARCIA HAMMOCK HANCOCK: I had an aunt who graduated from Grady. I knew that she was a nurse. Somehow, as I'm growing up, I just decided that's what I wanted to be. I always tell patients when they asked me why I became a nurse, I'd say, "The two things that I really wanted to do in life were either to be a ballerina or a nurse," and I said, "Look at me, you can tell why I didn't become the ballerina." Then I jokingly say, "I have had to be in positions that ballerinas would envy" – you know in my practice. But I've always wanted it. I never look back when I made the decision to be a nurse. It was just a passion. It's still a passion for me.

INTERVIEWER: That's awesome. So why did you choose to go to Georgia Baptist?

MARCIA HAMMOCK HANCOCK: I applied at Piedmont and Baptist.

INTERVIEWER: So you were from the Atlanta area?

MARCIA HAMMOCK HANCOCK: Yes. Baptist had a good reputation. Piedmont had a good reputation too, but I got the feeling that – well because Baptist was a Baptist facility, my mother trusted it more. When we'd be talking about options like Grady, she knew that we had the bridge to go across or the tunnel, you know, and so she was like, "You need to do that, if you're going to be downtown Atlanta."

INTERVIEWER: She thought it would be safer for you?

MARCIA HAMMOCK HANCOCK: But I interviewed at Piedmont and got accepted, but the feel wasn't like it was at Baptist. I just felt like it was the right place. Everybody has always told me if you're a Baptist graduate you're ready to be a nurse when you get out. From the minute I was accepted and was in school, I had begun working as a tech, and they kept saying to me, "You're gonna work in ICU (intensive care unit). We know you're gonna work in ICU after graduation," and sure enough, that's where I ended up. I don't – of course I don't tell my students that – that that's what they need to do because I think I probably would have had a better advantage working, you know, Med-Surg for a while, but I had such a great preceptor, that I felt like it was the right thing to do for me.

INTERVIEWER: ICU's were pretty new back then.

MARCIA HAMMOCK HANCOCK: If you remember the history of ICU's, they bridged out from PACU's because the patients were sicker, so they just started extending it to ICU. That was like in our time. So yeah, they were pretty new.

INTERVIEWER: That was good that you got chosen to do that right out of school. Well, we'll talk about your career in just a little bit. So did you – I know you said you considered Piedmont – did you think about any other, like baccalaureate programs, at the time?

MARCIA HAMMOCK HANCOCK: I never even was aware, I don't think. I just knew that the diplomas, in those days – what I heard was that they were the best, that you got the hands-on – and everybody that I talked to when the hospital was – if you graduated from a diploma you were ready to work. You had it, you know, you had the skills. You could do it. I never thought about it. When I got out – like say the last year they were just starting to bridge – I want to say medical college and I may not be right –

INTERVIEWER: I think there was a program through medical college.

MARCIA HAMMOCK HANCOCK: I was going to do that and – I'm thinking that might have been later, but anyway that was offered and I thought, I need to get a little bit more experience before I do that and – just life got in the way and I didn't do it for years, but . . . I had tried twice to do that. It was in my head to go back and get my - all I had to do was bridge and I didn't do it twice and like finally the last time it was like if you don't go now, you're too old. You're never going to get it done.

INTERVIEWER: So go ahead and talk about that. So you did finally go back to school.

MARCIA HAMMOCK HANCOCK: My son was at Georgia Tech. That year – I want to say it might have been like his junior year, and I thought, this is a really good time to go back. I did it online and went to Walden. I liked their classes because you were teaching. Like, you had to – every week you had an assignment and you talked to three other students. I'm sorry, let me back that up. You had an assignment that you had to do. You had to research it, and then you had to do a presentation online. You had a limit of how many words, or whatever, but you had to have evidence-based practice and you had to have a minimum, I believe if I remember right, three, APA (American Psychological Association) format and the whole bit, references. So what you did then was you responded to – you had to have the one posting and



on, and make it a goal to do better the next day. A lot of times you realize that you couldn't have changed it, because things happen. They're going to happen, regardless of what you do. The point is to take care of it as quick as you can.

INTERVIEWER: That's why reflection is so important. What other classes do you remember?

MARIA HAMMOCK HANCOCK: I remember my English class – no not English – my Biology class. I remember Miss Tribble. I was lucky to see her many years later at a 5K run in Social Circle, and she looked just the same. I know that recently she passed but she was very elderly by then. But I remember her facial expressions and I remember the lab, and I really like the lab. I thought she was a good teacher. It was stressful, but I learned. You know, that's what's important.

INTERVIEWER: What about the nursing classes?

MARCIA HAMMOCK HANCOCK: The nursing classes... um, it's funny that I would say those two and not . . . I remember clinical a lot, and I still wonder – because I was so young. I was right out of high school. I wonder how I did as well, and I'm wondering how I really did. You know what I'm saying? I think now how I passed all the clinicals and I did okay, and I was very compassionate but it's like I was so shy. Somebody did something right. But when I'd walk in, with my uniform, it was like it was a different person there, and I did, you know, what I was taught to do. Somewhere I picked up - I think I had some basis for the compassion, but somewhere I picked that up. I don't think that that just totally came by itself. And the confidence that I got – I still had little confidence issues even years later because I felt like my leadership wasn't as great. I remember Mrs. Gunby. I remember her from clinical, and I remember there was one instructor who did the spinal cord – she was quite elderly at the time. I say elderly, in my perception. She was probably my age now.

INTERVIEWER: Where'd you do –?

MARCIA HAMMOCK HANCOCK: I do remember the skills labs. It's just, it's been so long ago I'd have to really pick to remember that.

INTERVIEWER: Where'd you do, like your Psych?

MARCIA HAMMOCK HANCOCK: I did it at Bolton One, which is over in DeKalb County. I remember three or four patients from that experience. I remember – the things I remember about that are how much it's changed now, thank God. Because what I remember most about that was the staff sat and smoked and drank coffee all day with the patients. But I remember talking to patients. Like this one guy, his girlfriend stood him up at the

altar and he just lost it. He was in the Psych unit for a long time. Wouldn't work in the daytime. Wanted to sleep all day. All I'm thinking is give him a night job. Get this guy a night job. Work around this, you know. But maybe I didn't understand the Psych so much . . . but I just thought, couldn't you work around it? I remember that, and I remember this one lady that when she had sex with her husband these little imps came up and poked pins in her eyes. This weird stuff. Would I remember the really smart stuff? No. I remember thinking –

INTERVIEWER: That stood out to you, though –

MARCIA HAMMOCK HANCOCK: That was a good experience. I remember going to Milledgeville. I remember seeing a patient with Parkinson's.

INTERVIEWER: Did y'all still go down to Milledgeville then?

MARCIA HAMMOCK HANCOCK: Just one day, though, we didn't stay.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, like they had previously?

MARCIA HAMMOCK HANCOCK: In a minute we'll talk about Grady when we get to the - because I don't want to forget that. I remember going down there and seeing a Parkinson patient. I remember there was a serial killer in the tower. I just remember it being a really sad place. I made best on my boards in Psych. Psych and med-surg. I remember my Psych teacher. She was awesome. Just liked her. She just was a – I felt like I learned a lot from the education I got with that. Abnormal Psych. I wonder why, but –

INTERVIEWER: I'm not going to read anything into that.

MARCIA HAMMOCK HANCOCK: In Med Surg I made second – either I think I made best on Psych then on Med Surg, on my boards.

INTERVIEWER: Did you do all your Med Surg clinical at Georgia Baptist?

MARCIA HAMMOCK HANCOCK: Yes. I remember going to different places like Red Cross, and different places like that... hadn't thought about that in years. And the nursing home across the street, we used to go over there.

INTERVIEWER: I didn't know there was a nursing home across the street.

MARCIA HAMMOCK HANCOCK: Yeah, I forgot what the name of that was.



forget... and I think I was trying to come back to school at that point, but I was trying to get back into the hospital first here. I called her and she just said Marcia you've never quit nursing, so somebody will hire you. Well that's when Gwinnett hired me. So I'd called like Eastside and their comment was, "Well we don't have a refresher course for so and so," and didn't even try and I was like so distraught. I thought I don't understand. I don't think I've lost all my skills. So I got on with Gwinnett and I interviewed with them, and everything was good after that. I always knew I'd end up back in the ICU part. Being on Neuroscience was a little bit different. But the skills came back really fast and I felt really good and they took me for orientation early, and my question in my interview was . . . if I feel like I need to go back for the refresher class can I, and they said yeah. Let's see, you know. The first question that they asked me during my interview was you have a neuro patient. What's the first thing you're going to check? I said well their level of consciousness. I was like, what level of consciousness? Because I go head to toe. That's what I was taught. I also remember the person... my best preceptor ever, in the beginning and between Baptist and the way she did it, it was like my – ingrained in my brain. So I'd go, okay, level of consciousness, pupils, and I got down to the chest before Pam [Garland] goes, "Marcia, you answered the question. That's what I wanted." She was like . . . so it was proud but I was so worried...

But anyway so a few – like another year or so anyway, I was starting to work in ICU and you know I'm training kind of to go in there and things have come back, but we started getting spinal cord injuries. Remember I swore that I would never do spinal cord injuries again because I was like, oh please. So I remember sitting at the desk and they were having our staff meeting and the clinician says Ladies – because we didn't have a lot of guys in there – ladies you might as well get over it. Shepherd's full, CHOA's (Children's Healthcare of Atlanta) full, you know there's no place else for these people to go, so you might as well just get used to doing the spinal cord injuries. I thought – I kind of looked up towards heaven and kind of did that little eye roll and I said God you know you knew what I said . . . but since then it's like, it's so different. It's not like what I had before. I'm not saying I love taking care of them but I don't mind it, and when I do it I really embrace it. It's just that I think it's sad. Hopefully in my lifetime somebody will get those stem cells working and will have some progress in that.

INTERVIEWER: Absolutely.

MARCIA HAMMOCK HANCOCK: I know I went through a lot but it was like full circle. That day I sat there and I remembered Grady and I remembered that experience and I said it's so different and as I said often I'll embrace this opportunity.

INTERVIEWER: Any other things about clinical that you remember?

MARCIA HAMMOCK HANCOCK: I remember funny things. I'm sorry – I think about – I had a roommate and I'm not going to say her name because she'd probably kill me but she was like so perfect. She got straight A's the whole time. She was like always so together. I remember clinical. We've got a little old lady and she's checking her fecal impaction and so me – I won't say that I've always had this sense of humor but sometimes things just get to you and you just – you know. So I'm going in there for moral support. She's got the little lady laid on her side and so she gets it and instead of like wiping it off from her fingers she goes [gesture] well when she does it goes up there and like it flipped in the little lady's hair...

INTERVIEWER: Oh dear.

MARCIA HAMMOCK HANCOCK: Oh my God. So I remember a lot . . . She was so perfect. I mean really, this was just so bizarre. I couldn't help it. I was trying not to laugh because she was so together and I was such a doofus sometimes, I felt like, but anyway . . . and so the little old lady, she just kind of went, you know, and she went in there and just and the little old lady goes "Oh my goodness did I get it way up there?" Then I had to, like, kind of leave, but anyway . . . I remember the clinical and we didn't – I mean, I never saw anybody do anything bad it was just that one thing just stays in my mind forever because she was so perfect. I always thought we were kind of like the odd couple as roommates because I would sleep, not till the last minute – I would get up early but she would be up thirty minutes before me and she would take time to brush her hair and put it up, and she was all, you know, she was just like the odd couple and me I'm like the other one, what's his name, but –

INTERVIEWER: Oscar?

MARCIA HAMMOCK HANCOCK: Yeah, I would be like him. I didn't lay my things out and have them all ready like she did. Everything was just so – you know. Organized. But she was always really smart.

INTERVIEWER: So talk about – was there kind of like a hierarchy among the students? Describe that, like freshmen, junior, senior. How was that? The difference between the different years and what you did, the traditions and those kinds of things.

MARCIA HAMMOCK HANCOCK: I remember capping. I remember pinning. I wasn't like really active in the student group. I remember [pause]

INTERVIEWER: So you got capped at the beginning, and then the pinning was at the very end.

MARCIA HAMMOCK HANCOCK: Yeah. I don't remember a lot about – I just remember a lot of the girls would go to Baptist Student Union. I never felt like I had the time to



INTERVIEWER: The cafeteria. So you had the cafeteria the whole time. The cafeteria was kind of a social gathering place wasn't it?

MARCIA HAMMOCK HANCOCK: Yeah. We would get up really early for clinical, and -

INTERVIEWER: Had breakfast before you went to the hospital?

MARCIA HAMMOCK HANCOCK: Oh yeah. I learned to do that real quick because, you know, you know the students that - the ones that would go to OR then they'd get really hot and almost pass out. It happened to me one time. I tried to be conscious and eat healthy, but there was some good food...

INTERVIEWER: I was going to say, it was hard in that cafeteria. And when you were at clinical you came back over to the dorm to have lunch, right?

MARCIA HAMMOCK HANCOCK: They had the goody cart. People would buy chocolate and all -

INTERVIEWER: Down the hall, yeah, there was like the seniors and -

MARCIA HAMMOCK HANCOCK: I think we had the goody cart and my suite-mates room, one time; it was like please, keep the door locked. I tried to be careful with that.

INTERVIEWER: Were your clinical like three to eleven, eleven to seven. How was that, doing the different shifts?

MARCIA HAMMOCK HANCOCK: In those days, you know, three to eleven was great. After I got out, I was like never liking three to eleven. But eleven to seven, I remember doing that. I don't remember a lot of details but I remember one of the floors that would have been like, I mean . . . It would be the same street as Boulevard.

INTERVIEWER: So that would probably be the East Wing?

MARCIA HAMMOCK HANCOCK: I remember giving medications up there. It must have been OB (obstetrics) because I remember doing backrubs. Doing the evening care. I sometimes refer to that with students, to tell them you know - I still do backrubs. That was required that we do the backrubs and do the p.m. care. It's just different now, what the demands are, to make sure that the family member has hot coffee, but nobody said anything about giving the patient backrubs.

I hope that helps. It's just there's so much . . . It's been so long ago, but I can see them in my mind. [Pause] I remember the emergency room. I never was really comfortable with that because a strange area to me, but I do remember being there and thinking if I could I would really love to do the ER for a couple of years so I could do Life Flight, but I didn't pursue that.

INTERVIEWER: Life Flight had to have been pretty new then, too – probably that came out of the Vietnam War. They had helicopters in Korea too, but yeah . . . so it still had to be very new.

Describe how the instructors at Georgia Baptist facilitated your acquisition of nursing knowledge and skills.

MARCIA HAMMOCK HANCOCK: We had care cards and we had medication cards, and when they would come around they would ask us about our patients and we would go over our care plan. I think that that's why I am the nurse I am today. I still – I've been trying to incorporate that with my students. I really think that they – even though I know we do the charting, I think that sometimes just sitting there and writing out the plan I think is so effective. I felt like that's probably the basis – if I could say one awesome positive thing about Baptist the care plans and the medication cards probably influenced my career more than anything. They began the foundation for my critical thinking skills. Because you always had to go back to the basics and I think that somewhere, some schools have lost that because we keep trying to get – I love the technology but we've got to somehow pull back and start – every time we have a patient go back to what, and – the one thing I remember - and I really treasure this and I try to remind my students of this is we always have emotional support written on those care cards. You addressed the issues that they had and why they might feel that way. I remember the *On Death and Dying*, Elizabeth Kubler-Ross. For me to remember that – I mean, it's been some years. I never forgot her name. I still go back and Google and look at some of the things with her, because students – I know that they get that but I think that being able to go back to the emotional part and the psych part to note, because so many – Okay, patients' families come in and they are distraught. We're trying to get them, help them –and the word is facilitate, through education of what's going on – to make the right choices. We want to tell them what to do. We've got to back up and look at where they are emotionally and assess that and help them get through it because I think we – some have lost that touch. I work in an area that's got a lot of that. We have brain death and we have a lot of stroke patients that are just critically, critically ill. Some aren't reacting. They're not brain dead but the family's got to make these decisions and we've got the kids with head injuries, and so – when the family is arguing with you or being really snotty to you there's a reason sometimes and we just need to. I mean, that's what influenced me. I still – that goes back to my ten minutes of touch thing. I learned that in school. Somewhere along the way I think that I learned that.



and you earned it. She said you'll never have to depend on anybody, if you're in that situation. You can make it on your own, you know. So that was pretty cool.

INTERVIEWER: Describe some of the struggles you encountered while at Georgia Baptist.

MARCIA HAMMOCK HANCOCK: My struggles mostly . . . I was young, right out of high school, so getting adjusted but I did have social with my suite-mates and another lady. We were like close and we would eat together and we would go to the gym together and stuff. I did do a lot of social things. I wanted to address that because I made it sound like I didn't do anything but study but I did do things. Struggles mostly were . . . it was hard.

INTERVIEWER: It was academically challenging.

MARCIA HAMMOCK HANCOCK: Yeah. I felt like when I finished – I said when I've been out for five years I'll be so smart, is what I thought. At the five year mark and I thought oh my goodness, I've got to continue learning. So you know the push today is the continued learning thing. I don't know that anybody said that, but something about that program pushed me to always want to learn. I always wanted to go back. I always wanted to learn more and –

INTERVIEWER: You're definitely a lifelong learner.

MARCIA HAMMOCK HANCOCK: Yeah. Somebody taught me that. I mean, not all of it but somebody explained that, to seek it out. To seek the knowledge and to find the reasons why, so . . . do I remember them saying ask why? No but somebody put that critical thinking . . . challenged me to do that.

INTERVIEWER: We already talked about your education. Your career . . . you started in the ICU after you graduated.

MARCIA HAMMOCK HANCOCK: I went to another hospital and worked in PACU thinking I'd do day shift there and I would love it. I hated it. It was a big hospital and it was one of those situations that we were talking about, situations that make you . . . the staff were older. I don't know what they wanted from me different. I think that I didn't feel comfortable there. I wasn't confident enough. That just didn't work out. They ate me alive, really. It really hurt me because I felt like it really knocked my confidence out. My husband – we were talking about this yesterday because what happened was I worked PACU (post-anesthesia care unit) and it was a big hospital and I'd been in a smaller hospital, still getting my confidence. I hadn't been out but a year. This was so big, and all these nurses would go in the lounge and smoke. I would take patients all day. Even the manager would go in there and

smoke. There was a code. Of course all of them show up to the code and it wasn't my patient. So my thinking was I'd go from the other patients and take care of them, and I did, and she basically wrote me up for that. I really know now it was because she didn't want me there, because I didn't fit into the group. For years and years that has just bothered me. Whenever I went to Gwinnett I thought oh my god what am I doing here I am in this hospital, and I'm like a new kid on the block, and I'm in my forties, and is this same thing going to happen. It hasn't happened of course. Still to this day I go into an evaluation and I almost break out in a sweat thinking about it. I think about that day and I think, she was not a nice person. What it was, there was another girl that wanted full time, and I think she really wanted her full time, and the thing was, I never got written up for anything. I never got any evaluation and this blindsided me. So I was devastated. Called Dunwoody, which was where I was working, Dunwoody hospital, and they said we got a position in CCU (coronary care unit). Come back, and I went back and it was just like I was home again, so I thought maybe I'm not supposed to work in big hospitals, you know. I thought maybe that was it because I didn't understand why maybe you would treat somebody like that. So it was one of those lessons that was hard and I really could smack her for doing that to me but I've thought so many times . . . we've even bought these situations up when we were, when I was working on my master's, about things that have happened to us, with eating your young and whatever and I brought that up and I said that is what made me the person I am today so I can't totally hate it, because I will never be that nurse that does that to a new graduate. If anybody's around that's doing that I'm going to be telling them to stop that. I'm just not going to let that happen.

INTERVIEWER: Good for you.

MARCIA HAMMOCK HANCOCK: It made me, who I am today, but I look at where I am today and where I was then and there were some other side issues. I was very young. I was married, and that was really a tough marriage. I was the only one working, so that was like, you know, at the time but I'm better for it. Did I get off track?

INTERVIEWER: No, you're fine. So let's talk about the seventies and the United States and all – so the Vietnam War ended while you were in school, right? In '73?

MARCIA HAMMOCK HANCOCK: I remember having Filipino nurses come over here. They came – a bunch of them – I remember being upset that they were taking jobs away from the students. That's what they said. I didn't have a problem because I'd already had my job. I had been working all the way through school, and they said when you're out we know where you're going. I went straight to ICU. I remember everybody being upset because they brought them all over here. Then I remember a lot of them had trouble passing the boards. That

was interesting to know that happened, when I was studying for my master's – all the things we'd done to try to help with the nursing shortage, so that was pretty cool.

I do remember the Vietnam War. My cousin was in Vietnam but I don't know that I remember anything affecting me clinically.

INTERVIEWER: Later in the decade it was kind of that whole seventies – Nixon and all his political scandals – inflation and gas wars, more toward the end like when Jimmy Carter was president. When you started in '71, right, I mean the economy wasn't as bad, even though we were in the middle of this long war. Did any of those political or social or economic issues influence your decision to be a nurse or influence your decision to go to Georgia Baptist?

MARCIA HAMMOCK HANCOCK: I knew that that was the only place I was going to go so I made up my mind it was going to be Baptist and I was just praying that I was going to get accepted. When I got accepted at Piedmont, there was a friend of mine that really wanted me to go there. It was nice to have a choice. It was just the – the field just wasn't there. Here [GBH] it was right.

INTERVIEWER: So how did – tell how the education you received at Georgia Baptist facilitated your transition into nursing practice?

MARCIA HAMMOCK HANCOCK: We got a lot of clinical. We did a lot of skills. We did the critical thinking. I don't think there's – really, I don't know that there was any Baptist person that graduated that didn't have critical thinking, so somebody did something right.

INTERVIEWER: They didn't use that term so much back then.

MARCIA HAMMOCK HANCOCK: Right, they never said the words “critical thinking” – it was always explained why you're doing things. The assessment skills were the most amazing to me because I – you try to teach it and you watch students and you think, how they're thinking, and I just remember – I had my assessment down by the time I got out of school. I had to have. I was working in ICU. Everybody kept saying you're Georgia Baptist. You know you're going to go to ICU right after. There's no question.

Another thing people would say to me was if you graduate from Baptist you'll never have to worry about getting a job. You didn't even have to say anything. In those days they'd say, “Where'd you go to school?” Baptist. They were all ready to hire you right then. They knew that you had the critical thinking skills and you had the experience.

My sister in law went to a two year program – and she’s very smart. She’s been a nurse for a long time. But she had not even put in a Foley catheter, the whole time. She was working as a tech so she eventually got that experience that way and she worked her way all through school so she had that, but she never got to put in a Foley and we were like doing it in Labor and Delivery. I just remember doing all those things early on. I don’t remember not doing them. I even am amazed at myself because I was so naïve. I was only 18. The things that I picked up so quick – somebody evidently was teaching well. I felt like I stepped out from them and just finished. It’s like I was ready.

INTERVIEWER: It was a smooth transition from one to the next.

MARCIA HAMMOCK HANCOCK: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Well that’s all the questions I have. Do you have anything else you want to say?

MARCIA HAMMOCK HANCOCK: I don’t think so.