

INTERVIEWER: This interview is between Kim Kelly Royster and myself, Laura Madden. Today is Friday, July 1st, 2016, and we are meeting at the Georgia Baptist College of Nursing and discussing Kim's memories surrounding her time as a student at Georgia Baptist Hospital School of Nursing in Atlanta Georgia. And you graduated in June 1979? Okay, so the first question is describe the thought process that went into your decision to become a nurse.

ROYSTER: When I was in high school I was very much interested in going to medical school. I was a product of the 70s as far as the high school days, and it was not necessarily favorable so much for women to go to medical school. So my high school counselor at the time that I was a junior in high school said to me, you might want to look at nursing school. He said, "I don't know that you would want to go to medical school you're going to be in such the minority that it would be extremely challenging although you have the academia to do so." So again, I took that to heart and I thought about it and prayed about it, and I realized I did really want to have a life. That's where he also was leading me, to think about the fact that I was, being a woman, there would become other things in my life that I would really want to, hopefully, be able to enjoy, and being a family and so forth and medical school was going to be a really long process and that might not be the case for me. I guess at that point in time I didn't have enough. I was young. I didn't realize that hey, you know, you can still be married and go to medical school and all those good things. So I thought okay maybe nursing school would be a better choice for me so that I could enjoy other things in life, so I began to sincerely, you know, consider that as an option and had a very good friend of mine whose mother was a graduate of Georgia Baptist, and who was at that time teaching at Georgia Baptist, Eola Scott. And I was dating her son, if that be the truth, and I spoke to her and she encouraged me to look at Georgia Baptist as an option if I was truly going to apply to nursing school. Well I went on and applied to other universities, University of Georgia, Emory, et cetera, and kind of tossed Georgia Baptist in there, and came for the interview and I fell in love in school. I also really realized in my heart, too, that nursing was really where God was calling me, so even though I was accepted into other universities, Georgia Baptist truly was the place where I felt the most comfortable and I felt at peace with my decision to accept the opening that they offered me as a student, so my journey began.

INTERVIEWER: What was it about Georgia Baptist that you loved so much?

ROYSTER: It was the people. I don't remember now all the people that I met as I came for interviews, um, but it was all those that were – whose paths I crossed in the interview process. They were just so kind and just so wonderful. There was again a sense of - they were compassionate people – women. I felt drawn to them. I felt a kindred spirit, you know, with them, because of my desire to help others. They, too, had that, obviously, to be in that profession, to be nurses. So I felt just that draw, to be at Georgia Baptist. Plus I loved the

atmosphere of the dormitory, and the tour. I remember going on the tour and thinking it was so cool, the whole thing. I don't know. I didn't desire another thing. I wanted to obtain my education. That was really what I was first and foremost about. I wasn't in the game to get; you know, married and get that M.R.S. like unfortunately you can get kind of tagged. In college, in another setting, the university, the coed university, the temptation probably would have been too great for me to get involved in a lot of activities because I was very leadership-minded person and I could've easily gotten drawn into so many other different facets of university life that education would still have been important to me, but it would have been probably a little more of a challenge to balance everything out. And so I felt like going to an all-girls school and be able to just stay focused on my education . . . um, little did I know there would still be great opportunities for involvement and leadership and all that good stuff that again makes college wonderful and what it should be, a full experience. I really wanted to be in a place where I felt like I could just be with like-minded students and with like-minded goals and of course a Christian education was so important to me and that's what, of course, Georgia Baptist was founded in, so I really felt like it all came together, and all of that was presented to me throughout the interview process, and I just really felt a great confirmation and it was a great feeling when I was there.

INTERVIEWER: Good. So you said you applied to other programs.

ROYSTER: Right.

INTERVIEWER: Were you aware of the difference, at the time, between the diploma graduates and the baccalaureate graduates?

ROYSTER: Very little, very little. I knew that there was going to be a heavy lean toward academia and less toward clinical in those programs at that time. Where Georgia Baptist – and where I did receive a lot of insight, again from Mrs. Weeks or Mrs. Scott – she was Mrs. Scott then – there was the fact that there would be so much clinical, and she advising me that that was key to really being able to have your classroom, but yet take it to the clinical setting for application, and that may not have been the word she used. We know that to be the word now. That was so crucial to really becoming a nurse, and a good bedside nurse, which was so important at that time in the teaching process, and it was important to me, individually, that I did learn how to really take care of my patient and know them and meet their needs to the best of my abilities, within the realm of what nursing was supposed to be, and do.

So, um, the other programs, it was definitely where I was going to get that academia, which is definitely important, but not so much clinical. So, Georgia Baptist academia yes, clinical, wow. That was really the key.

INTERVIEWER: So talk about your classes and the clinical experiences and how they were structured at Georgia Baptist.

ROYSTER: Now are you talking about for the first year of course, that was again just our pre-recs. Obviously the Chemistry and obviously Pharmacology which was phenomenal, and I remember the gentleman – I'd have to look back to glean his name but he was hard and he was tough but he was good. Oh, my goodness, the classes were very challenging. Chemistry, I still remember her face, I would have to look at my yearbook to remember her name. We just, loved, loved Chemistry. It was huge. That's why; again, I was leaning towards medical school. I was a huge science person. I found Chemistry to be so enjoyable and yet challenging. But the help that we received, the encouragement we received from all of our professors and the pre-recs was phenomenal. I think they were there for you. That's what was also so unique, to me, about Georgia Baptist. Um, I felt confident with all my teachers/professors. They were for you. They wanted you to succeed. They wanted you to be the best that you could be. They worked with you and did not – I didn't feel like I was coddled by any stretch, you know, I mean I think I was encouraged. I think I knew the offices were open. Doors were open. If I needed to go in and speak to anyone about anything that I was struggling with, needed further clarification, needed another option to get it, I could go and speak to them at any time, make an appointment and they'd welcome me. I was able to go into the classrooms after hours and use the big blackboards. You know I would come down from my class and go to the library, go to the classrooms, and study.

INTERVIEWER: It was all right there together.

ROYSTER: All right there, all convenient. And the beauty of living in a dorm and not having to, you know, struggle with traffic and all these other issues to get somewhere, to be able to accomplish whatever I needed to do – study, go to a lab, whatever. It was there and that was nice.

The classroom structure, again, everybody came to class. You came to class. You didn't even think about not, unless you were truly sick. And you know Mrs. Johns was there as our, you know, nurse, right there in the dorm and you could see her and if you couldn't make it and there was somebody that really knew you were sick and took care of you. That was the same as the doctors that were available to us, but it was like, you went to class because you knew it was important. You better get there. The teachers knew you and if you weren't there they wanted to probably find out why you weren't there.

The teaching setting was great, I mean again, long and hard. Lots of handwritten notes, I mean longhand. No – I don't recall, there may have been somebody using a tape recorder, I think there were a couple of people that did that for lectures, but - it was mostly, all of us, just hours and

hours of writing notes longhand, and you know, listening to our professors just give us wonderful lectures and I remember, of course there were so many, Joanna Greene and -my memory leaves me, but . . . the ones that taught Advanced Med-Surg, they care again so much about us.

INTERVIEWER: Cecilia Owens.

ROYSTER: Cecilia Owens.

INTERVIEWER: Elaine Grier.

ROYSTER: Elaine Grier, yes, who's obviously here. But they – I remember Joanna was so concerned. She was working on her master's degree. That was the next big level at that point, for a lot of our professors and teachers, and she was doing a relaxation class, that she wanted to see the effect of, if we actually, those – on testing days – if after we had studied hard, you know, obviously, the idea of the test, the study, was to get a decent night's sleep, but then come downstairs and listen to some relaxation tapes, lay on the floor, in one of the classrooms – one of the offices because it had to have carpeting – and do the relaxation tapes where we would sit and just tense one arm and then relax, tense the other arm and then relax, and then go take the test. And then she, of course, was gleaning data from that. The students who did those classes voluntarily signed up to be part of the study and those who did not to see if test scores were different. I never ever saw the data that resulted from that, but I thought –

INTERVIEWER: I'd be curious, too –

ROYSTER: I know. I thought how neat, though, that she was choosing a study for her masters that was going to, again, benefit us, hopefully help her show, you know, something relevant at the same time for her study, but at the same time it really was a caring project that helped a lot of us. I signed up because I thought I'm a worrywart kind of a person. I want to do well on all my tests and so I was really appreciative of her wanting to do something that would help us just be ready and prepared to take the test. So, you know, I thought that was wonderful, all the professors and teachers.

INTERVIEWER: So talk about clinicals. Where did you have your clinicals and what experiences do you remember?

ROYSTER: Oh my goodness. I remember a lot of them. They were of course right there at Georgia Baptist obviously on all the floors and all the – all the wonderful, oh my goodness, places that we were able to go in addition to Georgia Baptist. I was at Grady of course, working there, riding the ambulance, I'm sure you've already heard.

INTERVIEWER: How was that?

ROYSTER: That was the primo experience of all time. I mean, that was – I saw a lot of things. I think that experience in itself helped me realize that I lived in a bubble.

INTERVIEWER: You're from right in Atlanta?

ROYSTER: I'm from Atlanta. Born and raised, you know, in DeKalb County. My dad worked forty years in Atlanta, self-employed, so I'm very, very familiar with the city of Atlanta. My grandparents grew up in Grant Park, and so anyway, history for me is huge for the metro area. And so to ride that ambulance, and to go into the projects, and to go into places that I knew about – believe me, I did not grow up not knowing – that there was a side of people that lived different from me. I'm going to cry about this because it was very –

INTERVIEWER: It's okay, I have tissues.

ROYSTER: [Crying]. It was very emotional, in a good way.

INTERVIEWER: I totally understand what you're feeling. I felt the same way, even though I didn't grow up in Atlanta. I had never been to places like that.

ROYSTER: Right.

INTERVIEWER: And didn't know – I think I thought those kinds of places were in another country, not here in the United States. It was very eye opening.

ROYSTER: It was a good thing.

INTERVIEWER: I almost hated it was at the end of our time there, because I think it would have given a different perspective had it been earlier in our education.

ROYSTER: It marked me to understand that why God called me to be a nurse, that because you know . . . I also knew, I also grew up in an era of time where there was segregation. And I went through that experience in my high school with integration, so . . . but to care for people that were the different color and the different socioeconomic background, in a time of need those things go out the window. That did separate some of the students early on in our career of learning, because of being raised in the South and realizing that there are obvious differences and sometimes it's not of your fault that you're a product of the way you're raised. I was blessed to have a family that was very open-minded early on, so . . . Many of my dad's employees were African-American, so I was raised to appreciate that, because I knew they helped my dad in his business, so they were our friends, so I had no problem caring and wanting to help. I had friends, unfortunately, that couldn't stay in the program because of that. It became

very much an issue for them to be able to deal with race. Um, and that's sad. For me, it would break my heart that – but I had to understand that they came from a different place and, for them, the way they were raised was not going to work. But for me, again, to go into the places that we went into on the ambulance and help, was what my heart was about, and it was wonderful to be able to reach out, and look at someone's face and eyes and know they needed help, and know that they didn't see the color of my skin and I didn't see the color of theirs. It was just what they needed, at that moment that we were able to get them back to Grady and get them the help they needed, and of course it was life and death out there. That was uncommon in that even though you had clinical in the hospital setting and you saw people very ill, they were already under the – they were under care, so the odds were getting better, maybe, for them. But on the streets, when you walk into an apartment building and there was someone who was already deceased and the family didn't even realize it, they were deceased, and you were there to render aid of any kind, but all you could do was explain that, you know, it wasn't good, and that we were going to just be waiting for additional help and you know, have to move from that point, that lack of education was pretty profound in my – seeing that. Again, it broke my heart that we live in a world and a society that where I was being blessed to have this education, there were others who didn't even recognize that their loved one was so far into their sickness or illness that they didn't even realize that it was too late. But yet all they needed to do was call Grady to get help. There was no means, maybe educationally or financially or whatever to even get the help before. Um, so those kinds of realizations of life are so important. I think, for students to see and understand. So again you realize, even more affirmation, as to why you're doing what you're doing. It's not about, you know, again, color, or socioeconomic backgrounds, it's truly the calling of being a nurse is about helping and caring and loving, rendering whatever, again, aid you can to someone who needs it. I just loved that experience obviously, it impacted my life in many ways and made me just realize, again, that the world is big and we cannot be, kind of cheesy. You know if we're going to make a commitment to do something, we do it all the way.

So that was a great experience, and also the experiences that we had going into – there was like the Elaine Clark Center where we worked with special needs children. That was phenomenal, again to see children –

INTERVIEWER: How was that? I don't remember –

ROYSTER: I believe – I think Elaine Clark is still located off of Peachtree Industrial, if I'm correct in remembrance. Elaine Clark was a small experience, but it was a huge one in that, again, it took you into a world of children who were born with defects and various special needs issues that could not be taken care of in the home, but they were placed into facilities that had the means to take care of them. That again was a great, eye-opening experience to – again if you just grow up with, maybe, normalcy, and then you are opened up to

situations that you don't even really know exist until you get into these kind of training experiences, it makes you appreciate and be more thankful obviously if you aren't already for what you have, in your health, and then to realize, again, that there's another world, another realm of care that's available to you as a nurse, in a facility that is so not the hospital, but something that is . . . hospital care usually, you know, it's going to come and go as far as the patient care load usually they transition, they either go home or they go to a facility of rehab or whatever. But these facilities that we went to with the pediatric experience, this was ongoing. This wasn't going to change. These children were there until – because there was no other option for them. And so what you could do, in those experiences, maybe you weren't there to act like – do medical care, per se, you were there to play with those children, and interact with them, um, in a way that was just leaving some sort of impact on them, if they could even realize it. But it impacted me.

The psychiatric experience –

INTERVIEWER: Where did you go for that?

ROYSTER: I went down to Panthersville [Road], to DeKalb, and locked in there for however many days, months, weeks –

INTERVIEWER: Mrs. Remy was there?

ROYSTER: Yes she was. That again was an eye-opening experience, awesome experience. Could not have had a better psych experience. I did my paper on schizophrenia. I had a patient of course for my care plan that was a schizophrenic, and that, again, was scary. I think if I ever experiences a little bit of fear, it was there, probably, because of the unknown. You did not know – you knew what you were doing as far as, or dealing with in relation to the classroom, of what you had been told was the diagnosis and the why the way person had been diagnosed, their mental illness, but then there's that unknown of, are they going to say something to you that you wouldn't know how to say back –

INTERVIEWER: Respond appropriately? Therapeutically?

ROYSTER: Therapeutically, right. They might even act out, physically, in that place and you needed to be aware of how to, again, respond therapeutically. So I remember we entered into a game – a card game, I believe it was – or some board game they had there. And I was with a couple of other students, of course, and we were playing the game with a couple of other patients, and this one gentleman just decided it wasn't going his way, and he got up and he put his fist through the wall. And you know, thankful it wasn't directed toward us, but toward, you know, something that was inanimate, but it was a very, you know, like profound moment.

Here we are with someone who has become angry, and has taken their anger out on the wall, but everything was good. There was of course someone there to help him. But the students – we were like, wow – that was amazing. And so, you know, you just were exposed, again, to a lot of different things that you just had to deal with, and it was a very good experience.

INTERVIEWER: You came to Georgia Baptist right out of high school, so you were young when you were experiencing all of these things.

ROYSTER: Yes. Absolutely. That was very, I guess revealed to me when I went back to a five year high school reunion. By that point in time I was finished at Georgia Baptist and working. And the difference – I don't mean to say this in any kind of, you know, there's no arrogance here or anything but the maturity difference between maybe those who maybe had not – or maybe had gone to college but just had not been exposed to the world as I had been exposed to it, like I said, through the Grady experience, psych experience, through you know, a lot of outside experiences my level of maturity of seeing the world and – just in a small place, not like I had gone abroad to do this, it was right here in our back yard – really, my maturity level . . . I mean, I was dealing with, again, that life and death situation where a lot of my friends had not even crossed that road yet for whatever reason and that's fine for them but for me it was a totally different place, and I was carrying a lot of responsibility in my work at that time, as well as just how I had grown up. In that three year period it was very remarkable, I thought. Sharing talk of what are you doing now? Well I'm, you know, just finished my fifth year of college, trying to graduate, and I'm like, okay . . .

INTERVIEWER: You were already working.

ROYSTER: Oh yeah, you know, and had experienced, like I said, many things that had changed me and matured me and grew me up. I mean that was just the way it was going to be. You know I mean you just didn't really have much choice in that if you finished it and stay the course, you know, because it couldn't help but affect you, in a positive way, obviously.

INTERVIEWER: Anything else about clinical? Where'd you do Labor and Delivery?

ROYSTER: Labor and Delivery was there at Baptist. That was really fun and exciting, and, you know, all about that. Didn't think I'd ever, ever work in that area, however did not – I mean I'd go back to pediatrics, loved pediatrics, but didn't think I would ever do pediatrics. A good experience, Peds, was right there at Baptist, probably trying to remember if I crossed over to Grady. Grady was more neuro and Med-Surg, ICU (intensive care unit) experiences at Grady, but most everything else I had, clinical-wise, was at Georgia Baptist, unless it was off-site, like I mentioned a few of those places that we would go. But when I ended

up, obviously – let me get to this question later – but my boards I excelled on pediatrics, which surprised me. I didn't expect that because it was my least – not necessarily my least favorite. I loved children, but just didn't quite see myself there.

But I did end up being hired at Georgia Baptist and worked in NICU (neonatal intensive care unit) there. So that really was – became a love of mine. Didn't expect it.

INTERVIEWER: How long did you work in the NICU there?

ROYSTER: I started work as soon as we could, once I passed the boards, started working at Baptist, and worked there until I actually met my husband there. Um and left there, let's see, December of '81. We were married in November of '81. I worked until the end of the year, and then Marv was in the Air Force, so his commitment was going to start in January, so we were both – he was finishing his flex internship, and I was – so I finished in about two and a half years.

INTERVIEWER: So he's in Orthopedics, right?

ROYSTER: Orthopedic surgeon.

INTERVIEWER: He met you in the NICU?

ROYSTER: I did. He was a flexible intern and he rotated through. Now I did not – I met him in the elevator. Now this is where – we're going to go in a little different direction here because the big deal in nursing school was for the medical – either students or interns to come over, as you might recall this as well – to eat in our cafeteria.

INTERVIEWER: They closed it at the end of my freshman year.

ROYSTER: Really? That was a shame because that cafeteria holds huge memories for me. I loved the ladies that worked there. I loved their fried chicken. It was the best in the whole wide world. As president of Student Government, we held a couple of events and I wanted their chicken to be served at the events so they always cooked fried chicken for me to have – not for me personally but I requested it and we served it. And anyway, that cafeteria was the place where these interns would come over to eat. You might have heard this before. They were obviously scooping and scouting the nursing students, in the midst of also being ravenously hungry because they did work obviously very hard and very long hours. So they could come over there to eat or stay in the hospital to eat. I just thought that was ridiculous, you know, to have these interns kind of part of the scene, although they were cute and all that good stuff. I thought you know what; I came to nursing school to be a nurse. I didn't come to get asked out. It was fine. We would meet. I thought most of them were fairly full of themselves,

and so I really dismissed the whole idea of ever, ever marrying a doctor or having any dating relationship with one. Well that, of course, ate my words, and I became working at Baptist, and one particular night I was going down to the pharmacy downstairs to pick up some Hyperal and Marvin – not knowing he was going to be my husband – was coming up for a delivery. He had – OB (obstetrics) was his rotation and we just made a common, you know how you doing, nothing major, just a hello, how are you, kind of a thing. Well then the next thing, he's in the NICU as part of his OB rotation. And of course I worked nights and it would get slow, and we were just talking. Come to find out that he was actually born and raised just a few miles from me, and we had all these things in common. We didn't know each other but we had friends in common. We never met, et cetera, et cetera. So I – he asked if we could go out and of course I was very low key. I did not want people to really know my social life. I did – people knew I dated, but I didn't want them to know – I definitely was not going to have a date with an intern. So I agreed but I said we had to keep it extremely under the wraps, you know, nobody's going to know. So we did that, and we didn't tell a soul, and I know none of my nursing friends knew that I was dating Marvin, and then it became – this was in March, and we fell in love. It was real. I mean obviously, we've been married; we'll celebrate thirty-five years in November.

INTERVIEWER: Congratulations.

ROYSTER: Thank you. He and I, we didn't realize it was going to happen, and we got engaged. That was basically just before – I mean, it was really close to the, that I actually let people know I was dating him and I came into work that night with an engagement ring. They were flipping out. Nobody expected it. Some were a little upset that I hadn't been, you know, more transparent but it was like listen, you know, again, I don't want to be fodder for hospital gossip, you know, we know this. We were the precursor to the Gray's Anatomy. Okay, but it was existent, as far as, you know, those kind of things happening, so I really did not want anybody to know that, so Marvin and I made that public knowledge when I became engaged and we were married in November, so it was really like a very quick, March to November, and boom. I was on my way, you know –

INTERVIEWER: He was leaving.

ROYSTER: He was leaving. Had to make a decision and he wasn't leaving me behind, as he told my dad. So asked permission and of course it was granted, and we were on our way after that point, to leaving Atlanta and Marv was paying back, he was Air Force, he did his medical School on an Air Force program, so we took off from that point.

INTERVIEWER: So go ahead because that's one of the questions is talk about your education and your career. So from there, did you continue to work?

ROYSTER: Yes. Well and also before that, let me say, I was also in school, as soon as I finished at Baptist, I went back to school. I took night classes out at - now it's Georgia State – DeKalb College. I was working on my BSN (Bachelor of Science in Nursing). I immediately went back to do that. I was working on my core. I still needed, obviously, some classes, Economics and Speech and a couple of things that we didn't offer at Baptist that I could fulfill, and that of course curtailed, when I got married. So, you know, let me just point out, honestly, I really did want to finish my degree and get that BSN, which I did not ever do, because I got married and had to move away, and it's all good because we went right from here, there, we moved to San Antonio – no, Las Vegas. Las Vegas, Nevada.

It was Marvin's first assignment, in Vegas. I worked at Valley Hospital there and worked Pediatrics. They did not have a NICU. They had a NICU at Sunrise, but I liked the Valley, whole thing there, and went Pediatrics, which was awesome. Just had a great, great career there. Did a lot with the military as well. Served in Volunteer roles. Did Red Cross, and teaching. Did a lot of teaching education-wise, in that role as well with the public and a lot of the retirees and so forth. And just worked and worked and worked because Marv was so busy with his military commitment and gone a lot, and not around, and I was just there to shore up the home, and just work, so I was always - no kids, and husband gone. I got every double that I needed. Every request for the weekend, they would call me, come Kim. Did a lot of charge positions and so forth.

Then from there we moved to San Antonio, Texas, and I worked in Methodist Hospital there in Pediatrics, but also did L&D (Labor and Delivery), I did I taught childbirth classes, which was very intimidating because I had no kids and I taught childbirth. I also transitioned to teaching breastfeeding classes, I mean you know, I did anything mother-baby, basically. I also did PICU (pediatric intensive care unit). Worked a lot in PICU, and thoroughly enjoyed that as well. Kind of did – it depended – whatever the census was, you know. I was in the unit or I was on the floor.

Pediatric was really my love, and then we came to Columbus, Georgia. And in Columbus unfortunately my dad died and I did just volunteer work – we were only going to be in Columbus for a year. I was going to make application to work down there. It was St. Francis, I believe, but it just didn't work out because of the timing, only being in that city for a year, and my dad passing, unexpectedly, and needing to help my mother here in Atlanta, so I just did volunteer work in the hospital and I just did anything. I didn't care. I was not proud. I would just do blood pressures, and just whatever. They knew my circumstances and knew I really couldn't commit to a full-time job with the fact I was only going to be there a year.

Then went back to San Antonio. Worked again at Methodist, and then Marv got out and we moved. He took his job here in Atlanta, with Peachtree Orthopedic. And began my job application, I was just in the process, when I got pregnant. And I decided, you know what, it's been fifteen years and I guess that's when – because Kaly was born in '93, and I just said you know, I'm ready to take a break, and be a mom. And I told you my circumstances with pregnancy, and just being so thankful that we were able to conceive, and then turned around and had Clay, so really my life has been a lot of volunteer work since then. Involved with my children – school nurse, where they go to school I filled in as a sub, as a school nurse. Camp nurse for church. You know, again, nursing's so diversified. It's such a blessing that I could apply everything in my nursing career to raising my children. Working, again, as a volunteer, wherever it was needed. Like I said, church, school, um, that's what I've done. I have been so fulfilled in that it's – there's been days when I would like to go back to the hospital setting because I enjoyed it so much, but I feel like I'm not qualified to do that, without a refresher, although sometimes some things feel like they're right there, still. When you are committed to your profession, and you've loved it, but at the same time, realistically, you know, it's been a long time, so I would definitely not be safe. [Laughs].

INTERVIEWER: That's why they have those refresher courses.

ROYSTER: That's right. Exactly. But I do feel like I have utilized my education, in many ways.

INTERVIEWER: Absolutely. Let's talk about the hierarchy among the students at Georgia Baptist and the different grade levels and the differences between those.

ROYSTER: Um, you mean, like, the class?

INTERVIEWER: Just like what – that's probably not the best way to phrase that question – but each year, what were the differences? Was there any kind of mentoring?

ROYSTER: Yeah, okay. Freshman year was extremely intimidating, I thought. You really knew you were the freshmen. To me it was total class, you know, you were really in the books, and yet you know we began a little bit of clinical during that freshman year, of course going over and doing some research on patients for drugs, pharmacology, things of that nature. You wore that little yellow coat and you felt so – I thought you just – you were a freshman. But it was also good, in that the upperclassmen were very good to the younger ones. I didn't feel like I was ever not accepted. There wasn't truly that – I think that could happen maybe in a larger university where you just don't know anyone, but because we were a small school and we had so many overlapping opportunities beyond the classroom to mingle and to get to know one another but you still knew who the seniors were, of course. You knew they were the seniors. They were

the big dog on campus. That's the way it should be, because when I got there I kind of wanted to feel that way as well. Had kind of risen and deserved being recognized as the seniors.

I never had a Big Sister until I guess my junior year. That was always a big deal, that Little Sister Big Sister thing. I wasn't approached to have one, as a freshman. I guess I kind of experienced a little bit of . . . feeling like I was a little left out, maybe? But that's the way it goes sometimes, you just don't always, you know, appeal I guess, and so . . . I didn't have a Big Sister, so I had to rely upon myself, more or less, but my roommate did, so that was fun, and I was blessed to have the same roommate, by the way, the whole way through. I thought that was really unique because a lot of people changed roommates many times, as well as floors. We developed a great foursome, myself and my two suite-mates who had a – it was a little bit of a mix because she was – one of those suite-mates as a year ahead of us. So therefore I feel like I had a little bit of a connection even though we were one year difference. I still felt like I was very well-received, and then even though I didn't have the Big Sister thing, I was a cheerleader my freshman and my junior year, and I opted out my senior year because I was so busy with other commitments. Being a cheerleader was also a really great way to get to know the different classes, because it was a mixed bag on the cheerleading squad. So we kind of all interacted, you know. We would ride together to the games, and many of the basketball games were out, up in North Georgia. We would have to go in the cars up to those other schools, which was really fun, because it allowed us to get exposure, again, to – like you didn't feel like you were not a part of the university scene because you were going to play, you know, other schools – Truett-McConnell, Piedmont, all these other North Georgia schools and exposure there but in the car ride up I was with juniors, being a freshman. They always just received me so well. I really never felt, like, any difference – you have to sit in the backseat because you're a freshman or whatever. We just all got along and helped each other, and a lot of encouragement in those – from the juniors to the freshmen. You know, juniors to the senior year you know again just kind of stuck in the middle there, just kind of doing your role and you know waiting to get to the next level.

I remember as a junior interacting again, with seniors because again I was involved with yearbook and SGA and Baptist Student Union. All those places where again you were mixing with like-minded students but yet different year levels. You just still felt like they were, you really were one, even though you were at different levels. I remember sitting in the auditorium and watching, you know, we'd have our – I don't even remember the name . . . we'd just meet and have like – I can't believe I don't remember the name and I would lead them. We'd have like talent shows and we'd have just all kind of fun.

INTERVIEWER: Those might be assemblies –

ROYSTER: Assemblies. That's the word. We would have, you know, guest speakers, and we would have entertainment. We'd have outside – I remember one year I had a magician come. It was just so much fun. The seniors would do their senior skits and oh my goodness was that fun, to laugh and just be excited for each other and of course we'd always imitate the teachers and the professors. We just really had a good time, even though there was a different class and you were happy they were going to get to graduate. It was almost bittersweet because you would just get to know maybe some of the older students if you were younger, a freshman or even a junior, and then we had the March and the June graduations. It was like, this class would just go away, you know. You were like oh, you know, and you come back from break and they graduated and you were just like, almost sad they were gone because you got to know a few of them.

INTERVIEWER: It was like a family.

ROYSTER: Very much like a family. Absolutely. And then, I loved the fact that we went all year round. We had summers we were in school and we'd have those two week breaks. Then I would just always look forward to coming back, and couldn't wait until the night before, we'd all be arriving back from being gone and of course some girls would stay there and work. That was an option. I would leave and of course go home and come back that Sunday night with my suitcase, and there'd always be, you know, girls down in the common area, you know, talking, and laughing, and then guys coming in of course to let their girlfriends off, some were being brought back by boyfriends, so it was like old home week again. Even though we knew each other, we lived together, we'd have that nice break in between those quarters, semesters, and . . . obviously the ladies that sat there at the desk knew us all and, you know – housemothers, you know, we've all heard stories about that. I'm sure you've got lots of those. But it was so sweet because it just felt like home. It just felt like you were coming home again the ladies – the moms were there to meet you, and then all the discussion, all the laughing, all the carrying on and going up in the elevator and getting settled back in ready to start the semester. It was really fun. It was just really sweet.

INTERVIEWER: Now did you choose a Little Sister?

ROYSTER: I did, even though eventually I got a Big Sister.

INTERVIEWER: Oh you did, okay.

ROYSTER: Eventually a friend of mine from – that I went to high school with actually, who never chose a Little Sister, she realized I didn't have a Big Sister, so she became my Big Sister, just for her senior year, so for one year I had a Big Sister. But then I certainly did participate in that and I had a Little Sister, Carolyn Sutton, that was my Little Sister, and she was

also a cheerleader for her freshman year, my junior year, so we had a great time. I really took a big interest in those freshmen. I went down to their floor. I – that was also kind of that – they were definitely all together as freshmen. I would go down to their level, literally, on their floor, and meet with some of those young girls, and I felt older because I was -

INTERVIEWER: That was my class.

ROYSTER: Exactly.

INTERVIEWER: I have to tell you, I remember looking at your classes and thinking you guys knew more than the nurses that were already graduated. You guys had such – that air of confidence about you. That was inspiring to me to think well someday I'm going to be there. But then when I got to that point I'm not sure I had that confidence.

ROYSTER: Right, and I actually shared that with Kaly and talking again about Mary, because Mary was an excellent student – Mary Beerman. She was – you know, I looked up to Mary and I thought wow, if I could just be half of Mary I really would have, you know, done well in my education because Mary was a sharp student and a very focused student really about her education. Also, we all, had our fun, but you could just tell that about her and I really admired that. I really looked up to her and several of the girls in that class, like you to me, really thought oh dear, I'll never be there. I'll never get that smart, you know, or whatever, and have that much confidence, in my abilities. But it's great in that that was part of the education, having that setup so you could be mentored – if anything inspired from afar, by the senior level students. Like I said, I really felt an interest in gravitating to them to say what can I do for you? You know, what do you need? Some advice on – or let me help allay a fear you might have about your clinical experience. So that door was open if you chose to go through it and a lot of my friends did. I would not say I was unique to that. A lot of us did choose to go and really talk to those freshmen and get to know them and kind of just build a little bit of a bridge there, so we were accessible to them and not feel like they couldn't approach us and ask us questions and you know, find out what they were feeling was normal. And that's the way it is in a lot of things. It's like, if I could just find one other person that feels the way that I do, I won't think I'm weird. [Laughs].

INTERVIEWER: Absolutely.

ROYSTER: If I just get one other person who says oh gosh I felt the same way – and that happened a lot, in my experience with the student life, that we could find another person that felt the same way and you just thought, okay, I'm not gonna flunk out here, I'm not gonna – I can pass this or I can do this, and I can get past whatever obstacles are in my way, and

I'll be stronger because of it, because somebody else has been the same way and they know what I'm talking about, and that is key. Very good.

INTERVIEWER: So talk about dorm life.

ROYSTER: Oh, it was awesome. It was great. The biggest thing – and you've heard this all before – was obviously telephone situation and we all –

INTERVIEWER: Nobody's really talked about the phone situation.

ROYSTER: You're kidding me.

INTERVIEWER: So talk about that.

ROYSTER: The pay phone in the hall yeah, those were the days –

INTERVIEWER: There were three for 40 girls or something like that?

ROYSTER: Yeah, three or four, or maybe even two –

INTERVIEWER: Two or three. I'm not sure there were four.

ROYSTER: Whatever. It was a small number of pay phones that were in the common area on each floor. And if you wanted to make a phone call or receive a phone call, you had to just sit in the common area and wait for someone to get off the phone, and for you to drop in, you know, your coins so that you could make that phone call. Then you had to be very cognizant of the fact that you couldn't stay on forever, unless somebody else shows up, so it had to be a very – and there was so many of the girls that had the long distance boyfriend relationships of course they were calling long distance. Of course, letter writing was huge then. We had the mailbox scene too, where we had to actually go check our mailbox, and get letters from friends that wrote letters. In today's world that is totally foreign. Yet it was the highlight of your day to get done on clinical and be dog tired, walk across, stop by your mailbox and check it. There was no message machine as far as a phone call was concerned. You knew maybe at 4 o'clock you were going to get a call so you had to be back and hopefully sit by that pay phone and hope when you answered it was your call coming in, and not someone else's but the mailroom and the mail – you know, receiving letters and packages from people from home or maybe even a local person, I still got letters from people that I – knew I was in nursing school and would send a note or card or whatever. So that was cool, and you just then were so excited and sitting and waiting for those phone calls and talking on the phone. Sometimes girls were on those phones 'til 2 in the morning, you know, getting those important calls from the boyfriend, and the breakups, and the heartaches that went down on those phone calls . . .

INTERVIEWER: Right there with everybody else.

ROYSTER: With everybody – was pretty impactful – there were no – there might be a secret or two, don't get me wrong, but not many, because life was such that you were just sharing it, you know, and you were dealing with it, and you knew that somebody had had a bad day, or something was not going well with your social life, and you were very sensitive to that, you know. So that was fun. Dorm life.

The raids, you know, we would have –

INTERVIEWER: Talk about Senior Raids.

ROYSTER: Those were cool. Those were fun. Those were obviously unexpected. I mean . . .

INTERVIEWER: How did you feel as a freshman?

ROYSTER: Oh – I mean, a little scared, obviously, because not sure how far they were going to take it, you know. Some of those girls were pretty intense – letting you know that you were a freshman and they were the seniors. Shaving cream and just a lot of – tearing things up kind of thing. Not so – not damaging to the point of being irreparable but you still had some cleanup to do, but it was – it was – like not knowing what was going to happen, then all of a sudden, you going to bed, and hearing the pots and the pans banging together and the screaming and the hollering and the shaving cream coming down the hall, with all of the doors, and it was a hoot.

INTERVIEWER: You couldn't get that door locked fast enough.

ROYSTER: You really – I mean it was so much fun. At the time you were scared, like I said, but it was anticipation, and it was, it was just great. Now there is something I should mention that I experienced, that I really don't know if I should mention this on the tape, that I experienced in my time in the dorm, but I don't know if you've heard about.

INTERVIEWER: Was it the fires?

ROYSTER: The fires, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Other people have talked about it.

ROSYTER: Okay, I just wanted to make sure –

INTERVIEWER: No names have been mentioned.

ROSYTER: Okay good, because that was a horrifying experience, where you got the contrast here between the raids which were unexpected and fun, and non-harming, you had the other unexpected that began with the fires, and that was not good. I mean we lived, for a while there, on edge, because of this reality that was happening.

INTERVIEWER: You didn't know who was doing it, at first?

ROYSTER: No, at first we did not know. Of course, over time it was revealed. But you know, the biggest – I guess the best thing of it was going down in your pajamas and having the Atlanta Fire Department show up, you know, and us standing out there in our skivvies, with, but nothing revealed. Just being out there with these seemingly good-looking – Atlanta Fire Department coming in to rescue us all and they were obviously about their business. But it began and it started up in a way that you thought it was just one of those things, you know somebody just accidentally did something to the ironing board. And then of course it repeated itself to the point of being not an accident. Thankfully that was resolved, but it left . . . We were all relieved of course when it was over, but it was shocking, again, shocking, that, you know, this would happen, that there would be this kind of occurrence in our dormitory, in a place that we all felt very safe. I'll say this; too, I never worried about being in that dormitory. I felt it was a very safe environment. I felt we were very well protected and looked after. Parents didn't worry about me more than a parent would be concerned about their kiddo being away from home, but they felt very comfortable with me in that place. I did too. Again, but when that occurred there was that fleeting moment in time where you felt your safety was jeopardized. And how sad, again, that it was, you know, by a fellow – someone who just was having some issues.

INTERVIEWER: Needed some help.

ROYSTER: Absolutely. Once that was resolved everything was back to normal again and we were all much relieved, obviously, so it left a memory, of course, that you can't really leave out, to some degree.

You told me to talk about dorm life. Being in a high rise where we did talk as roommates and suite-mates, um, what do we do if we can't get out, and we were in a high rise, that doesn't have – you know, I mean, windows opened but there was nothing there, no ledge, nothing really. So you couldn't help but have a little bit of a discussion about that as we all sat around in our dorm rooms after it was over, after we'd had a fire. We just like – well, okay we gotta keep moving though, gotta keep walking through this, keep praying that some way, somehow this will be resolved. Of course it was. Anyway, it made you stop and think a little bit.

Again, how to react. Nowadays our kids today live in a world very much – in much greater ways, they have to think forward. We – that was the first time I'd really every had to

think like that. It didn't last long, thank goodness, and we're back to normal, back to feeling safe and secure again, but it was a little glimpse to the future.

INTERVIEWER: I hope that person – I don't know who it was because nobody's mentioning names – I think she was gone by the time I got there.

ROYSTER: Oh yeah, she was.

INTERVIEWER: I hope that she's gotten help and moved on with life. It was so stressful. It happened during your freshman year, right?

ROYSTER: I think it was my junior year.

INTERVIEWER: Oh was it?

ROYSTER: I think I was at a little bit higher in the building, at that point, when it began. And you know what was so hard sometimes to discern – we got so, kind of on edge a little bit – we had kitchens, you know, in the common area, and somebody would be down there and inevitably, every now and then you would have somebody toasting toast, and it would just accidentally burn, you know, and you were on edge to that scent, to that smell of smoke, you know I smell smoke, I smell smoke, where is it? Oh it's just so-and-so they just burnt toast, they did something in the kitchen. Oh okay, no big deal. It was happening anyway in the nighttime hours, after we all went to bed. You know that was also the hard part, that we were asleep and you didn't even – you know, were you going to be woken up –

INTERVIEWER: Would somebody catch it before it got too bad?

ROYSTER: Right, right, right so it left you – it was a little bit of an uneasy situation, until finally they were putting some pieces of the puzzle together, and they were able to figure it out. So the person was, like I said, asking for help, and that was an unfortunate way to get it, but – so anyway, it was just a memory that we have but we were just thankful it didn't cause anybody any harm.

INTERVIEWER: No absolutely, I'm glad. I'm glad it didn't burn the building down. It did not harm anybody, is most important.

ROYSTER: Absolutely.

INTERVIEWER: So what events do you remember occurring while you were in school at Georgia Baptist that helped to make you a better nurse? You already talked about the ambulance.

ROYSTER: I think my leadership experience was about –

INTERVIEWER: Where did you do that?

ROYSTER: Well, leadership was a new course that was offered my senior year. It was developed by Susan Gunby. I'm going to say, again, Leslie Brown – I cannot remember if that was her married or maiden name – but anyway Leslie and I also, just very close friends. And so we were the first class that had Leadership. And it was phenomenal. It was just a great experience. Coupling that with what I did in the organizational aspect at Georgia Baptist, like I said, yearbook co-editing, with Melanie, and co-president of SGA with Lisa Thomas, and under those directions with the sponsorship, like I said, of Ann Patterson, and Susan Gunby – um, that helped me as a leader in the units and the floors. Again, it's all connected. I mean, it's like, you're challenged in these organizations and they challenged – the sponsors challenged us to make these decisions and to lead as we were called to lead, and in doing so you're transferring that as well to the floor. You're building confidence, you know, in being able to go to the floor experience, or the unit experience, and prioritize, know you know, what's really . . . Now this is minor compared to nursing experience, don't get me wrong, but it still overlaps. But being underneath, you know, again, Ann and Susan more personally by working with them outside the classroom setting or clinical setting, but now is organizational, that helped me, just again, kind of just bolster my ability to be a leader and to want to kind of emulate them, because they made such an impact on my life – as women, as Christian women, as, again, nurses and educators. I just wanted to, you know, be like them kind of thing, you know. So I just, I – everything rolled into one – took it out into the real world upon graduation, and it just helped me not be – not only – we still had lots of moments, because again, this is still academia, this is still clinical. This is now the real world. You're really gonna learn when you get onto the – really learn when we get hands on, you're doing more. You know you go through the orientation and all that good stuff, you still are going to have to step off and be – now it's me. Now it's Kim Royster, RN. And I'm pulling from all of these experiences – from the clinical setting, from the organizational experience, and now I'm going to apply it. I've got the knowledge and I've had the leadership experience in different places, different ways in nursing school, now I've got to put it right into an action, and I was able to do that, you know. It was great. It was really – I could just look back and think then, and I think now, you know, oh my goodness, I'm so thankful that I had all that to help me, you know, practice nursing, you know, and do it, again, not always perfectly and not always with complete confidence, but I knew I could do it. I knew I could because I could remember the conversations that were made to me, the responsibilities that were given to me, as a student, and I do it then, I can do it now. You know? So keep moving forward.

INTERVIEWER: Absolutely. You've kind of answered two questions in one. So the next question was describe the extracurricular activities that you were involved in and how

they contributed to your knowledge development as a nurse. You kind of answered that. Anything else you want to say about that?

ROYSTER: Let me think. Oh it was all good, I'm telling you. I just – you know I loved every minute of everything that I said yes to or was elected to. I was there to enjoy and just embrace everything to the best of my abilities and obviously, you know, scared at times, but obviously excited. Cheerleading was fun. That was probably something that really didn't – it was just fun. We had a great time. Major Netherland, the basketball team – all that experience was just – whether that really helped me with nursing, I don't know that that really did. But it was still an aspect of the school and of the experience that . . .

INTERVIEWER: Made it more enjoyable.

ROYSTER: It did. It really did. We had great team support and student participation, and the games, and then just appreciating us as cheerleaders and . . . It was just really fun. All the things with yearbook and SGA, and I don't know what else. I'd have to look back to see what other things I did but all of it – it just made the whole experience what I wanted it to be, full.

INTERVIEWER: Do you feel like – you know you said you had to travel to the basketball games. How was it juggling your time between studying and clinical? Did that make a difference?

ROYSTER: Yeah it did. It really did because I probably – I mean you had to be a fairly decent person in relation to organizational skills to do that, because you left in the afternoons, and you didn't get back until late at night, and we took our books in the car and we studied as long as we could, we needed to, and that was the fun thing, like I said, the juniors and the seniors, or the juniors in the freshman year. When I was a freshman we were just poring over like Chemistry or Pharmacology and we'd be trying to study in the car going up to the game wherever it was, offsite, and you just had to be that type of a student if you were going to excel, and carry a load of extracurricular activities. I probably, in the end, I probably could have graduated with a much higher GPA (grade point average) than I did, but I chose to be involved.

INTERVIEWER: GPA is not everything.

ROYSTER: It's not everything and I knew that. I thought you know what I mean. I thought I could pull back and not do something but I just had to, I couldn't – that was a part of me. I wanted that. I still studied hard. I never went out like a lot of friends did, went out at night and had other social life. But I really – I saved my social life for the weekends. So during the week I was very much devoted to my schooling and to whatever responsibilities I had

with organizational activities. Many times it was requiring kind of focusing on a meeting or whatever was coming up next. But it didn't overshadow my education by any stretch but it was part of the process. I had to balance and keep myself in check with what I said yes to, outside of Georgia Baptist so I saved my social life for the weekend. Because I went home and I had church at home, and therefore I saw my friends, and if I had a date it was on Saturday night and I could deal with that. Didn't do it during the week because I knew it was going to interfere with my focus of what I needed to get done. I didn't utilize, you know, the downstairs area much –

INTERVIEWER: Dating cubicles?

ROYSTER: I didn't do that part so much, I think maybe once or twice if my boyfriend came up with me on Sunday night maybe to drop me off we'd sit back there for a few minutes.

But you know, that was really my deal, what I was doing at Baptist, and I really felt like I did have to balance it. That we did have to be careful. We were paying attention to our studies and not letting anything go through the cracks even though we were choosing to be involved in some extracurricular things that were very important. Like I said, I realized that my GPA could've been higher. It was very good. I did receive the Davison-Newton-McKee Award at graduation, recognizing leadership as well as academia, so I think in the end there, you know, I didn't expect that. I was kind of hard on myself because my GPA could have been a little bit higher, but it wasn't going to keep me from getting a job. It wasn't, hopefully, going to not help me pass my boards and in the end I felt like I graduated with – being a well-rounded student. That was really my goal, to do that, and joy.

INTERVIEWER: Absolutely. Talk about some struggles that you had while you were there.

ROYSTER: Struggles. Hmm, what struggles did I have? Well initially I guess it probably was, somewhat, I guess feeling accepted, if you can believe that, after all I've said. Because in the beginning at Baptist, I – believe it or not after all this talking – I'm very quiet. I'm not a chatty Cathy unless I'm asked, and then I can definitely, you know, say what I need to say. But in the beginning, I felt my roommate and I were polar opposites. She was the chatty Cathy and I was the quiet one. And I was again, very much about what I told you, you know, I was here to get my education, and I didn't mingle a lot and I didn't run around. I stayed in my room, and my roommate would not be there. She would go and talk and laugh and I figured at some point in time she was going to come and tell me she was not going to be my roommate anymore, because she wanted to be more with those like-minded girls and that's fine. I was like cool, that's great, I understand that, and I'll just be okay to be by myself. And um, as time went on, that changed. I guess my being a quieter person was okay. It was fine. It's a mixed bag.

It's okay to be a little different. I found other girls kind of like that, so I began to feel more comfortable in that freshman year, with the fact that I wasn't going to be any front and center. But in due time, somewhat that changed, but I just didn't change who I was. Does that make sense?

INTERVIEWER: Yeah absolutely.

ROYSTER: Stayed true to myself, but the recognition I was there and cared and wanted to be a part and very much was a part of school revealed itself as time went on. My roommate and I worked through differences of personality, so much so that I like said we never were not roommates. And that was really unique because most people had changed roommates. Debbie and I stayed together and basically we had a love for each other that was really special, respect for each other that was very special. I'll never forget when that ice broke; it was really not until our junior year. We agreed we wanted to stay together and the reason we stayed together was because we were both clean freaks, and neat freaks, and we believed in keeping the bathroom clean. We always cleaned that bathroom. Debbie was from Roswell, Georgia, so she would go home on the weekends. She had a boyfriend so she was definitely home to see him. And we'd come back together on Sunday nights, you know. We always left our bathroom just spotless. We eventually found two other suite-mates, like I said, that – one in our class and one a year ahead – that we all four felt really strong about keeping that bathroom clean. So we had our bathroom regimen and we took turns every weekend. Annette and Deborah, our suite-mates, they were African-American, and so we just had a really, really sweet relationship. It was just really wonderful and we're still in contact today. We were all about it but we – different personalities but bathroom, cleanliness, that was it. So that was our key.

We came back, like I said, junior year, and somewhere about halfway through there Debbie just had a breakup with her boyfriend, and it was very unexpected, it wasn't going to be that way, in her mind. I didn't think so either, but it did happen and so she was very heartbroken. I was there and I listened and it was like – God just worked a really sweet thing there, that we just realized that even though we were different, we really cared deeply about what was happening in each other's lives and from that moment on we were just like the best of friends. It was amazing. It was really amazing. I'm so thankful that we didn't jump ship on that relationship too early. That we could have, because of the differences but we stayed the course and – even if it was because we liked to keep our room clean and our bathroom neat, and all that good stuff, we stayed together as roommates, and then eventually there was an occurrence that really broke the ice, about just talking and being able to relate to one another. From that moment on, through the end of our senior year – Debbie was part of my wedding, and it was just great. We have seen each other, obviously, since then, and anyway that all worked out as far as my . . .

Back to the original question as far as what challenges, it was probably just making relationships, being the type person that I am and that not being maybe key, on top of the list. I've got to have friends first and then I'll find my course in the education, then find the friendships later, and so it worked out, it all worked out.

INTERVIEWER: My first roommate, her father had just died, like a month before she came. She was from Dunwoody so it wasn't a long way but she cried every night and she only lasted one quarter. It was hard, because I came from out of state and I really was looking forward to developing that relationship with my roommate. I ended up one of my suite-mates, we got along better than she and her roommate, so we switched and it worked out fine.

ROYSTER: I know that was a neat thing, the way that the roommate and suite-mate thing, and the challenge of living with someone. I came from a home where I was the oldest. I had my own bedroom. You just – even though I was just down the street compared to my friend who were from out of state or South Georgia. We had a lot of girls from that direction. I was very homesick. It was really a big transition, to leave home, and like you said, right out of high school, and even though I was going into a familiar area, it was like, how do I be homesick? I grew up here, you know. But I loved my family. Very, very close to my family. That separation, being the first one to do it, out of the nest, was very traumatic.

INTERVIEWER: I'm sure it was.

ROYSTER: But my mother and my sister, we laugh to this day about my mother was known on the hall. She baked goods and she would always – a lot of times send my little sister up – my physical little sister would drop by and Mother would have driven downtown and send Christy in, and Christy got to where she knew the housemothers – hey, she'd tell who she was and who she was here to see – go to the elevator, and they'd allow Christy to come up. Christy would bring just boxes of homemade chocolate chip cookies. Mother would make these cookies for all the girls that wanted to stop by my room and eat a cookie. That was sweet. That was fun, because it was a little like taste of home for a lot of the girls that came by that were kind of in the vicinity of the room and they'd drop in and have a cookie or two and, you know, just a little homemade goody always goes a long way, you know, when you're tired and when you're working hard and you're away from your family. So anyway, that was my mom's way of contributing to the scene.

INTERVIEWER: That's really sweet that she did that.

ROYSTER: She really was doing all that and thinks that's really neat that she could be a part of that in a little way, you know.

INTERVIEWER: That's wonderful.

ROYSTER: That's the beauty again of all girls, you know, that kind of suite arrangement that we had there, with being just all girls. We could all just kind of hang out and if anybody was in their underwear or their bra it didn't matter. You could just run down the hall. You know, nobody was like doing that, obviously, a lot, but it was just that comfort that you were comfortable and you just didn't have to . . . um, you could go out there with your hair in a towel . . . I think that was in the yearbook, somebody took a picture of me with hair in a towel standing outside a room writing on one of the little boards. I was writing a note probably to Debbie or something and I was – hair was in a towel, you know. I told Kaly when she went to Georgia for her first two years, she – I said – she had a communal bathroom situation at Georgia in her dorm, and I said I'm glad you do, because you need to learn a little bit about getting past, you know, this inhibition thing, not that you're – not that you're going to be an exhibitionist, you know, you just have to be comfortable doing what you've got to do. If you're on a floor with all girls, you know, it's like learning to just live with other people and get along, and just relate, and I mean . . . It was just a great learning experience, to the social aspect of life.

INTERVIEWER: I was never in a sorority but it kind of made me feel like that was in one big sorority.

ROYSTER: Right. Exactly. You had a little taste of what it would be like to be in that, and be all connected, and have a common thread, and share life together, and do life together and just really was sweet and fun and good growing experience. Absolutely. So challenges, yes, there were some, but not many compared to what was really a good time, you know, really fun.

INTERVIEWER: All right, so let's talk about the seventies. The beginning of the decade the Vietnam War was still going on. That was over by the time you were there, but we had Nixon and his political scandals, there was Ford, and Carter was President at the end of the decade. There was inflation, and gas lines, and things like that. Did any of that affect your decision to go into nursing, or your decision to go to Georgia Baptist, or affect your education in any way at all?

ROYSTER: No, no it did not. I'm very much politically-minded, very much historically-minded. All those things were just the current events of the day, but nothing that changed me. I guess I was more concerned with my family. Now that was definitely the impact, because my dad was 40 years, like I said, employed in Atlanta, and I was right here and knew the impact that gas, inflation, and all that was having on his business. But I worried, I guess, a little bit about the fact that they were paying for my education, and the impact of the economy at that time and things that were happening just concerned me about Daddy's job and his business, which did

stay afloat and everything was fine but it was, I just didn't like that, you know. There was this hardship kind of thing going on in the world that was affecting, you know, him, and then knowing that I was also costing them money, so to speak, in education, but they wouldn't have had that any other way, you know. I was thankful at the same time that I hadn't gone to a bigger university where the cost would be even greater. Georgia Baptist was in a reasonable amount that, you know, we could afford that. It still was, you know, something that I thought about but it did not really affect me. It did not stop me from going to school, or it didn't scare me, or anything like that. No, I just knew that, first of all, God's got it all in his hands and he's in control, so it was just part of life and there's always history being made of some kind, good and bad and we just . . .

I guess politically I wasn't . . . I voted for the first time in the seventies. It was a divided house in my home. That is to be up before the nursing school because again I entered nursing school . . . well I guess I was in nursing school when I voted. I didn't turn . . . well I turned 18 in July, of '76 –

INTERVIEWER: Depends on what year was an election year.

ROYSTER: '76 wasn't it? It was. I'm trying to remember. But anyway, divided house. I was more the outside the box thinker. Parents very much ingrained in the way of the south, you know. Do it because, you know, he was the governor. No wrong. I'm going to be out of the box and cause the controversy here and tell you some other things you need to be thinking about, so anyway. So therefore when that election didn't go my way, it went their way I was like, oh well, you know, I'll have to ride this one out. So I think if he was President during my years at Baptist.

INTERVIEWER: Carter, it was the next election when Reagan defeated Carter, I was – that must have been like maybe '80, and you were already graduated, because I voted for Reagan. And my classmates and friends were not happy that I voted that way.

ROYSTER: Right, the out of the box thinker –

INTERVIEWER: How could you, because he's a Georgian!

ROYSTER: No, that's not why you do that! I know. See I guess, you know, my dad had gone to college and it was the University of Georgia, and my mom did not, so – but, very smart, just from a very large family and not economically able to afford college - because of the timeframe, we're talking about the Depression years - so obviously a whole different animal. . . . But, so I had the business side in my family, of knowing why we need to be careful in our voting, because of business, you know, and now we know more - obviously we've become even

more educated as the general population if they choose to do so, in understanding the ramifications of the political, you know, arena. And so then it was basically homegrown, you know, serve the state, blah, blah, blah – no. I was coming to the part of the beginning of the generations going forward that were going to look at the bigger picture, of what this particular party – not just the person – was going to do for the country and for the business and the world politics and world economy and so forth and so on. You know, then my husband being military opened up a whole other aspect of me, and me working in the military, or not working but serving as a volunteer in the military on the bases, and really understanding more the effect that the leader of our country has, you know, on the military, and how that's perceived around the world. Um, my eyes were – again another sidebar to nursing – but you really do, again, I was able because of my nursing to really see things really differently, even though I wasn't a military nurse, I was serving on the bases during the Gulf Wars and times when things were very unstable. Very unstable in our world, and I chose not to come home during those times Marv was deployed. I stayed and served, and volunteered on the base, because I felt like that was my calling – to help and to render support, mostly emotional support, psychological support to those family members who were separated from their loved ones in really volatile situations. For the first time since Nam we were really in a war that was involving just a whole different level of uncertainty. My husband being deployed to mass casualties of proportions that we never really – yes, Vietnam took a lot but it was going to be of a different type and different caliber of destruction that we were going to be looking at and it was all unknown. Dealing as a nurse in that realm and again not in the years of nursing school but just later on it really was very, very interesting as to how you applied your nursing knowledge to people in an uncertain time yet we really didn't face so – we had some uncertainties in our generation in the 70s with that time I was in nursing school but this was a whole new ballgame. Yet I really felt prepared, that what I'd experienced at Georgia Baptist was – I was in a good place. I really felt like everything I'd had, Psych nursing and everything I'd had out at other places – I knew the world was changing, and it was – I'd already seen change. So I could at least accept that. It wasn't like oh no what do I do now, you know, so I felt that my education came through again.

INTERVIEWER: So somebody else I interviewed mentioned the day that Elvis died, in connection with your name. Do you feel like talking about that?

ROYSTER: I really just remember being very emotional about it. I don't know what Robin said, but I was an Elvis lover, for sure, and I remember hearing the news on the elevator when I came in at night, and not believing it, not believing that he had died because that was just not the icon that was going to ever die, you know. I had seen him in person, perform two or three times, and he was just great. I loved every movie he made. I was just a fan, a super big fan. Not one to hang the, you know, the pictured on the wall –

INTERVIEWER: The velvet Elvis?!

ROYSTER: Yeah, I didn't go that far with it but I certainly enjoyed his music, had every album he'd cut and had seen every movie he ever made, and so when he passed that was very traumatic. It was sad. It was a sad day. Just like the nation, it really impacted me. You know, that was probably one of – if I recall to people, like where were you when? Do you know where you were with all these traumatic events in life? I remember that day like it was yesterday. It made quite an impression.

INTERVIEWER: She remembered it too, so – there were quite a few in that decade, famous people who – kind of like now, that died of drug overdoses and things like that.

ROYSTER: I think what was so heartbreaking for Elvis, for me, was that he physically had health problems. Last time I saw him perform, of course, he was very overweight but you still didn't think of it being a life ending situation. He just probably was eating too much on the road and not exercising, you know, but then to find out that he just had so many issues going on that he couldn't deal and didn't get the assistance and help that he probably should have. You know, just like, it could've been different. You're kind of sad because that kind of talent, of any kind, that's lost early, you just feel sorry about that, and you really wish that they could have received the help that they had available, especially someone that had the funds to get the care they needed. It's a whole different ballgame when it's someone who doesn't have the means, but when you've got the basically at your fingertips you could just call any expert in the country and come and get me and take me to your facility, and clean me up and get me well and yeah I'll take a leave of absence and a sabbatical in the public eye for, you know, a year if that's necessary, but if I come out whole and I could still perform, and you know do what I love to do it's worth it but he chose not to, that type of thing as you kind of go back and think about it you're very sad, just the loss of the talent. It was an impactful day.

INTERVIEWER: So tell how – this is the last question – so tell how the education you received at Georgia Baptist facilitated your transition into nursing practice.

ROYSTER: Okay, well again, leading off from graduation and stepping off immediately into the NICU at Georgia Baptist with Reni Stafford, the head nurse, and Mescal Hunt was already there, so I felt like. . . There were several graduates from my class – Kathy Onches and Kathy Sutherland and we were all in the same grade, same class, and got hired there in the NICU. Um, I felt – I felt scared initially, just because we didn't get a lot of NICU experience. That just wasn't on the docket. We got mostly normal newborn. So we were looking at a high acuity. You know, these kids are very, very sick and yet you're going to . . . And NICU nursing has changed tremendously. We know that. But that was hands-on; I mean you really were taking care. It was scary. But I didn't feel like again I had had enough of that

but I did a lot of . . . I had to go back and do – as well as I felt prepared for the leadership aspect, being confident that I could do this – I had to do a lot of self-teaching aside from the normal orientation. I ended up being a preceptor up there, at the NICU at Baptist, because I did really pore over every note that I had, and more. The neonatologists that were there at the time were great, helping us new grads, you know, learn. We had a lot of respiratory therapists that were great and helped us learn how to manage the vents and how to – we didn't necessarily do a lot of the dialing down, but – or dialing up – but we were definitely integral. So integral in that whole process. Now it's just so different, but, you know, I just felt like . . . I just knew I just felt like I could do it. At Georgia Baptist I had fear of the unknown in that I needed more knowledge but fear of the clinical experience was not a problem because we got so much clinical experience that I knew my way there. I knew my way around. So that in itself was very comforting, in that people knew me. I mean it was like I had been over in that hospital so much during that course of time that I could go anywhere in that hospital and somebody at least knew who my face was, and that was so reassuring, so you didn't have that whole indoctrination to a brand new building, where's the cafeteria, where is this? I didn't have any of that, so all I had to do was focus on my job and wanting to do it well. So I felt like I'd had enough clinical experience that I wasn't a total – like it wasn't so foreign to me that I'd never seen any of this. I had seen it all. That was the point. If you didn't put your hands on it in clinical you saw it, you observed. The labs – the thing I remember – I loved going to the autopsies. That may sound kind of odd but it was what I did enjoy and again that desire to be a doctor was coming back and the instances because any time they made the announcement and that was the beauty of having a –and having the interns at a teaching hospital. Georgia Baptist was always in mode of teaching. And so if we weren't being lectured by an actual, you know, physician, - physicians would come and lecture as part of the lecturing process at Baptist, the clinics that were held at Baptist, the indigent care clinics were awesome experiences for us to get a lot of hands on. Then you had the – like I said the interns. Anything was being done, any procedure, we're fixing to put in a subclavian, call students. Who on the floor has time? You can come observe autopsies – if you want to come you can come. I went to anything and everything I could go to see, you know, and all I did was stand there. The OR (operating room) experience at Baptist was phenomenal. I mean, that was scary. You talk about, again, something scary, because you were told you couldn't touch anything and you're trying to be as still as possible and still somebody broke the field and oh my word, you know, how embarrassing was that, you know, but the doctors were so kind and so considerate, and the interns and the residents that were there were okay, you know, the other student nurse broke the field.

INTERVIEWER: I passed out in the OR. I did. It was terrible. I had stayed up late the night before working on a paper or studying or something and didn't eat enough breakfast and it was a mastectomy, so they used the bovie and I smelled the burning flesh. I just remember

everything looked, that digital kind of look, you know? And I remember the surgeon saying she doesn't look very good, get her out of here. The next thing I knew I was laying on a stretcher out in the hallway.

ROYSTER: You didn't hit your head?

INTERVIEWER: Somebody caught me.

ROYSTER: They tolerated us. They allowed us to do anything and everything we wanted to do and they included us and I always thought that was key. We were never looked upon as, oh it's the student nurses, don't call them, no call the student nurses let them come and see and enjoy this experience as much as possible. So I felt like that that was an asset, tremendously, and again, going forward and stepping off into the real world, that I had seen and done so many things that were either directly related to my teachings at Baptist or related to the fact that we were in a teaching hospital and we had all these other experiences that were afforded to us because of the interns and the residents program and therefore we were a part of that. So you couple all of that together I mean goodness gracious when you left, if you weren't prepared I don't know who in the world you would blame. I really don't, except yourself, if you just didn't bite it off and enjoy it and take hold of it . . . Um, I remember even – you know, if you missed a test, which I did, I got sick, and I missed a test and Miss Tribble. I stayed friends with her. I don't know if you had Miss Tribble for the biologies and the anatomy and the physiology and I stayed friends with her for forever because she went to Social Circle and so did my in-laws so they would care about you to come and be able to help you, you know, get that test taken in an environment that was non-threatening, you'd be the only one taking it, and I remember them, just again, wanting you prepared. Like I said, going back to – they were for you. They were for you. They were not there to fail you unless you did not do your part. I thought they did their part in getting us as well prepared as possible. So stepping off into the clinical experience for the first time it was basically again, not because I hadn't seen a lot of things and done a lot of things, but it was just, I didn't get a lot of knowledge in NICU, in special care of the neonate, that I could take that on myself. I was willing obviously to do that and learn and just shadow everybody you know that I could shadow in that experience just to increase my knowledge, but it wasn't because I didn't have a good baseline.

INTERVIEWER: They taught you how to teach yourself. How to access the information and use it.

ROYSTER: Yes. Absolutely, yeah. I actually became part of the audit committee at Baptist while I was there and so I, you know, they'd asked me to be on that committee, to go look over charts and be able to pick up anything that wasn't up to snuff for the sake of an audit that was being performed if there was a legal issue. I thought that was even

good, being able to do that now as a Registered Nurse, to just learn more, about just reading charts and seeing how people were recording things, and I remember there was something else that I did in the nursing education experience that was maybe part of the leadership, but anyway. It was just all good.

INTERVIEWER: That's all the questions I have but is there anything else you want to say? Any other stories you want to tell or anything like that? You've given great information.

ROYSTER: I don't know if I've answered all your questions and given you anything that was life-changing for your paper or your dissertation that you're working on and I'll probably go home and maybe think about some more things so that's great we have the opportunity to maybe add something to this if I think through it or look. I didn't even look; I just grabbed these off my shelf. I thought I'd bring these along if I needed to help with my memory.

I guess the biggest thing to me was just the faculty and all the wonderful relationships that I felt we developed and the fun side of the faculty – I keep using the word fun, excuse me I need to think of a better adjective – the faculty was so, again, because of the environment, they were connected to us in so many ways. While we knew there was a limitation there, again had that respect for authority. They were there to reprimand you if necessary, and correct you, and if you didn't do your job, didn't do, you know, the work they assigned, you were going to know about it. They weren't going to coddle you, but there was also the side that they participated with us. They came to events that we were hosting and got involved, and dressed up, and joined in and did whatever we needed them to do. Some of them of course were Georgia Baptist graduates and they knew legacy. They knew what it was we were doing and trying to do with an event, or whatever it was and so they wanted to be a part of that, because it was something they had done in nursing school too. But those that came in at that point we had that were part, had been in other locations for their education and they joined in and they got involved, and they enjoyed the legacy and understood what Georgia Baptist was all about, I thought that was just amazing. I think that enhanced, made us want to learn to emulate them and make them proud of their students and see that we were listening to what they were telling us. It was part of a team effort. I thought that was just really a blessing to have that, so I can't say enough about the faculty.