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2009

An Interview with Joy Snyder

An Oral History Conducted by Lisa Gioia-Acres

Heart to Heart Oral History Project

Oral History Research Center at UNLV
University Libraries
University of Nevada Las Vegas

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University of Nevada Las Vegas, 2009

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These recorded interviews and transcripts have been made possible through the generosity of Dr. Harold Boyer and the Boyer Foundation. The Oral History Research Center enabled students and staff to work together with community members to generate this selection of first-person narratives. Participants in the Heart to Heart Oral History Project thank the university for the support given that allowed an idea of researching early health care in Las Vegas the opportunity to flourish.

All transcripts received minimal editing that included the elimination of fragments, false starts and repetitions in order to enhance the researcher's understanding of the material. All measures have been taken to preserve the style and language of the narrator. In several cases, photographic images accompany the collection and have been included in the bound edition of the interview.

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Preface

Joy Snyder, born and raised in Pennsylvania, is the daughter of Jean Dasinto and stepdaughter of Ray Hunt. Though she was raised thinking she was an only child, she shares that as an adult, she was contacted by an aunt who gave her information about an Austrian half-sister. The half-sister had tracked the family through WWII records on her biological father!

Joy was raised in a very large extended Italian family (her maternal grandmother was first-generation Italian) and became the first in her family to attend college. She had decided early on that she wanted to be a nurse and chose to attend Temple University Hospital in Philadelphia. She recounts memories of her earliest work there, which began the first week of school.

After graduation from nursing school, Joy married her childhood sweetheart, William (Bill) Snyder. They made the move to Las Vegas in 1978 and Joy found work right away at Desert Springs Hospital. She worked there about six months and then took maternity leave after the birth of their second son. When she returned to work, it was at Sunrise Hospital (early 1979) in the newborn nursery.

Joy comments on many aspects of her career, including the informal approach to health care, the effects of desert climate on mothers and newborns, and the changes she has seen at Sunrise Hospital. She also comments on adoption practices in Las Vegas, drug-addicted babies, and cultural attitudes that appear during the birthing process.

Today Joy is retired and her husband Bill is close to retiring. They feel a strong connection to Las Vegas (Bill has a school named after him), but maintain a second home in New York for their trips back East to visit friends and family. They also keep up with various community activities, including book clubs and running clubs for the children at William Snyder Elementary School.

This is Lisa Gioia-Acres. Today is December 17th, 2009 and I'm here in the home of Joy Snyder, a former nurse here in Las Vegas. I'm conducting an oral history interview for the Heart to Heart project at UNLV.

Hi, Joy. How are you?

I'm fine. Thank you.

Joy, before I talk to you a little about your life as a nurse in the medical community in Las Vegas, I'd like you to tell me about your early life. Where were you born and when were you born?

I was born in Easton, Pennsylvania in 1948 and had lived in Easton my whole life until 1978 when we moved to Las Vegas.

Why don't you talk about mom and dad and what their occupations and their names are.

My mother's name was Jean Dasinto, her maiden name. And my father's -- well, I was really raised by my stepfather whose name is Ray Hunt. He is still alive. My mother is deceased. And my mother was a legal secretary and my father worked in a factory. And Easton is a small, blue-collar town about 60 miles north of Philadelphia.

Do you have brothers and sisters?

I have none. Well, I should say I spent my whole life thinking I had none. And about three years ago I found out that I have a half sister who was from my biological father and was conceived during World War II in Austria. And she found me.

Very interesting. Talk about that. What was that like for you?

Which is very interesting. I mean it was a shock.

Did you get a phone call or a letter?

I actually got a phone call from my biological father's sister-in-law, which would be my aunt. My half sister's daughter had contacted them through World War II records. My father had been in Austria prior to meeting my mother, and this woman got pregnant. He wanted to bring her back and help her out and she wanted none of that. So she stayed there. He returned to the United States and never even knew what the child was, you know, that the baby was born and never even had any idea.

But he at least knew that there was a child out there.

Yeah, he did, but he never mentioned it at all. So my mother never knew because my mother was a really upfront person. So, you know, she would have told me. I mean that's just the way she was. And she never mentioned it at all. So three years ago I get this phone call saying, you know, there's a possibility that you may have a relative.

Have you spoken to this person?

We actually met. I was planning -- I had already actually planned a trip to England. I found this out in April and I had planned a trip to England in May. I was already going over there. As it turns out she has five children. One of her daughters lives in England. And I said I am already coming over there, you know, in six weeks. So we met six weeks later. I met her and I met two of her children. And we have been corresponding since then.

Does she look like you?

Actually a little bit, yeah. From the nose down we look very, very much alike. And a couple of her children are incredibly striking resemblances of our father, which is very spooky.

I'll bet.

Yeah. I mean --

What a fascinating story.

Yeah. So she always knew or assumed that she had some relatives because she knew that her father was an American soldier. So, you know, her assumption had always been, from the time that she was a child on, that her father had come back to the United States and had a family.

Wow. Fascinating.

But, you know, of course, on the other side I had no idea.

Well, growing up in Pennsylvania was it a small town?

Oh, about 40,000. Yeah. So very much so.

So growing out without brothers and sisters, which is kind of unusual for that era --

Uh-huh. Yeah.

-- what was your childhood like?

My mother was Italian. I was raised with a very large, extended Italian family. My grandmother had many sisters and brothers and I had lots of second cousins. It was a very happy, big Italian family, so it was great.

Were your parents very involved in your childhood development and was school very important to you and your family?

It was. My grandmother was first-generation Italian. My mother always -- I mean desperately wanted to go to college and could not. She was very bright and just was never able to do it. I think her lifetime goal was for me to be able to do that. And so, you know, that was what she always wanted me to do was to go to school because she never could. So I was actually the first person in my family to ever go to college.

And so growing up did you know what you wanted to be when you --

I did because I always had an interest in science. And I think -- you know, our generation at that time -- I mean I'm 60 years old now -- in a smaller town, our options were not what they are today for women and especially in a small, working-class, blue-collar town. You know, you were a teacher. You were a nurse. You were a hairdresser. You were a secretary. And that was pretty much it. So, you know, nurse was the job that I decided that I wanted to do. And it worked for me. I mean I really enjoyed it. I liked it. I like science. So had I been from a larger city I probably would have wanted to go to medical school. But the option was not there at that time. And the shove to do that wasn't there, you know, being from a small town.

What was the high school you graduated from?

Easton Area High School.

And then where did you go to college and what made you decide to go there?

I went to Temple in Philadelphia, which was actually at that time a three-year diploma nursing school program. They didn't have a four-year program at that time. It was almost nonexistent in our area at that time. There weren't very many. I wanted to get out of Easton and go to a larger university hospital, so I applied for a few in the Philadelphia area and chose Temple. And I liked it. It was a 1500-bed hospital at the time. It was a huge place.

Was it difficult to get accepted?

Yeah.

But you got there.

But, you know, I got in.

How about your friends and your peers, were they also going into nursing? And did you go

to school with a lot of your --

I had one friend that went to Temple with me and she ended up not staying. And she was the only one. There were a couple of girls in my graduating class I think that went to other nursing schools, but none of my personal friends.

So after you graduated after three years, did you go on to any further education?

I did not. No.

Okay. And so what was the degree that you received?

I had a diploma in nursing, which is what you got then.

It's a little different today, isn't it? There's RN. There's LPN. Was there a difference?

Correct. I have an RN. I mean when you had a three-year diploma, you were an RN. So at that time we went to school for three years. We had four weeks off a year. That was it.

Wow.

So we actually ended up going to school longer than kids go to school for a four-year degree now. But we didn't have all the liberal arts stuff that kids go to get a bachelor's in nursing now. So it was very concentrated. And at that time we had more practical. We would go to class -- all the diploma programs worked that way. You'd go to class for maybe, you know, six months and then there'd be three months that you would work. And I mean you would actually be staffed in the hospital.

And you lived in Philadelphia at the time you were going to school.

I lived in Philadelphia. Yeah, you lived on the -- all the hospitals had dormitories right there. And you were actually considered staff. I mean the hospital staffed with students. You were cheap labor is what you were.

Exactly. Do you have any memories from that time of anything that you'd like to share?

I have a lot of memories from that. It was an unbelievable place. The first time I -- you know, I was very naïve because I had never done any work in a hospital before going to nursing school. I had never even -- I mean I think I had visited somebody twice. So I was really, really cold. And I walked onto a 56-bed ward, a men's surgical ward. Those places don't even exist today. That was the first place they took us like the first week of school. And I remember our instructor saying to us we're going to show you something you'll probably never see again in your life, so we want you

to see this. And there was a man who had had a tragic accident. And his wife had thrown a bucket of lye on him. I mean it's horrible.

So it's not an accident -- or it wasn't an accident.

Well, it wasn't really an accident. Yeah. I mean it was a horrible thing. But she said, you know, you will never see this probably again in your life and so I wanted you to see what this looks like. I mean that was my initiation into nursing the first week.

Any doubts at that time that you'd made the right decision?

Not really. I mean I was okay. I was okay with it. It was fascinating actually to me. I mean sad for the man.

So after you graduated were you dating? Did you meet your husband there?

Actually my husband and I were high school sweethearts.

And what is your husband's name?

His name is Bill Snyder. So we met in high school. He was in the army the whole time I was in nursing school, and then we got married after I got out of school. He went to Vietnam after that. After he got back from Vietnam, we lived back in Pennsylvania for a couple years and then we moved out here.

And what does your husband do for a living?

He's an architect.

Did he get his training back East?

He went to school part time back there. And then we moved out here and he actually got his architectural license through -- I don't even know what they call it anymore. I mean he just did it by total experience and he went and took the boards. You cannot do that anymore. I mean he now sits on the Nevada State Board. And he has been a master juror for the whole United States for testing. So he's done well with it.

Wow. So what brought you guys out from eastern Pennsylvania to here?

My husband came out for a fight with Larry Holmes.

A fight?

Boxing.

Oh, boxing.

Larry Holmes is from our hometown. He was a boxing champion and he was fighting Muhammad Ali I think. A bunch of guys from our hometown wanted to come out and see the fight, so my husband came out and looked around. He said there's a lot of construction out there; would you like to move to Las Vegas? And I said no. And he said how about for a year? And so here we are 30 years later.

So what year did you come?

1978.

Okay. What was it like back then when you first came here?

Well, I hated it. But that's beside the point I guess.

What did you hate about Las Vegas?

Well, I mean it was a complete geographic and cultural shock for me. I had never been to the West Coast at all.

And what month did you come out here?

We came out in October.

Okay. So that was good.

Yeah. Well, we came out for a week in August because he said if I take you out in August and you can stand the heat, then we figure we can make it. But we ended up moving out, then, two months later in October. I mean it was just such a difference compared to Pennsylvania. Pennsylvania's green and beautiful.

What was it like for you being the only child leaving mom and dad?

Well, it was leaving everything. I mean it wasn't just mom and dad. We had been married for almost ten years at that point. We had a life. We had friends. And all of our families lived all in the same town. I cried a lot. I cried a great deal.

Yeah. Did you have children?

We had one son and I was pregnant. I found out I was pregnant like a month and a half before we were moving. So we had no jobs and I was pregnant and we had an almost five-year-old kid and we moved. So it's worked for us.

So tell me what you did when you first got here and then how you became a nurse in Las Vegas.

Well, we had traveled out here and stayed for about a week in August. And I went around to some of the hospitals. And they all said don't bother coming out until you have an address. You will probably not have a problem getting a job. And so that's what I did. When we moved then in October, I just went. And I mean I could have had two and three jobs within days. So there was no problem getting a job. I got a job I think within two days of moving here.

Where did you first move to?

We lived in an apartment behind -- like across from the Boulevard Mall, Spencer and Maryland, which is now like the 89109 ZIP code, you know. But at that time it was a real nice little apartment complex. And it was really lovely in there at that time. Unfortunately it's not now, but it was at the time.

When you came out did you have to take any tests or get certified in Nevada?

No. We had reciprocity with licensing. So I had my Pennsylvania license and I was able to just get my Nevada license through reciprocity. So that was no problem.

Okay. And did you specialize in anything?

I had worked mostly ICU and just med surg back East. When I came out here I worked on a surgical floor at Desert Springs and I was pregnant. So I worked for about six months -- five and a half, six months until I had my baby at Desert Springs.

Desert Springs?

Yeah.

And one of the questions is: Did you have a problem being pregnant and getting a job? And did they know you were pregnant?

Yeah, they knew I was pregnant. And I did not have a problem.

They were good with it?

Yeah. They had no problem.

And how much time did you take for maternity leave?

Let's see. I had my son in May and I went back to work in September. But I did not go back to work at the same place. I ended up going back to work at Sunrise.

And what was the reason for that?

I just wanted to do something a little different. And I needed the night shift, you know, the

11-to-7 shift because with baby-sitting, you know, we had the two kids. And I wanted to work the night shift so that Bill could be home with the kids at night and I could work and then I would be home during the day when he was at work. So that's how we worked it. I wanted to work part time, so I ended up working in the newborn nursery.

What was that like? You had been married for a while. But how is that -- you're in a new community. What was it like for you to not see your husband as much? And what was day care and whatever being a working mom during that time? How was that?

Well, it was different. You know, we were fortunate enough that there were -- I mean we were able to work out the day care between the two of us when I went back after I had the baby. When we first moved, I was pregnant and we just had the one child. I was able to find -- there was a lady that lived right upstairs in our apartment complex and she baby-sat. So it really worked very well for me. I mean I was amazed at the 24-hour thing here, though, because, of course, back in little Easton, Pennsylvania we didn't have that. So all these day care centers that were open had 24-hour care -- I mean there was nothing like that in our hometown. There were barely day care centers. I mean that was back in the late 70s. They were just starting to pop up in our area back home. They were very, very rare.

Why don't you talk a little bit about the differences between the kind of work you did and the people that you saw and what health care was like in Pennsylvania versus when you came out here?

I think when I first moved here and I worked at Desert Springs one of the biggest things that struck me was the informality of health care. I was so used to doctors coming in in lab coats and ties. And they would come in -- I'll never forget one guy coming in at Desert Springs making rounds in really, really, really, really, really short running shorts. And I mean I was appalled. I mean we just did not ever see such a thing in a hospital back east. I couldn't believe my eyes. And I felt there was a lot of rudeness. I mean there was so much more respect I felt back east between doctors and nurses. And I didn't find that here.

Can you give us an example, maybe something that you might recall?

I mean I can't probably remember any specific. I just think it was an overall feeling. I mean just because it's just been so many years ago I can't think of things. But I mean the respect just wasn't

there. The way you were talked to, I mean I was not used to being talked to the way the doctors talked to nurses here. I mean it's like you come in in shorts. Somehow you're not going to --

So the way the apparel kind of translated into how they approached --

Exactly.

-- their job.

Yeah. Exactly. It was a big eye-opener and not necessarily a good one.

Right. And how was the rapport between nurses, nursing staff?

Nurses were okay. Yeah. I think we all had a good rapport. You know, everybody came from someplace else, you know, the old Las Vegas story, of course. And so there were very few that didn't. You know, I find it interesting that it seems like nurses seem to have gravitated to Las Vegas for different reasons than physicians did at that time. Nurses followed their husband or were military or whatever. And there were a bunch of military physicians at the time as well. And I think they were a little -- I hate to -- you're going to delete some of this I'm assuming, right? I mean they were a little higher standard. You won't put all this, right?

You can take out anything you want.

Okay. But I mean there were -- truly when I first came here, they always said people that couldn't get a license in other states would always gravitate to Las Vegas. If you lost your license in another state, you could end up getting it in Nevada.

Let me ask you this: as a professional did you see a difference in the quality of care because of that?

I would say sometimes. Not always. But I would say sometimes, yeah. And I would say that that did improve over the years.

Standards have been raised.

Standards have been raised a great deal, yeah.

Can you explain why that might be?

Well, I think number one it had to. I mean you can't live under the Wild West theory anymore. I mean those days are long gone. Las Vegas being what it was 30 years ago, things have just changed. And it had to. The mob's gone. I mean things have changed. So everything had to change with it. And medicine did as well.

What kinds of things did you and your husband do for entertainment after hours? Or did you have a chance?

Yeah. Not much because we didn't know anybody here. And so to have two kids and not know anybody and try to find a babysitter at night was pretty hard. We ended up moving to our little neighborhood. You know, you end up in the neighborhood because in about six months we bought a house. And it was all young families and everybody had little kids. So we ended up being friends with all those people. And some of them have ended up being lifelong friends. So we do what young families do. We get together.

At what point did you stop missing home, if ever?

It was probably about five years. And I finally decided that we weren't going to be moving back. Of course, I was, you know, bag packed, ready to go at any minute. And I said, well, I can either stay here and be miserable or stay here and not be miserable. And so, you know, I mean come on. What's the sense? I might as well get with the program here. And I'm glad I did. I mean it's been -- Las Vegas has been very, very good to us. I have no complaints. And we're happy.

So how long did you work as a nurse?

I worked at -- well, I worked, what, four or five -- well, you mean total?

Well, yeah.

I graduated from nursing school in '69. So I graduated from Temple in '69 and I retired in 2000.

And not quite 30 years of that in Las Vegas?

Yes. And I worked at Sunrise from 1970 -- let's see. My son was born in '79. So September of '79 till 2000.

How was that experience for you?

Great. Yeah. I had a very good experience at Sunrise.

As far as Sunrise Hospital goes, did it change over time and, if so, in what ways?

Oh, definitely. Yeah. I mean it became more corporate. You know, that's all hospitals have become. You know, insurance has changed, as we all are well aware of. Therefore, nursing has changed. Physician care has changed. Everything's changed.

Did you need to go back to school periodically?

No. I mean we all -- to keep up your nursing license you need your 30 CEUs. And I don't know if

that's changed since I've retired. But you had to get 30 continuing ed credits every two years for your license. I think it was every two. Maybe it was every four. I can't even remember now. Whatever the licensing was I can't remember now. But other than that we didn't have to do anything else.

Talk about the patients that you took care of. Do any stand out in your mind? And what difference might there be from the care that they would have received back east?

Well, I worked newborn nursery and postpartum my whole Sunrise career. I used to float to neonatal off and on but mostly newborn nursery. I was the charge nurse in newborn nursery for over ten years, about 12 years in there. I mean it's very different than back east in that -- well, in a few different ways. Well, number one, when I first started we had a lot of drug babies. And in a smaller community we didn't have as many. So that was a newer experience for me. And the care of them has, of course, changed a great deal over the years because it used to be years ago they would send them all to Child Haven until mom had drug rehab. Now they just send them home because Child Haven is too overwhelmed for them to even go anywhere anymore. As long as mom's got a house, they send them home now. So that changed. In those 20 years that care of those kinds of babies has changed a great deal. I was also not used to a lot of emigrant babies. Of course, we saw a great deal of those here. And we had a lot more adoptions here than I ever had back in Pennsylvania.

Very interesting.

We had a lot of adoptions from California here because --

Meaning people from California were adopting babies?

People from California would adopt babies, yeah. There were some lawyers in California that would hook up with people here. So we had a lot of those. There were a lot of -- the Mormon Church had a lot. You know, they have a pretty active adoption agency within their own. And so there were a lot of those. We just didn't see many adoptions when I was back east.

And in your experience can you give an explanation as to why maybe there were more adoptions here?

Well, I mean obviously maybe I was just more aware of them because of the unit that I worked in. But I also think because of the whole California connection with the private adoptions now that

that made a whole different scenario for them that didn't exist years ago when I was working back in Pennsylvania.

Do you mean there was more advertising?

Yeah. People are doing that now.

Right. So there were more options available to maybe an unwed mother?

Correct. Yeah.

What was the stigma for unwed mothers?

Well, years ago when I was in school and, you know, we were young and I first started working, I remember having a friend that went to the home for unwed mothers. I mean that's what people did then. You were sent off and you went to some -- God knows where you went. I don't even know where the heck they were. But you went away and you had a baby.

But not out here?

No. No.

So young unwed mothers didn't really experience the stigma that you recall?

Not at all.

This was back in the 80s then.

Yeah. Definitely. Yeah. I don't think those places exist anywhere anymore, though.

Right. How about the drug-addicted babies? Did the drugs get more sophisticated and were the problems greater over time?

Yes.

Can you talk about that?

Well, when I first started in the nursery, there were -- we had a lot of coke babies and, of course, the problems with them. They definitely have a higher rate of SIDS deaths and learning disabilities and everything that goes with that. I'm sure today heroin's become very popular again. Heroin babies actually I think have a higher chance of doing better because once it's out of their system they do better. The long-lasting problems are not there with heroin. But all those other crazy drugs in between -- you know, the amphetamines, I mean the list goes on -- those are devastating to those babies. And then the drugs that they have to give the babies to get them off of them, I mean they're devastating to those kids. They're lucky they make it through.

And as a nurse how did that affect you?

Well, I mean you get a little pissed off to tell you the truth. You see these poor babies going through all that and --

How did you then interact with the mother that you knew -- as a professional and then also as a mother yourself and as a woman --

Yeah.

-- how did you work through those conflicts?

You know, it's -- sometimes you look at them, though, and they're such -- they're so sad, these girls, that you can't -- I mean you're angry and you say how can you possibly do this to your baby -- to yourself and to your baby? And then you look at them and you look at the life they're leading. And they're so sad that it's like, you know, thank God it's not you. Thank God it's not one of your kids. And you just try to do the best you can for them.

Did the hospital ever offer any counseling or did you ever --

Oh, yeah.

-- need to seek counseling to cope with that kind of thing?

Oh, for the nurses?

For the nurses.

No.

Do you feel that's something that would have helped?

I don't think so. I think everybody handled it pretty well. I mean we'd hash it out, you know, between ourselves. I think it became -- I mean it's very, very common.

That doesn't make it any easier.

No, it's not. It's not. But it's -- I mean it just becomes part of what you do.

Does any one of your patients or the children of the patients stand out in your mind as something that you still recall all these years later?

Yeah. There was one girl that came in who worked at a topless bar.

What year was this?

Let me think. It was probably about five years before I retired. So I'm going to say it was -- might have been -- maybe about seven. It was probably in the early 90s I want to say. She was a

young -- she was young, maybe 18 -- oh, no. She was probably over 21 because she worked in the bar. But she worked in a topless bar. She came in. She had the baby. She was living I think in a rented room. But she didn't pay the rent. So she didn't have anyplace to take the baby home. So Social Services would not let her go home with the baby. I think she had marijuana in her system but not much else. So she was okay drugwise. She wasn't too bad. You know, as things go she might have had a little something else but nothing drastic. And she came in. She had gone back to work. She went back to stripping in this bar with breasts that were leaking milk all over the day after she had this baby. And she was probably one of the saddest things we had ever seen.

How did you find this out, though?

Oh, she told us because she would come in to visit the baby. She said, oh, you know, I'm trying to get enough money to get my room back so I can take the baby home.

Did you ever follow up or find out how --

It was so sad, so sad because there she was.

Yeah. And you remember this many years later.

Yeah. There she was back there working topless with -- I mean you know how you are after you have a baby.

Wow.

And we thought, oh, my gosh, this poor thing. Poor thing.

Wow.

On the streets for -- God knows how old she was when she was on the streets.

Did you find that your patients confided in the nurses a lot?

Some.

Interesting. All right. Let's get off that subject.

Yeah. That's good.

But you worked mostly with children. Can you talk a little bit about some of the overall health complaints that were kind of unique maybe to Las Vegas, its desert climate?

We probably didn't have as many in the nursery and postpartum as you would maybe on the med surg floors or whatever. You know, dehydration, of course, is just one. And that was always a concern with babies. Even when you take a baby home you've got to make sure because it's so hot

out that your babies don't get dehydrated as well. But I don't think living in the desert made a big difference as far as health concerns for moms and babies, you know, anything different than that, just heat alone. Other than that I can't think of anything in my department in general.

In your experience in the hospital you did come later on in the early 80s and whatnot. But let's talk a little bit about race in Las Vegas. Did you notice if there was any prejudice towards emigrants or even black women and children? Was it different back in the early 80s versus how it might be now here in Vegas?

Patients? Nurses? Overall?

I guess your overall perception.

I don't think so. I mean I never perceived any around me.

So nobody really got any biased treatment, perhaps?

I don't think so. I mean I was amazed. I came from a very culturally mixed area on the East Coast. So I was used to anything and everything. We probably had fewer Asian people than anything in my area.

But I was amazed by one gal that I worked with who came from some small town in Colorado. She told me that she had never seen an African-American person until she was 18 years old. I mean, you know, that's a jaw-dropper to me. But there was not one black person in her town. And until she left her town had she never seen a black person in person.

Was she okay with being?

She was. I mean, you know, she had a little bit different outlook because she had no experience, no experience at all. And she was the same age as me. She's had a lifetime past that, but it just amazed me to hear that in today's world. I just couldn't imagine that there's still a town in the United States --

It's sometimes hard to believe that it really wasn't that long ago because we've come so far.

Yeah.

But sometimes you're just like wow.

Yeah. How could it be that you grew up in the 50s and 60s and you lived somewhere that there wasn't one black person in your town?

Right. How about the emigrant babies? You said it was a difference for you. Were they

treated differently in the system and did they get the same quality of care?

Oh, yeah, I think they definitely got the same quality of care. I mean I was just not used to having -- I mean in our small town back home everyone was a citizen. There was no problem with that. So, of course, you know, just even paperwork when you have people that are in the United States that are not citizens and then --

Well, what happens then? I mean --

Well, because then you have the whole -- because when the child's born the child becomes a citizen.

But the parents are not.

The parents are not. The child becomes eligible for services. So then the mother can stay. You know, there's a whole thing that goes along with -- that's why moms -- you know, the whole thing with Texas going across the border. And there were actually a lot of women that would come to Las Vegas to have their babies.

How did that affect your workload? I mean with that paperwork and all that.

Well, we had a -- I mean there was a significant number off and on. I wouldn't say it was consistent every month. But off and on we would have some. And we actually -- at one point there were quite a few of -- I'm trying to think. It was from Hong Kong and China. It seemed like we had an influx of people from over there that were coming to have their babies here so that they could have a child that was an American citizen as well.

This brings up an interesting question on my part. Did they approach the birthing process differently because their culture was different? Do you recall any of those?

Well, I mean I think every culture has its little nuisances.

Well, share some of them because I'm fascinated by this. Did anybody insist on doing it their cultural way?

You know, I mean I think there are women that are culturally allowed to scream a lot. You know, that's okay. In the Latin culture that's good for them. The Asian culture tends to be very stoic, don't say a word, you know, not anything, although those babies end up tending to cry a lot for whatever reason. You know, we always said those little Asian babies screamed a lot. This is going to sound -- this is not going to be something good.

No, no, no. It doesn't sound like that at all. This is very fascinating.

You know, there are some women that just want everything. They want the drugs. Then you get the whole earth mother group. And that goes across all cultures I guess. That's just the whole group of the young moms who want to be the earth mothers, you know. Yeah. Sure. And then you got the educated other mothers, you know, the -- what do I want to say? -- I don't know how to put them in a group -- the ones that want absolutely everything. You know they've read all the books, but they want every drug and then they want it planned. You know, I'm coming in. I'm going to have this and this done. I'm going to have that and that done.

What was your preference overall, the educated ones who let you do your job?

You know, I have to say sometimes young and dumb is not so bad because -- and we used to laugh about that -- because they are more open and more at ease to be -- not led, but just let it happen. Sometimes it seems some of the moms that read every book that came down the road it was like they were so sure everything was going to happen exactly like that book said it was going to happen. And it doesn't.

Right.

And trying to explain that to them was often tough.

Very interesting.

Yeah. So we'd say, you know, just forget what you read in the book and just -- you know, this is you; this is your baby. This isn't Dr. Spock and his baby or whoever's the --

So you attended a lot of births?

Yeah. Yeah. I mean we did not go to every one. To every C-section -- there always had to be a nursery nurse there for every delivery of a C-section baby. So we were always in every C-section. And then if there was going to be some risk at a regular birth, we'd be there. So over the years I attended a lot, yeah, a lot of births.

Do you miss it?

Always a miracle.

Yeah, always.

Always a miracle when that baby comes out.

Do you miss not working?

No. Pointblank no.

You're enjoying yourself.

Yeah. Thirty years.

Can you talk about some of the doctors and nurses who stand out in your mind as exceptional? And can you talk about them a little bit and name them?

Oh, gosh. You know, there's just so many. You know, there were a lot of people that worked at Sunrise for a lot of years. There were a lot of long-term employees there especially in my department. And there are a couple of them that are still there. They've not necessarily stayed at Sunrise. They've stayed within the Humana circuit because they've got a couple of other hospitals in town. So they've moved onto the other smaller ones now. And some of them have retired. I mean Dr. Snavelly was my kids' pediatrician. He's teaching with the university now.

Do you know how to spell his name?

S-N-A-V-E-L-Y.

Dr. Snavelly. Pediatrics?

Uh-huh. Yeah. Charles Snavelly. And he was the tops.

Was he? How about some others?

He was great. Gosh, let me think. It's gone out of my head. What can I say? Oh, I have to think.

Okay. Not a problem.

I'm trying to think who all was in -- I'm drawing a blank.

That's okay.

I'm trying to think who's all in that children's clinic group. There were so many of them there, a couple of those that I really liked.

Did this rudeness eventually subside and professionalism prevail?

Oh, definitely yeah. And you know what? Pediatricians are not in that group anyhow. Most pediatricians are -- they are a different group of people. Pediatricians are very kind people. I don't think you ever go into pediatrics as a physician with that kind of personality. You don't work with kids. So they are not -- you know, that's like the surgeons and -- that was like when I first got here back in the early -- well, it would have been the late 70s when I first started working and some of those surgeons were like that. But once I started working at Sunrise and was working with the

pediatricians, it's a whole different ballgame.

Did your children go into medicine?

No. Not at all. Not even close.

Did mom and dad ever come out and visit you -- or mom and step-dad come out and visit you?

Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah.

What did they think of Vegas?

And my husband's parents. Oh, yeah. They liked it. Yeah. Definitely.

And was your mom especially -- her feelings about you and the career that you had chosen -- was there a lot of pride there?

Oh, yeah. She was very happy, very, very happy. She was glad I finished school. That was like -- you know.

Oh, that's great. And when did she pass away?

She passed away in 19 -- let me think -- 1998. So ten years ago.

Is there anything else about your career and the life that you've led and here in Las Vegas that you'd like to talk about?

Oh, goodness. I can't think of anything.

Do you go back home a lot?

We go back home a lot, yeah.

And are you going to stay in Las Vegas? Is your husband retired at this time?

He's about to retire. Yeah. He's kind of in transition right now.

And you're going to stay in Las Vegas?

We are, yeah. We will always probably keep a home here. Our children both live in California now. We actually have an apartment in New York City. So we go back there a lot, which is only an hour away from our hometown in Easton.

Now, why an apartment in New York City?

Well, our son lived in New York for about eight years, our older son. I mean we just love the city and we went there a lot. So we finally decided to get a second home. People get one in the mountains. We've got one there instead.

That's great.

It's actually a great place to have a second home because you've got the world at your feet there. You know, it's wonderful. So we really enjoy it.

So overall are you happy that you came to Las Vegas and had your career here?

We are. Like I said, it's been very, very good to us. My husband has had an extremely successful business. He has a school named after him, an elementary school. So we have a tie here that we will probably never --

And where is the school?

Charleston and Lamb.

Wow. And how long has the school been there?

I think they're in their seventh year this year.

So Charles Snyder Elementary School?

Yeah. William Snyder Elementary.

William Snyder. Where did I get Charles from? I have no idea where Charles came from.

Sorry.

Charles. You just wrote Charles. That's why.

Yes. There you go. William Snyder Elementary. I want to make sure that's on the tape.

So we spend a lot of time at the school.

That's terrific.

Yeah. I do book club there with the kids. He's a runner and he runs marathons, so he does a running club with the kids. You know, we will never leave probably because of that tie.

What kinds of community activities did you participate in before and after retirement?

You know, my husband has done a great deal over the years. I have tended not to do -- I've done a little, but I have not done -- he was involved in so many things that I didn't.

This has been terrific. You gave me some very good insight into some things in the medical field that I had never had the opportunity to ask before. So I thank you very much.

Oh, good.

So this is great. Anything else you want to say?

I can't think of anything.

All right. No problem. Thank you.