

Jones

WARREN WILSON COLLEGE  
SWANNANOA, NORTH CAROLINA 28778

ORAL HISTORY

INTERVIEWEE: Evelyn Jones, school nurse  
INTERVIEWER: Cathy Merino, student  
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SUBJECT: Memories at Warren Wilson  
1942-1978

Arrived as  
school  
nurse  
in 1942

This is Evelyn Jones. I came to Warren Wilson on August 5, 1942, as the campus nurse. I grew up in Portsmouth, Ohio. I went to school in Columbus, Ohio, at White Cross Hospital for three years, which is now called Riverside Methodist Hospital since White Cross is no longer in existence. I went into nursing in a mission school primarily because I grew up in a Presbyterian church and my parents were very much interested in missions and we often had missionaries visiting in our home. I thought it was a good way to combine a professional career with my church, which I was very much interested in. And so I applied to the Board of National Missions for employment.

Worked first  
in N.M.

I was sent first to Embudo, New Mexico, to a small hospital there and was there almost a year. Then I began to have some trouble with my back so I was out for awhile. And then the Board decided that there was an opening here at Warren Wilson, which was then still called Asheville Farm School. So I came here in August of 1942. I think the fact that I was in New Mexico, and then looking for further work with the Board of National Missions, had a lot to do with my coming here, since this was the only vacancy at that time. But the work in New Mexico didn't really prepare me for the work here at Warren Wilson since there I worked in a hospital setting under the direct supervision of physicians. Here at Warren Wilson the decisions were mine to make and I had no one else to go to.

Infirmary  
built in  
1926

The Infirmary, which is called still the Fannie Murden Infirmary, was named in honor of a woman in Peoria, Illinois; money for the building came primarily from her estate. It was built in 1926. It was built primarily by student labor. Then in late 1965 and '66 it was remodeled and the new apartment for the nurse was built on. The inside of the Infirmary is--for the most part, the existing Infirmary is primarily the same as it was when I arrived except that it's in much better physical condition.

Only nurse  
on campus  
for 31 years

When I came, I was the only nurse on campus and that continued for thirty-one years. It wasn't until five years ago that I had any other nursing, professional nursing help. We used students and some of them worked for me several years and became very valuable assistants, but I was the only nurse on campus for all those years.

Resident  
physician  
for only  
3 years

We had a resident physician only for about three years in the early forties. Dr. John Bigger, who had been a missionary in Korea, came back at the beginning of the second World War. Since he was near retirement, he did not want to establish a practice anywhere and the Board sent him here. He was a fine person and a fine surgeon. He wasn't too interested in treating colds and sore throats, which were the main problems among so many of the students. We've not had a resident physician since those years because there isn't enough volume of business to interest anyone. Several times we've had doctors who came by when we had bed patients, but we simply don't have enough--and haven't had through the years--volume of business that would require a resident physician, although that would be very nice to have.

Tonsilectomy  
operations  
on campus  
in '30's

Before I came, back in the thirties, they did do some operations at the Infirmary. A Doctor Vanderburg was on the campus between 1934 and '39, and I've heard--in those years--heard many stories of tonsilectomy clinics and they would get, even from the community, three or four or five people who needed tonsilectomies. They would have a clinic and he would take out the tonsils. Then they would be cared for there at the Infirmary. But we've done nothing of that sort in the years that I was at Warren Wilson.

Emergencies

We've had, naturally, some emergencies, some epidemics. The emergency<sup>acc-</sup> that I recall especially were some that happened in the wood-working shop when the students (both fellows) momentarily had their minds someplace else and also their eyes someplace else, and lost part of several fingers in an electric saw,



or a planer. We've had some emergencies, of course, on the farm--a few accidents with the shredder. One accident back in--probably the late forties--happened as a group of students were being transported in a truck over<sup>to</sup> the Berea Baptist Church for an evening service. As they were rounding the curve going out toward the dairy barn, they were swaying with the motion of the truck and the side rail broke and spilled a good many students out on the road. One student died because of a punctured lung. Another student had a fractured pelvis; and, I believe, someone else had a collarbone. Except for those, the others were miraculously not injured. But that was a tragic affair.

We've had very few serious injuries in the work program. I would say the majority of injuries have probably been in sports, with broken bones, or just in everyday life around the campus--someone slipping on ice, or something of this sort. I was always very grateful that we did escape a good many serious injuries and I think we've had a wonderful record as far as injuries in our work program.

#### Flu epidemic

One flu epidemic stands out in my mind. Up until 1957, we'd had flu epidemics every two or three years; we'd have forty or fifty students sick in a period of time. But the Asian flu was the epidemic and that was in 1957 when so much of the country had Asian flu. In over a three-week period we had over one hundred fifty students sick. We had infirmaries set up all over the campus. Shep<sup>k</sup>ard House had just been finished but not furnished, so we put cots all around the walls of the living room and used the double rooms back the hall. We used all of St. Clair, one end of the third floor of Sunderland--even had a convalescent center over at Dorland in one end of the first floor. Here again, I had no volunteer<sup>7</sup> help, except for Helen Miller, whose husband was on the staff. She was an R.N. But she worked one night over at St. Clair and got sick, and that was the end of her help.

Did classes close down then?

No. We continued classes, thinking that the students who were well needed something to do. Sometimes classes didn't meet because there was no one there. But work went on and each morning Sam Devries, who was director of the work program then, would call and say, "How much help do you need?" Sometimes girls who worked in the Infirmary would get sick, so he'd call and see what help I needed and he'd get someone to go down and get food for them and help make beds. This happened early in the school year; we were starting then after Labor Day and this happened three weeks after school began, toward the end of September. It was a bad way to start off a school year and yet, in a way, it was good because it certainly drew everybody together and there was a great spirit on the campus of helpfulness and just pitching in where one was needed. But I don't think anyone who was here in '57 will forget the Asian flu epidemic.

I am not a teacher. I enjoy showing people how to do things. But back in the late forties and early fifties while we still had high school students, I was asked to teach some hygiene courses, which I did. I'm not sure how much anyone learned, but we did do some practical things which I think probably helped the girls in later years. In the community, I taught through the Red Cross. I taught some home nursing courses, and this again was during the Second World War.

The thirty-one years I worked without assistance-- in a way it didn't seem that long and again sometimes it seemed much longer than that--I was on 24-hour call. But everyone realized I was the only person. So I did get off campus. I had no regular time off but I could not be available every minute, of course. I never went any place without letting someone know where I was and how I could be reached--leave a note on the door or by telephone.

Taught  
hygiene  
in 40's  
& 50's

Taught  
home  
nursing  
for Red Cross

24-hour call

Who took your place when you were gone or on vacations?

During the vacations, during the summer particularly, in the early years, perhaps just another teacher would look after the Infirmary. I know Glenna ~~Gwen~~ <sup>Gwynn</sup> did this several years; she was interested in first aid. She would be available and she had enough judgment to know whether somebody needed to go to a doctor or not and she could take care of some first aid. Of course, we didn't have the number of students that we have now so it worked out fairly well. Some years we would have a volunteer nurse in, somebody from a church in New Jersey or Ohio, Some place would want to volunteer some time, so she and perhaps the whole family would come to the campus for a month. So she would staff the Infirmary. After the Millers arrived, when Eleanor <sup>Helen</sup> was here, then she would relieve me for a month in the summer. Of course, she was an R.N. so that worked out fine. Often I would take over the store for her when she was on vacation. I did run the store for a good many years, until we moved--well, even one year after we moved into Gladfelter. This is the campus store. I inherited this when Glenna <sup>Gwynn</sup> ~~Gwen~~ left the campus in 1950 or '51. She had charge of the campus store then. It was in the old shop, which is where the Administration Building is now. It was on the first floor; they'd remodeled the auto mechanics building there and the automechanics moved over here to Spidel. Anyway, she had charge of the store, then she left campus in '50 or '51. I was asked to take charge of the store, so I did. I had students working for me there but I supervised it. So if people couldn't find me at the Infirmary, often they could find me at the campus store. As you see, things were very much less formal in those days than they are now. Everyone had several jobs; no one just had one job. I liked the store because it gave me another means of meeting students other than only if they were sick and came to the Infirmary. I got to know a lot of

a  
  
Supervised  
campus store  
in 50's



of students that way. In those days I knew everyone on campus; that's not true now. In the last five or six years, it was impossible to learn everyone's name. But then, I did and the store was a good place to do that. But I had the supervision of the store then from around 1950 or '51 until we moved into Gladfelter. I think that was 1960; I'm not positive about that. But close to ten years, I had the store.

Did you have any other roles?

Elder at  
Church

No, that was the only thing, except I was active in Church. I was on the Session as an elder. These were the only two roles that I have had. But they were--especially the Infirmary was a 24-hour-a-day job. So I worked in the store business along with that.

Recalls  
dairy days

There have been many changes, of course, in the campus. When I came, campus roads were not paved, and one of my earliest recollections is hearing the dairy wagon come by with a horse--clop, clop down the Infirmary road delivering milk to the families. We all put out our containers--a little milk can, or if you wanted cream, you put out a pint jar or a half-pint jar to get cream, which was so thick that you could just dip it out with a spoon and almost had to thin it in order to whip it. Milk was five cents a quart in those days, so families had no problem getting enough milk for their children.

Was this milk from our dairy?

Our dairy. And it was raw milk, but they were tested cattle. We continued that for many years until the dairy was closed. It was closed because state laws changed and we were required to pasteurize milk. That process would have been just too expensive for us. So for one or two years, Biltmore Dairies bought our raw milk and, of course, processed it and then brought it back to the campus for use here. There was some arrangement with the dairy for that. But then that

was not satisfactory and it was hard to find someone to run the dairy, supervise the dairy. Mr. Laursen didn't have time with farm work. This is Bernhard Laursen, Ernst Laursen's father. And so, the dairy was closed. It was too bad, but times change and we could no longer support it.

When I first came, of course, we had a good many younger students because we had--in 1942, up until that time we still had high school students. It was, of course, in '42 that we began the junior college program. So I can remember the date I came easily because it was the year we began the junior college program and changed the name from Asheville Farm School to Warren Wilson. Of course, then it was called Warren H. Wilson Vocational Junior College. It was known as that for some years until it was shortened into Warren Wilson College. But the Infirmary and I, as the nurse, with the younger we served more as a mother image. We had some students as young as twelve and thirteen. So they'd come for lots of advice and treatment of minor things, which was fun. I felt that some of these youngsters we really helped to raise.

Those were the Pee Wees?

Pee Wees, right. Then as the high school, of course, was discontinued in '57, I believe, was the last high school year. From then until '69 when we graduated our first senior college class we were strictly a junior college. So there have been many changes in that respect, too--from high school to high school and junior college, and then to just junior college, and then to senior college. So it's been very interesting to see that growth.

I imagine in those years that I've been here there's probably been more changes in the college than in any other similar period. Now the students are the same in many respects, but they're more sophisticated and more independent. Many of them have cars. The Infirmary is not--I think it serves a good purpose

Mother image  
in earlier  
days of  
younger  
students

Here through  
many changes  
in school



Students more  
independent  
now

and is certainly necessary, but it doesn't serve the same needs to the students as it did in the early years when everything was taken care of on campus and students had very little opportunity of getting out on their own. They often make their own appointments and many times the Infirmary knows nothing about it, which is their privilege. They take care of things on their own rather than coming to the Infirmary for advice. Some of the students have been accustomed to doing this; they've been out on their own perhaps and are accustomed to making these decisions. It's just a difference in the times. They're just more independent. But I think there'll always be a need for the Infirmary.

The thirty-six years I've been here have been good ones. I certainly have no regrets about working the way I did and it's good to feel as though you've had a part in molding some of the students and some influence in their lives. As students come back to the campus and keep in touch with Christmas cards and all, many of them say this and are grateful for the part that I played in their lives and certainly the part that Warren Wilson College played in their lives.

Who was in the Infirmary before you came?

A nurse called Mrs. Larsen. She was not related to the Laursens who are here now. I never met her, but she was an older woman; she had not been in the Infirmary too long. They had trouble keeping nurses there. One year, shortly before I came, Mrs. Gage lived in the Infirmary for a year. And Mrs. Gage had no medical background at all. In fact, her background was all in music; she was an accomplished musician. But she was willing to help out, so she lived in the Infirmary for a year and did what she could, and referred people. She was a grandmotherly type and that was, of course, when they had just boys. Apparently they did very well for that year.

Why was it so hard to keep nurses?

I don't know. I think probably because of the 24-hour responsibility and the fact that there was no doctor. All nurses were trained to take orders and when I first came it was quite an adjustment to make a great many decisions on my own. For all those years what I did primarily was what nurse practitioners are doing now. But they're highly trained after their nursing degree, then they go on to school for at least a full year, maybe longer, and get degrees in nurse practitioner work. But they still have contact with a doctor whom they can call. But they do go ahead and do general physical exams and many other things--screen people and are trained to recognize more symptoms and even to prescribe simple prescription drugs. But still they have a doctor to fall back on. But this is what I did practically the whole time I was here. But it didn't have the training for it, but I learned a lot. I was very fortunate we never had any serious problems because of my failure to do something that I shouldn't have done or not do something I should have done. But I think that's the reason that it was difficult to keep a nurse.

Heavy  
responsibility  
reason hard  
to keep  
nurses here  
before E.J.

What did you do in case of an emergency that required a doctor?

Well, of course, fortunately we're close to Asheville. I don't mean to say that I didn't have the backing of doctors. Dr. Cooley, who was closely associated with the college in early years--in fact, he had taught here before he became a physician, and after he got his degree, he located in Black Mountain. So he was officially our college doctor for a good many years until he died. I could always call him for advice and he also would come by the college on his way to the hospital in Asheville and see someone. So I did have backing. Dr. Clapp, who still practices

Backed up  
by different  
doctors

in Swannanoa, was a great help through the years and he, too, would come over when I had someone I felt was too sick to go to a doctor's office. I could always call him for advice. I was very fortunate in having doctors like that; and in more recent years, Dr. James and a good many of the doctors that I have a very good relationship with and who trusted my judgment were willing to give me advice.

But if we had someone who was injured, we'd load them in the back of a station wagon on a stretcher and take them on into Asheville. I've done that a good many times. Now we would call an ambulance. But back in those days we didn't do that. Other emergencies, I'd call friends or house directors or someone to take someone in if I felt I couldn't get away from campus. Everyone was most helpful in coming to my help when I needed someone to drive. So many times in the work program if we had even a minor accident, the work supervisor would know about it and often he'd be the one who would bring the student by. If a person needed stitches or something like that he'd say, "Well, I'll take them on in." We had even less transportation in those days. When I came here, Dr. Bannerman had a car and Dr. Jensen and the Laursens. But very few of the staff had cars. I didn't have a car until I'd been here fifteen years. We were isolated, so everybody had to just pitch in and help out.

You were translating books into braille at one point, weren't you?

Oh, yes. I learned to write braille through a program at the YW and did that for a good many years and thoroughly enjoyed it. We had a blind student on campus one time, Irene Ip, and I transcribed a good many things for her. I would braille her tests for her ahead of time. Then on Sunday I would braille the words to the hymns or a responsive reading so she would have it. Betty Klein got me interested in this; she had

Staff co-  
operative  
about trans-  
porting  
students

Translated  
in braille



Bad shoulder

learned this first and then suggested it to me. I did it for a good many years and transcribed books for the Library of Congress, the blind division of the Library of Congress. But then I had to give it up in recent years because of a bad shoulder. I'm sorry about that because it still is a terrific hobby and something that's very much needed even though they are transcribing, or duplicating now, electronically. But somebody has to make the first copy. Locally there are a lot of people who would like to have one copy of something that's important to them and so there's still a big need. And it is still being taught in Asheville. A woman who was in a class ahead of me instructs in braille now. So it's still being taught. I did that for a good many years. How I found the time to do it, I don't know, but just 15 or 20 minutes at a time I'd go back and do some braille. I had a braille writer that I used like a typewriter.

What made you decide to stop working--to retire?

Retires at  
62; tired  
or so much  
responsibility

Well, thirty-six years is quite a long time. And even though I had help in the last five years that I was here--Linda Laswell was here three years then Polly Durfee came two years ago, this is her third year now.-- I still had the responsibility of the Infirmary and that's the thing that weighs heaviest. And I thought for a good many years I'd like to retire at sixty-two rather than wait until I am sixty-five. So I decided a year ago that I probably could do it financially and the more I thought about it the more attractive it sounded. That's the reason. I just was tired of the responsibility. It's just good to be free of that and living just four miles away I have the best of everything. I can come over here and be still active in Church and can come to anything in the college activities and see my friends and still be free of that responsibility. But they were great years. I have no regrets about staying that long or leaving. And that's a good feeling.

What are you doing now?

Volunteer  
at Red Cross  
Blood Center

Loafing for the most part. Although the days are busy. I don't really know where the time goes. I am volunteering at the Red Cross Blood Center, working there a half day a week as a volunteer and doing their histories which requires an R.N. with a North Carolina license and they have difficulty finding enough people because so many older nurses drop their licenses. Younger nurses, who may come into the area with their husbands who were transferred or some like this, if they don't want to work, then they don't go ahead and get a North Carolina license. So the Red Cross has difficulty finding licensed nurses. They were really in a bind when I called so they were very happy that I volunteered. And I'm enjoying it. I go in there on Wednesday afternoons and do their histories, screenings people for giving blood. And then several times I've gone on the Bloodmobile to Oteen Hospital or Western North Carolina Hospital and I'll continue to do that as they ask to help in their mobile units. I was coming over here to Warren Wilson but they had someone else to do it on that day so I didn't get to come here. But the next day I was out at Western Carolina Hospital. So I'm doing that--and just keeping busy, keeping house and traveling and having fun.

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Note: Miss Jones retired August 1, 1978.