

Daisy Plenderleith

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DP: I started back home in Dominica and I went into training when I was 19 years old. It was a four year training course that I did – three years in general nursing and one year of midwifery.

Q: So your entire training period was five years?

DP: Four.

Q: What did that give you?

DP: Just the RN, registered nurse.

Q: When was this?

DP: I finished training in 1964.

Q: Tell me about the journey from that point to Edmonton.

DP: I left Dominica and I immigrated to Barbados, where my aunt lived and my mom was there. So I moved to Barbados and worked at a couple of places there, clinics and that. There was this Catholic hospital I worked in, St. Lucy, somewhere in Barbados, and there were Canadian nurses that were there at the time. They said, you should apply to go to Canada and you can get a better salary and more there if you leave, because it was not much that I was making when I was down there. They gave me a couple of addresses and stuff for me to apply, and that's what I did. I had no idea about Canada. I didn't know the history of Canada. I had a lawyer friend that I used to speak to, and I asked him to tell me what it's like in Canada and what should I be looking out for, and what is the best place to go, and stuff like that. He suggested a few places. He said, you would like Alberta because it's prairie country and there's places you can go there, like Banff and Jasper. He outlined all the different places that I could visit when I'm there and stuff. I said,

well tell me about the temperature and what to look forward to. I had never left the Caribbean to go anywhere else; it was the very first time I was going to leave the country. So I chose Alberta.

Q: Did you need to have an offer from an institution?

DP: Yeah. I got the information from the magazine she gave me. She said, you have to apply for immigration status. So when I decided where I was going to, she said, you correspond with the matron in charge of this hospital and she probably will help you along with the immigration.

Q: Was there any program at the time for Caribbean nurses?

DP: No. They were accepting immigrants from the Caribbean, because Pierre Trudeau was running the country at the time. They said it's a good time to go because they're really needing nurses and stuff like that. So I thought, well, okay, I'll try Alberta.

Q: What year did you arrive in Alberta?

DP: I arrived here in 1966, in September of '66.

Q: Did you know anybody here?

DP: I knew nobody. I had no friends or relatives. The only person that I kept in contact with was the matron of this hospital, whom I corresponded with.

Q: Which hospital?

DP: It was in Bonnyville, Duclos Hospital, which is not there anymore. She made all the arrangements for me and she said, we'll be sending somebody to meet you at the airport once you get to Edmonton. But I had to stop off in Montreal for the night. It wasn't planned that way. I was supposed to get a connecting flight from Montreal to Edmonton. But because there was

about 104 people that were the first time in Canada, we had to go through the screening and the questions and all that stuff. Once we got through there, I said to the person, I said, I have a flight to catch, I said; I'm going to miss my flight. They put us in different rooms and you had to fill out different papers and stuff. All that information was sent ahead of me, but yet when I got there I had to fill out these forms. So it took time. He said, well we'll have to make arrangements for you first thing in the morning, because we have to go through the process and you have to go through different rooms and questioning and all that stuff. So they put me up at a hotel in Montreal for the evening. The matron had sent somebody to meet me at the airport. So, when I didn't show up, I can't remember if I corresponded or I phoned or what happened. But I must have sent her a message somehow. I asked them, I said, I have to keep in contact with the matron because she was sending somebody to meet me. I was terrified that once I got there the next day that there'd be nobody and I wouldn't know where to go and how to get around. Whoever she sent stayed the evening in Edmonton and waited for me for the next day. So, that was good. When I arrived at the airport, I heard my name being paged over the pager: Daisy Plenderleith. I thought, wow. Whoever came to get me had to meet up with me to know who I was and everything. So I'm riding this escalator up to find where he was. He said, you must be Daisy. I said, yes, I'm Daisy. I said, well thanks for coming to get me. He said, I was here yesterday and I realized you were not on the flight. I said, yeah, I was detained because of all this paperwork that I had to go through and stuff. He was pretty good. So we had to drive from Edmonton to Bonnyville. He took me straight to Bonnyville.

Q: Did you start work the next day?

DP: The next day. I got in on a Sunday and I started work on the Monday. I was anxious to get ready for work.

Q: Did you have a uniform?

DP: Oh yeah. I brought all my stuff with me. I brought my uniform; it was white. During our trip from Edmonton to Bonnyville I said, why am I so cold? I said, I'm freezing. I was just shaking; my teeth were knocking together and I was going through the shakes. He said, why are you

shaking? I said, well, when I left Barbados it was 35 degrees there, and it's 5 degrees here. I said, it's a big shock to my system. So he stopped and said, I'll get you a hot chocolate to warm you up. So he stopped and picked me up a hot chocolate. But I had a lot of clothes on, lots of layers, but I was still shaking.

Q: How were you received?

DP: I was received by the matron. It was a small hospital, 35 bed hospital, and there were two Filipinos there ahead of me.

Q: Even back in the '60s?

DP: Yeah. There were two Filipinos and one technician who was an X-ray technician, and an LPN. I was well received there and everything.

Q: So there were not wards? It was just open?

DP: Yeah, it was an open hospital.

Q: What did you do?

DP: General nursing. They had a maternity unit there. The one incident I remember is that this one lady had had her baby and she had lost a lot of blood. So she was very anemic. The doctor said to her, we'll have to get a transfusion going on you because you've lost a lot of blood. There were two hospitals in this town. There was the Duclos Protestant hospital and there was St. Louis Hospital, which was Catholic. The doctor said to her, we have to get you tested so we can give you some blood. She had to be on oxygen; she couldn't breathe and everything, and she was very pale. I don't know what religion she was. But she was Catholic and not Protestant. She said, what kind of blood am I going to get? He said, well you would be cross matched for your type of blood before we do the transfusion. She looked at the doctor, who was Asian, and she looked at me, and she said, I don't want any black blood in me, or something like that. I said, I'm

not here to donate blood for you. I said, it's been cross matched in the city of Edmonton and they'll send your test in to see what you can have. It doesn't necessarily have to be from me. The doctor said, well you have to make up your mind whether you want to be transfused. She said, I don't think so. I'm not sure what blood I'm getting and I don't think I want to take it. She had to be in a wheelchair because she couldn't even stand. The husband is trying to talk to her and said, you know, they're trying their best to get you some blood so you can feel better. She said, no, I don't want it. The doctor said, well you have to discharge yourself if you don't want it, and go to St. Louis Hospital. So this is what she did. She didn't want the blood and she wanted to move to the Catholic hospital.

Q: How did that make you feel?

DP: It made me feel, I thought wow, black blood, she doesn't want black blood. I said, what is wrong with black blood? I don't understand. I said to Dr. Chen, I said, I feel so bad about this. He said, no don't feel bad, we have people that according to their religion or whatever, that wouldn't accept blood. But if she doesn't get a transfusion, she wouldn't make it very long. She's low on blood and she needs the oxygen and stuff like that. When I was in Montreal, we ran into a lot of things like that, she said; so it's nothing new for me. It's new for you but I know all about it, because I was in Montreal, she said, and this is how some people react to transfusions.

Q: So Dr. Chen thought it was an isolated incident about transfusion, not because she was not white.

DP: That's right. I said, I think it's more to do with the colour more than the blood. I said, me being a black person, she thinks that it's coming from me. But I said, nothing to do with me. I said to her, it's nothing to do with me. I was already having problems losing weight and everything there at the hospital and stuff. I said, I am not a blood donor. I said, I don't donate blood because I need all the blood for me to survive here in this place.

Q: And this was during your first week on the job?

DP: The first week, yeah.

Q: Did they tell you about the staff association or any rights you had?

DP: No, they didn't explain nothing like that to me. They just said, it's a Protestant hospital and there's a Catholic hospital, and some people prefer not to be at the Protestant hospital. They prefer to go to St. Louis Hospital, which is Catholic. It was a bigger hospital and it was closer to the downtown area.

Q: So they didn't tell you anything about your wages or conditions?

DP: Well, I had all that information from the matron prior to that. She gave me all the information.

Q: While you were still in Barbados?

DP: When I corresponded with her and we corresponded back and forth.

Q: Did she tell you about joining the staff association?

DP: No, but she said if I decide to move to the city that they have stuff that I have to deal with there with the association. I wasn't registered right away when I got there. She said that when I applied for the registration, they said that I had to write the exams in order to get registered. I was called an undergrad. They called me an undergrad but they paid me grad wages.

Q: So you were an undergrad at Bonnyville?

DP: Yeah.

Q: How long did you keep the undergrad status?

DP: When I did move to the city and had applied for registration, I got all the information stating that because I was trained at a small hospital that I didn't cover enough hours in order for them to register me as a registered nurse. I had to go through some courses and stuff and write the exams in order to do that.

Q: So you proceeded with that?

DP: Yeah, when I came to the city I had to sit in with the classes with the first year students to go through the whole thing: anatomy, physiology, all the lectures and stuff. I had to go through all that.

Q: By then you had moved from Bonnyville to Edmonton?

DP: Yeah, I moved from Bonnyville. When I left Bonnyville I came straight to the city. I had choices. I could've gone to the General; I could've gone to the University. But I chose the Royal Alec, that's where I went. They were needing staff at the time. That was in '67, a year later after I got back from home I decided to transfer to the city.

Q: Did you get your RN at the same time you went to the Alec?

DP: No, I had to go back to school pretty much. I had to attend classes with the junior students.

Q: How long did that last?

DP: Quite a few months, maybe close to a year or two before I could finish all that stuff, go through all the lectures and all of the instruction and all the assignments and everything. I got there in '67 and I think it was not until 1970 or '71 that I finally got my registration.

Q: So you're now an RN at the Royal Alec.

DP: Yeah. And of course I was treated as an undergrad there too, but I worked with the graduates of the Alec. I worked first on the medical floor. All the stuff that I learnt when I was a student nurse and everything, I was ahead of them all. I knew everything, I knew how to do everything. So the instructor had students with her come to the unit and they were trying, in one incident, they were trying to... I was not allowed to give needles or anything, just the meds and patient care and stuff. But there was an incident where she was teaching the students to do a catheterization. This was on an elderly woman in her late 70s that had not been able to go to the bathroom, and she had been all night without going to the bathroom. So she had these students and her trying to get a catheter to drain this bladder. They said, well call Daisy, because she's experienced in those things. I said, well why don't you call one of your RNs, the registered ones? I said, I'm an undergrad. Call your RNs, I said. She said, they're not comfortable with that. I said, really? So anyway, I felt sorry for the lady and I saw she was really in a lot of agony. She had a bladder on her so big you could see where it extended on her thing. She said, she's been all night without going to the bathroom, so could you help us out here? I said, I only need two students, I said, and I don't need this big bright light that you're shining on this lady trying to get a catheter in. They had her in this position with all these catheters hanging out of her and not able to get to her urethra where they're supposed to put it. So I said, I only need a couple of students, and I will try and see what I can do here. So I scrubbed up and put my gloves on and got everything together. The instructor was there with the rest of her students, and I got the catheter in and drained her 900 ccs of urine. The lady said, thank you, I could kiss you. I said, no, save the kisses; that's okay. So we had to clamp it off and wait for half an hour or so before we continued draining, because she had such a huge bladder there was a lot of urine in there. She was so thankful. She said, can I just give you a hug? She said, I'm so happy that you came to help me out. I said, sure. The instructor said, how did you learn how to do this? I said, because I'm experienced; I've done this a lot and I know where the urethra is. Even she taught the students and everything, this woman because of her age, I said, if you study anatomy of the vagina you would know exactly where to put this catheter. She said she just couldn't understand, because she herself tried and she couldn't get it done. Any time they'd have problems with anything, they'd call me instead of getting their graduates who graduated there. I felt sometimes inadequate because of how they were treating me and stuff like that, but...



Q: In what way?

DP: Well because I wasn't allowed to do so many different things that I knew how to do, like injections, intravenouses and all that. We learnt all of that in my small hospital; we did all that on our own. We were taught those things.

Q: So they didn't call you until they were in a pickle?

DP: In a pickle, exactly.

Q: Were you compensated in any way or did you at least receive a letter of commendation?

DP: Nothing like that, no. They just verbally thanked me, that's it. Same thing, they had an incident for a nasal gastric tube to go into the stomach. That was another thing the students couldn't do. I showed them the position, what to do to get it down.

Q: Did they treat you differently after you became an RN?

DP: I wouldn't say they did, no not really. I was just treated like one of the other regular people. But I did run into discrimination sometimes with patients. When you get assignments, they give you assignments as to the patients you look after on the floors. I was assigned this room that had a Metis lady, an Indigenous person. When I walked into the room, it was like a four bed ward, she took one look at me and said, I don't want any Black person looking after me here. I said, pardon? She said, no, I don't want any Black folks in here to look after me. I said, okay we'll send you a white person. I went out to the supervisor and said, could you give me a different assignmen? This lady doesn't want me in the room. She doesn't want to be looked after by me. She said, okay, we'll send somebody else in there, and she gave me a different assignment. She was an alcoholic and they had picked her up and brought her in intoxicated and everything. So I said to myself, you know, maybe I'm in the wrong profession; maybe I shouldn't even be here. You feel like you're useless sometimes when you get into situations like that.

Q: Did it happen often?

DP: Not often, but in a few instances. One of the girls said, don't take it too seriousl. We get people like that occasionally. I said, with you white folks or just with Black people, people of colour? Is it happening just with people of colour? We had an East Indian and we had an Asian that worked on that floor, and they ran into the same problem.

Q: And that was in the '70s.

DP: That was in the '70s at the Royal Alec.

Q: So nurses of colour were already in the profession, and running up against resistance from patients.

DP: Yes. I constantly had to go to the, there was the manager, they called them the head nurse. There was a head nurse and assistant head nurse, and there were the other ladies, what do they call them, they're the ones that look after the head nurses and that. They had their own office. I used to go and try to talk to them about the situation and the things that I was going through. The one white girl said to me, now Daisy don't get a chip on your shoulder over what happened. I said, it's not a chip on my shoulder; this is racism here. I said, I'm telling you. I'm not thinking this; it's happening to me. So why are you saying I have a chip on my shoulder? I don't have a chip on my shoulder, I said.

Q: Did anybody tell you about the staff association?

DP: I tried to complain to these two ladies that were managers, they called them; I think they were managers. I said to them, so what should I do in this situation? I said, if I run into problems like that, should I transfer to maybe another area or move from the medicine? She said well you probably can do that if you want, you can transfer if you want to see if it'll make things a little easier for you. So I left medicine and went into surgery. It was not as bad in surgery. I needed the experience for the surgical unit; so I decided I'll go there. Then from surgery I said I want to

try going to pediatrics and see if I could maybe work with the small kids. But I did run into discrimination there on the pediatric floor as well.

Q: In what way?

DP: The parents, the parents. This kid who was two or three or four, of course we get assignments to these kids to rooms to look after. Then there's the instructor and then there's the manager and there's the head nurse. When I went into the room with this child I was doing the regular thing that I had to do, taking the temperature and checking on the kid and stuff like that. The little kid said to me, don't touch me, you're dirty. I said, dirty? He said, yes you're dirty, you have dirty all over you, you're dirty. The mother was there, and she said nothing. So I went to the instructor and said, this kid doesn't want me. He said I'm dirty. I said, did you have that problem with anybody of colour with children? I said, and why wouldn't the mother say something to the child? She said nothing; she just stood there. So I went to the zero to six months baby section. I moved around a lot; I did move around a lot in that place finding different situations and stuff. That was better. But then there was a charge nurse that does the assignment as to what you do for today. I said, can you just maybe change me around to different rooms so that I don't have to see the same kids every day? She said to me, you have no choice. I said, what do you mean I have no choice? I said, do I have to stay in one place all the time? I thought maybe I should move around a bit. So when she told me that, I found out with some of the staff members, some of them were like a little preferential treatment was given to certain staff members. When it came to break time especially, when it's coffee break you have either first break or second break. So I said, what coffee break am I having today? She said, you're on first break. So when it came time to go for break, they will just all leave without even picking up on me and saying, are you ready to go, let's go for coffee. They would just go. So I continued on working and I said to the head nurse, I didn't get any coffee break because the girls didn't even bother to check on me. She said, yeah, you can have your break. She said, you go ahead and have your break. I wouldn't go to the coffee shop. I would go downstairs in the lounge area and just spend my 20 minutes there, and then go back up after. I said, that's really weird how we're on first break and they will just go without even checking on me. Usually

people on first break will all go, but that didn't happen. So that's when I felt that it doesn't look like things are going to work out very smoothly here for me at all.

Q: So you found yourself being isolated?

DP: Isolated more or less, yes.

Q: In that workplace, were there any other nurses of colour?

DP: I was the only, well they had other people, like I said. They had an East Indian nurse there and an Asian, but they treated them different to how they treated me.

Q: Was there any staff association that you could turn to?

DP: No, I just mainly put my concern to the head nurse or the assistant head nurse. The head nurse was kind of a wacky person; she wasn't fair in certain things. I said to her when I was getting ready to do the exams which were coming up in a few months, I said to her, I'm requesting a day off because I have to write the exam. I needed a day off because I had to go downtown somewhere. She took it and put it in her drawer and never responded to me about it. So when the time was getting closer, I said, did you get my note about that day that I was asking? I have to be doing this exam that I'm supposed to do, and I need the day off. Oh, she said, I don't think you can get that; we're short staffed, you can't get it. So I went to the supervisor to complain about her. I said, I requested this two weeks ago and she's telling me that I can't have it because they're short staffed. So she came and spoke to her and said, if she requested something two weeks ago, why wouldn't you...and she talked to her. She said to me, you can take that day off, she said. That's the supervisor lady. So I wasn't in her good books of course, because I complained.

Q: Did you feel like a part of the team?

DP: Yeah, a bit with a couple of them, but not all of them.

Q: Were you still in pediatrics at this point?

DP: No, I had moved back to medicine. I thought, well let me think of where I'd like to change to now. I thought, well I decided to go to the gynecology unit. I thought, I'll take a break over there and go there. It was much better there. I did run into at least people that talked to me and included me in stuff, and I was able to manage there pretty good.

Q: Did any of the union upheaval impact you at the time? Did anyone encourage you to sign up to join forces with UNA?

DP: No, none of that happened.

Q: So you were working in isolation.

DP: Still in isolation, yeah.

Q: Were you ever in the staff association?

DP: I did go to one or two meetings there to speak to other people and see what their thoughts were about certain things that I was encountering. I asked them, what do you think I should do about this situation? They said, well it doesn't matter where you are, you're going to run into people that are not going to be helpful or compliant or anything like that. You'll just have to work your way around it.

Q: So you initiated this relationship and went to a meeting to try to...

DP: To see if I could, yeah.

Q: No one on your ward ever came to you and invited you to a meeting?

DP: No, nothing like that.

Q: This was the '70s?

DP: The '70s.

Q: Did you stay in medicine for a while longer?

DP: Yeah, and then I moved from there.

Q: Were the clients from Camsell?

DP: No, none of them were from Camsell.

Q: Did you ever encounter any transfers from Camsell?

DP: No. It was only when I decided in the '80s sometime that I did apply to the Camsell to work there casual, so I worked part time there. I did have a better time at the Camsell doing part time. I said to myself, maybe I should transfer to the Camsell and forget about the Alec, because the girls were way different; the staff was way different. They treated me differently.

Q: These were regular nurses?

DP: Regular nurses, yeah. They had a couple of LPNs in between and they would say to me, you have to know there's people that are for you and people against you. I decided I felt much more relaxed there in that environment.

Q: Did you feel like you could provide better patient care?

DP: Yeah. And they really appreciated all the stuff that I did for them there. When I moved there I was able to help out with intravenous stuff, which they didn't know very much about. I

had had some training in intravenous therapy. So I looked after their special lines, and did the bloodwork and stuff like that. So they really appreciated that.

Q: Who were the patients at the Camsell?

DP: There were quite a few indigenous patients.

Q: Were the patients welcoming, as well?

DP: They were, yeah they were okay. They had a few white patients but nothing much to talk about. Mostly Indigenous people were at the Camsell at the time.

Q: Where did they come from?

DP: From up north, they came from up north.

Q: Were they long-term patients?

DP: Ya they were long-term.

Q: Did you live in the community?

DP: Yeah. When I was at the Camsell, I lived in Wellington at the time. It was just about a 10 or 15 minute drive to the Camsell. It was closer going to the Camsell than going to the Alec.

Q: So a lot of the patients were coming from up north and stay awhile?

DP: Yes, so I got to know a few of them. They seemed to be okay with me around.

Q: So you preferred it to the Alec?

DP: Yeah, they really appreciated me much more so than at the Alec.

Q: Did they try to woo you into the community? Did you feel that you could flourish better there?

DP: They didn't woo me into the community. I was flourishing better there when I worked with them, yeah.

Q: How did your own personal needs continue to be met? Were you relating to the association at that point?

DP: The association was already going on, yes. They invited me to meetings and stuff but because I was only part time or casual as they called me, I wasn't there all the time. Only when they needed extra help I would go.

Q: And you were still at Royal Alec fulltime?

DP: Yeah I was still at the Alec. In that time I had moved to gyne to the intravenous therapy unit. After a while they were talking about merging the Camsell with the Alec and I said to the girls at the Camsell, I said, I'll tell you something. I said, you girls have it really easy here. They'll give me two patients for the whole evening. Hardly anything to do, so I used to go around to see if I could help the other staff members. I said, when you come to the Alec you're going to have to work, you're going to have twice as much work as you do here at the Camsell. So there was a lot of friction with the girls merging from the Camsell to the Alec. Because I had seniority at the Alec, when they started saying that according to your seniority they're going to have to give you the pink slip or something like that.

Q: Were they bumping people?

DP: They were bumping, yes. So the girls from the Camsell were trying to bump people in areas at the Alec. Not so much medicine, but surgery, orthopedics, eye clinic.



Q: So the girls at the Camsell had more seniority?

DP: Yea.h

Q: How long had you worked at the Camsell?

DP: A few years, I think two or three years I worked there. Then once the bumping was going on I said to them, am I going to get a pink slip so I can go somewhere else? They say, no, you're at the top of the list; so you don't get to go anywhere.

Q: This was at the Royal Alec?

DP: Yeah. I was at the top of the list.

Q: When the Camsell nurses came over to the Alec, you said there was a lot of friction?

DP: Oh yeah.

Q: Give me an example.

DP: The girls were quite resentful with them, because they thought that they were getting too much work to handle.

Q: The Camsell girls?

DP: Yeah. They were saying that they're giving them a bigger assignment because they're from the Camsell. They used to call them the Camsellites. The Camsellites think they can come here and just order people around. So the girls who were already established would say to them, you're new here so we're just teaching you the ropes, and you have to abide with what we show you here. You just don't do as you please. So a couple of the girls I used to know personally, I

said, didn't I tell you that when you get to the Alec it's going to be a rude awakening for you guys? They used to really take it easy at the Camsell, easy stuff. Then once they got to the Alec there was a whole lot more that they had to deal with.

Q: Were the Camsell patients moved over to the Alec?

DP: Some of them moved to the Alec, yes. They were still having people at the Camsell but not as much. I think because they were Indigenous people coming to the Alec, the staff members were very short with them; they were not very patient with them. I said to them, you know, a patient is a patient, it doesn't matter what nationality they are or anything. You have to treat them as patients. They're here for treatment, and this is not the way this should happen. Nursing care was not very good with some of the staff members and those patients.

Q: When you were at the Camsell, did you get a sense of any strange activities happening that targeted indigenous people?

DP: No, not really.

Q: When did it close?

DP: I can't remember, sometime in the '90s. When the move happened it was between '91 and '92, so it was somewhere in the mid '90s when they closed. I was so disappointed.

Q: Did you recognize any of the patients when they showed up at the Royal Alec?

DP: Oh yeah, I recognized some of them and they remembered me too. There were not very many Black people around at the time. They had a few but not a whole lot. So they recognized who I was.

Q: Did your experience begin to change?

DP: Yeah, things were changing differently when I moved to the intravenous therapy team. It was different, because I got to go to all the units. We had to look after all the special lines and stuff that they gave people that couldn't eat and stuff. So we did all that. We had to go to all the floors; so they got to know who I was.

Q: Did the union inform you of the cuts? Did you attend meetings?

DP: No, I didn't attend meetings but they would send us information. We had one member from our group that would go and get the stuff, go down to the office, and then come back to us to let us know what was happening.

Q: You had a staff representative?

DP: Yeah, we had one of our staff representing. So she came back to let us know what was happening.

Q: Did you take any industrial action? How did you protest against the cuts?

DP: We didn't. One of the girls said to me, that's what we have UNA for. We pay fees for UNA. So anytime you have a problem, you go down and talk to them. Make sure you go down there and have an appointment and talk to them.

Q: By this time you were in UNA?

DP: Yeah, I was with UNA at the time. So anytime I had a problem with my manager on the unit; for instance, we had a manager when I worked in the CT scanning area. After I moved from the IV therapy I went to the CT scanning, he was a technician in one of the departments. I think he behaved like a racist sometimes. He would find all kinds of things. I'm trying to think of the department he worked in; it wasn't CT scanning. Nuclear medicine, he was a nuclear medicine person. We'd have patients coming from neonatal, little babies and that, coming down for treatment in the department. We covered all of X-ray: CT scanning, ultrasound, angiograms. So

we get called over to nuclear medicine for this little premature baby in a bassinette, that needed to have some drugs. I said to him, he is coming from the neonatal unit with a nurse. She's looking after him. She should be the one to administer the drugs. We're dealing with adult patients, I said. I'm not qualified to give drugs to this premature baby when there's a nurse there. He said, well you're an RN aren't you? I said, you're a technician in nuclear medicine. If they call you to CT scanning to do a procedure, would you be comfortable going to do that? Even if you're a technician in nuclear medicine, would you go there and do that, or would you be able to do that? He said, that's beside the point. You're an RN; you should be able to do it. I said, I will not be doing it. I'll go and talk to my coworkers and find out more. So I went and talked to one of the girls who was there working before me and I said, this is what he's saying to me, that I should administer medication to this premature baby. She said, no no no, he cannot tell you to do that. So I went back in and I said, and the answer is no. You can report me if you want, but I'm not doing it. I'm not going to take responsibility when he has a nurse with him. Same thing with catheterization: we can only catheterize the female; we cannot catheterize babies. They have to have a special person to do that, for male premature babies. We don't do that. So I think he was the type of guy that nobody liked him in that department. He was just a guy that tried to push buttons there and do everything. This one nurse said, I hate him. I said, well I can't say I hate him; you're not supposed to hate anybody. She said, I wish he had a heart attack and just died. I said, no you don't say that about people. I said, don't say that. Any time he came to say something to us, there's a little kitchen that we have where we have our lunches and stuff there. You could smell him from a distance. He wore this cologne that stunk. I said to her, oh-oh, Fred's coming; you can smell him. We'd all leave the room and go around the corner because he'd probably come to say something to us. So one of the girls, the white girl says, Fred, these girls work very hard. What do you have against them? They're the most hardworking people here.

Q: Who was she talking about?

DP: She was talking about me and this friend of mine, because we were both Black. We had a Filipino and the two of us were Black. So I said, I think he's a racist, the way he acts and behaves and the way he treats us and wants us to do things that we're not supposed to do. He's willing

to get us into trouble. So she told him off. She told him, you cannot be treating those girls like that. They work hard and they're experienced people and they know their rights. Of course this other girl always goes down to UNA when there's a problem. She goes and will lodge her complaint there, and they will call him down to the office. He was a technician, one of the nuclear medicine technicians. They would open up our little contract book that we have and say, this is what it says here. You cannot say to the girls that you should do this when they're not supposed to. They're not supposed to do that. So don't you be telling them that.

Q: How did people react to the cuts you were experiencing?

DP: A lot of them said, maybe we should transfer somewhere else, go to a different place. A lot of them left and went to the U of A; a couple of the girls went to the U of A. He, on the other hand, nobody liked him and he complained about everything. He ended up leaving and going to the U of A. They didn't like him there either. So next thing I heard he was at the W.W. Cross; he was at the Cross Cancer Institute. I said, oh boy, he doesn't seem to have a resting place, this guy.

Q: So you stayed at the Royal Alec for most of your career?

DP: Oh yeah, most of the time, 35-1/2 years.

Q: Did you find any other reactions to Klein's cuts? You mentioned bumping earlier. How did that impact the staff?

DP: We had a lot of people complaining and all that. But all they did was complain and complain about this, that, and the next thing. There was a lot of bickering and a lot of talk, but I didn't see much difference or change in anything. Every time we went there was always something new that they would try to have us do, like you're responsible for this, this, and this. They would add more stuff to what we were supposed to be doing.

Q: Management was doing that?

DP: Yeah, management was doing that to us. Working in the CT scanning area and angios, we'd move back and forth. When people come for tests and stuff, they will need to have bloodwork sometimes. I'll say to them, the lab is on the fifth floor, that's where you go for bloodwork. I say, we have to have the right tubes and the requisition and stickers. We can't just take blood and put it in the tube not knowing about the stickers; we can't do that. A couple of the girls, one or two of them, would go ahead and do it. I said, I'm not doing that. I said, we're not covered to do that. I send them up to the fifth floor. One doctor came down and his wife needed bloodwork and stuff and a CT scan as well. I said, lab is on the fifth floor if you want to take your wife up there to get bloodwork done, because we don't know what tubes to use for the test that they want. It's better to go up there where they have the proper stuff to do things the right way. He thinks that he's a doctor; so he has his rights around there. I said, I'm not doing it.

Q: What was his reaction?

DP: He tried to complain. He tried to go to the manager and talk about it. I said, I don't care if you go to the manager. I said, it's not in our contract to do bloodwork here. I said, we do it with people if they come for a CT scan and they need to have bloodwork; then, instead of having to have them poked two times or more we try to accommodate them. But the thing is you have to have the correct requisition and stickers for the tubes, and somebody has to take it up to fifth floor. I said, it's just two of us working here.

Q: How many beds did the two of you have?

DP: It's not beds; they were like in-sitting positions. So we have the waiting room and we have the sitting area where we do all the work, and then we have another private area on the other side. I said, even if we did the bloodwork, somebody has to take it upstairs. It has to be labeled and the proper requisition, because if you don't have it done properly, they won't accept it. So this was our predicament; we had to deal with that. I said, I don't care who else did it, but I said, I don't think I'm going to do that. You have to follow the rules. Some girls will say, oh come, we can do tha;, we can make stickers. I said, where's the time? I said, we have five or six people

waiting to be looked after, so one of us can't take off and go upstairs and leave one person to do this. So I said, I'm not doing it.

Q: It sounds like your working day was a little bit stressful.

DP: Oh yeah.

Q: Because of the number of people you had to care for.

DP: Exactly.

Q: Did you have to file any PRCs?

DP: No. We had a beeper system working. So we carried the beeper and then we have to respond to when we get calls on the beeper. I said, we have to prioritize our work as to which is more important. We get calls to MRI, to nuclear medicine, to ultrasound, to main X-ray, all of these departments. We had a lot of coverage; we had to cover a lot of places and we have to prioritize our work and stuff. We had different starting times when we worked there, too. Some people start at 7:15, another one will start at 8:15, and there's the late person that starts at 9. So we had different starting times, and with the beeper system and everything.

Q: How did the strikes in the '70s and '80s impact you?

DP: It was a lot of stress in those strike times. I don't remember the '77 one but in '77 I probably was on maternity leave at that time. But in '88 I remember that strike. It was nasty. We were on the picket line and people were throwing eggs at us and rotten things at us on the sidewalk.

Q: Members of the public?

DP: Yes. Cars would drive by and pitch things at us. There were reporters. I don't know what company they were from, but there were reporters. I was walking with a group of us walking and it was cold; so we had a lot of covers on and everything. I had things wrapped up and all you could see was my eyes. This reporter comes up and he says, it's pretty cold out here, isn't it? I said, yes, aren't you cold? He had icicles on his beard hanging. I said, what about you, aren't you cold? What is your name? I said, there's no such thing as asking me my name. So this other girl said, don't tell him your name because he'll put you in the papers. So I said, yes it's cold. We're here for a reason, I said. So, what is your point? What do you want to know? How long do you think this is going to go on for? I said, I don't know. But he kept walking on the sidewalk and trying to get information from the people that were walking.

Q: Did you suspect he was from management?

DP: Yeah, I think so; he was. So we wouldn't give our names and wouldn't give him any information.

Q: Did he seem intimidating?

DP: Yeah. I remember when the papers came out. I think they had my profile in the paper with my hat and my cover and the thing that was wrapped around my face. All you could see was my eyes. I knew that was me. This girl I was with said, Daisy, I could recognize those were your eyes there. I said, really? But this is the guy that tried to get us in the papers, or whoever it was. I don't know.

Q: How was work at that point in time?

DP: We had a few scabs that went into work.

Q: Nurses?



DP: Yes. This one girl said, I have to go to work. I have bills. I said, everybody else has bills. Then she went in and the girls were really mad at her because she did that. Nobody would talk to her. We had a manager at the time and we had a little room outside our office where we'd leave our work shoes and sweaters and things. She took it all and threw it into Goodwill. She took all our stuff and pitched it. I said, why would she do that? This is a strike, and she thought she should clean everything up and throw things out. I was so angry at this girl. She threw my shoes out, my sweater and everything, because we kept that in our little closet there outside of the thing.

Q: So she thought you had no right to strike?

DP: Yeah, she was in management of course.

Q: How did the strike impact your family or coworkers?

DP: They said they would give us compensation for every day. We were getting I can't remember how much, but we were getting enough to buy lunch or whatever. My husband at the time said, why are you guys striking? He said, you're not going to get nothing out of it. I said, you're one of those people that will take anything. At your workplace if you guys strike and you get 10 cents more or 50 cents more, you're going to settle for that. There's other issues we have to settle here, not only for the salary thing. It was for other things, like responsibility, having at least two people working in the evenings, and different things. It wasn't all about salary.

Q: So there were other issues?

DP: Other issues, yes, about taking charge and doing things. Like on evening shift you have to have at least two people working to cover; you can't leave one person by themselves on the unit. And they were taking away different things like the vacation thing and everything that the girls wanted, like responsibility pay and stuff like that, working on the weekends and all those different things that we were trying to get.

Q: They were threatening to take those out of your collective agreement?

DP: That's right, yes.

Q: Did you feel justified in going on strike?

DP: To keep our benefits, that's what we needed. The vacation thing was another thing, and all these different little things that were happening at the time.

Q: What was the vacation issue?

DP: Years before all that happened, when you take vacation in the wintertime you'd get a week's vacation if you take it in the wintertime for free. It was like the week was free; you get paid for that. I would take advantage of taking vacation in the wintertime, because that's when I used to go home, and I'd get an extra week free. I said, girls, you can have your June and July and August; I don't need those months; I need the winter months. So this is what I did for a couple of years, and then they cut that out.

Q: That was in the UNA collective agreement?

DP: Yeah, right.

Q: Did any benefits transfer over from the staff association?

DP: I can't remember what we had transferred over.

Q: When you were on the picket line, did anyone call out any obscene comments to you because you were a person of colour?

DP: Not so much because of colour, because we were covered up so you couldn't tell. All you could see was your eyes. But we had a lot of obscene things happening with cars driving by and saying nasty things.

Q: This was in the late '80s?

DP: This was in the '80s, yeah. They were throwing things at us, rotten eggs, throwing eggs and rotten fruit at you. It was bitterly cold, very cold.

Q: After you returned to work, did you feel the benefits had improved?

DP: We did get some improvement there.

Q: Did Klein try to get back at you?

DP: He tried. Yes, he did.

Q: What did he try to do?

DP: He closed a couple of places, a couple of hospitals. He did a lot of changes. I can't remember all the changes, but he did a lot of changes.

Q: For the better or for the worse?

DP: For the worse. Cut back on the beds, cut back on different things. I don't even know what he was thinking. That one hospital he closed in Calgary; he closed one of those hospitals in Calgary. Then St. Jo's, I can't remember what he did to St. Jo's. He did a lot of things that people weren't happy with at all.

Q: Did he close the Camsell at that point as well?

DP: He probably did, yeah. He closed it.

Q: Did he close units in your hospital?

DP: No, he just cut back on certain areas. Here they're struggling to find places to put people, in emergency for instance. All the hallways were lined up with stretchers on both sides of the hallway. There was nowhere to put people, and yet he's closing and cutting back on beds. How can you do that? There was nowhere to put people. You couldn't do nursing care with people in the hallway. In the hallway – how can you do that? He was doing things really different. Negative things.

Q: What about staff-patient ratios?

DP: A lot of people didn't like him; a lot of staff members hated him.

Q: Did he increase the patient load?

DP: Yes, that's why a lot of the staff members quit; some of them quit because of that. They couldn't handle all this heavy load. You can't expect one nurse to have 50 patients to look after. The load was too heavy.

Q: Any other cuts you remember?

DP: No.

Q: Did they make attempts to recruit new nurses or to retain current ones?

DP: Yeah, they were trying to do that, but I don't think it worked out.

Q: Did you have any other experiences with patients who were obnoxious?

DP: In CT scanning we had an incident of two elderly women. We were having lunch, me and my friend, in the foyer. We were sitting there having lunch. They came up and gave us this dirty look. I said, what is their problem. They said nothing. One of them said, where is the X-ray

department? I said, if you can read the sign there it says X-ray; that's where you go. She cut her eyes at me, didn't say thank you or nothing. I said, let's bet they're going to CT scanning where we have to still look after them. After lunch I said to my friend, okay. We're heading back, took our stuff back to the kitchen and went back to the CT scanning area after lunch. There they were, sitting in the waiting room. They looked up at the two of us that they cut their eyes at. We said nothing to them. Then one of them says, are there any white people that work here? I said, they will be back at 1 o'clock. So you can wait until 1; they'll be coming back. So we said nothing more and we went on to look after the other people that were sitting in the waiting area. We had two waiting rooms. I said to my friend. I said, I'm not touching one of them. I said, not the way she looked at me. The technicians brought their sheet of paper for them to fill out. You have to fill out this sheet telling them your meds and things like that. They filled out their sheet and they had to come over to the general waiting area, and there they looked up and saw the two of us again. So I said to the radiologist, I said, I don't think those ladies like us. Maybe they don't like our colour or whatever; they're looking for white girls. So the two girls who were working with us, one was Filipino and the other one was white. They came around and I said, well there are your two people. I said, I don't think they want us anywhere near them. They had a snarly look at them and then I went in and talked to the radiologist and said, I think maybe we should let those two girls look after them, and we'll do the other people. So we did all the other people and left the two of them there. The tech says, what happened to those ladies? Are they not prepared yet? I said, I don't think they like us, because they gave us a dirty look earlier and they asked if there were any white people that work here. So we're waiting for the white girls to do them. But they couldn't do them. They couldn't get an IV going on them. They had to give them an IV and give them the drink and everything. One of them got poked about two or three times and was making a whole lot of noise. I said to the Asian radiologist, I said, Dr. Sinn, those are yours. When they get in there for their test, you can do their IV, because they don't want us. She says, you know that I'm not good with stuff like that. You girls know what you're doing. I said, but they don't want us, Dr. Sinn, they don't. So they put them on the table and she poked away at one of them, and she was screaming and hollering and carrying on. So my other friend went in and she said, now are you prepared to get one of us to do you or do you want to go home and come back another day? So she put the thing in, put the needle in. She said, are you done? She says, yes we're done. We know what we're doing here; we're experienced people.

Never mind the colour, but we're experienced people here. She was a quite outspoken lady; she would tell them straight out.

Q: Did you feel that you had to be defensive all the time?

DP: All the time, yes. You can tell when people come into the department or they come for tests; you can tell from the way they look at you what they're thinking. I can tell what they're thinking.

Q: Were you dealing with a lot of Indigenous people from up north?

DP: Not a whole lot, but a few of them came by from up north.

Q: So in the '90s you were still at the Royal Alec, and was that the only job you had at that point?

DP: At that point, yeah.

Q: You didn't work part time anywhere?

DP: No.

Q: What else was happening with your career?

DP: There's not really too much more happening with us. The last place I worked was in the angiogram room where they did angios and stuff.

Q: Did you gain any seniority, or just experience?

DP: Just experience, not seniority.

Q: Did you attend any UNA conventions or activities?

DP: We did have some offers to go to certain things, and one of us would be picked to go to say a convention or something, and one of the girls actually went to it. At one point we had to train all the homecare nurses and people from out of town on how to look after the central line IV thing that we had to insert for people. We had a list of all the girls that had to come for training, and we had to go through the training period to teach them how to do all these IVs and stuff. They said, well when we're doing homecare we go to people's homes and we just use a small catheter. I said, well here in the hospital we don't use small catheters. It's the same poke that you get, but it's a different needle. I said, we don't use those little tiny things. I said, they use a #20 or #18. I said, what's the difference? Once you have the technique, it doesn't make any difference what size catheter you use. But they couldn't get that through their heads. Some of them, we'd take them to the daycare units where people go for the one day thing when they're just there for the day, and we had to take them over to the other building to get all these things going, take them to show them how to look after the central line catheters and stuff. They said, you make it look so easy but it's not that easy. I said, if you put your mind to it and you watch and follow the technique, I'm sure you should be okay. But the patients, on the other hand, when they see we have somebody training, they don't want them to do them. They say, no Daisy, I think you'd better do me. I said, but she's here to learn; this is a teaching hospital. We actually had incidents where I'd take the girls over to the one-day clinic there for their procedure and I said, I will demonstrate for you the first one. I'll show you exactly what to do. Prepare yourself, because you have to get all your stuff together, talk to the patient, and let them know what you're doing, and then I did the one patient. I said, okay, I'll pick the people that you should do, those people that look like they're easy to do. I said, you can go ahead and do this other lady here because it's an open area where you have four beds or whatever; they're not like single rooms. So she goes to this next person and she's shaking. I said, why are you shaking? I'm nervous. I'm nervous. I said, well, don't be nervous. I said, well, don't be nervous. I said, if you shake like that the patient is not going to let you touch them. Daisy, Daisy, please don't do that to us, come and do me. She says, don't let her touch me. So that put a lot of pressure. After training for two days in a row I said to the girls, I need a day off; I cannot come

back another day with this. I said, because there's so much pressure on you and you have to do it right the first time. Nobody wants to be poked two or three times.

Q: Did any of your patients ever recognize you in the community?

DP: Yeah, I had an incident at Safeway. I had my groceries and I went through. Usually when I go for groceries I make a list and I have a rough idea how much I should be paying. I know exactly what I pick up and how much everything is. So she goes through the thing so quickly, and sometimes they punch things in twice. After she went through the whole grocery thing I got my list and I said, I have nothing here in my groceries that cost \$15. I said, where did you get this \$15 from? So I go to the manager and I said, I want you to go through my grocery list. I have it all in the cart here, and I think she double checked something and she doesn't want to admit she made a mistake. So I go to the manager and he goes through my groceries and says, yeah, you're right. There was an extra \$15 or \$20 on my list that was not there. He said, I'm so sorry; we'll have to compensate you. He gave me a chocolate bar and some other thing and stuff: I'm so sorry; I'm very sorry ma'am. The very next day the same cashier was a patient. I walked in there and took one look at her and thought, this is the lady that screwed me over and tried to let me pay for what I didn't have. She slid herself under the sheet to cover her face. I said, you don't have to cover up. I said I'm here to give you a needle today, an intravenous. I'm not a mean person. She was shaking under that sheet. She thought I was really going to torture her or something. I said, I'm not that kind of person. I said, you just relax, take a couple deep breaths, and everything will be fine. She was a day patient or something. So I did her IV and said, see, that didn't hurt so much, did it? It's all in your head. Well I tell you, after that, every time I went to Safeway this woman was the nicest person to me. I said, you never know who you're going to run into.

Q: Do you still live in the same neighbourhood?

DP: Yeah, in the general area. I moved from Wellington to Castle Downs. But, like I say, you find racism everywhere you go. I had a neighbour that was right next door to me. In the wintertime every time I went out to start the car she would come out. When I tried to look at her, she



would turn her back on me like this. I worked a late shift one time and somebody had parked in my stall, and I had a feeling it was a person belonging to her. So I went and knocked on her door at 11:30, quarter to 12 at night, and I parked on the side. I said, there's a red car parked in my stall. Is that your visitor? She said, yes. I said, well I need to park; this is my stall. So where can he park? I said, on the street. There's the street there that he can park, but this is my stall and I need to park. She said, and what is your name? I said, why does my name matter? Do you live here? I said I'm right next door to you. Don't you see me every morning come out? She just didn't acknowledge me. Oh, my God, what is your name. I wouldn't give her my name. It's really hard when you're living somewhere and you don't know your neighbour. Anything can happen.

Q: During the period of the '80s, did any experiences jump out at you?

DP: When I was looking for a place to stay when I was renting, I needed to get somewhere within the general area. I didn't want to go too far away. So these two girls that I worked with, one was an LPN and the other one was an RN. I didn't drive in those days. We got the paper and we were looking at places. I said, could you guys help me out here? I'm looking for a place in this general area, Westmount or somewhere around the general area. Why don't you guys come with me? They're the ones that told me I had a chip on my shoulder. So I said, come with me and see if we can find me a place. So we circled a couple of places in the paper and we checked out this one at Westmount somewhere, a place for rent. So they went forward. I stayed in the background. They went and said, I see you have an ad in the paper for a place for rent, and we're just wondering if it's available. Oh yes, she said. And how much? And she told her everything. This was an elderly lady. So she says, I'm looking for a place for my friend over here. I came forward, and this woman's face just went poof. She said, oh, she said, well actually I need to do some repairs on the place. So it's not really available right now. She changed her story completely. I walked up to her and said, when you put an ad in the paper you should say for whites only. If you don't want people of colour, then you say so. Don't change your story; it's not nice. She turned around and left. I said, girls, you see what I mean now? You understand what I'm talking about here? Two different places we went and this happened, because I let them go ahead and check for me. I said, don't tell me that I have a chip on my shoulder. I don't. This is the situation here.

Q: You've had a long career – 38 ½ years. Do any experiences stand out in the last 10 years, in the late '90s coming into 2000?

DP: Not that I can think of. The last place I worked was in X-ray. X-ray was my last assignment. We had the regular problems with the drug dealers and those people that come in demanding stuff. But there was really nothing too outstanding there.

Q: Have you worked during COVID at all?

DP: Oh no, I retired in 2014. My friend that retired a couple of years ago, they were calling to see if she could come back. She said, not in this lifetime. She said, I've had enough of you guys. I don't want to see any of you. I have nothing to do with you. She just told them off.

Q: Have you found a new direction to channel your energy?

DP: No. When I didn't renew the registration, the registration people said for me to keep my active thing as an RN. I should pay not the full amount but so much to get magazines and updates on what's going on. I said, I am not interested in you guys anymore and I'm not paying nothing, and I don't want to be called an RN. I've done my RN years. They're saying that I can't keep the title of RN if I don't comply with what they're asking me. I said, I don't care. I said, I don't need to be called an RN. I know what I can do and what I'm capable of. At registration time you had to go through sheets and sheets of paper. You go online to do this. They go through a question period as to what things did you do in the past month or two, like things to do with work, like what studies did you do – all kinds of things they ask you and stuff you have to keep up with.

Q: Even though you're retired?

DP: Yeah. I said to my friend Gladys, I said, Gladys, I probably could work for another couple years, but if I have to go through all this, it took me almost two hours online to do all this

paperwork. I thought, I'm not doing this. I said, I don't want to do this anymore. I don't have to be called RN. I'm just Daisy Plenderleith, no RN.

Q: So you couldn't do any nursing work, not even casual?

DP: No. I said, even if I get a casual job, I don't want anything to do with the nursing business, because they'll ask you for registration if you want to do anything like that. No, I don't want to do it.

Q: When the merger took place, you automatically jumped over to membership in UNA?

DP: Yes.

Q: Until you retired?

DP: Yes, in 2014. I actually retired in 2006 but then I went casual part time from 2006 to 2014. I was the person that did all the weekends for them, because nobody wanted to work the weekends. I used to get weekend pay, \$4 extra for weekend pay. So I would do all the weekends, and all the stats that people didn't want to work; I would offer to do it.

Q: You've had a very full career, starting off in Dominica.

DP: Goodwill, Dominica, Princess Margaret Hospital.

Q: Do you keep in touch with any of your nursing colleagues?

DP: We had a reunion in 2012, a reunion with all the nurses. We went to Texas for that. I think it was 2012 or 2013. They wanted to do this every two years. There was about 75 of us that went to Texas. I never heard back from them. My friend in St. Croix used to be my classmate, and then she was in Manhattan, and then she moved to St. Croix; then she moved with her daughter

to Maryland. She's the one that I used to keep in contact with, because I don't keep in contact with them back there.

When I met up with the girls in Texas I hadn't seen them for a couple decades. In Dominica there's certain parts of the place that speak patois . . . I said, would you speak English please? They would remind me of what I used to do. But it was so good to see them after all these years.

Q: And to know that they've thrived in Canada.

DP: All of them have lived all over the U.S. I was the only one that was from Canada. Everybody else was from the U.S., like worked there and moved there.

Q: I've heard from other nurses that they used to have IV teams that travelled around the hospital. Was that something you were involved in at Royal Alec?

DP: We used to be asked to go to Glenrose to help out with IVs. So we did make trips to the Glenrose via the tunnel from the Alec to the Glenrose. So we took turns to go there. I'd say to the girls, okay, make sure your patient is in his room and not in the bathroom or downstairs or something. We have work to do and we're making time to come and help you out here. So, make sure that they are there in their rooms. Yeah, we did that for a while.

Q: At the Camsell, was there a difference in the amount of family support the patients from the north would have? Did they have visitors, or were they pretty much on their own?

DP: I didn't see too many visitors with them really. They were pretty much on their own.

Q: Were most of them tuberculosis patients?

DP: TB, yeah.

Q: Did you have a lot of deaths?

DP: No, they were treated. They had treatment for them.

Q: Back in the '70s, what was the relationship between nurses and doctors?

DP: I think they felt that they were superior to the nurses, like when they say something they want something done. We shouldn't question it, we should just do it. This is when I said to the girls, if you guys are going to be doing this for some people, I am not going to do it. So stop doing that. A couple of them would do it; then it makes it bad for you. I said, if I stop and do this for him, another one will come along and want me to do the same thing. We have other things to do.

Q: Did you feel that your training was respected?

DP: I think the doctors didn't have much respect for nurses at that time. We had a lady in the waiting room in one of those open waiting rooms calling out for a nurse. I went up to her and said, can I help you? She said, I need a nurse. I had my tag on, my name tag and everything. I said, well, I'm your nurse. She said, I need a real nurse. This was a person on a stretcher in one of the rooms waiting for some kind of test that they were going to do on her. I said, well, if you don't need my help, then I will leave. She looked at me as if I was a cleaning lady, for some reason, although I had my name tag on. They always tell us to make sure you wear your tag. But she didn't want my help.

Q: What does it mean to have Shirley and the Black salon in Jasper Place?

DP: I've known Shirley ever since many years ago. When she was training at the Marvel school there on Jasper she always used to say to me, come over and let me do your hair, because you don't have to pay anything. I would go there after work.

Q: Is she one of the people you met when you first came to Edmonton?

DP: Oh yeah, when I was new in Edmonton.

Q: Does that salon provide a place where people connect with each other?

DP: Oh yeah. You get to meet people that you haven't seen for a long time. The last time I was there was a couple months ago, and this person was from Dominica.

Q: Was this somebody you knew before?

DP: I used to know her during the Cariwest period there. She used to be with Cariwest. She was from Dominica.

Q: Did you know Constance?

DP: I know the name. She used to work at the Mis? . . .

She used to work with another hairdresser way back before that time. Delores Barker, do you know Delores? She used to work with Delores. I remember there was a wedding that I had to go to. This friend of mine; she was a Barbadian girl. I said to Shirley, I want you to do my hair, I don't want Delores. Because she has more style and she knows her job. Delores was busy with all these people, and I was there for hours. Delores had a helper there; I can't remember her name now. I said, I've been here for so long. When am I going to get done here? I said, you're doing all the white folks and you're leaving me behind. Is that what you're doing? She goes, what? I said, can you not do me? She said, well, she sort of tells me what to do, type of thing. She was kind of an apprentice there. I was so disappointed when she...it was Anne Walters, you know Anne Walters? Anne and I were supposed to go to this wedding. Anne and I wanted our hair done. I knew Anne from when I first came to the city. I can't remember if she did me or if one of the other girls did me, but I wasn't happy with the way my hair was done. I said to Shirley, I wanted you to do my hair and I don't really like it.

Q: It was really a meeting place.

DP: Oh yeah. So that's when Shirley broke away and got her own place, which I was happy about.

Q: She had a place right on this corner.

DP: Oh yeah, that's right, Stony Plain right there. I think I found a picture, and I said I'll have to bring it and show how young she looked in that picture, Shirley.

Q: Are you in that picture too?

DP: Yeah, me and my daughter.

Q: Can I have the picture?

DP: I don't know where it is. I have to look for it. It was my daughter and I and Shirley in that shop right there. When my daughter was months old, maybe over a year or something, I wanted Shirley to pierce her ears for me, and I brought her to that shop there. So I said, I want you to do it but you have to do it quickly. So she did the freezing of the ears and she marked it. I held her, and she was okay with that. I said, when you do the first one, do the next one real quick. She did the first one with the gun; then she moved over there, and it didn't kick in yet, and then she did the second one. Then about 20 or 30 seconds later this scream came out, and I couldn't stop this child from crying for about 20 minutes. I thought, oh my God, what have I done? I held her and rocked her and sang to her. I said, that's okay, it'll be fine; it will go away; the stinging will go away. I put ice on her ears and stuff. She cried and cried and cried. I said, I can't go home like this, because if her father sees that, he's going to blast the heck out of me. He was very protective of her and he didn't like me to take her to Shirley's shop; I don't know what he had with Shirley. She cried so much that her face was all puffy from the crying. I had to really give her a lot of good treats and everything to settle her down.

Q: So you travelled around with Shirley to every location.

DP: Yeah, every location; then when she was on 124<sup>th</sup> Street there at that little house there.

Q: Is there anything else you'd like to talk about? Any other experiences?

DP: Experiences--do you expect me to remember those things after all these years?

Q: Have you been back home?

DP: 2020 I was there last. That's when I took the trip for the carnival. I didn't participate but I was a spectator. I went with my cousins from Barbados in February.

Q: Do you have family in Barbados?

DP: Yeah, I have cousins there; I have three cousins. In Dominica I still have one cousin left there. The aunts and uncles have all passed.

Q: Your dad was from Dominica too?

DP: Oh yeah, he was fire chief for many years down there. He lived in a place called Govna, way out from the airport. Three miles from the airport, up on a mountain up there.

Q: What was your maiden name?

DP: That was my maiden name, Plenderleith. Then I became Joseph and I went back to Plenderleith. He said to me at one point, my family name is Mills. He said to me at one point, when I was a student nurse I used to travel through the country in the ambulance and do the deliveries in the country and stuff. I stopped by and he said, you want to change your name to your family name, Mills? I said, why? He said, because I thought maybe you want to be Mills instead of Plenderleith. I said, no, I'm keeping my name, I don't want it changed.

Q: Did Plenderleith mean something to your dad?



DP: Well, his father is from Scotland; it originated from Scotland. They used to call him the white boy of the country, because the mother had five of them but he was the only white boy. He thought that he was greater than anybody else, Mr. White Boy.

Q: Any regrets from your working life?

DP: No regrets, no.

Q: Where did Joseph come in?

DP: Well my ex-husband, he was married once before to a Canadian Black lady from Calgary.

Q: So your married name was Joseph?

DP: Yes.

Q: Is there anything else you'd like to reflect on?

DP: I keep saying to myself, what if I had gone to the U.S.? Would I have been a different person or been better off? I couldn't really say. But I had so many choices at that time. I could've gone to England; I could've gone to the U.S. I had uncles in England that lived there.

Q: So, do you have any regrets?

DP: Well not really. I just wonder what life would've been, going say to England. The girls that went there said you have to start all over like you knew nothing. Even after you've trained at home for four years and you go to England, you start from scratch like you knew nothing. They treated you like military, like a military type of thing. So I said, I don't know if I want to do that really. It's like when I was younger my mom worked for two ladies that were unmarried. They lived together and she was their housekeeper and she cooked for them and everything. I was

like five or six, and one of them was a teacher. I said to her, her name was Olga, I said, I want to come to school with you. She said, you have to wait another year or so; you're too young. I said, but I want to come. I pestered her and pestered her for a long time until she said to my mom, get her dressed and I'll take her to school with me when I go in the morning. I was so happy when I went with her. I was not of the age to go to school yet, but then I learned a lot of stuff. I learned the ABCs, I learned to count, I learned to write my name, and do all those things. So, when it was my time for school, I was ahead of everybody. That's what I wanted. So, she said they had to move me from one level to the next level because I knew everything. Then, when I left Dominica when I was 10 or 11, I went to Barbados and I went to a Catholic school there with nuns. I dealt with a lot of nuns. They were not very nice, some of them.

Q: Like residential school here.

DP: Exactly, yeah. The school that I went to, this nun was an Irish nun. There was an Irish nun and there was another one from one of those big countries, I can't remember the name of the country. But this Irish nun was a skinny little woman, very strict. When I got there I was 11 at the time, and because I was ahead with all the stuff that I learned in Dominica she had to figure out where to place me in that school – form 3 or form 4. So they gave me some testing things to write and she said, no I can't put you in form 3, I'll have to put you up one more because you know all that stuff already. So I got to the next level. She said I was very mischievous and I talked too much in class and stuff like that. So she put me at the back of the class. Then she taught scripture, geography, and those things. I used to memorize all the scripture things. There was one girl that was in charge of the classroom; they called her--there was a name for her. She overlooked everybody in the class and if there was anything happening, she would report it to the sister. I can't remember what her name was called. Anyway she said, go back there and check to see if Daisy has things written hiding under her desk, because she can't tell me she knows all these things, all the dates and everything, the scripture that I was supposed to learn, and geography. She went and checked and she said, no, there's nothing on her desk, nothing there. I said to this other girl, who was from St. Lucia, she used to speak patois. She was talking patois to me and I said, this is a miserable woman. I said, we have to stop talking to her because she's wanting to make me look like I'm lying here. So we would talk patois back and forth, and

she told mother that we were talking bad about her and stuff. So she had me face the wall in class and put me in detention because of that. Mother Santé I think was her name. I said to my kids, I want to take you to Barbados to show you this nun that was really miserable with me. They said, why would you want to see her if she was that miserable? I said, I want you guys to see her. So I took them down one year, and she was still alive, and she remembered me. Daisy Plenderleith, she said, where have you been all these years? Were you in England? I said, no, Canada. She told the kids, she was a very smart woman, very smart person. She memorized everything.

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