

An Interview with
Eleanor Sullivan

at *The Historical Society of Missouri* St. Louis
Research Center, St. Louis, Missouri

22 May 2014

interviewed by Dr. Blanche Touhill
transcribed by Valerie Leri and edited by
Josephine Sporleder



Oral History Program

The State Historical Society of Missouri
Collection S1207 Women as Change Agents DVD 4

NOTICE

This material may be protected by copyright law (Title 17, U.S. Code). It may not be cite without acknowledgment to the Western Historical Manuscript Collection, a Joint Collection of the University of Missouri and the State Historical Society of Missouri Manuscripts, Columbia, Missouri. Citations should include: [Name of collection] Project, Collection Number C4020, [name of interviewee], [date of interview], Western Historical Manuscript Collection, Columbia, Missouri.

Reproductions of this transcript are available for reference use only and cannot be reproduced or published in any form (including digital formats) without written permission from the western Historical Manuscript Collection.

Use of information or quotations from any [Name of collection] Collection transcript indicates agreement to indemnify and hold harmless the University of Missouri, the State Historical society of Missouri, their officers, employees, and agents, and the interviewee from and against all claims and actions arising out of the use of this material.

For further information, contact: The State Historical Society of Missouri, St. Louis Research Center, 222 Thomas Jefferson Library, One University Blvd., St. Louis, MO 63121 (314) 516-5119

PREFACE

The interview was taped on a placed on a tripod. There are periodic background sounds but the recording is of generally high quality.

The following transcript represents a rendering of the oral history interview. Stylistic alterations have been made as part of a general transcription policy. The interviewee offered clarifications and suggestions, which the following transcript reflects. Any use of brackets [] indicates editorial insertions not found on the original audio recordings. Physical gestures, certain vocal inflections such as imitation, and/or pauses are designated by a combination of italics and brackets []. Any use of parentheses () indicates a spoken aside evident from the speaker's intonation, or laughter. Quotation marks [""] identify speech depicting dialogue, speech patterns, or the initial use of nicknames. Em dashes [—] are used as a stylistic method to show a meaningful pause or an attempt to capture nuances of dialogue or speech patterns. Words are *italicized* when emphasized in speech or when indicating a court case title. Particularly animated speech is identified with **bold** lettering. Underlining [] indicates a proper title of a publication. The use of underlining and double question marks in parentheses [(??)] denotes unintelligible phrases. Although substantial care has been taken to render this transcript as accurately as possible, any remaining errors are the responsibility of the editor, Josephine Sporleder.

Eleanor Sullivan: I live in St. Louis now and my children are grown and I have an absolutely wonderful life.

Blanche Touhill: Talk to me about your early life: your family; where you were born; did you have brothers and sisters; did you have cousins, grandparents; did any of those encourage you to do things that you really thought you enjoyed immensely and what sort of set you apart from other kids?

Eleanor Sullivan: Well, I was born in Indianapolis and I have one sister a year younger than I am. We did have some cousins we saw occasionally. Interestingly, a cousin I have never met is coming to town this weekend and we are getting together on Sunday but we were not close to any of the cousins. It was mostly just my sister and I.

Blanche Touhill: And what about your grandparents?

Eleanor Sullivan: Oh, I was very close to my grandmother. I spent a lot of time with her, even part of a school year, living with her and she encouraged me in everything. In fact, she sort of thought I was like the poster child.

Blanche Touhill: Oh, wonderful. All children need that.

Eleanor Sullivan: Well, they do. My sister, sadly, sort of fell by the wayside. She encouraged me especially because I liked playing the piano and took lessons and when I was 16, she bought me a brand new piano for my birthday and I still have it with me today.

Blanche Touhill: And you play?

Eleanor Sullivan: Occasionally. A few years ago I went back and took lessons to kind of get back into it but it really would take more time now than what I want to spend.

Blanche Touhill: Did you have a favorite song or did she have a favorite song that you played?

Eleanor Sullivan: Well, she liked to hear me play the hymns, just traditional hymns and so at my church, I would accompany the children's choir and then I took lessons. Apparently someone referred me to the conservatory, the Jordan Conservatory in Indianapolis and I took lessons there every week and I don't know how it happened but they gave me a reduced rate and I earned my money babysitting to pay for my lessons.

- Blanche Touhill: Oh, wonderful! So you really loved it?
- Eleanor Sullivan: I did love it. I still do when I do play. It's just wonderful.
- Blanche Touhill: Did you play in elementary school or high school?
- Eleanor Sullivan: No, not in school I didn't. I played at home and I played at church, a lot of church, various times when they'd want someone to accompany.
- Blanche Touhill: Do you sing?
- Eleanor Sullivan: No, no, no. My family won't even let me sing at Christmas. No, no, no. I have a voice like my grandmother's.
- Blanche Touhill: Did she play or anything?
- Eleanor Sullivan: No, she did not but she loved the symphony and in fact she took me to the symphony several times and probably the reason I love it today.
- Blanche Touhill: That's right.
- Eleanor Sullivan: Yes, and she would often play it on this little tinny radio because radios weren't very good at that time and they lived out in the country. But she'd have that on and she'd just sit, just sit in her rocking chair and listen to it and I saw the pleasure she took in listening to music.
- Blanche Touhill: How wonderful! So she really was a major force in your life.
- Eleanor Sullivan: She was. I was never really clear at how much she would help me with college but she did take me to meet the president of Wabash College in Crawfordsville, Indiana and I just remember sitting outside on their lawn under a tree drinking lemonade. I wasn't sure if she was saying, "If you go to college, I'll help you." I never was clear about that and never asked, unfortunately.
- Blanche Touhill: Well, you went on to high school and you went to a very good academic high school.
- Eleanor Sullivan: I did.
- Blanche Touhill: And how was that?
- Eleanor Sullivan: Oh, it was wonderful. It was a public high school in Indianapolis but people, even today, even though it's no longer a school, if I say I went to

Short Ridge High School...I just met a news anchor for one of the Indianapolis stations and she said, "Where did you go to school?" I said, "I went to Short Ridge High School." She said, "Oh, my mother went there; my grandmother went there," you know, and we've had congressmen and Senator Lugar graduated and what I loved about it...I didn't know about any of those things but what I loved is the classes were so fascinating and I just took every class I could, as many as I could and took honors classes in my senior year and I just couldn't soak up enough learning.

Blanche Touhill: And so you like to read?

Eleanor Sullivan: I love to read, even today. I have to keep my supply. I have this little addiction to reading and if I don't have enough books stacked up to read, I start to get anxious and have to get more and I read two or three books a week.

Blanche Touhill: Did your grandmother read?

Eleanor Sullivan: Not like that. She mostly read religious kinds of things.

Blanche Touhill: Well, how did you pick up the reading habit, just in elementary school?

Eleanor Sullivan: I think it was when I started to read fiction. It's really fiction that I love. I like interesting non-fiction but I do enough of that in my work so usually for fun I read fiction, and mystery fiction now is all I read.

Blanche Touhill: Did you write in those early years?

Eleanor Sullivan: I did not. I didn't have any problems when I needed to write but it didn't occur to me I might write. I didn't think about what I could do. I just thought about what I could learn at that point and I did graduate in the top 10% of that class which was an achievement in that school; National Honors Society and so forth, but there was no money for me to go to college and, like I say, my grandmother hadn't come forward and said...I couldn't go to Wabash, that was a men's college but "if you want to go to DePaul or Earlham or one of the other schools or even Indiana University and I'll pay for it," my life might have been different. But she didn't and I didn't ask. So one counselor called me in though one day and she said, "I have good news for you." She said, "You've been awarded a scholarship."

Blanche Touhill: Oh, nice.

Eleanor Sullivan: Well, until she told me it was \$100 and that was it for college. So I did what a lot of other kids did in the '50s and I got married.

Blanche Touhill: And you lived in Indianapolis?

Eleanor Sullivan: We did.

Blanche Touhill: And you had children?

Eleanor Sullivan: Not right away. My husband had...it was the draft and he had to go to the army and I worked. One of my classmate's father was a department store manager and I had worked for him through high school. Well, I had two jobs in high school: I worked for him in the afternoons and I worked in the business office at the high school before class. So he offered me a full-time job in the office and so I worked in the credit office and there everything was done by hand, you know, and I liked it actually. It was something different.

Blanche Touhill: And so then your husband came home from the army?

Eleanor Sullivan: Came home and then we started having our family and eventually we bought a little house of our own and his family lived...his parents and lots of extended family. That's really the extended family I'm still close to, the whole Sullivan family. Then, well, we had four children, 10 years later and he got a job offer here in St. Louis and I was delighted to move.

Blanche Touhill: You were ready?

Eleanor Sullivan: I was ready and a lot of the family: "Oh, you can't leave." You know, there are families like that where they're so embedded in the community that no one should leave but I was ready to go and he was, too and so we came here and three years later, we had our fifth baby and four weeks after that he was hurt in an accident and hospitalized.

Blanche Touhill: How did you hear about it? Somebody from the office called?

Eleanor Sullivan: No, no, the hospital called, the Emergency Room nurse called and said, "You need to come" and she said, "Don't drive yourself here."

Blanche Touhill: So what did you do?

Eleanor Sullivan: I called my neighbors across the street.

Blanche Touhill: And you had five children, one was a baby in arms?

Eleanor Sullivan: I was breast-feeding him at the time I got the call. So I called my neighbors across the street. I don't know what the older ones were doing. The four-year-old was out in the sandbox and I didn't even tell him I was going which turned out not to be a good thing for him, years later. He said "All of a sudden my parents just disappeared." He was only four. But anyway, back to what I did: The wife came over, my neighbors across the street, she came over to stay with the kids and the husband drove me to the hospital.

Blanche Touhill: Oh, wasn't that wonderful.

Eleanor Sullivan: Yes, yes.

Blanche Touhill: Wasn't that wonderful, and weren't you lucky they were both there.

Eleanor Sullivan: Yes, I was.

Blanche Touhill: So then, he had died?

Eleanor Sullivan: Yes. Well, he never regained consciousness. It was two-and-a-half weeks and of course the first thing I did was call his parents and they were here in a few hours from Indianapolis and then his mother stayed with the children the whole time because I stayed at the hospital the whole time. I didn't leave.

Blanche Touhill: Did you spend the night there?

Eleanor Sullivan: Yes, I slept on the couch outside ICU. But people would bring the children to see me and to see him. Now, a couple of them don't ever remember seeing him but they did but he was unconscious and he looked all right. It was brain damage that was done and so he looked...well, and he had a broken arm and pelvis, internal injuries but to look at him, other than the trach in his neck and the fact that he didn't move or open his eyes. So I stayed there all that time and I kept saying...the kids later said, "Well, you kept telling us he was going to be all right," which I did keep telling them that.

Blanche Touhill: Well, you didn't know.

Eleanor Sullivan: Well, I really kind of knew. You know, it's one of those things you don't want to know and the doctor would say, "You know, if we keep him alive,

he may never get up out of that bed” and I said, “Oh, no, keep him alive, whatever” which made no sense anyway. But I would listen to the nurses taking care of him and talking to him and I thought, if something happens and he doesn’t survive, I’m going to be a nurse.

Blanche Touhill: Oh, my goodness!

Eleanor Sullivan: I remember, the middle of the night, hearing a nurse talk to him.

Blanche Touhill: Oh, my. So you were thinking ahead already?

Eleanor Sullivan: I was and even the last few days before he died, I even planned the memorial service.

Blanche Touhill: Yes. Well, you were grieving and you were in the process of letting go.

Eleanor Sullivan: Right, yes, yes.

Blanche Touhill: So you come home and you then have to charter a whole new life?

Eleanor Sullivan: Yes, I guess, I did. I was so, I think, just startled by the whole situation. My in-laws wanted me to move back to Indianapolis, said they’d help me and I just couldn’t do it. I just said, “No, no, I couldn’t disrupt our lives that much.” That seemed like too onerous a task, to try to do that and I think in reality I would never have gone on to school and done what I did. They would have just taken care of me and I would have become the poor little widow with five children and I would never have probably gotten out of that. So, it took me a year. I couldn’t even function really for a year. I didn’t realize how bad off I was financially, right away. His company came and took the company car and files and so forth in his office and so I was left with our Volkswagen bug...

Blanche Touhill: With five children?

Eleanor Sullivan: With five children. But we did it. We had little spots for each one of them, the baby on the floor, one in the very back and two in the back seat and I could hit them all, “Behave or I’m smacking you.” But then, I kept thinking, I’m going to be a nurse. What do I do? So I look in the Yellow Pages for nursing schools and there weren’t any. There were private duty nurses, nursing homes. I didn’t know where to go to school. I had no idea and I was telling a neighbor...of course, people told me right away, “You can’t do it. You’re too old. You have too many kids and you don’t have

any money." I thought, watch me. Then someone told me the community college had a program and they thought they had some money for people who wanted to go, because money was really the big problem. We got Social Security. I still remember, \$384 a month for six people because they really only pay for three, three dependents and if I got remarried, then there would just be five but it would still be the \$384 and thank God for that, we got that until Patrick, the baby, was 18. I don't know what we would have done without it. I don't know. Well, that first year, people offered me a couple little jobs. I sold dog licenses for the City of Manchester and I helped out in an office of a counseling service that was related to my church when someone was off work for six weeks and I think that's all, the two jobs I had that year and we had a little bit...tiny, tiny bit life insurance and then I sold the house, moved to an apartment which, that was hard to do because nobody wanted to rent it to a woman with five children and then I started school. Well, then I went to Meramec, found out they had a nursing program, signed up, was an alternate, got in and there was federal money, not only paid for all of my school, but we got a \$200 a month stipend and between that and the \$384 and a little bit of life insurance and a little bit of house money, we struggled along.

Blanche Touhill: Were the children able to stay in the same school?

Eleanor Sullivan: No, they did not and that was terrible; I hated that and I think that was...it was more disruptive to their lives than I realized, how bad it would be, but we lived in a pretty nice area and I couldn't really afford to stay there. So, the first week of nursing school, I'm watching Irene Brown teaching and that very week, I said, that's what I want to do, I want to teach nursing. I can be a nurse and I can take care of individual patients, but if I teach nursing, I can affect nurses and they all will take care of more patients and so forth. And I don't know where that came from because that never would have been in my mind. I never wanted to be a teacher. That never occurred to me. Anytime I tried to teach my daughters anything, we got a screaming fight so I had no talent in that way. And from that day on, then I just...and I graduated at the top of my class. The young students all elected me class president, they did, and one faculty member said to me, "I hope you're planning to go on to school." I said, "I've already applied." But then there was one occasion...I love psychiatric nursing, my absolute favorite, but I went in to have my

evaluation with my instructor first thing and I just thought it had gone great because I loved these people who were disturbed and she said, "Well, I hope you're not planning to go into psychiatric nursing. You have no aptitude for it." And I was briefly devastated but I said, well, like I told the people who said I couldn't go to nursing school, I said, "Watch me." So I went on to graduate school in psychiatric nursing and I had my first evaluation with my professor and the first thing she said is, "You have absolutely picked the right field. You're perfect in psychiatric nursing."

Blanche Touhill: Can you explain that?

Eleanor Sullivan: Oh, yes, I can. When I think back, I was the star at Meramec Community College nursing program. They've had events since and invited me to come back on more than one occasion to speak and be a part of the festivities. This woman, that made her angry. She was going to make sure I didn't get too full of myself, but it didn't work. I went right on.

Blanche Touhill: Where did you go to school?

Eleanor Sullivan: Oh, next I went to St. Louis University.

Blanche Touhill: Oh, to get your B.S.?

Eleanor Sullivan: To get my B.S. and I did it in one year and two summers.

Blanche Touhill: Oh, my goodness!

Eleanor Sullivan: Yes, I took 20 hours at a time. I took independent studies which is how I met Mary Castles.

Blanche Touhill: Yes, she's on the faculty?

Eleanor Sullivan: Yes, she was in independent study with me. That's when I knew I loved research.

Blanche Touhill: Yes, she was the big researcher on our faculty.

Eleanor Sullivan: Yes, she was.

Blanche Touhill: And she helped people.

Eleanor Sullivan: She helped. Oh, she was a wonderful help to me, wonderful and she helped everyone. That was her mission in life.

- Blanche Touhill: And then did you continue at St. Louis U?
- Eleanor Sullivan: No. Well, I had to borrow money to go there. There were no more funds but I went to SIU-Edwardsville for my Masters because they had a grant to teach nurses to become psychiatric mental health specialists and that's what I did. So it was perfect for me. It was what I wanted to do and I got more money. So again I got paid a stipend.
- Blanche Touhill: Has psychiatric nursing changed over the years?
- Eleanor Sullivan: Oh, absolutely because of the anti-psychotic medications now, although they were already being used at that time but it's definitely changed, yes. The whole field has changed and I really don't keep up with it now but I'm still on this track. I'm going to teach and I knew I needed to have a Ph.D. I knew that before a lot of other people did. I mean, people weren't really paying attention. They'd say, "Oh, a Masters Degree is good enough. You can teach with that." So then I went to St. Louis U and got my Ph.D. and while I was working on it, I took a job out at Maryville working for Shirley Martin in the baccalaureate program and then when she left there and I finished my doctorate at the same time, she hired me to come here to UMSL.
- Blanche Touhill: So you've been with Shirley for years and years?
- Eleanor Sullivan: Years and years, yes.
- Blanche Touhill: As well as Mary Castles. Mary is probably dead 20 years now.
- Eleanor Sullivan: Yeah, probably.
- Blanche Touhill: Fifteen anyway.
- Eleanor Sullivan: Yeah, but, yeah, right away both of us wanted her to come, yes.
- Blanche Touhill: When Shirley hired you, was it hard to leave the psychiatric nursing?
- Eleanor Sullivan: No, because I was ready to move on. I have this feeling that really I only do things for a short period of time and then I do something else. But that's worked out for me. Yes, I was ready...yes, because I was teaching psych nursing for her there.
- Blanche Touhill: Oh.

- Eleanor Sullivan: Yes, so I'd been teaching it, taking students to clinical sites but when I came here, she gave me the opportunity then to go to the next level and participate in putting a program together and that was such an exciting and satisfying work.
- Blanche Touhill: Well, I met you and Shirley and...was it May?
- Eleanor Sullivan: May, the secretary.
- Blanche Touhill: Shirley was the dean, you were...were you a faculty? Were you an administrator?
- Eleanor Sullivan: No, I was just a faculty member at that time but I really functioned as an administrator.
- Blanche Touhill: But you were full-time?
- Eleanor Sullivan: I was full-time.
- Blanche Touhill: And Ruth Jenkins was part-time?
- Eleanor Sullivan: She came on...I don't remember...she came on later. It was just May, Shirley...
- Blanche Touhill: So it was just the three?
- Eleanor Sullivan: For the first few months.
- Blanche Touhill: And you were going to build a nursing program?
- Eleanor Sullivan: Yeah.
- Blanche Touhill: And all you had at that time was an RN completion.
- Eleanor Sullivan: Well, that's what we were starting, that's right.
- Blanche Touhill: That's right, that's what you were starting.
- Eleanor Sullivan: We were starting the RN completion but we knew it was going to be a full-scale school.
- Blanche Touhill: Yes, the dream was there.
- Eleanor Sullivan: The dream was there, absolutely. And then I was with Shirley almost five years. One time she offered me the job as assistant to the dean.

Blanche Touhill: Well, I thought you were the assistant or the associate to the dean.

Eleanor Sullivan: Well, I said, "No, Shirley, that's not a position I want. What I want to be is assistant dean."

Blanche Touhill: Associate dean?

Eleanor Sullivan: Assistant first, assistant, assistant dean and assistant to the dean...

Blanche Touhill: Oh, are different?

Eleanor Sullivan: They are very different and I have been here long enough to figure that out. So she said okay. Then, a year or so later, she said, "I think you should be an associate dean." I said, "Well, that would be good."

Blanche Touhill: So did you all hire the faculty?

Eleanor Sullivan: Yes.

Blanche Touhill: The curriculum...

Eleanor Sullivan: Write the curriculum, the faculty policies, the student policies, whatever else there was. We did it all but that was so satisfying.

Blanche Touhill: It was building a university.

Eleanor Sullivan: Building a university.

Blanche Touhill: A nursing part of the university.

Eleanor Sullivan: Yes, yes.

Blanche Touhill: And everybody kept saying you won't be able to build it.

Eleanor Sullivan: Yes.

Blanche Touhill: But you must have said, "Watch me."

Eleanor Sullivan: That's right, "Watch me." I've done a few more watch me's since then. But the best thing that Shirley did for me, first, just letting me be in on all of this. Oh, when I was at Maryville, maybe I should have said, I knew I wanted to teach and so I wanted to learn all about how schools of nursing work and so we were writing our self-study for our accreditation.

Blanche Touhill: At Maryville?

Eleanor Sullivan: At Maryville. We only had four faculty. It was very risky to go for accreditation with four faculty. We were very much looked down upon and we only had an RN completion program, again, and I offered to edit the self-study and do it on my day off because I only worked four days a week and I was doing my Ph.D. but I said, "I'll come in and edit." Well, it wasn't every week and I edited the self-study and I learned all about how a school is put together and when Shirley hired me that was one of the reasons she hired me.

Blanche Touhill: To come to UMSL.

Eleanor Sullivan: To come to UMSL, because I understood the big picture, plus, I would be able to write the self-study when we came up. You don't get accredited, you don't have a school.

Blanche Touhill: That's right.

Eleanor Sullivan: It's that important.

Blanche Touhill: Did Maryville get their accreditation?

Eleanor Sullivan: We did.

Blanche Touhill: And UMSL got theirs.

Eleanor Sullivan: Yes, yes. I remember when we were sitting at Maryville in the office, the four faculty and Shirley and we got the phone call and she said, "We got it." So it was successful and so that helped me get the job here, because I had no other teaching experience.

Blanche Touhill: But it was your writing skills.

Eleanor Sullivan: Yes, and editing skill, putting it together so it made sense and not leave anything out. I tracked each one of the criteria, how did we meet that and if we didn't, how are we working to meet that?

Blanche Touhill: How many faculty did you have here?

Eleanor Sullivan: Well, we only had four or five for a while.

Blanche Touhill: But when you got accreditation?

Eleanor Sullivan: I don't remember; I don't know exactly. Not very many, but by that time, other RN completion programs were getting accredited.

Blanche Touhill: And Mary Castles came, but when did she come, early or a little later?

Eleanor Sullivan: She came pretty early...Ruth Jenkins and then...oh, and Karen Shutesenhopper. Karen was one of the first ones and then probably Mary Castles would have been next, yeah.

Blanche Touhill: Well, they were all hard workers, weren't they?

Eleanor Sullivan: They were. Also, the other thing Shirley did for me, it made all the difference and changed my career forever, was she took me to all these big national meetings and she had been on boards and still was on boards. She was on the National Commission for Nursing, out of the federal government. She knew all the people. She had been part of it and she took me and introduced me to people and she said, "This is Eleanor Sullivan and she is going to go places and you need to know her." So she didn't just say, "Oh, this is so-and-so." And she would say, "Come here, you need to meet..."...and she did that over and over and over, for the four-and-a-half years I worked for her.

Blanche Touhill: Well, then you decided to move on?

Eleanor Sullivan: I did. I got a call one day from a headhunter. They were looking for an associate dean at the University of Minnesota. Shirley and I talked it over. She said, "I think you should go." She said, "I've taught you all I can teach you," and so I uprooted my youngest son...now the baby was 14...and took him to Minnesota which he didn't want to do but he did anyway and it turned out fine. I did have a family member say, "You're deserting the family."

Blanche Touhill: Again?

Eleanor Sullivan: Again, yes, and I thought, if that was a man taking a better job in another city...no one told my husband he was deserting the family. Well, I guess he did. They told us, as a family, but men were expected to do that, not women. And again I found a wonderful dean who just taught me and took me places. She didn't take me as many places as Shirley but she taught me so much about major large university medical centers and how they work or how they don't.

Blanche Touhill: And Minnesota was a much bigger place than St. Louis.

- Eleanor Sullivan: It was huge; it was a huge medical campus. It had a hospital, right, so some of the politics and all were different. They were all tough but different.
- Blanche Touhill: You did some other writing at UMSL when you were here. You wrote a book on administration.
- Eleanor Sullivan: Oh, yes. Now, there's something that's changed my life. A business professor came to me and said, "I'm teaching management classes for nurses down at Barnes Hospital and I can't find any good textbook." He said, "We should write it." I said, "Well, I don't know management" even though I really was doing administration but "I don't know the theoretical underpinnings" and he said, "But I do and you know nursing." And so we got some of our colleagues and put them together and they wrote some chapters and then we did tons of editing and making it sound single author and it was published, had no trouble getting a publisher, Addison-Wesley, I believe...yeah, that's who it was at the time. They've all been bought out now and they're all big conglomerates and the book won the American Journal of Nursing Award Book of the Year, the first year, the first year out.
- Blanche Touhill: And it's still going, isn't it?
- Eleanor Sullivan: I just did the 8th edition last year. Yes.
- Blanche Touhill: And how many years has it been out?
- Eleanor Sullivan: It came out first in '85.
- Blanche Touhill: In '85 and it's still going?
- Eleanor Sullivan: It's still going.
- Blanche Touhill: But you updated?
- Eleanor Sullivan: Oh, every three years I have and he's not part of the project anymore and I don't have any other writers. I have a research assistant. But then interestingly, just a week ago, I got a note from my publisher that the book was being translated into Arabic and will be available to nursing students in Saudi Arabia.
- Blanche Touhill: Oh, how wonderful!

Eleanor Sullivan: Yes, yes. I feel very honored. It's been translated through the years, I think Japanese and maybe Korean but there's something about helping nurses in the Mideast that just means more. So I'm delighted, yes. That book and then I went on to write other books for various nursing publishers. I wrote a book on nursing care, some psychiatric books. Most of those I would get contributing authors and I wrote a book about the future of nursing and I got people from all different fields of nursing to contribute to that.

Blanche Touhill: What do you think is the future of nursing?

Eleanor Sullivan: Oh, I think it's got a great future. Oh, my goodness, yes.

Blanche Touhill: Why do you think so?

Eleanor Sullivan: Well, because we don't have enough physicians for what's needed and there are many, many things that nurses can do that don't need a physician: monitoring people with chronic health problems, and this is what we have mostly, is a population of people with chronic health problems because we've saved them from the serious things that used to kill them. Many people live with high blood pressure and high cholesterol. They would have been dead of a stroke or a heart attack 50 years ago. So, yes, I went on and then one book I wrote a few years ago, it's really my gift to the nursing profession. In a way I feel like I'm giving back and I do actually give them royalties from that for nursing scholarships. But the book itself is called *Becoming Influential: A Guide for Nurses* and I use little stories of things that I've seen happen over the years where nurses have either been influential or not influential...mostly not and they wanted me to update it. I just did a new edition again, came out last year and it included little sidebars for the novice nurse: "You may think you don't need to know this now but..."...and it's written in a more conversational style: "You'll be faced with..."...you know, certain situations and I get all kinds of letters from nurses who say, "I wish I'd had this sooner" and now apparently they're selling it almost as a companion book to the management book. So that's what I'm hearing from people. So, yes, that got me started on my writing.

Blanche Touhill: Well, how many years were you at Minnesota?

Eleanor Sullivan: I was just there three years when I got a call for the position of dean at the University of Kansas.

Blanche Touhill: And did that come through a headhunter or from a search committee?

Eleanor Sullivan: A search committee that was a search committee.

Blanche Touhill: And by that time you were nationally known?

Eleanor Sullivan: Well, I was doing some things, yes. It was actually one of the faculty members from UMKC who had given them...no, that's who gave them the name for Minnesota which was kind of interesting, one of our colleagues, but she wasn't interested in going to Minnesota. But anyway, no, this was a search committee and so Shirley and I had a conference: "What should I do?" and there was another position open at another university, another deanship and she said, "You probably don't want to go there," and I said, "Why?" "Actually, it was in Indiana so I'd be going back home, and she said, "Because that dean is wonderful. She has done great things for that school" and at Kansas, that wasn't the reputation of the dean and so she said, "You go to Indiana and you call a meeting and they'll say 'but Betty didn't do it like that.' You go to Kansas, you call a meeting and they'll say, 'Isn't she wonderful?'" and Shirley was exactly right. There used to be this story going around Kansas, "When did Dean Sullivan start?" "July 1st, 8:00 A.M." "When did Dean Sullivan make her first change?" "July 1st, 9:00 A.M."

Blanche Touhill: So you began to go in and make changes?

Eleanor Sullivan: Oh, yeah, big changes.

Blanche Touhill: Was it hard?

Eleanor Sullivan: Not really because I could see what needed to be done and I had the backing of both my vice chancellor and the chancellor. As you well know, had they not been behind me 100%...because people were up in arms but I looked at the assignments and they were so skewed. People who should have been doing research were in the hospital three days a week with students and they had Ph.D.'s and one was getting a post-doc and she said, "Well, I have to go to the hospital and take these beginning students" or whatever because they thought that was fair. Everybody had to go to the hospital. That was the old model, years and years ago. Just doing research, there was no time to do research but there was this woman who was going off for a post-doc. I interviewed her before I took the job and I said, "Really, tell me how many people here can do

research” because I knew if we were going to build a research program, you had to have a cadre of enough people to do it. You can’t bring them all in from the outside and she said, “I think there are five of us” but she said, “I’m resigning because I’m going to do this two-year post-doc.” I said, “Kathleen, don’t resign.” I said, “Take a leave of absence.” “Well, why should I? Nothing is going to change.” I said, “Watch me,” and I said, “There’s no disadvantage to you to take a leave of absence because I’ll be stuck holding the line open. If you don’t want to come back after your leave of absence, you don’t have to.” I said, “It doesn’t hurt you.” “Well, okay.” Two years later she came back, became a full doctoral faculty member funded by NIH, eventually got recruited away to Columbia University in New York. And there were three or four others, they just blossomed under the way we arranged it.

Blanche Touhill: So you divided the research faculty from the teaching faculty, not that they didn’t teach now and then but they didn’t do the clinicals...

Eleanor Sullivan: They didn’t do the clinicals and we called research “an assignment,” not “release time.” I still can’t stand that. When I heard somebody say, “Well, she has so much release time.” I said, “It’s an assignment.” What are the goals? You’re going to be published in one article, prepare a grant for. At the end of the year, how did you meet those goals? That’s how you decide on your salary. It seems so easy for me. Coming from not nursing for 1,000 years, I sort of saw things differently; I think and maybe in some ways still do.

Blanche Touhill: Well, maybe if you had gone into nursing after you were 18 or something, you would have an entirely different life.

Eleanor Sullivan: That’s exactly.

Blanche Touhill: It might not have been the life that you have.

Eleanor Sullivan: I very much suspect it wouldn’t have been because I would have sort of just fit into that mold and wouldn’t have thought beyond it.

Blanche Touhill: Well, I know how hard it is to move a teaching faculty to being a research faculty and I think optometry has tried to differentiate in assignments.

Eleanor Sullivan: Yeah, in assignments.

Blanche Touhill: And we had a dean of Arts & Sciences here, Bob Vater, and he used to have...you had 15-hour load but maybe 12 of those hours were research...

Eleanor Sullivan: Yes, exactly.

Blanche Touhill: Then the last one was teaching or how you rearranged it but you had to get the grants, you had to be applying for the grants.

Eleanor Sullivan: Yes, otherwise you went back to being...

Blanche Touhill: That's right. You did the thing that you're really good at and that you should continue.

Eleanor Sullivan: Right, that's right and what that resulted in, the Masters prepared clinical faculty then, had to do four days a week of clinicals instead of two.

Blanche Touhill: That's right.

Eleanor Sullivan: But, because we were able to manipulate, I was able to give each one of those people a 25% raise, but still...

Blanche Touhill: But they had to get the grants.

Eleanor Sullivan: No, no, these are the clinical faculty, clinical people.

Blanche Touhill: Oh, because they came in more days in the clinic than the others.

Eleanor Sullivan: Right.

Blanche Touhill: Well, how many years were you there?

Eleanor Sullivan: Seven, and the other thing we did there was we had no endowment.

Blanche Touhill: Oh, a built in endowment.

Eleanor Sullivan: Built in endowment. Again the chancellor came through. He was in Indianapolis meeting with a man who had been an executive at Ely Lilly. He was a graduate of the Kansas Pharmacy Program and Gene called me up and said "He has committed to \$500,000 for you" and he said, "It was his idea." Well, of course I went back and met George several times when he insisted it was really the chancellor's idea. But of course I encountered the wrath of the Pharmacy dean who George told me had completely ignored him, every time he had an opportunity, he ignored him and he

said, "I wasn't going to give him any more money," and come to find out George's son-in-law and I were high school classmates. So anyway, then I got a nurse practitioner program started, in spite of the legislature saying no new programs but I got it through getting all the schools together and we all went in together and we got that started and then I got a new building...again, no more new buildings, you know about that and we had architects in and all and I thought, oh, this isn't any fun. Getting it was fun. Working with the architect, getting the building built, no, and that was about the time you called me.

Blanche Touhill: Yeah, I called to offer you an endowed professorship.

Eleanor Sullivan: Yes, you did.

Blanche Touhill: And you came back.

Eleanor Sullivan: I did. I wasn't going to because I remember saying, "Well, yeah, in about a year" and you said, "No, this is..."...you said September.

Blanche Touhill: But you were ready.

Eleanor Sullivan: I was ready and I thought, well, you know, I've kind of done everything here they set out to do and anyone who makes big changes can't stay forever. And in fact, my boss said...and he had retired since then...he said to me once, "Now, don't stay too long," he said, "You stay too long, things start going bad and then, that's all they're remember about you." So anyway, he taught me a lot and he took me places. He helped me get a fellowship through the Association of American Medical Colleges...I'm not sure that's the right name...AAMC, and I went to some programs and did some site visits where positions as vice presidents would be open and it was on one of those visits that I came back and I thought, I don't want to be a vice president. I like being a dean. That's where the real trouble came. I could see being a president but a vice president was back to middle management, is what I was thinking. So even though he did that and it was an opportunity, it wasn't anything I wanted to pursue.

Blanche Touhill: Then how did you get into mystery writing?

Eleanor Sullivan: Oh, well, while I was still at Kansas...and I had had an episode...had been ill a couple years before that. I had viral encephalitis and I think just...I was traveling a lot and I just wasn't really taking care of myself, but as

you well know, these jobs are demanding and my boss was especially demanding. It didn't matter, if I was on vacation, if he called me, he wanted me and it was usually a good reason but nevertheless and the treatment was just to go to bed for six weeks. There wasn't any treatment really. So it gave me some time to think, how long do I want to do this and so forth and I thought, I don't want this kind of schedule forever. I can't do it, just physically and so a couple of years later, when you called, I thought, well, maybe this is the right time to just take something that's manageable job, now, at this point in my life. But I had been writing, I had been playing around with writing mysteries. I couldn't write anything that looked like anything I read, or that's what I knew and then...well, then a friend of mine had a serious health attack and I got her in right away and she got help and she still, to this day, said I saved her life. I think getting in there, I saved her life but other than that, I didn't do anything. And then her husband introduced me to someone who was a long time writer in Kansas City and it turned out he and his wife knew people. My son married their family in Kansas but he steered me to an editor and I was still in Kansas City then but I was doing this on weekends and vacations and so forth, or just playing around with it, but I couldn't figure out what I was doing wrong. It wasn't right but it wasn't...and so this woman helped me. I was just in touch with her a few weeks ago, as a matter of fact. She helped me over the next several years, because again, I was working so it wasn't full-time. She said once if she'd have told me how bad my first writing was, I would have been discouraged, but she did a little bit. She'd mark out one page and she'd put "OTT," "over the top." It was too melodramatic. So anyway, it was really the editors that helped me through the years.

Blanche Touhill: Well, I know you had two main themes: one was your nursing murders...

Eleanor Sullivan: Yes, that's right.

Blanche Touhill: And then you moved into sort of a historic.

Eleanor Sullivan: Yes.

Blanche Touhill: Talk about the historic ones.

Eleanor Sullivan: Oh, well, I did the nursing one because I wanted to sort of cut my teeth on it.

Blanche Touhill: And you knew the world.

Eleanor Sullivan: I knew the world and, in fact, the dean here, Julie Sebastian, said when she read one of those, she said, "I knew this author walked those halls," which was the nicest compliment I could have about those, and they took place in St. Louis and they're contemporary so I could drive around, I could see places and I knew that helped me, to get, and when those got published...but in the back of my mind, I always wanted to write about my family history, the family who really escaped persecution in Germany, made their way across...

Blanche Touhill: In what century?

Eleanor Sullivan: Early 1800's and with help of Quakers in England and Quakers in Philadelphia and bought some land in Ohio, cleared the land, built the town, became prosperous and my 4th great grandfather was the man who led them and I knew that...my grandmother had taken my sister and I back there to see the town and the museums. Later, when I had two daughters, she took me and my two daughters back there. I had gone back there just as a weekend over the years for a few days and just loved everything about it. So I just knew, when I felt like I could write well enough...and I took a lot of courses. I went to the University of Iowa summer program, I went to workshops. I let people critique my work. Thank goodness I had already written because it would have been discouraging, how bad I did and how much they told me how bad I did. And again people said, "You can't do that. You're too old. You have a good job and you'll never make any money." Well, they're right about the last part but fortunately, textbooks are more lucrative and I can afford to do the mystery writing. And so then last year I went back to Germany and saw the prison where they were incarcerated.

Blanche Touhill: Oh, how wonderful!

Eleanor Sullivan: Well, and it's still...

Blanche Touhill: And you met relatives?

Eleanor Sullivan: I met relatives in the town.

Blanche Touhill: That stayed?

Eleanor Sullivan: That stayed, his brother and sister stayed in this little town and now I'm planning to go back next year with the same group from Ohio and I want to spend several days in the town with a translator and hope I can get people to tell me some family stories because the book, after the one I'm writing now which will be the third in that series, is going to take place both back in the 1800s in Germany and in Ohio. So, as much as I can learn about what happened in that town...

Blanche Touhill: And you're getting more book selling's, aren't you? I mean, your books are getting out to the public?

Eleanor Sullivan: Yeah, I think so. Yeah, somewhat. There's a lot of competition out there but they're getting some really nice reviews and that's really what makes the difference, I think, and I don't really work very hard at promotion. I'm on Facebook and I have a website and I write a blog about what I'm doing but I don't really want to work that hard at it and I have events that publicists set up, events here in St. Louis and of course they always do big things in Ohio for me and I've been other places in Ohio and had things do well. And by the way, the UMSL bookstore is going to buy the two historical mysteries for their shelves.

Blanche Touhill: Wonderful!

Eleanor Sullivan: When I was in there last week, they said they would do that.

Blanche Touhill: So really, your professional nursing career was in St. Louis and then Minnesota and Kansas?

Eleanor Sullivan: It was.

Blanche Touhill: But a lot of it was St. Louis.

Eleanor Sullivan: But I also then, while I was here that year, I was elected president of the International Honors Society.

Blanche Touhill: Now let me talk about that. Talk about some honors that you've gotten over the years or some posts that you've held.

Eleanor Sullivan: Well, that was certainly one but that was work too. I mean, it was four years of work. But that took me all over the world and that was wonderful. I think that was worth the work which, of course, I wasn't paid for. So that was one. I think all of my schools have given me a

distinguished alumni award. Some of the other books have won awards through the years. I think in Kansas I was an honorary alum so that officially makes me a Jayhawk, sorry...Missourian. And they have a Distinguished Women of the Year and I was selected for one of those. There were some others but I don't really think about them.

Blanche Touhill: What about your nursing boards? You must have been on a lot of boards of nursing.

Eleanor Sullivan: Yes, oh, and I helped get started in Missouri a program for nurses with drug and alcohol problems because a lot of my research was in the substance abuse field and I wrote a book on caring for patients with substance abuse which is a subset of psychiatric nursing and there were some programs around the country that helped nurses get...they're called "diversion programs" where if the nurse goes into this program...there was one in Kansas...for two years and is monitored and regular reports and so forth, she won't lose her license and, in fact, even the...or he because a number of nurses who are addicted are male...and sometimes in some states the record is just completely sealed. So we got that program started here in Missouri and when I got to Kansas, there was a program there and I met some people involved with that. I didn't really have much to do with that but interestingly enough, one day I'm sitting in my office and I get a phone call from the chief nurse of one of the major hospitals. She said, "We have a problem with so-and-so drinking on the job, one of my faculty members" and I thought, now I know what people feel like when they have to do this. It was one thing to write the policies, you know, the administrator should call them in and you do this and you do this and you do this. Then I had to do it and so I just sat down with her and I said...with, of course, our legal counsel and whoever we needed and of course right away she said, "No, no, I didn't do that." I said, "Well, this is the report" and I said, "My license is at risk if I don't report you so if a nurse knows of another nurse...now, I've never heard of that non-reporting nurse being really cited but it's written in the regulations."

Blanche Touhill: And you can understand why they would do that.

Eleanor Sullivan: That's right because it's very...

Blanche Touhill: Yes, the health of the patient.

- Eleanor Sullivan: The health of the patient, it's very hard to turn in someone you work with and like and so she did go to the diversion program. In the end, I don't think she made it but that was after I left. But I was involved with that. I was on the board of the American Association of Colleges of Nursing. I was involved with various committees...and I'm trying to remember because they change words, what they were called...groups with the American Nurses Association. In fact, I went to Germany once, represented the research arm of ANA at a meeting of European nurse researchers and it was in September of 1989 and the East German nurse did not show up and that was the month before the wall fell.
- Blanche Touhill: Let me ask: If you had been born 50 years earlier, what would your life have been like?
- Eleanor Sullivan: I guess that would have been my grandmother's life. My grandmother finished high school and the only work she could do was go to nursing school and so she went to nursing school.
- Blanche Touhill: So probably you would have been a nurse.
- Eleanor Sullivan: I still would have been a nurse.
- Blanche Touhill: But you wouldn't have been the nursing dean or the associate dean...
- Eleanor Sullivan: No.
- Blanche Touhill: ...or have written all these books.
- Eleanor Sullivan: No, no.
- Blanche Touhill: And this was the grandmother that used to cultivate you?
- Eleanor Sullivan: Yes, and the fact she was a nurse probably played some role in my wanting to be a nurse, not at that moment but, yeah, that's probably...
- Blanche Touhill: Is there anything that you really want to talk about in the next few minutes?
- Eleanor Sullivan: I think what was interesting was about getting the nurse practitioner program in Kansas. I put together very early on an advisory board which they had never had and I had the hospital administrator from little country hospitals and people, sort of state leaders, I was able to get a few of those people so I came to them and I said, "Do you think Kansas would

be amenable to a nurse practitioner?” and told them...most of them didn't know what that was. This was a number of years ago, 20 years ago and so I explained a little bit and I think I had someone there, a nurse practitioner there and this one old crusty guy said, “I would never go to a nurse practitioner. I want to see my doctor.” So they all left. That wasn't the consensus. They all left. This took several years to get to this. So the next time they come back, three months later, he said, “Well, I got something to say: I went to my doctor and lo and behold, he's hired a nurse practitioner and that's who I saw and she knew everything.” He said, “I think you should go for it.” So, again, we can't have any new programs so the advisory board group says that they will take this in hand and they will have a lunch for the legislators in Topeka and so I'm an invited guest to come there. So they have the lunch and they talk and so forth and by that time, they're all prepped which we made sure. So we let that go and then the governor's budget comes out and she's budgeted for the nurse practitioner program but it's to all go to KU and not to the other schools. So, then we have to traipse over and see the governor and say, “Well, we think it would be better for the state if we...” ...and you know, we risk it because she could have just...you know, line item, it's gone, “but we'd like to take the same amount of money but to share it with the other schools because it would be better for Kansas to have their programs out” and of course that worked. But we went from “I'll never see a nurse practitioner” to getting it and Kansas is an incredibly rural state.

Blanche Touhill: How did you do that then? Did you do classes on the computer or the internet?

Eleanor Sullivan: No.

Blanche Touhill: How did you share resources?

Eleanor Sullivan: We did the video just like you did here in Missouri, yes, and, of course now they're probably computerized training now. Can I talk about one more thing?

Blanche Touhill: Yeah. Talk about one more thing.

Eleanor Sullivan: *Nursing, the Heart of Healthcare*, that's my proudest achievement. I thought, here are all these nurses. I'd go around the state and I'd meet these nurses, hard-working. People don't even see nurses anyway; much

less recognize what they do. I thought, we need to have an award for nurses from all over the state and patients should be nominating them and it shouldn't be teachers; it shouldn't be researchers; it should just be hands-on clinical nurses and we started it, had no money. I went to some of the big donors in Kansas City. "Well, okay, I can give you \$5,000"; "Well, I can give you \$4,000." We scraped together some money. We put on the most magnificent event. People wrote these letters. The advisory board took over judging so the nurses, they would be the most heart-wrenching stories. We had one, a piece of notepaper and written in a crayon, "My nurse took such good care of me when I had asthma," and then we'd select 10 of them. They would come to Kansas City. Some of them had never been to Kansas City, all dressed up. We had this huge banquet. We had the NBC anchor MC, the chancellor came, legislators came, administrators came. We didn't make any money. We spent it all. People could buy tables. We did everything we could. It was the most fun, putting together. One day my assistant looked at me and she said, "Do you know what you're doing?" I said, "No, do you know what you're doing?" She said, "No." I said, "Well, then, let's do it...watch me." So that was my proudest achievement.

Blanche Touhill: Do they still do it?

Eleanor Sullivan: Yes. They don't do it every year. I did it every year for three years probably. They do it every few years.

Blanche Touhill: And did the nurses who were chosen, did they get a stipend?

Eleanor Sullivan: No.

Blanche Touhill: But they got their way paid to the dinner?

Eleanor Sullivan: I don't know that we even did that. We didn't have that kind of money. What they got, we had a man at KU blow individual glass sculptures and inside was a little heart and it said, "*Nursing, the Heart of Healthcare,*" and we had a logo. We commissioned a logo and it was on our stationary. That was so much fun. I almost became an event planner after that.

Blanche Touhill: Well, you're more than an event planner.

Eleanor Sullivan: But I'm also an event planner because I do that as you know.

Blanche Touhill: Yes, that is true.

Eleanor Sullivan: I do.

Blanche Touhill: Well, thank you very much.

Eleanor Sullivan: You're very welcome. It's been my pleasure.