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Interview of Zane Wolf, Ph.D., R.N., FAAN

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Dr. Zane Robinson Wolf, Ph.D., R.N., FAAN

Melissa Pompeo

March 23, 2007; 2:05 PM

Dr. Wolf’s office at the La Salle University School of Nursing and Health Sciences Offices, Philadelphia, PA

English

A booklet about the history of the School of Nursing and Health Sciences, as well as several articles, were brought to the interview. They were not used.

Dr. Wolf has been a faculty member in the nursing department (now the School of Nursing and Health Sciences) since its inception in 1980, when it was still a division of the School of Arts and Sciences. She was the first full-time faculty hired for the new department and worked under the leadership of Dr. Gloria Donnelly. The interview was conducted in her office in the School of Nursing and Health Sciences main offices on the Mezzanine Level of Wister Hall.

Her extensive experience in the La Salle School of Nursing made Dr. Wolf an ideal candidate for an interview about its history. I visited the La Salle University Archive and received help from Br. Joe Grabenstein, the University archivist, in my search for articles and photographs that related to the nursing department. He presented me with several boxes of material to look through and I made photocopies of helpful pieces. After looking through the information I had copied, I first contacted Dr. Wolf via e-mail to schedule an interview. When she agreed to participate, I arranged a meeting time with her secretary. The chosen date was about two weeks after my initial e-mail.

Dr. Wolf is small in stature, but her commanding presence and sense of professionalism are clearly evident upon speaking with her. She has a very strong personality and also demands an equally high degree of professionalism from her students, facts which made the interview somewhat intimidating at first since she is the dean of the School to which I belong as a nursing major. I felt extremely inadequate as a freshman nursing student attempting to interview such an accomplished figure as Dr. Wolf. After borrowing a digital voice recorder from a classmate, practicing its use several times, looking over my list of interview questions, and resolving to simply conduct the most poised conversation possible, I began to feel slightly more confident.

When I arrived at the School of Nursing and Health Sciences offices, I was shown into Dr. Wolf’s office by her secretary. The room was not brightly lit, a state exacerbated by the fact that it was a dreary day. However, the many posters and paintings hanging on the walls made the office a welcoming space. She stated later in the interview that many of the posters were souvenirs from the International Caring Conference that she attends each year with the upperclassmen of the nursing program. She said that she felt like a stereotypical American tourist
purchasing them, but could not resist. Dr. Wolf's desk is large and made of dark wood, crowded with papers on one side and a computer and printer of the other, and surrounded by bookshelves. She sat at her desk in her office chair for the duration of the interview, I was seated opposite.

Before the interview began, I thanked Dr. Wolf for taking time to speak with me and requested that she sign the legal release required to submit the interview to the university archives. Her nurses' attention to detail was apparent in her careful reading of the release before signing it. I also explained that my list of questions was to serve as a guide only and that the interview would be conducted simply as a conversation. She asked to be reminded as to the specifics of my project and put me at ease a bit when she stated, upon remembering that it was an oral history project, that "Oh good. Oral history is fun."

My first questions during the interview involved a brief synopsis of her academic history and the various positions she held during her career. Although this did not relate directly to the topic of her history at La Salle, such information gave me a context in which to place her current position, as well as an idea of her personality. Dr. Wolf was very responsive during the interview, often speaking at length after a question had been asked, so that I ended up asking fewer questions than I had anticipated. I had intended to discuss the School's past at greater length than we actually did, but she spoke most readily about her experiences at present and I felt that this was therefore the best line of questioning to pursue. I reasoned that I could bring up any unanswered questions with Dr. Gloria Donnelly in my interview with her at Drexel University.

The most enjoyable part of the interview for me was learning about the research in which Dr. Wolf is currently engaged and has competed in the past. She is an active nurse researcher and has made many significant and interesting accomplishments (her curriculum vitae is forty-three pages long), including the development of a standard of measuring nurse caring used nationwide. She has also investigated issues relating to medication errors and explored the use of nursing ritual in various cultures.

The digital voice recorder functioned well, and was small enough to remain unobtrusive during the duration of the interview. The interview itself was only interrupted by a ringing phone (which Dr. Wolf did not answer) on one occasion. Subsequent interruptions were related to supplying information during her answers, such as printing a copy of her curriculum vitae, looking through her bookshelves for related material, and calling a colleague for elaboration. I did not feel as if these affected the flow of the conversation as a whole.

Once I thought the interview was competed, I thanked Dr. Wolf for her time and was about to switch off the recorder. However, we began speaking again for a few minutes and I continued recording. After the interview was truly ended, we spoke for a few more minutes (she asked me about the progress of my nursing studies so far, about my professors, etc.) and, after I once again thanked her for her time, we said our goodbyes.