

1960-1968: The Early Days in my Professional Career

I Returned from Korea, 121st Evacuation Hospital with assignment orders to the U.S. Army Disciplinary Barracks (DB) Psychiatry Unit, Fort Leavenworth KS. Later I was reassigned to the Post Hospital, later Munson Army Hospital, Fort Leavenworth KS. The Inpatient psychiatric function at the DB had transferred to Fitzsimmons Medical Center CO.

This was the pivotal event in my personal, military and professional career. I was a young captain who had been educated and practiced as a Psychiatric Nurse Clinician. Prior to November 1955 R.N. males were not commissioned in the armed services. A draftee in early 1954 I had been trained as a combat infantryman and later as a combat Medic and commissioned in January, 1956.

Soon after I arrived at the Post Hospital I was assigned as the Head Nurse of the Ambulatory Clinics. It was a challenging and satisfying assignment but far from my previous professional assignments. The staffing within the Ambulatory Clinics included a Medical Service Corps Officer (MSC) and a senior Nurse Public Health Officer (ANC). These officers were rotated out on normal transfer orders; however, they were not replaced.

I was gently persuaded by the hospital commander that I could fill in until replacements arrived (Not). The Executive Officer, a Senior Medical Service Corps Officer averred that since I was acting in the role of the MSC officer it would broaden my knowledge and experience base to volunteer to be on the hospital's rotating Administrative Officer of the Day (AOD) roster (It did).

Sometime later making my rounds in the hospital as the AOD I stopped by to talk with patients. One of these patients was the Post, Chief of Staff, he asked why an ANC officer was an AOD. I explained the circumstances and he said why not be an MSC officer. All MSC officers must have a College Degree and that I was within six months of a degree and was eligible for a "Boot Strap" educational opportunity. The Chief of Staff said "let's make it happen" (We did).

I graduated from the University of Nebraska at Omaha with an undergraduate degree with a major in philosophy and receive my orders to Fort Sam Houston TX where I would stay for the next 6 years of my career. Shortly after arriving in Fort Sam Houston I received my Army Medical Department transfer from the Army Nurse Corps (ANC) to the Army Medical Service Corps (MSC). The next career decision was to choose a career path within the Corps. My clinical background associated me closest the entry "Patient Administration" which was feeder specialty in Hospital Administration (later Healthcare Administration).