



Episode #8: Conversation with Cindy Hill for Women's History Month

Host: Vicki Guinn

Guests: Cindy Hill

Vicki Guinn:

Hello. This is Vicki Guinn with Legacy Health's Public Relations, and welcome to a special edition of our podcast, Engaging Our People, where we're focusing on Women's History Month. This is a month where we celebrate women's contributions to history, culture, and society. It started as a week in 1980 with a proclamation from then-President Jimmy Carter. It grew to a month because we simply couldn't contain us in a week, could we?

At Legacy Health, we want to use this month to recognize and celebrate the strength, resilience, and intelligence of women making important contributions to healthcare right now in non-traditional roles or traditional roles like nursing, where, nationally, 88% of people who are nurses identify as women. So, every year, the National Alliance of Women adopts a theme for Women's History Month, and this year it's celebrating women who tell our stories.

So it is fitting to have, as our guest today, Miss Cindy Hill. She's a nurse, and she's a nurse leader, and she has agreed to share some of her stories about her making history in nursing and at Legacy as a nursing leader. Cindy is currently the Vice President and Chief Nursing Officer at Legacy Randall Children's Hospital. So welcome, Cindy, and thank you for your time. Cindy just told me she is heading out of the country, not out of town, out of the country tomorrow. So we're going to make this quick, but I thank you for taking the time to come in. So, Cindy, I'm going to start at the beginning like we always do. Tell me about your tenure at Legacy, because I was looking at your resume and you graduated from the Good Samaritan School of Nursing. So you've been around us.

Cindy Hill:

I have.

Vicki Guinn:

You stayed.

Cindy Hill:

Yeah. Yeah, yeah. So I have been here at Legacy for 44 years. I did go to nursing school at Good Samaritan School of Nursing. That was before it was Linfield College. It was on the campus of Good Sam, and actually my dorm was Northrop and Leverich. Northrop, actually, is now offices, I notice. I go over there and visit every once in a while.

But, yeah, I have a lot of really fond, fond memories of nursing school and having the opportunity to go to school on a campus where there was a hospital and we were integrated into it. It was a diploma

program. A diploma program for nursing, back then, was, the very first day of school, you're in the hospital interacting with patients. You're passing trays, food trays. You're helping them with comfort in their bed, with bedding, linen changes, those sorts of things, on your very first day of nursing school.

Vicki Guinn:

Very practical. Hands on.

Cindy Hill:

Right. And again, I'll reiterate that there aren't very many diploma programs left anymore in the United States. They were three-year programs, and then we had the ADN programs that were two-year programs and the degree programs, four years. But I had a privilege to go to school at Good Sam. Interesting enough, I interviewed and applied both to Good Samaritan and Emanuel because they both had diploma nursing school.

Vicki Guinn:

That's right.

Cindy Hill:

And I chose Good Samaritan.

Vicki Guinn:

They both wanted you, right?

Cindy Hill:

Well, they did. I'm not sure, to be honest, how much that was a big deal or not. But anyway, I went to school there. And then, after graduation, I actually took a job at another hospital in our community here for four years. And I did adult critical care. And in that experience, I had the opportunity to care for children, children that were receiving heart surgery and things like that. And I thought, "That is it. That's where I want to be. That's where I want to be."

Vicki Guinn:

That's kind of where you landed.

Cindy Hill:

Yeah.

Vicki Guinn:

I was looking at your CV, and it seems like you have a lot of pediatric experience.

Cindy Hill:

When I left adult critical care, adult cardiac critical care, I applied for positions at the two children's hospitals in the state of Oregon. This campus, it wasn't called Randall at the time. It was Emanuel. We were all part of [inaudible 00:04:34] campus.

Vicki Guinn:

That's right. It was in the hospital, the main hospital.

Cindy Hill:

It was in the main hospital because this building hadn't been born yet. In doing so, after I applied and interviewed and actually talked to people there, it was really clear this is where I wanted to be. And I know a lot of people say, "Oh, yeah, right. You knew that when you put your foot in the door here." I did. And I knew it because of the reception that I had, just personally, from people helping me, talking to me. But I also knew it in observing that they were really here for the reason I wanted to be here and that was for my patients and their families.

So I took that job in January of, wow, 1979. Hard to believe. And have had the opportunity and true honor to be a part of this organization since then and in all different roles. I started as pediatric and pediatric intensive care nurse, bedside nurse. And then I was a charge nurse, and then I was an assistant nurse manager, and then I was a manager, and then I was a director. And now, I'm the Chief Nursing Officer here at Randall.

Vicki Guinn:

That's amazing.

Cindy Hill:

And so it's been a journey and one that, if you asked me, was that intentional? I would have to say no. I never thought of it.

Vicki Guinn:

I'm going to go back a little further. And so, I remember growing up and people asked you what you wanted to be. Little boys were the firemen, and women were the nurses... or a policeman or some... There were very gender-specific roles back then. But did you always want to be a nurse? It sounds like you had something else when you maybe... Let's go when you left high school. what were you thinking?

Cindy Hill:

Well, I was exposed to nursing when I was in high school because, again, I'll date myself. There was a program called Candy Strippers, and I was a candy stripper. I worked in the hospital as a candy stripper from 16 to 18 years old. I also then worked at... There was a nursing home across the street from the hospital, and I worked there on weekends and some evenings, too. So I've been exposed to-

Vicki Guinn:

And that was volunteer work, right? Or to get credit?

Cindy Hill:

No, candy stripper was volunteer. I worked as a nursing assistant in the area of the nursing home. And so, that wasn't volunteer. I was an employee there. What was intriguing is the amount of diversity that you had in what you could do as a nurse.

Vicki Guinn:

Really?

Cindy Hill:

There are so many things, so many different types of nursing positions to hold, so many different types of nursing. Even when you think about here, we've got critical care nurses. We have nurses that work in clinics. We have nurses that work in care management. We have nurses that are on our flight teams and in our intensive care units. There's just a plethora of opportunity. And to me, that was exciting, thinking that I would have choices of things that I could do.

But I have to tell. You asked me whether or not there was any other thing that I was thinking about. There was. I actually was thinking about, in addition to being a nurse, potentially being... And back then, they were not called flight attendants. They were called stewardesses. I was thinking about doing that.

Vicki Guinn:

Yes.

Cindy Hill:

And so I remember, even as a 17-year-old, that an airline came to my home and interviewed me for becoming a part of their program. I remember feeling, "This is weird." There are so many things that I... I had to put a book on my head and walk across the room for them to see how graceful I was, which I wasn't, by the way. And then I also had to show how I looked in clothes. It turned out, at the very end of it... and I don't think I would've chosen them, anyway... that I was too tall. I'm 5'10", and that was way too tall for being in that profession back then.

Vicki Guinn:

Oh, my goodness.

Cindy Hill:

But it did give me kind of my first taste of almost feeling like I being wasn't being looked at for what I could bring to benefit the position, but what I looked like and how I carried myself. And that was a bit awkward, to be honest. So that's the only one I thought about, but then they ruled me out. So then I went to nursing school.

Vicki Guinn:

Well, I was thinking about the workplace and what is it like now. How has it improved over the years for young women, and now men, entering the field of nursing? One thing you said is the diversity of nurses, because, in my mind, my mom did nursing years ago. And I just remember she was the bedside nurse. She had the white uniform. She starched it every day.

Cindy Hill:

Yep, that's right.

Vicki Guinn:

And the white socks and the white shoes. So, what's changed?

Cindy Hill:

A lot. And I think about this. Change helps us grow and helps us be better at what we're doing. But I never want... When I'm talking about this, it isn't that I'm putting another entity down and, in this case, the male entity of healthcare. Back when I started, it was a very rare, rare case to see a female physician. But when I remember what has changed over the course of healthcare in general is you see more women in positions that are termed non-traditional positions, so lots of physicians, lots of physician assistants, nurse practitioners. That field has grown so largely. In fact, you can even now know people that their primary provider... Many of them have nurse practitioners.

I would say that what's changed, too... There was a hierarchy when I first entered the field of nursing. And it happened to be that most of the physicians were male, and there were things... I remember telling someone this story that, in my training, I was trained at what my role was when a physician entered onto the unit. So when they entered to the unit, my responsibility was to get out of the chair that I was sitting in and offer the chair. I thought, "Well, okay."

Vicki Guinn:

Are you serious?

Cindy Hill:

That's kind. It's kind. It's kindness.

Vicki Guinn:

Okay.

Cindy Hill:

But the difference is that wasn't being offered to everyone that entered our unit. So it was just the male provider at the time. And you were almost looked at as the... I don't know if this is the right word or not... handmaiden, meaning that they entered the... This is way back in the olden days, when you have paper charts. But they entered the unit, and you had to go gather the 30-plus charts that they were there to see those patients on and ensure that they had them to be able to document on in a timely manner. Again, I'm not going to say anything about... I mean, in the olden days, there was an efficiency factor to it. But it lent itself to putting the role of a nurse more into a tasky-oriented type of experience versus what they're really trained to do.

Vicki Guinn:

Oh, that's so interesting. You had to get up out of your chair. And that was a challenge then, but have you experienced any challenges because of your gender? And I'm kind of taking that moving into leadership roles, as well. That must have been challenging when you said, "Okay, I'm ready to grow my career and move into leadership."

Cindy Hill:

Sure. Yeah. Again, I will say, because the leadership field that I'm in is in nursing, and even though I'm so pleased to see that we have a lot of more males in our field, it's still predominantly a woman's field. And so when I went into leadership in the field that I went into, there was a comfort level of that area because it was in nursing, and I had a lot of confidence in my knowledge of nursing, both clinical and scope of practice and along those lines. But, yeah, leadership was different. I say this all the time. I used to do a class for our organization called Charge Nurse Bootcamp, and I really believe that the charge

nurses in our organization are the glue that keep everything going. They are the most effective and needed leadership role in our organization.

And so, I had the opportunity to do that, and I mean opportunity. It was an honor to be a charge nurse. So it was one of my very favorite roles. But, in doing so, I learned a lot about servant leadership, which is a leadership style that resonates with me. What I did feel like, though, as a nurse leader, is maybe a little bit of pigeonholing of me. And I don't think it's all nurse leaders, but I... I don't know if y'all remember when we, as leaders, did our Myers-Briggs personality.

Vicki Guinn:

Oh, yeah.

Cindy Hill:

So I happen to have one that is-

Vicki Guinn:

You want to share your type?

Cindy Hill:

Yeah. ENFP. I'm very proud of it. I'm not sure I would've said it 30 years ago.

Vicki Guinn:

Is that the type for nursing?

Cindy Hill:

Is that what?

Vicki Guinn:

Is that a nursing type?

Cindy Hill:

No, it's actually-

Vicki Guinn:

Your "N" is.

Cindy Hill:

Yeah. I think that it's a small number of people. I remember having this done in a large group of leaders here at Legacy, and there were just a few of us that were ENFPs.

Vicki Guinn:

Yeah, N and F. I could see that being in nursing.

Cindy Hill:

Yeah. And many of the other nurse leaders were not. But what I remember thinking at the time is I sure hope that, even though we know that personality testing is not meant to be... There's no right or wrong.

Vicki Guinn:

Right.

Cindy Hill:

It's all what we are, and it just gives us the opportunity to play on our strengths and look where our opportunities might be.

Vicki Guinn:

Absolutely.

Cindy Hill:

And that's how I looked at it. But I do remember one male leader saying something like, "Well, I'm a such and such," and I can't remember what he was. But he just said, "And we're all here to make sure that those pie-in-the-sky ENFPs can get their work done." And I'm just thinking, "Okay. That was rude."

Vicki Guinn:

It was very rude. There's a place for everyone. I can see where the ENFPs are-

Cindy Hill:

Right. But it made start thinking about it. I'm not going to make excuses for wanting to incorporate compassion and caring-

Vicki Guinn:

Absolutely not.

Cindy Hill:

... and feelings into the work that I do. And for a while, I felt like I needed to maybe put that to the back.

Vicki Guinn:

Was that one of the challenges, going into leadership, is not showing... I was thinking about this last night because, when I entered the workforce, it was during the Annie Hall era. You had to wear a suit. You had to wear bow tie. Retrospective, it was emulating the dominant gender in the workplace.

Cindy Hill:

Right. Yeah.

Vicki Guinn:

We didn't talk things like empathy or caring out loud.

Cindy Hill:

Yeah.

Vicki Guinn:

Have you seen challenges to your gender?

Cindy Hill:

No, I definitely had those challenges. But, again, I'm going to preface this. I have worked with amazing male leaders who possess those traits. The idea is that we're creating a workforce, or a leadership workforce or just a general workforce, where we're all melding together. And we're all then able to play on our strengths and grow our opportunities. But if we're embarrassed or if being labeled is used in a negative way, it really erodes the confidence of the individual. And that's one of the things that I am just fastidious about is that everyone needs to be honored for who and what they bring to the table.

Vicki Guinn:

Did you have a mentor? And I know you have a mentee. She had mentioned you. But did you have a mentor?

Cindy Hill:

Yeah. Actually, I'm trying to think back on my very first one. I don't remember her last name. Her first name was Terri, and she was an amazing mentor.

Vicki Guinn:

And what did they teach you?

Cindy Hill:

That, to be an effective leader, you meld that empathy and that compassion with strategy and business knowledge together, and you will get what would be considered an amazing leader. It's funny. There are some studies out there about... because I think everyone would... People do surveys, and they say, "Well, of course, women leaders would do great in development of people, just culture," and those are all things. I want to say to women out there, "Please be proud of that," because that's probably one of the most important elements of an effective leader is development of others and not having your ego get in the way of the development of another person. But they found that women have a tendency to be more successful in getting the job done, too. Again, I want to liken it to probably how... when I think about who usually facilitates a household, makes sure everything is-

Vicki Guinn:

Yes. Who manages, makes sure the bills are paid. Decisions around children.

Cindy Hill:

And I do believe those skills that you garner doing that are very applicable to the workplace.

Vicki Guinn:

Have you ever felt like quitting? Did you have one of those days where, "I'm grabbing my purse and coat, and I'm out"?

Cindy Hill:

Honestly, I know this is going to... I don't want to be Pollyanna about... I never have.

Vicki Guinn:

Never have?

Cindy Hill:

Never. I mean, 44 years later, never wanted to grab my coat and walk out, ever.

Vicki Guinn:

Tell me some of the challenges over those years.

Cindy Hill:

Oh, yeah. Hard days? Absolutely. The last three years have been probably one of the hardest of my career. All of the changes with the pandemic and children and our colleagues and adults, too. But the surge of respiratory illness this last... Those are hard. They keep me up at night because, probably, the thing that worries me the most is making sure that we have enough staff to be able to provide an environment where our team feels comfortable and feels like they're able to give the care that they want to do, and then our patients also feel like they're getting what they need. But I've never ever said, "I'm out of here."

Vicki Guinn:

Never?

Cindy Hill:

I've never had that feeling ever in my life. I'm not exaggerating. I say it every day. "Wow. How did I get so lucky to be... I walked into the [inaudible 00:21:21]. I applied for a job as a nurse." I look back on that day, and I think, "That was so lucky to be able to have been chosen for that position."

Vicki Guinn:

That is wonderful to hear that. I want to hear how it felt opening up this beautiful children's hospital. Was that just thrilling? I'm sure it's more than the opening. All the planning involved in-

Cindy Hill:

Oh, yeah. Sure, sure, sure. I always remind people, we have had a children's hospital on this campus for greater than 50 years.

Vicki Guinn:

Fifty years?

Cindy Hill:

Mm-hmm. It just happened to be a part of Emanuel. Actually, we were the very first teenage unit in the United States to open up.

Vicki Guinn:

Really?

Cindy Hill:

And it was up on the fifth floor of Emanuel proper, where the old helipad is. One of the things that warmed my heart the most, when we opened up this building, is that we could literally provide a child and their family space to heal in, without being crowded with other patients and families.

Vicki Guinn:

Yeah, it's a beautiful building. I was actually here at the opening.

Cindy Hill:

Yeah? Exactly.

Vicki Guinn:

I wasn't working here, but I came to the opening.

Cindy Hill:

Came to visit? Yeah.

Vicki Guinn:

So something you said, and I'm thinking about your leadership progression throughout your career, is you had the clinical skills. And tell me about the business. Or if you were talking to someone who wanted to grow their leadership career in nursing, tell me about the business. What would you advise?

Cindy Hill:

Yeah, I think that is what came very easy to me, in my leadership role, is the clinical element of it. What was more challenging is knowing the finances.

Vicki Guinn:

And that's necessary?

Cindy Hill:

Absolutely necessary. And my advice to individuals would be that, certainly, what the clinical world brings you are eyes that people that don't work in a clinical role... that you can bring those eyes to a leadership role. But you cannot forget that we have to excel in leadership development as it relates to people development. We have to excel in financial development. We have to excel in customer service as it relates to our patients and our families. So all of those are the package of a leader. In the way olden days, a nurse leader was called a head nurse, and all they really did was the element of the clinical management on the unit. That is not a nurse leader at all anymore.

And so lucky, because I have some amazing colleagues in all of our support services, like in finance and our quality area and our safety area and those kinds of things. And I always welcome them to come into the clinical world. If they can touch it and smell it and taste it a little bit, they might have a better understanding of what challenges there are at that level. But it also is a responsibility of us as leaders, nurse leaders, to get that experience in all of those areas, too, whether it's finance or quality or safety or

any other field. So what's needed is not just experience in it, but you need education. And what's so exciting is that-

Vicki Guinn:

How do you get that education, that additional?

Cindy Hill:

Right. So you can become a nurse. Now, the diploma programs are pretty much gone, but you can become a nurse as through a two-year ADN program or a four-year degree program. And then, after that, to really go into leadership, a standard that we have at Legacy right now is that all managers and above are required to have a master's degree. The great thing about the discipline of nursing is that they have recognized now that nurse leaders are not just the clinical leaders that might have happened 30 years ago. And so, they are creating leadership programs, nurse leadership programs, that talk about all of those elements that you don't get when you go to nursing school, as simple as-

Vicki Guinn:

I see.

Cindy Hill:

When you go to a degree program and become a nurse, you do get things like writing skills and just the breadth of being able to talk about history or something like that. But when you go to the program I went to, the three-year program, you didn't get those kinds of things. It was all clinically focused. And so that, to me, is extremely important, for nurse leaders to make sure that they are exposing themselves to those leadership degree programs that can help build their expertise in all of the other areas that are important for a leader.

The people that work here at Randall? I'm sorry. They are special. And I hear it from people that come from other organizations and work here. I hear it from travel nurses, that there's just something special about the team here. I would completely agree that they are so focused on doing the right thing for the patients, the families, and the teams that they have that it is one of the most remarkable experiences and honors that I've had is to be able to work side by side with these people.

Vicki Guinn:

And they are going to be listening to this podcast, for sure. That is amazing to hear. I was going to say, what helps you sleep better? Probably knowing you work with these wonderful people every day. But what keeps you up at night?

Cindy Hill:

Yeah, I talked about it a little bit more. These are wonderful people. These are people that are... When you use the word "dedication" and "commitment," we can tend to use those words sometimes lightly. These people are dedicated and committed. We just got through a storm, a snowstorm. These people did whatever they could to get here because they knew that the patients needed them and their team needed them. We just got through a surge of respiratory illnesses, one of the biggest I've seen in my career here. They all just stepped up and displayed that we can do this kind of work. And so, they make me proud and so privileged to work here.

But what does keep me up is I do worry about... I want to make sure that they have all the physical resources, the staff that they need to be able to do the work that they want to do and need to do. I worry about making sure that... Healthcare is a tough entity right now. And I think back on... It's always been a place where you have to work really, really, really hard. There's no doubt about that. But I do think that, with the last three years, it took a toll on our caregivers, and not just nursing caregivers but all caregivers. And so, I do worry about their resilience and their wellbeing. That keeps me up a little bit too, because I'm not sure that we've figured out the answer to that. I would support anyone in choosing what's right for them in regards to a career path. But I will say this. I will tell young people, "If you want to enter a career that you will have amazing, good feelings about, with the work that you do, and opportunity, nursing is really, truly one of those careers."

Vicki Guinn:

Cindy went on to praise the amazing leadership and clinical team she works with daily at Randall Children's, but we were getting close to the end of our time, and I wanted to make sure I asked her about her support system.

Cindy Hill:

My family helps me, too. My husband has been just a rock in making sure that... we do it for each other, but that he's understanding because, many times, I'm rounding at night or even... especially when I was at our manager level. I was in here a lot during weekends and nights and stuff. And so, just an understanding from my family. Both my daughter and sons still say they remember the nights I had to bring them in to sleep in my office because my husband was out of town.

And I remember one, too, where they got into a big fight. They were fighting in my office, back when we were in that west wing. I had to go into the [inaudible 00:30:44], one of the units there. And all of a sudden, I just heard this blood-curling scream. Well, my daughter had slammed my son's finger in the door, and he needed to go to the ED and have stitches. So they always bring that story up to me, too. So they say, "Yeah, you did work a lot." And that is true. I did. But again, they were understanding, and I couldn't have done it without them.

Vicki Guinn:

I asked Cindy what she would like on her page in the book of women's history.

Cindy Hill:

I would say, "Please don't make excuses about your caring, your empathy, your compassion. It's part of you. Embrace it and make sure that you are living it or living the true you. You can be the best strategic planner. You can be the best financial business guru. If you cannot connect with people and you cannot genuinely tell people how much they... I mean, convey to them how much they mean to you, not just in good times but in difficult times... All of those other skills are for naught if you can't develop those genuine relationships."

So that's what I would want my page to say. "Don't be afraid to speak up about it." There were times in my career where people said things and it made me feel bad that I was classified as a feeler. I think that's what they would say, because wouldn't the ENFP feel? Yeah. So it kind of brings tears a little bit to my eyes right now because I think about I got that trait from my mom. And if my legacy could be to be like her, that would cause me a great pride because she is a very kind and generous person. So my page is, "You got to have it. If you don't have it, your leadership skills are lacking."

Vicki Guinn:

Thank you for sharing that. And you have signed your page, and it's in the history books.

Cindy Hill:

Yay. Right.

Vicki Guinn:

Thank you so much for joining us today on Engaging Our People, our special Women's History Month.

Cindy Hill:

Thank you. I appreciate it.

Vicki Guinn:

And we're so honored to have you share your heart with us.

Cindy Hill:

Thank you.

Vicki Guinn:

We know you're an amazing leader.

Cindy Hill:

Oh, that's very kind. No, I do.

Vicki Guinn:

Sharing your heart with us is more important.

Cindy Hill:

I will just say that the lives that we touch are what we look back on. And if someone can leave an interaction with you, or if someone can leave a... I used to say this when I had to terminate someone. I would say it to them directly. "My goal here is that you can walk out of my office right now with as much self-esteem and self-confidence as you possibly can because there will be some place. It may not be here, but there'll be some place for you to be successful in." That's extremely important to me. I have five grandchildren, only one girl. Tell them I wanted more girls, and I didn't get. But her name is Sojourner D, and she was named after Sojourner Truth. And when my daughter picked that name for her, that was for one that had the strength and the courage but also the caring and the compassion to move things forward. And that's what women do.

Vicki Guinn:

Thank you so much, Cindy Hill, for joining us.

Cindy Hill:

Thank you.

Vicki Guinn:

Again, Cindy, thank you for your time and inspiration and for sharing your story on a special edition of the Engaging Our People podcast for Women's History Month. This podcast is for all of us at Legacy and was created as an opportunity to share stories, build connections, and learn about one another. We are more than our work.

If you are hearing this message, you've listened to the full episode to the end, and I thank you. We value you and your feedback. So please take a moment and drop us a message at podcast@lhs.org and tell us about your ideas for stories or how we can better engage our people. This is Vicki Guinn with Legacy Health's Marketing and Communications. Thank you. Be safe and be well.