

First Impressions: Oral Histories of the Founding Members of ANAC in Historical Context



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In memoriam



Thomas O'Donnell, RN, BSN
ANAC Founding Member

Statement of the Problem

- June 26, 2006: AIDS at 25 years
- PBS, *Frontline* feature: *The Age of AIDS*
- Nurses: Absent, Voiceless, Invisible



Purpose of the Study

- Generate the oral histories of RNs
 - Early responders to emerging AIDS pandemic
 - Founders of a new professional association in response to the needs of nurses in AIDS care



Significance of the Study

- Impact of AIDS: radically sensitized body fluid contact, sexual behaviors, addiction-related injection practices, blood product transfusions, and reproductive decision-making
- Role of Early Nurse Responders
 - Contemporaries from diverse practice settings
 - Witnesses to an emerging pandemic
- Breaking established patterns of rendering invisible nurses' significant contributions

Framework of Historical Inquiry

- Social History: a framework for uncovering and understanding the experiences of people who have been invisible in formal historical records



Organizing Framework

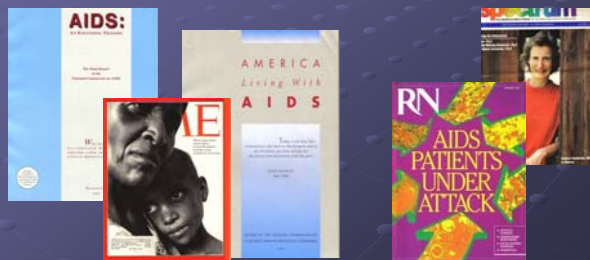
- Comprehensive chronology of scientific, social, political, and organizational events from *The Age of AIDS* documentary



Research Questions



Significant Historical Events and Review of Literature 1981-1987



First Nursing Journal Article AJN – November 1982

- Cumulative statistics at that time
 - 603 cases and 304 deaths
 - Case reports in 43 states and Washington, D.C.
- 17 months after first MMWR report– 6/5/81



Methodology

- Oral History
 - Method of dialogue
 - Interpretation of meaning
 - Creation of an archival collection
- Data collection
 - 17.5 hours of digital recordings
 - Over 400 pages of transcripts



Analytical Tool

Shopes' Guide to Analysis of Oral History Interviews



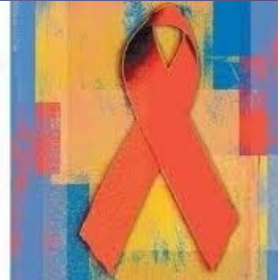
Interpretive Method

- Progressive-Regressive Approach
- Denzin: "Interpretive Interactionism"



Founding Members

Caring for
Patients
With AIDS



- Nancy T
- Alison
- Jeanne
- Tom
- Jim
- Errol
- Mike
- Susan
- Nancy M

*"I can clearly remember
my first AIDS patient."*



*"Nobody could really figure out
what was going on."*



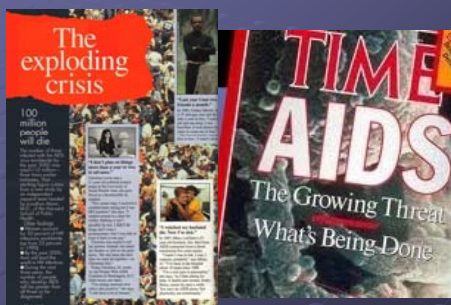
*“The hospitals were scared.
Nursing homes were scared.
Community centers were scared.”*



*“I want to be a good nurse and I
want to take care of this patient,
but I don’t want to kill myself.”*



“I didn’t sign on for this.”



*“I kept encouraging her: “It’s
okay to go over and hug him.”*



"...it became obvious that ... nobody was going to come out unscathed. ... It was just relentlessly happening."



Meaning



Pride Privilege Honor

Epilogue



"Dedication: To Those Who Have Suffered" Janice Bell Meisenhelder, DNSc, RN 1988

- I see an invisible fire raging, consuming humanity.
- People, who have felt outside the mainstream, who have been told they do not matter as much as the rest,
- Who have felt the footprint of society on their backs, now burning in an epidemic.
- I feel the stabbing pain of human suffering.
- At the same time, I ache with amazement, awed by the resilience of the soul:
- Eyes which reflect determination, conviction, perseverance.
- Words which show me an inner strength, untouchable by disease, unconquerable, even by death.
- An inner strength, augmented, matured, perfected by the heat of disaster.
- I see the human spirit like a Phoenix
- Rising from the ashes of a wasting disease,
- Soaring to heights of courage, hope, and faith, only imagined by us below.
- And I stand with pride,
- Among those who care.