# HISTORY OF NURSING NEWS

VOLUME 11, ISSUE 1

JULY 2000

# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

A new leaf turns. Thank you for your confidence in selecting the new set of faces to serve as your executive. We begin with a look back, after all we are historians!! Thanks to Helen Shore for her untiring efforts to move us forward in the past two years. Also, thanks to Shirley Holzman for serving as member at large. The new executive reflects a shifting of the deck chairs with faithful members changing positions and responsibilities. We will endeavor to attain the high standard set by previous executives.

Now, we look ahead. Our journey began with the June 15th fund raising dinner, planned in collaboration with the Registered Nurses Foundation. Nina Rumen and Beverly Du Gas did a fine job in bringing this gala evening together. We enjoyed great company, fine food and outstanding entertainment by Ivan Sayers. Altogether, a wonderful evening!

The Canadian Nurse's Association (CNA) Conference took place June 18-21 2000 at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Vancouver. We had displays and assisted at the



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Canadian Association for the History of Nursing table. Rob Calnan, former president of RNABC and a supporter of the HoN Group, was elected president-elect of the CNA. Congratulations Rob!

The Canadian Association for the History of Nursing annual meeting took place in Fredericton New Brunswick June 8-10 2000. Glennis Zilm and Sheila Zerr took part in the conference, both presenting papers. Look for a report of the conference in a future newsletter.

The next step task will be planning for our summer workshop in August. We will be holding a "garden" meeting at the home of *Ethel and Rudy Warbinek*, 2448 - 124th Street, Surrey, (1000-1500 hours) on Saturday August 17, 2000. Come and join us. We plan to set out our path for 2000 to 2001 and beyond.

We all beaver away in our "historical" corners, come together to share and plan activities, and serve on the many committees of the BC History Group. We'll walk together a step at a time. We'll keep our passion for nursing history alive and we will endeavor to keep our message and goals before the nursing public.

Sheila Zerr, President

# A REMINDER ABOUT OUR MEETINGS

The History Group Executive Meetings are held the first Thursday of every month starting again in September. This usually are held at the RNABC Offices and begin at 4 PM and end about 6 PM. All members are welcome to attend. For further information, call President Sheila Zerr at (604) 943-3012.

Regular meetings of the Archival Development Sub-committee take place each month. Sometimes they meet in the History of Nursing office at UBC, but most often meet around *Nina Rumen's* dining room table where ideas and plans flow. If you are interested in joining up and working on this committee please call *Nina* at (604) 733-7529.

# ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2000

The 10th Annual General Meeting of the History of Nursing Group was held on April 13, 2000 at the Hyatt-Regency Hotel in downtown Vancouver. Following a continental breakfast and social time, the executive and committee chairs presented their annual reports.

Member Joan Doree reminded us of our history and how far we have come when she read the following item from the morning edition of the Vancouver Sun newspaper. Dateline: April 13, 1955 (45 years ago today). "Registered Nurses' Association of B.C. today won a demand that married nurses be taken on as permanent staff of the city, succeeding in its bid to get city hall to ease it's policy against hiring married women on a permanent basis."

The highlights of the meeting were the recognition of retiring and individual members for their contribution to the History Group and the awarding of Honorary Membership.

# Recognition of Don Ransom

Lois Blais, current Treasurer of the HoN Group presented a plaque to **Don Ransom** in recognition of his many contributions to the History Group. Here are her comments:

"It is with pleasure today that we honor Don Ransom. As well as being an active member of the History of Nursing Group and the treasurer for the past 5 years, Don has had a long and productive reputation with the RNABC.

I have known Don for the past 30 years through our work together at St. Paul's Hospital. I distinctly remember several Annual General Meetings of the RNABC and several more Vancouver Metropolitan Chapter meetings when Don 'kept us on our toes'. Don knows Roberts Rules of Order from cover to cover and always reminded us of those procedures and rules and added order to many meetings. This was before the RNABC had a Parliamentarian.

Don served on the Board of Directors of the CNA. He was honored by his colleagues by receiving an Award of Honor from the RNABC.

On behalf of the History of Nursing Professional Practice Group of the RNABC, Don, I present you this plaque in honor of the many contributions you have made to the History of Nursing Professional Practice Group."

# A Tribute to Helen Katherine Mussallem

Editor's note: The following tribute to Helen Mussallem was written by Beverly Witter Du Gas and is reproduced with permission.

"Helen Mussallem is someone of whom I can truly say, 'She needs no introduction'. She has been the recipient of honorary doctorates conferred on her by six Canadian universities; she is a Companion of the Order of Canada, Dame of Grace of the Most Venerable Order of St. John of Jerusalem, and has been awarded the Florence Nightingale Medal of the International Red Cross and the Queen's Silver Jubilee - to name just a few of her many accomplishments. All of these have been well documented.

Most of you here are familiar with Helen Mussallem's national and international reputation. She is, after all, one of us—born in Prince Rupert and "trained" at the Vancouver General. We have followed her career with fascination as she played an increasingly important role in nursing not only in Canada but also on the world stage. For those of you who are not familiar with the details of Helen's career, the posters and other displays around the room will give you some idea of the breadth and scope of work she has done. These highlight her major awards, major international assignments and missions, and provide a sampling of her formidably long list of publications. Or, you can read all about it in the vignette Glennis Zilm crafted so beautifully for the second edition (1999) of our Canadian nursing text, Nursing Foundations (p 252).

I will not, therefore, dwell on Helen's accomplishments but talk instead about Helen as a friend and mentor. Helen was Director of the School of Nursing at VGH in 1953 when I first met her. The School was in the Nurses' Residence, the Infants' ward of the hospital was also in the Nurses' Residence - in the basement, along with the classrooms - the teachers' offices were upstairs on the main floor. I was working as a staff nurse on the nursing unit. You came down one day looking for me. You were my savior, Helen! I had been working shifts and doing a double rotation of night duty so I could be at home with my children in the evenings. You offered me a position teaching psychology to the preliminary class and psychiatric nursing and neurosurgical nursing to the senior classes in the school. I promptly accepted your offer and you sent me off for a 5 day postgraduate course at Essondale (now Riverview). You were a good Director Helen, and gave me the freedom to try out the new ideas in clinical teaching I had learned during my master's program and, subsequently teaching a course in Clinical Teaching and Supervision in San Francisco

In 1957, you were approached by the Canadian Nurses Association to undertake a pilot project on the accreditation of Canadian schools of nursing. At that point, you brought me over from the clinical wards where I was Senior Instructor to sit at a desk in your office. Over the next few months you taught me what I needed to know to run the school in your absence. The lessons I learned have served me well throughout my

career.

Besides the details of curriculum, clinical rotations, running a residence housing over 500 girls between the ages of 18-22, there were the interpersonal relationships with faculty and staff of the school, hospital staff and administrators, solicitous parents and, of course, students. I also learned a few other things that proved valuable:

- I can now, with great skill, shuffle papers on my desk into neat piles at the end of the day so that it looks as if I am well organized, even if I am not.
- The bathtub makes a good temporary storage place for student files, when you run out of room on the couch.
- 3. It is wise to get a report from the Residence Director first thing in the morning -before the Director of Nursing phones about all the naughty things students have done.
- 4. You have to look after yourself as well as other people. I shall always be grateful to you, Helen for getting me started on a regular exercise program. I have diligently adhered to this throughout my career. We are both, I know, still doing our regular exercise programs.
- 5. Sometimes you have to "wing it". You kept promising you would give me the course outline for the Professional Adjustments course I used to have nightmares of chasing after the plane as you were leaving crying, "Helen, where is the Professional Adjustments course outline?" You never did give me an outline for the Professional Adjustments course. I came to the conclusion that you tailored your classes to meet the needs of the students at that particular time.

And lastly -

Always tilt your chin up when you are smiling for the camera.

When you were off on the Pilot Project and later when you were doing your doctoral studies at Columbia, I was one of the lucky recipients of your newsy family letters. You were so thrilled to be in New York City and described it so vividly - the letters were wonderful! I knew you would never be back - you had moved onto a larger stage.

The next time I saw you was in 1967. You were, by then, Executive Director of the Canadian Nurses Association. I stopped in Ottawa to see you on my return from India to pursue doctoral studies in Vancouver. You gave me lots of encouragement, telling me that having the doctorate would open many doors - it had for you and would do so for me.

When I finished my doctoral studies I moved to Ottawa as Nursing Consultant (later director) of Health Manpower Planning with the Health Manpower Directorate of the Federal Government. Our paths had crossed again. Helen and I were both part of the group of nurses working in senior positions in Ottawa so met frequently, both at professional meetings and at social get-togethers. It was always a treat when you had a small group in and cooked a Lebanese dinner.

In 1972, I was elected to the CNA Board of Directors as Vice-President and had an opportunity to work with you at CNA Board meetings. I was amazed at your stamina, and at your unfailing good humor throughout those dreadfully long 3 - sometimes, 4 day meetings. You and Verna Splane (Chief Nursing Officer with the Federal Government) and I worked closely together on numerous projects and national conferences. Because the Association acts as a watchdog on what the government is doing and the government watches carefully what mischief the professional associations are getting into, we sometimes had our differences. We always managed to sort these out amicably, however, and work collaboratively for the betterment of the nursing profession.

I left Ottawa in 1975 to undertake some international assignments but returned in 1982 to take a position at the University of Ottawa. Helen and I renewed our friendship and shared many of the wonderful cultural events of the capital city. When I broke my kneecap and was confined to hobbling around my apartment on crutches, Helen came to visit, bearing food that she had cooked herself and helping with the small things that make life easier when you have restricted mobility. She had learned her basic nursing skills well.

The last thing I will mention among my memories of Helen is the night she came to give a class for me in our then still experimental teleconferencing program. You talked about professional associations and the students in Ottawa, Cornwall, Pembroke and Peterborough were all quite inspired by your address. There was lively exchange between you and the students -your teaching skills were evident.

In conclusion, Helen, I would like to tell you how much I - and all of the rest of us -have admired your accomplishments during your marvelous career. You have indeed, helped to shape nursing history in Canada. I consider myself very lucky to have had you as a mentor.

It is my pleasure and privilege to welcome you as an Honorary Life Member of the B.C. History of Nursing Professional Practice Group."



#### FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE DISPLAY

The recent BC History of Nursing display at RNABC celebrated the life of Florence Nightingale. Three display areas at RNABC presented several aspects of Florence Nightingale's long life.

The foyer display featured an historical costume in the Victorian fashion of the mid-1800s. The dress, created for BC History of Nursing member *Lois Blais*, is in a deep red color with trim en tone, and depicts the style of clothing worn by Florence Nightingale and her social class.

The library display board featured color photos of Florence Nightingale's chatelaine. This gold ornament was suspended from the waist and appears to have been worn over a long time by Nightingale. It carried items of personal importance to her. BCHN member, Nina Rumen, was instrumental in obtaining color photos of the actual chatelaine as well as information about its history. The chatelaine is on permanent display at the University Hospital of London, Ontario and was a gift to the nurses from a physician in honor of their quality of care. Descriptive cards explained the history and composition of the keepsake. After the death of Nightingale in 1910, a close friend and colleague of forty years, Henry Bonham Carter presented the ornament to a Mrs. Coleman, who had been of assistance to Florence Nightingale during her final years in her home on South Street in London.

The glass display case in the boardroom contained various items reminding us of Nightingale and her long life. The historical costume worn by the Florence Nightingale doll (18" in height) is styled as an exact replica of the fashions of the day and was created for the American Association of the History of Nursing. The Scutari lamp, or lantern, is an actual lantern as carried by Nightingale in the Scutari Barrack Hospital during 1854 - 1856. It was presented to the BCHN by former RNABC president, Lyle Creelman. There is also a large color photo of a stained

glass window in St. Mary's Anglican Church in Kerrisdale, Vancouver. Its figure of Florence Nightingale, with lantern, was created in 1986 as a memorial to a former nurse by her husband. Lastly, a large illustrated biography of Florence Nightingale by Dossey (1999) is displayed. It contains many new photos of Nightingale and her contemporaries and presents her life and post-Crimea illness in an interesting new light.

May 2000 marked the 180th anniversary of Florence Nightingale's birth. As pioneer and leader, statistician and teacher, administrator and writer, this brilliant and exceptional woman continues to fascinate and confound us.

Submitted by Jill Thompson

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# NURSING ETHICS: A PERSPECTIVE

Lois Blais, the History of Nursing Treasurer presented "Nursing Ethics: A Perspective, Past, Present and Future" on Saturday March 18, 2000 at the B.C.Lung Association. Twenty six members and guests were reminded that ethical dilemmas are much more complex than "in the old days."

Society's moral melt-down over the past 30 years presents a challenge for health care workers as they strive to find meaning in their every day practice. Many nurses, in all fields of nursing feel the singe of change in the ethical foundations of their profession. Many struggle to maintain, at best, their individual integrity, and at least their professional promise to their patients.

Blais suggested that the concept of agency, borrowed from philosophy, may add a cadre for nurses and other health care

workers to draw from and breakthrough to new meanings. She spotlighted the concept of agency and introduced the concept of "moral agency" as a role nurses might assume to voice patient concerns.

An agent is an autonomous profession who reflects on the obligation and responsibility inherent in their role. Within the context of a team environment a moral agent is a self-determined individual who takes action for another or for himself or herself. Metaphorically, a moral agent is like a pathfinder or navigator who seeks out a possible route through a maze of unknowns. A moral agent joins with the patient and family to find new paths of meaning using guides and skills; choosing actions on behalf of the patient and family: or helping the patient and family to choose actions.

Blais claims if "moral agency" is restored and integrated into each health care providers practices, a new type of authority becomes obvious and ultimately a common purpose is met, namely the best interests of the patient. And this new type of authority becomes legitimate authority as it arises out of the decisions of a collaborative multidisciplinary team.

Lois, recently retired from her Patient Care Leader position at St. Paul's Hospital, drew from her studies in philosophy and ethics as well as her volunteer role at St. Paul's Hospital on the Ethics Network. Lois currently provides feedback to the CNA's Committee for Ethics and will be doing a poster presentation on "moral agency" at the Fourth Nursing Academic International Congress in Washington, D.C. in October 2000. She is also hoping to present her work at the Canadian Bioethics Society conference in Quebec City in the Fall.

#### SEARCHING FOR INFORMATION

Does anyone have any information about a nurse named Frederica Wilson? She was born February 11, 1868 in the Goderich area, Ontario and graduated from the Winnipeg General in 1899. She was superintendent at Winnipeg General from 1905-1914, Matron, BC Unit #5 and received the Royal Red Cross. She retired to a fruit ranch in Whonock, B.C. Frederica passed away February 18, 1935 and is buried in Mountain View Cemetery, Vancouver, B.C.

Anyone with information is asked to contact Natalie N. Riegler, Nurse Historian/Author, 3 Dromore Crescent, Willowdale, Ontario M2R 2H4 or e-mail her at rieglern@yahoo.com.

#### WEB SITES

Here are several web sites of interest to nurse historians and researchers. Our B.C. History of Nursing web page has been revised and is now located at <a href="https://www.over.to/Nursehist.Can.">www.over.to/Nursehist.Can.</a> Check out the extensive list of links which includes the new CAHN/ACHN site found at <a href="https://www.ualberta.ca/~jhibberd/CAHN-ACHN/">www.ualberta.ca/~jhibberd/CAHN-ACHN/</a>.

The Margaret M. Allemang Center For the History of Nursing has a new site that can be reached at <a href="www.allemang.on.ca">www.allemang.on.ca</a>. This web site contains information about the Center and all issues of the Bulletin including the new 2000 edition.

Boston University has an extensive history of nursing archives in their Department of Special Collections. To see the listing of individuals and organizations go to: <a href="www.bu.edu.speccol/">www.bu.edu.speccol/</a>. Click on to Collections and Archives and then on to the History of Nursing Archives.

# NEWS AND NOTES ABOUT OUR MEMBERS

Milestones: Past President Helen Shore celebrated her 75<sup>th</sup> birthday in June. Long-time member and former Membership Chair Diana Ritchie celebrated her 75<sup>th</sup> in July. Elsie MacDonald celebrated her 21<sup>st</sup> birthday earlier in the year (born in a Leap Year, she is really a youthful 80!).

Past President Bev Du Gas was admitted to Richmond Hospital in late June for emergency surgery, but is now on the mend. Lyle Creelman had an accident with her electric "scooter" in June and is recovering from fractures. (Get well wishes to both.)

President Sheila Zerr and Glennis Zilm attended the Canadian Association for the History of Nursing Conference in New Brunswick in June and both presented papers. (Watch for an "Encore, Encore" presentation of these papers for HoN Group members in the fall.)

Newsletter Editor **Beth Fitzpatrick** set up a History of Nursing display at the Squamish Library during Nurse's Week. While travelling with her husband John to model train conventions, she is always on the look-out for old nursing texts and Cherry Ames books.

Glennis Zilm received the Award of Distinction from the UBC Nursing Alumnae Division on May 11, 2000. The Award was presented to her by Ethel Warbinek. (Congratulations, Glennis!)

Nina Rumen attended the Nursing Sisters' Reunion in Toronto in June – possibly the last reunion for this group as the core group of Nursing Officers from World War II are reaching the ages when they find it difficult to travel.

Brenda Flynn gave a very well received presentation on Monuments to Nurses at the June Annual General Meeting of the North Shore Sea-to-Sky Chapter of the RNABC. Dr. Shirley Stinson has been made a Charter Inductee of the Teachers College Columbia University Nursing Hall of Fame. The induction took place in October, 1999. Her citation reads "In Recognition and Appreciation for your Extraordinary Contribution to Nursing and Health Care."

Member-at-Large Janet Gormick and Past President Helen Shore set up and staffed displays on the History of Nursing Group (and sold cards and other fund-raising materials) at the Canadian Nurses Association Convention and AGM at the Hyatt Regency Hotel, in June and at the Wine and Cheese Party thrown by the UBC School of Nursing for Alumni and Special Guests during the Convention. Both displays were new, interesting, and informative, and attracted a lot of attention.

In a past issue, we reported on Gloria Kay of Ontario, who has a collection of nursing caps from schools of nursing across Canada. Glennis Zilm met Mrs. Kay, at the meeting of the Canadian Association for the History of Nursing and she reported that her collection has been selected for inclusion by the Canadian Museum of Civilization in Ottawa. Before she turns over the collection, she wanted to try to obtain caps from any schools not yet represented. As she only had three of the B.C. schools, Glennis came home and phoned a number of HoN Group members to see if they had caps they could donate to Mrs. Kay; several came through with donations. With these additions, the B.C. Schools represented include those from: Vancouver General, Royal Inland, Royal Jubilee, St. Paul's (Vancouver), Royal Columbian, and University of B.C. If any of our members has a cap and would like further information about donating it to Mrs. Kay, please get in touch with Glennis Zilm at (604) 535-3238.



# IN MEMORY OF ALICE WRIGHT

Alice Lillian Wright was born in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island on August 22, 1894 and died March 15, 2000 at the age of 105. At a gathering of family and friends held in late March Esther Paulson shared the following memories of Alice's professional and personal life.

"Alice moved with her family to BC in the early years of 1900. She graduated from the Vancouver General Hospital School of Nursing in 1918. Dr R.E. McKechnie, Chancellor of the University of BC was her uncle. When Alice attended Columbia University, she corresponded with her uncle on a regular basis although the family regret that the letters were not kept.

Alice had a distinguished career in nursing which included nursing instructor, pediatric nursing, Executive Secretary and Registrar of RNABC. She is known for the many initiatives she established and promoted at the RNABC to improve working conditions for nursing. She was a "smart" negotiator. She negotiated the first contract for the Royal Columbian Hospital Linion and the many executives she worked with felt she was fair and astute. She was involved with the RNABC investment of capital for the purchase of land for their building locations. She had a good sense of business and guided the purchase of the Cypress and Broadway site that provided revenue from tenant rental of extra space. She instituted an RNABC program to provide nurses around the province with continuing education. She called it "Travelling Instructor to go".

Alice lived in an apartment on Vine Street. Esther Paulson remembers sleeping over when Alice got caught in the folding bed! She was a great friend and companion to the many friends and members of her family who visited the Vine Street apartment. She also had a summer

place on Indian Arm. Alice provided great hospitality and fond memories for those who took the trip and rowboat ride to her cottage. Esther enjoyed a memorable trip to the cottage accompanied by Evelyn Mallory.

After her official retirement in 1960 Alice Wright represented nurses around the world by attending conferences in many countries for the International Council of Nurses and was an observer for the World Health Assembly. At her memorial service her family and friends paid tribute to her caring wisdom and logic. The family remembered her generosity and fondly recalled the many trips she took them on. They remembered her unusual collection of baby bottles, now housed in the special Collections at UBC. She leaves a legacy to family and colleagues of outstanding contributions to the profession of nursing.

#### THE EDITOR'S CORNER

Beverly Leipert, HoN member and professor in the Nursing program, University of Northern British Columbia, wrote recently to request an additional copy of our newsletter that she could share with her students. She writes "The History of Nursing newsletters and I seem to have been able to whet students' appetites here for nursing history. (When I have the time, I would like to offer a course in nursing history). The students also are interested in the nursing history happenings in the lower mainland - they read about them in the newsletters. Too bad some of those events couldn't travel to other areas of the province so that northern students and others (like myself) could have greater access to our interesting and important history. Wouldn't a kind of travelling road show of nursing history be an interesting project to contemplate for the future?"

Another history buff, Brenda Flynn, writes and reminds us of our history: She says that after reading John Gray's I Love Mom:

An Irreverent History of the Tattoo, she felt compelled to share the following information. "As a group, nurses are not fully aware of our history, or as the following illustrates, we may choose to forget it. Throughout time, tattoo artists have concentrated on meaningful works of art for their clientele. At times this clientele was restricted to only the military. Often tattoos were symbols of current or recent wars, of which World War I was no exception. John Gray writes: "....the most popular tattoo was Rose of No Man's Land, a comely Red Cross nurse, together with a garland, flag or religious symbol' (page 102). This is a part of our collective history, like it or not!"

Did you know that HoN member, Shirley Stinson, was an accomplished cartoonist? Shirley never retained any of her original cartoon drawings. "I simply posted them on the Autoclave room bulletin board and they just seemed to disappear!" But recently, Eleanor (nee Rogers) Stares, a Regina General Hospital graduate who was a theatre nurse in the University of Alberta Hospital operating room when Shirley was in training, returned two of the original cartoons that she had saved in one of her memory books.

If you look closely you will see that the first cartoon is signed "Shay '51". Shirley had discovered that there was another 'Shirley' in her B.Sc. class and she chose to go under the alias of Shay, which is what she had called herself as a small child, unable to get the gist of her real name. And that is how she signed her cartoons shown on the following pages.......



".....in the Autoclave Room, where we students would wash, test and autoclave hundreds of rubber gloves every day. My guess is that this seene would be totally foreign to any nurses who trained after the late 1950's".



About the second drawing: Shirley says "my classmates will recall there was a wonderful plastic surgeon, Dr. Ted Hitchin, who was given to frequent expletives. We students secretly referred to him as Bitchin Hitchin. And that would have been the context of this cartoon. My guess is that only nurses, surgeons and anesthetists who are 'golden oldies' are familiar with the process of threading sutures!"

# HISTORY OF NURSING PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE GROUP OF THE REGISTERED NURSES ASSOCIATION OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

The History of Nursing Professional Practice Group provides a forum for those interested in the history of nursing to exchange ideas and information. The Group, formed in 1990, strives to stimulate interest in history of nursing and promotes study of and research into history of nursing in British Columbia. The Group also encourages the teaching of nursing history in educational programs and can assist in the preservation of historical nursing materials.

Membership categories are honorary, full, affiliate and student. Full members must be paid-up practicing or paid-up non-practicing members of RNABC. Interested individuals not paying RNABC practicing or non-practicing fees may join as affiliate members. If you are enrolled in a nursing education program or are a registered nurse enrolled in a graduate program, you may join as a student member. Please get in touch with any member of the executive if you are interested in membership.

Dues for 2000 are: Full and Affiliate \$20; Students \$5. Membership year is January 1 to December 31. Send name, address, telephone number, or name of the educational program. Make checks to "History of Nursing Group" and send to: Lois Blais, Treasurer, 4074 West 16th Avenue, Vancouver, B.C. V6R 3E1.

# THE HISTORY GROUP'S NEWSLETTER

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