

History of Nursing News

SPRING 2001 VOLUME 11, ISSUE 4



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

BY SHEILA ZERR

As we celebrate the beginning of year 2001, I wish one and all health, happiness and success with your historical endeavours. We, the B.C. History Group, can look back on the year 2000 with pride. We can celebrate success in our efforts to preserve and promote nursing history. As a group, we have seen our membership grow, and we have enjoyed the successful production of our newsletter by a team of editors. Our Archives Committee has moved us closer to having our collection catalogued. Numerous nursing leaders have been put forward for inclusion in the memorial book projects. Our superb gatherings and displays have been enjoyed by many. We have issued two scholarships to support studies promoting the history of nursing. These are but a few of the successes we have realized as a group in the year 2000.

What about your success as individuals as you seek to preserve and promote the history of nursing? Each of you has worked on your individual projects and studies and many of you have shared your enquiries. The Scholarship Committee encourages you to review the application criteria for funds. Make 2001 a banner year for your project or study. Think about setting up a scholarship project. The scholarship criteria:

The B.C. History of Nursing Group is pleased to offer a \$500.00 scholarship to an RNABC member who is interested in the study of history of nursing.

The nursing history study can be a written essay; the preparation of nursing biographies; collection and documentation of oral histories of nurses; preparation of historical nursing materials for display and educational purposes.

Completed application forms are to be submitted in March or November. A selection committee will review the application and forward recommendations to the Scholarship Trustees. Successful applicants will be notified within four weeks of application.

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PROGRAM NOTE

A further note. I invite you to attend the history of nursing program meeting March 10, 2001 1:30-3:30 PM at Children's & Women's Hospital of B.C., 4500 Oak Street, room 2108. You will be joining the University of Victoria students for a session that will feature Lois Blais speaking about her research into Nursing Ethics. Don't miss this opportunity to inspire students to pursue nursing historical studies and to join the B.C. History of Nursing Group in the future.

To find this location take the Oak Street entrance to Children's & Women's Hospital of B.C. Once through the gate, immediately turn **LEFT**. The first white/greyish building you see on the left is the

Research Building (green trim) and attached to it is the Chan Centre for Family Health Education (blue trim with 4 large silver antennae on the roof). You can park your car in the spots in front of the building or in the lots further down the road. Enter the building between the Research Building and the Chan Centre. You will find Room 2108 just inside the entrance to your right. Parking is \$1.50 per hour or \$8.50 per day. **I wish you progress and success as you work toward your historical goals and aspirations in 2001.**



Sheila Zerr

HON SCHOLARSHIP AWARDED

Margaret Scala of Nelson, B.C., a student in the Masters in Nursing program at the University of Calgary, has been awarded a B.C. History of Nursing Group scholarship of \$500. Margaret, who now is a member of our Group, teaches in the RN program at Selkirk College in Castlegar, B.C. In her application for the scholarship, she said her thesis project will concern history of the nursing care of teenagers who had pregnancy and delivery experiences between 1940 and 1999. She plans interviews about the maternal/child nursing care they received with women who had teenage pregnancies during that time frame. She also plans to interview nurses who have worked primarily in maternal/child clinical areas with adolescent mothers during the period. She hopes analysis of this data will provide a base for further research into changes in attitudes and practices in obstetrics and public health nursing.

Congratulations, Margaret.

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The HON Newsletter is published four times a year. Submissions for the next newsletter are welcome. Please submit articles to Sheila Zerr, e-mail: szerr@portal.ca, phone 604-943-3012 or Lynne Esson e-mail: esson@netcom.ca, phone 604-270-4992 by May 15, 2001. Executive Meetings are held at the RNABC the first Thursday of every month at 4 p.m. **All Members are welcome.**

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS DUE MARCH 1, 2001

A gentle reminder to members that, if not already mailed, membership dues are to be forwarded to Treasurer Lois Blais by the beginning of March 2001.

Our BCHN membership has grown to its highest point ever, 114 members, by the end of 2000. Lets maintain this number and see if we can grow even more!

The interest and support of our members has always been a paramount factor in the success of the BCHN Group. We look forward to continued success and further member participation at our various events.

Membership Chair Jill Thompson

EDITORIAL

WORLD-WIDE COMMEMORATIVE MOMENT FOR FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE AND NURSING



The world-wide web can offer those of us interested in history of nursing an amazing number of potentially helpful sites in which to indulge our passion for discovery and learning. One of the most exciting is the University of Guelph website described in the October newsletter by Glennis Zilm. This Canadian project is of worldwide interest to nursing scholars: "The purpose of this project is to prepare a collected works of the writing, published and unpublished, of Florence Nightingale". Its website makes for fascinating study.

Our neighbors to the south also provide a rich vein to mine for nurse historians, scholarly or amateur. The Barbara Dossey Official Website (dosseydossey.com) has made an exciting announcement in conjunction with The American Holistic Nurses' Association (AHNA): "AHNA invites you to join with us and all nurses around the world in a **WORLD-WIDE COMMEMORATIVE MOMENT FOR FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE AND NURSING** May 12, 2001 12 noon your local time". Now, whether or not one is interested in this particular celebratory moment in honor of Florence Nightingale, it does illustrate the resurgence of interest in the life and work of the founder of modern nursing. In addition, the past decade has provided us with a number of new books offering insights into the life and times of Nightingale.

One of the most illustrious of these books is the 1999 illustrated biography by Barbara Montgomery Dossey titled **FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE: MYSTIC, VISIONARY, HEALER**. This work is beautifully written and richly illustrated with close to 300 photographs in color and black and white. What strikes one the most is the amount and depth of information presented. Dossey, a well-known American nurse, author, speaker and scholar, has done meticulous research. Nightingale's life is vividly presented in word and picture. And what is most intriguing is the numbers of eminent individuals that revered Nightingale, were her close friends, and worked by her side without cease, often till their own health broke down.

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Florence Nightingale has been lauded by some scholars and historians as one of the pre-eminent intellectual lights of the nineteenth century. One such is David Cannadine, a British historian and author, who includes Nightingale in his 1998 *HISTORY IN OUR TIME*, along with Sir Winston Churchill among others. Cannadine describes Nightingale as a person of amazing capability and an individual who, in spite of being a woman, brought about reform and changed the world at a time when women had little or no power, independence, money or vote.

The sad side to all of the above information is that often nurses and the public in general do not know much that is positive about Florence Nightingale. She has been looked upon as some sort of eccentric who spent decades of her life on a chaise longue suffering from the vapors, berating her colleagues and avoiding her family. What we really need is a historical docudrama, preferably produced by the BBC, that puts Dossey's superb biography on film for all to appreciate. In lieu of that, as library collections, book stores and the web provide us with more sophisticated information, let us hope Nightingale is accorded her deserved place in, not only the history of nursing, but in the social and scientific history of the world as a figure of monumental stature.



In closing, it is of interest to note that the American Episcopal Church will commence formal Episcopal Church services to honor Florence Nightingale beginning in August 2001 around the date of her death on the 13th of August.

Jill Thompson
Guest Editor
February 2001

OOPSI

Gremlins got into the computer layout in the last newsletter in the item about the Harriet Evelyn Mallory Memorial Scholarship for graduate students at the University of BC. The item should have made it clear that HON Member **Rose Murakami** was instrumental in launching this scholarship and ensuring that sufficient money was raised to allow this to be an endowed annual award.

Programs and Future Events



Saturday, February 17, 2001

1330 to 1530: "Nursing Jobs"

*** Postponed until further notice ***



Saturday, March 10, 2001

1330 to 1530: Nursing Ethics Part II

Lois Blais will present follow up from presentations at a Bioethics in Nursing conference in Washington, DC and the Canadian Bioethics Society conference in Quebec City. See President's Message "Program Note" on page 2 for detailed directions to program's location.

Saturday, April 5, 2001

0800 to 1000: BC History of Nursing Group Annual General Meeting

The **BCHN AGM** will be held at the Hyatt Regency Hotel, Vancouver, in conjunction with the **RNABC AGM**. A continental breakfast will be available at 0800. The meeting will commence at 0830 until 1000. Members are most cordially invited to attend. For details, please contact any member of the executive.

Saturday, May 12, 2001

1330 to 1530: "Florence Nightingale: Her Life and Times Revisited"

Jill Thompson will present intriguing stories about this fascinating woman and her exceptional life, information that you well may not have heard. See editorial on page 4 of this newsletter, "A Commemorative Moment for Florence Nightingale."

This program will be presented at St. Paul's Hospital, Vancouver, in the second floor Hurlburt Auditorium. Paid parking is available at the hospital with elevator access to the auditorium. For further directions, phone Jill Thompson at 604-888-1597. Please join us to celebrate the anniversary of Nightingale's birth and Nurses' Week. Birthday cake will be served!

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June 8, 9, 10, 2001

The Canadian Association History of Nursing (CAHN / ACHN) annual conference will be held at the Helen Glass Centre for Nursing, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, MB. For details, contact any member of the executive.

Saturday, June 16, 2001

Another special evening is planned with **Ivan Sayers** at the Vancouver Tennis and Lawn Bowling Club. Following a social hour and dinner, Ivan will present a fashion show for BCHN members and guests titled "Ladies in Waiting". This will be a fundraiser for "A Home of Our Own" and further details will be announced.

Call for Nominations

Past President, **Helen Shore**, will be chairing the nominating committee for several BCHN executive positions and will be presenting a slate of nominations at the Annual General Meeting on April 5 at the Hyatt Regency Hotel, Vancouver. BCHN full members willing to stand for office should contact **Helen Shore** at 604-731-9588 or **President Sheila Zerr** at 604-943-3012.

Proposal for Annual General Meeting

BCHN Treasurer, **Lois Blais**, will be leading discussion at the BCHN AGM to do with raising full and affiliate fees to \$25 starting in 2002. This will be the first fee raise in a number of years and will assist the HON Group to meet increased costs such as postage, etc. Come to the AGM and participate in the debate and the vote.

"STORIES OF CHRISTMAS PAST" **HON CHRISTMAS LUNCHEON SATURDAY, DECEMBER 9, 2000**



History of Nursing members and guests gathered at the Vancouver Tennis and Lawn Bowling Club in December to enjoy a Christmas Lunch and hear three retired nurses describe favorite Christmas memories.

Titled "Memories of Christmas Past," the luncheon and speakers were convened by BCHN member **Nina Rumen**. **Lois Blais** acted as emcee attired in her Santa Claus hat and vest assisted by Head Elf **Lynne Esson**.

Warm and poignant memories were recalled by **Beverly DuGas**, **Mary Nicol** and **Jessie Middleton**. Bev described one special Christmas in India during her work there with the World Health Organization. Mary harked back to some of her early experiences as a student in the 1950s. Jessie remembered the spirit of Christmas during time spent in the army overseas.

Beth Fitzpatrick thanked the speakers for reminding us of the Spirit of Christmases Past under unusual or trying circumstances. It was suggested by several members that the Christmas luncheon become an annual gathering!

The proceeds from the luncheon go toward the fund raising initiative for "A Home Of Our Own". Because of such initiatives, the BCHN group has been able to offer **Melanie Hardcastle**, an archivist, a part-time three to four month contract to commence much needed work on the BCHN archival materials currently stored at the UBC School of Nursing.



HISTORY OF NURSING DISPLAYS

"NURSING REMEDIES FROM HEAD TO TOE"

The informative and eye-catching display, **Nursing Remedies from Head to Toe**, is being moved from the RNABC Board room to several new locations. From mid February until mid April it can be seen in the Jim Pattison Pavilion (formerly the Laurel Pavilion) at the Vancouver General Hospital and for the month of May, in the Coquitlam Library.

This display shows a variety of remedies and tools formerly used by nurses in their role as comforters and healers of the sick in both hospital and home settings. Some of the items to see include the following:

eyewash cups Did you know that it was once believed that disease came into the body through the eyes and each member of the household would have an eyewash cup to use each day?

metal eye-shield protector These were used over eye patches to protect an injured eye from further trauma and date from the 1950's.

porcelain feeding cups These delicate cups were used in both the home and hospital settings to assist patients to take in fluids. One of the display cups, marked VGH, was likely used in the Private Ward Pavilion, where the china dishes, cutlery and food were equal to that of a fancy restaurant.

hypodermic injections Before the advent of disposable syringes and vials for medications, the procedure for preparing hypodermic injections was very complex. The display shows the original equipment and explains exactly how injections were once prepared.

mustard plaster Want to know how to make a mustard plaster? The exact ingredients and recipe are there to see.

stone pig Just add hot water to this receptacle and keep your bed warm!

The display was designed and assembled by **Beth Fitzpatrick and Ethel Warbinek**. Thank you to the *VGH School of Nursing Alumnae Association Archives* for lending many of the display items.

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"Early Nursing Texts by Canadian Authors"

The current BCHN display featured in the glass display case in the RNABC boardroom has been prepared by **Glennis Zilm and Ethel Warbinek**. BCHN members are invited to stop in to view the display and are welcome to do so any time the boardroom is not in use.

The five early authors featured in this display are: Isabel Hampton Robb, Isabel Maitland Stewart, Bertha Harmer, Florence Emory, and Elizabeth Breeze. Original textbooks are placed beside the photographs of four of the five authors. The only photo unavailable to date is that of Isabel Maitland Stewart. Various memorabilia is placed among the books and photos and adds interest to this well-researched display.

The display shows us a wonderful example of only some of the BCHN and members' materials related to nursing history and highlights the need for a "Home of Our Own" to house nursing archives and artifacts.

BC Public Health Nurse Summer Uniform with Hat

The 1970s PHN uniform and hat, complete with BC Provincial Public Health Services insignia, **pictured on the right**, is currently on display in the foyer of the RNABC. Thank you to Public Health Nurse, Gladys Rowlett, of Kelowna, BC, for the loan.

The bulletin board display in the RNABC library features the 1984 history book, "Through the Years with Public Health Nursing", written by **BCHN Honorary Member, Monica Green**. Black and white photographs from Mrs. Green's book illustrate, among its many historically important pictures, public health nurse summer uniforms and hats from the 1930s and 1940s as well as winter uniforms and hats from the 1950s and 1960s.



One particularly appealing photograph shows a large group of uniformed BC Public Health Nurses, numbering close to 100, arranged on the steps of the BC Parliament Buildings, Victoria, in 1949, during their attendance at the BC Public Health "Institute".

Please stop by the RNABC and view the BCHN displays in the foyer, library, and in the boardroom when it is available. Members are most welcome.

MUSEUM AT RIVERVIEW HOSPITAL, COQUITLAM, BC

BCHN member, **Anna Tremere**, reports that the new museum opening soon at Riverview Hospital in Coquitlam is in its final stages of preparation. Anna has been instrumental in the creation of the museum and says, "The museum has gone from a work in progress to just about ready to finally open."

To date, there are "two male and four female mannequins dressed in various period uniforms placed throughout the museum" along with "furniture, equipment, artifacts, memorabilia, etc. that reflect various departments."

Anna writes she is "hoping to be able to establish specific times when there can be volunteer staff at the museum and have it officially open."

Congratulations to Anna and we look forward to hearing more details soon about this wonderful new addition to our BC History of Nursing resources. This museum not only adds to the preservation of Riverview Hospital's history of mental health care in our province, but also highlights the care offered by nursing and other staff over many decades.

* * *

Anna Tremere loaned the historical uniform that has been on display in the foyer at RNABC for the past three months. The pale blue uniform dress is floor-length, with long sleeves, a high neck, and buttons from waist to neckline. A white bib and a floor-length white apron cover the dress, which is set off by a white mobcap with small frill.

This historical uniform was made by Anna and replicates those worn in the mid-1800s and early 1900s at the first "Provincial Asylum" renamed the "Hospital for the Insane" in Victoria. The uniform was also worn at the "Public Hospital for the Insane" in New Westminster and at the "Provincial Mental Hospital" at Essondale, later Riverview.

We look forward to a visit, possibly in the fall, by the BCHN Group to Riverview Hospital to see more of this fascinating collection.

Nurses Caps from Every Province in Canada

A news item from The Vancouver Sun (CP) on January 27, 2001 reports that 60 nurses caps from across Canada will be a featured display at the Museum of Civilization in Hull, Quebec from February 13 until at least October 2001.

Gloria Kay of Conestogo, Ontario has collected 167 nurses caps from across Canada, dating from 1895 to 1985, to create what has been called the "best collection of its kind", according to the museum's Ontario historian, Tina Bates.

Bates comments that "you might think you know what a nurse's cap looks like, but actually there is quite a variety. Even among the typical wing caps, there are subtle differences in the way they are pinned together or buttoned together."

Bates goes on to describe one cap in particular dating from 1895 as a "pleated oval that would sit on the back of the head...made from a very fine linen gauze...has a gathered band around the outside with tiny black polka dots." Its origins are not provided but the cap sounds eye-catching and appealing.



The museum is also reported to have "taken over a collection of 1,000 objects from the Canadian Nurses Association and is planning an exhibition on the history of nursing in Canada."

It is to be hoped that the plans to take a display from the CNA collection across Canada actually do transpire to allow us all to share in viewing this wonderful collection.

The Museum of Civilization intends to feature selected caps on its web site in May, 2001 at <http://www.civilization.ca/cmcc/cmcceng/welcmeng.html>

Glennis Zilm has a collection of all the History of Nursing Newsletters – except for Volume 8, Number 2, Winter of 1998/1999. If anyone has a copy and does not want it, she would appreciate having it. You can mail it to her at #306 – 1521 Blackwood Street, White Rock, BC. V4B 3V6. Many thanks.

News About Members

Dr. Shirley Stinson, our long-time member in Edmonton, was honored November 9, 2000, in Ottawa by the Canadian Association of University Schools of Nursing (CAUSN). She was presented with the prestigious Ethel Johns Award, CAUSN's highest honor and presented annually since 1988 "in recognition of distinguished service to nursing education in Canada." In the presentation, President Katharyn May stressed Shirley's "passion for excellence, commitment to creating a better health care system, and zeal for promoting excellence in nursing practice" as well as her energy focused on education, research, and political action. The award noted that, even in retirement, Shirley continues to be "an outstanding disseminator of research findings and scholarly information." Congratulations, Shirley.

Dr. Verna Splane, one of our Group's Honorary Life Members, was honored last June by the Canadian Nurses Association with the presentation of the Jeanne Mance Award. This award, the highest given by CNA, goes only to Canadian nurses who have made outstanding contributions to nursing and health care nationally and internationally. Belated congratulations to Verna – who also is recovering from hip surgery over the Christmas holidays. Get well soon!

Birthday wishes to long-time member **Muriel Down**, who celebrated her 75th birthday on the last day of 2000. Many happy returns.

A display on Ethel Johns – first director of the University of B.C. School of Nursing (1919-1925), an international consultant for the Rockefeller Foundation (1925-1933), editor of *The Canadian Nurse* (1933-1944), and author (1945-1968) – was put up in the display case at the UBC School of Nursing by members **Ethel Warbinek** and **Glennis Zilm**. The two have been doing some research to gain more information on Johns' medals, which are part of the Woodward Biomedical Library Special Collection. Photographs of the medals are in this display. The medals were only briefly described in the wonderful biography of Johns by **Margaret Street** (who was, until her death, our first honorary member).

Glennis Zilm, Ethel Warbinek, and Esther Paulson presented a paper at the Ethel Johns Research Conference, sponsored by the Xi Eta Chapter of Sigma Theta Tau at St. Paul's Hospital in Vancouver on February 3. The paper, titled *Portrait of a Leader: Laura Holland 1883-1956*, described their research into the life and work of the first "nurse consultant / advisor" to the B.C. government. Several other members of the B.C. History of Nursing Group were at the conference, which had 150 registrants from all parts of the province. Among our members attending were **Sheila Zerr, Lois Blais, and Sally Thorne**. **Lois Blais** set up the History of Nursing Group's display on the life of Ethel Johns, for whom this research conference is named.

BOOK REVIEWS

The Challenge of Caring: A History of Women and Health Care in British Columbia

Debra J. Brown

Victoria: Ministry of Health and Ministry Responsible for Seniors
and The Women's Health Bureau, 2000, 109 pp. ISBN 0-7726-4331-8

Reviewed by Beverly D. Leipert RN, MSN, PhD(c)

Associate Professor, Nursing Program
University of Northern British Columbia
Prince George, BC, Canada V2N 4Z9

The history of women and health care in British Columbia is essentially an untold story. However, this new book by Debra Brown, a sociology student at the University of Victoria, offers us a glimpse into the history and future of women and health care in British Columbia. *The Challenge of Caring: A History of Women and Health Care in British Columbia* outlines the challenges encountered by women either entering health care professions or being treated by health care professionals, starting in the early days of settlement in the province. Beginning in the mid 1800s and proceeding to the end of the last decade, the history of women and health care in BC is the history of lay women, women in politics and other social movements, and women in the professions such as nursing and medicine. It is also the history of technology and service provision, and of changing attitudes of and towards women and their roles in society.

The Challenge of Caring illustrates and celebrates the vital, and often downplayed, role women have played and continue to play in the development, delivery, and advancement of health care in BC. The intelligence, spirit, determination, and fortitude of women are well chronicled throughout the book's several chapters. Pictures throughout the text and a bibliography and notes at the end of the book help the reader appreciate details about women's past and provide references for the future.

Presented historically, the book begins in the mid 1800s and proceeds to the present time. The first women in health care, aboriginal women's health care, women during the gold

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rush, and women's health care during the war years all figure prominently. Highlights of each decade of the twentieth century are chronicled in separate chapters, with intervening chapters providing interludes and focus on a particular women's health care issue. For example, one chapter recounts the grim reality of helplessness and loss experienced by a family who immigrated to BC in the early years of the twentieth century. Their struggle to survive in a new country with few resources makes for touching reading and illustrates in poignant fashion the strength and courage of early pioneer women in a new land. Other chapters include brief biographies of women pioneers in health care, politics, and other related women's health ventures.

Throughout the book, the story of nurses is frequently revealed. As the chapter *The Fight Begins for Legitimacy of "Women's Work" in Health Care* reveals, this story can often be characterized as moving one step forward and two steps back. Nevertheless, in looking back, as we are invited to do in this book, it can be seen that nursing education, nursing service in hospitals, public health nursing, and the nursing profession have developed and advanced in BC during the past century and a half. Indeed, *The Challenge of Caring* reveals that although women were forced to jump through incredible hoops to get anywhere in health care, with determination and belief in themselves, they were also able to go where no woman had gone before.

Debra Brown's book makes for easy, enjoyable, and enlightening reading. Although brief, it is an important beginning in the recapturing and study of BC women's health care history. Subsequent elaborations of the book might more substantially highlight leaders in nursing, in addition to hospitals and physicians, as shapers of tomorrow's care and in envisioning the future. Further research and writing can build on *The Challenge of Caring* by elucidating other aspects of the history of BC women and health care, such as northern women's health, the health care of women from diverse cultural groups in addition to Aboriginal women, and lay women's health care practices and experiences. The history articulated in *The Challenge of Caring* is informative and inspirational, and encourages women to believe in themselves and follow their dreams. If we have come this far since the mid 1800s, think of how far we can go in the next 150 years!

The Challenge of Caring: A History of Women and Health Care in British Columbia is available free of charge from the Women's Health Bureau of the Ministry of Health. Contact Donna at 1-800-465-4911.

American Nursing: A Biographical Dictionary Volume 3, edited by Vern L Bullough and Lilli Sentz, (2000), New York: Springer Publishing Co. (307 pages, illustrated). Available from RNABC Library.

This is the third and final volume in a series of books written to honour the contributions of Canadian and American nurses. It contains the biographies of 132 nurses and documents the changing attitudes toward professional women during the last part of the 20th century. Two men are included, recognizing their contributions. This volume includes those born in 1925 or before, or who are deceased.

Twenty Canadian nurses are included: Edna Auger, Mary Birtles, Lyle Creelman, Ethel Cryderman, Kathleen Ellis, Grace Fairley, Mabel Gray, Jean Gunn, Gertrude Hall, Bena Henderson, Mabel Hersey, Margaret Kerr, Sister Lefebvre, Marion Lindeburgh, Mary Ard MacKenzie, Helen McArthur, Glenna Rowsell, Flora Shaw, Ruby Simpson and Jean Wilson.

The biographies are well written and the addition of publication lists, honours and bibliographies add to this scholarly work. B C History of Nursing member, Glennis Zilm, wrote biographies for Lyle Creelman and Mary Ard MacKenzie.

In case you were wondering about Ethel Johns, she was included in Volume 2. However, one questions the exclusion of some well known Canadian nurses such as Helen Mussallem and Verna Splane. Perhaps it is time to write a biographical dictionary of Canadian Nurses?

Ethel Warbinek



Kolata, Gina. (1999). *Flu: The Story of the Great Influenza Pandemic of 1918 and the Search for the Virus that Caused It*. New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux (330 pages, illustrated)

An estimated forty million people died in 1918 from the Spanish flu. Some estimate the numbers may have been as high as 100 million. Gina Kolata, a reporter for The New York Times, delves into the frightening and fascinating story of this epidemic. As Kolata states: "It was a plague so deadly that if a similar virus were to strike today, it would kill more people in a single year than heart disease, cancers, strokes, chronic pulmonary disease, AIDS, and Alzheimer's disease combined." It struck an unusual group - young healthy adults.

None knows for sure where it originated. What is known is that it began as an ordinary flu and then it changed. Medical experts speak of two waves of the flu. The first wave appeared in the spring of 1918 and affected residents of San Sebastian, Spain. Although many people worldwide were stricken, including soldiers, the name "Spanish Flu" was coined, much to Spain's consternation. The flu lasted for about three days and was soon forgotten as World War I was the focus of attention.

A few months later, the flu roared back with a vengeance. But this was not an ordinary three-day flu, this was a killer. Although 20 percent of victims had a mild form and recovered, the rest had one of two terrifying illnesses. Some quickly became deathly ill and died within days, and sometimes hours of pulmonary edema. Others had flu-like symptoms which developed into pneumonia that either killed them or left them debilitated. Visiting nurses often walked into scenes resembling those of the plague years of the fourteenth century. The fortunate ones were those young people who had contracted the flu in the spring as it is believed they had immunity. There is also a hypothesis that older adults had been exposed to a similar virus some years previously, and were immune.

In 1918, scientists had no idea of how to isolate an influenza virus. No one had even seen a virus as the electron microscope had not been invented and DNA and RNA, the genetic material of viruses had not been discovered. Today, the best way to combat an influenza epidemic is with vaccines. Unfortunately, the last victims of the Spanish flu died in 1918, taking the virus with them.

The last half of the book explores in detail the search for the virus particularly the race between medical researcher Dr. Jeffery Taubenberger and Dr. Kirsty Duncan, a geologist. It reads with all the drama and intrigue of a detective story.

Ethel Warbinek

Carter, Doris V. (1911--). *Never Leave Your Head Uncovered: A Canadian Nursing Sister in World War II*. Potlatch Publications Limited, Waterdown, Ontario, 1999.

This book is a short (150-page) but very interesting autobiography of Nursing Sister Lieutenant Doris V. Carter who served with the Royal Canadian Army Medical Corps from 1940-1945. Carter's duties took her to numerous military hospitals in England, and later to Algeria, Sicily, Italy, and Belgium. She was in the first non-combat convoy to enter Rome after its fall.

Doris Carter was born in Liverpool, England and came to Canada with her family at 6 months of age. Her early schooling took place in Woodstock, New Brunswick. She attended the Provincial Normal School in Fredericton prior to entering the Royal Victoria Hospital in Montreal for nurse's training, entering in 1932 and graduating 3 years later.

In its initial stages the book consisted largely of material taken from Carter's diaries, but later was expanded to include a broader historical context and many details from her memories of past events. The book is divided into 10 parts, each appropriately captioned and illustrated with charming black and white photos of the author, nursing and medical colleagues, and patients.

Carter found many ways to "bend the rules" that were an entrenched part of military and nursing life and she writes about this candidly and with humor. At the time of her discharge from the Army in 1945 she had the distinction of having the longest service overseas of any veteran who had, at that time, applied for discharge.

As the Second World War recedes farther into the past, this book "stirs memories of those who were there; it certainly enlightens those of us who were not" (Douglas, p iii). And the origin of the intriguing admonition: "Never leave your head uncovered" which initially made me want to read the book, is left for future readers to discover!

Beth Fitzpatrick



**From Silence to Voice:
What Nurses Know and Must Communicate to the Public
By Bernice Buresh & Suzanne Gordon**

Everyone is raving about this book as the definitive guide for nurses' voice. The authors have focused in on silence, traditionally attributed to the nursing profession. The subject is covered well by the authors, as they have interviewed many nurses. The authors write as if they are learning as well, as they gain information about nursing.

The authors are not nurses, but health care journalists. A report about nursing is given; as well, several stories are told by nurses and the journalists handle their data well. It is as if the book is written through nurses' eyes with the goal of inspiring and persuading the public to come on side with nurses. It is a powerful account of nurses' work and it is written in a way that challenges nurses to speak out with confidence to the public through the media.

Accounts explain why nurses' knowledge and contributions are left out of health care coverage, as well as strategies for nurses to change this pattern - from a practical guide, with suggestions for timing and handling of press and media in order to gain exposure for nursing, to a detailed script for nursing to use when speaking in public.

The main focus is on nurses' work and as a nurse, it amazes one to realize the mammoth amount of intricate work we do. It is a good read and the naming of specific problems and issues in nursing is transforming.

Lois Blais

UPDATE ON DUMPSTER DIVER FIND

The BC History of Nursing Group has acquired the material on Nurse Madeline Harrower (1889-1961). In the Fall 2000 Newsletter, possibly you remember the account of material found in the garbage by a Dumpster Diver. Well, we have now procured this material and **Lois Blais** plans to do some preliminary work to research Nurse Harrower and her nursing experiences during the Boer War.

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 nurses and 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 2001 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 payable to "History of Nursing Group" and send to: **Lois Blais**, Treasurer, 4074 West 16th Avenue, Vancouver, BC. V6R 3E1.

THE HISTORY GROUP'S NEWSLETTER

The History of Nursing News is published irregularly four times a year by the History of Nursing Professional Practice Group of the Registered Nurses Association of British Columbia. Unsolicited material is welcome, but the Editor reserves the right to shorten, reject, or edit materials in consultation with the author(s). APA style is preferred.

BCHN Web Site

<http://www.over.to/nurshist.can> (currently under revision)