# History of Nursing News

June 2002

? Vol. 13, No 1



## **ABOUT RETIRING**

WITH 2001 YEAR OF THE VOLUNTEER JUST PAST, HERE ARE ALTERNATIVE STRATEGIES TO CONSIDER FOR CONTINUING A NURSING ROLE INTO RETIREMENT.

### By Lois Blais



After 40 years of nursing — most of which was practised in Western Canada — as a staff nurse, head nurse and patient care leader, I retired. Before I left my patient care leader position at St. Paul's Hospital, Providence Health Care, in Vancouver, I met with senior administrators to offer my free services as a volunteer and help support staff in any way that might be feasible. I have been volunteering since then for about two and a half years.

About every two weeks for two to three hours, I meet with staff to plan, organize and facilitate discussions of case studies on ethics. I also coordinate the submissions and editing of articles for the Ethics Network newsletter, STEPS. As a volunteer for the Ethics Network at Providence Health Care, I share my nursing experiences, life adventures and educational

background. I meet weekly at a noon-hour session called "Let your Spirit Soar," a program funded by the Sisters of Providence Education Enhancement Fund.

#### WHY VOLUNTEER?

Some of my nursing colleagues have asked me why I would volunteer at the hospital and in nursing when I worked in this field for so long. "Why not something else?" they asked. I choose to volunteer at the hospital where I previously worked because I believe I have something to offer. Volunteering is an extension of my nursing. It has brought back the core intention of what I cherish about being a nurse. Being retired doesn't make me stop being a nurse. My volunteer support for the hospital staff is a payback for the privileges I have had during my nursing career. Meeting with health care providers during seminars and discussing case studies of ethical dilemmas in practice is a strategy to maintain the foundation of caring, a core value basic to nursing and the health care system. The health care system is not going to be fixed through money alone. It requires human effort and relationships, a building of novel ways to approach old problems and fresh starts to our interactions.

I am a member of the British Columbia (BC) History of Nursing Group, where I am presently working on historical research of a nurse during the Boer War. My computer is my hobby. I go to the Philosopher's Café, an initiative started by Simon Fraser University where community dialogue is promoted. I write letters to express my views to politicians and leaders in health care.

In the past two and a half years, I have attended conferences and meetings, internationally, nationally and locally, where I presented my work relating to moral agency and to nursing during the Boer War. I am also a public speaker and working on my Advance Toastmasters Certificate.

#### **ENJOYING LIFE**

Some people ask me if I have a life. Yes, I do. I write. I fly with my husband in our small plane to remote areas in BC for our personal travel enjoyment. We camp, fish and enjoy nature. And by the way, I can dance. I have earned a reputation over the years for tap, or step-dancing. I used to carry around a piece of plywood, occasionally, just for the fun of it. Some years ago, a few of my nursing colleagues bought me a pair of tap shoes, so at my retirement party from St. Paul's, I decided to revive my skill and do a dance for the staff.

Recently, I attended an ethics seminar, where part of the presentation included a discussion about strategies to improve and support health care providers. I told my story about volunteering and the importance of supporting the people who care for the patients. Whether it is as a staff nurse, housekeeper, administrator or maintenance worker, we all need to figure out how we can help. If it is one hour a month, one hour a year or 15 hours a week, it all helps. Best of all, it feels great to put yourself out for another person. It is the stuff of responsibility and consciousness. In the next wave of nurses who are going to retire, there will be many and they too might think about volunteering in a hospital environment. So, you might ask, "What happens to old nurses when they retire?" For me, my life's work is to figure out what I can do to support the people in this world by applying my learning and knowledge. That is why I became a nurse, and that is why I volunteer.

Acknowledgment: The author thanks Dr. Paddy Rodney for suggesting this article, and for encouragement, inspiration and teachings over many years.

Lois Blais, RN, BA, MSN, a 1959 graduate of Toronto's St. Michael's Hospital, is retired. She is an active member of the British Columbia History of Nursing Professional Practice Group and received the Award of Honour in 1994 from the Registered Nurses Association of British Columbia.

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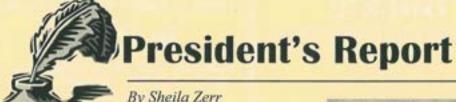
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### **HoN Editorial Board**

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The HoN Newsletter is published four times a year. Submissions for the next newsletter are welcome. Please submit articles to Lois Blais by September 15, 2002. Executive Meetings are held at the RNABC the first Thursday of every month at 4 p.m. All Members are welcome.



This message salutes our archival program and collection and the hard working archival committee responsible for this achievement. It also pays tribute to those who place precious archival artifacts in our keeping.

Dr. Ian M. Alexander of Victoria contacted us regarding his mother's artifacts. His mother, Delphine Rose Alexander (nee Fletcher) was born in Kaslo in 1896. Her schooling began in Kaslo and Marysville B.C. and continued later at a Catholic Girls School in Pincher Creek Alberta. In 1913, she entered the Kootenay Lake General Hospital School of Nursing in Nelson B.C. and graduated in 1916.

Dr. Alexander donated his mother's graduation pin to our archival collection. Included was her 1920 certificate of registration. The certificate was among the first issued in B.C. following the passing of the Registered Nurses Act of 1918, established to protect both the public and the trained nurses.

Delphine Fletcher joined the Canadian Army Corps in Victoria B.C. on May 16, 1917 She served a short time in B.C. before being sent overseas. She served in England and France and was discharged July 18, 1919. The collection we have received includes her war medals, her statement of service documents and several photos taken during her service career.



Delphine Alexnader's War Medals

After discharge, Delphine returned to B.C. to take a surgery course at the Vancouver General Hospital. She worked in B.C. for a few months then moved to Oregon and later to Los Angeles, U. S.A. She nursed for several years in Los Angeles. During this time she married S.J. Alexander, a soldier she nursed in a field hospital in France in 1918 when he served with the Canadian Army.

In 1926, they moved back to B.C. and settled in Kimberly. Delphine did not return to nursing as her time was devoted to caring for her family.

The receipt of this important collection is not only an honor to Delphine Alexander's outstanding career but it is a salute to the archival committee's work in establishing the facilities and documentation to receive this historical collection. Delpine Alexander's record and artifacts will be available to nurses and researchers wishing to examine her contribution to nursing for years to come.

### Silver Buckle

### ANOTHER INTERESTING STORY!

By Maggie Nixon

HoN member, Maggie Nixon shares the following story about her silver buckle.

As a nurse, who also qualified in the UK, I too have a story about my buckle. My mother had decided that she would give me a buckle when I passed my State Registration Exams. (Success in these exams meant that one was then a staff nurse, and as such was referred to by nurses, doctors and sisters as "staff".)

St. Bartholomew's Hospital actually had their own silver buckle, complete with hospital badge on it. Mum wanted to find me something different. I am not sure how much time she spent scouring the antique shops in Cardiff for one. However, my god-mother related that when they went on holiday together; for the two weeks, my mother did nothing but browse in the antique stores. (This claim may be exaggerated, as they were prone to go clothes shopping together).

The search was successful and my mother found a beautiful silver buckle. Not content with this, she proceeded to find out its age. Because it does not have a silver hallmark, the jeweler believed that it was created in the pre-Victorian era.

I have now taken my buckle off its original petersham band and have it on a 2- inch wide elastic belt. I wear it as my belt when I am out in the nursing practice area.



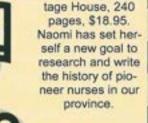
### In Print

Blais, Lois. (2002). About Retiring, Canadian Nurse. 98(4): 6. (See page 1 for the complete text)

Dewar, Anne, Esson, Lynne & Entwistle, Cheryl. (2002). Putting Experience to the test. Canadian Nurse. 98(5): 28-31.

HoN member Naomi Miller has served as a volunteer at Fort Steele Heritage Town (near Cranbrook) since 1987. She enthusiastically researched the history of that pioneer community and put her findings into a book. Fort Steele: Gold Rush to Boom

book. Fort Steele: Gold Rush to Boom Town came off the press in late May. Heri-



Zilm, Glennis, & Entwistle, Cheryl, (2002). The SMART WAY: An Introduction to Writ-

ing for Nurses. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Toronto: W.B. Saunders (Elsevier Science Canada). It is the only book on writing skills written specifically for nurses. For more information visit the attractive and informative web site at www.elsevier.ca/zilm.



# Random Memories

HoN member, Naomi Miller, sent the following article to us written by Bernadene Leonard whose St. Paul's School of Nursing class is celebrating its 55th anniversary this year.



It hardly seems possible that 50 young ladies from various towns and cities met for the first time on January 10, 1944. Over the last 58 years our friendships have grown beyond belief. We have had many reunions at Harrison Hot Springs, Parksville, The Okanagan Resort, Whistler and Sun Peaks. Somehow the anticipation of this year's reunion brought back more memories than previous reunions.

Most of us were strangers on that first day of training. I was lucky because my school friend Paulie accompanied me. We had gone from Grade One to Grade 12 together, setting the ground for the trials of three years of nursing school. Three years where you alternated between the desire to guit and the fear of being thrown out!

Paulie and I lived in Kimberley. We were to catch the train in Cranbrook at 6 a.m. on a cold January morning. Her dad had offered to drive my parents and me the twenty miles to the train station. We did not have a phone so we weren't aware the train was late. My

mother couldn't succeed in reassuring me that all would be fine. Paulie and family would arrive, we'd get to Cranbrook in time and the train would be there, and so it was! Many tears were shed by Paulie, her parents and my parents because of our parting, my tears because of the delay!

Paulie and I were wearing our very best clothes. I, sporting my first store bought coat, a black and white herringbone, Eaton's special, tweed. My neighbours had given me a huge bow shaped blue leather purse, also a first. Why I needed a purse I'll never know as my mom had sewn my small treasure of folding money into the lining of my coat.

As the train pulled out of the station the last words we heard were "Keep your eyes on your purse", and we did.

We were traveling coach which meant we sat in the coach for the entire journey, two days and a night. Whenever one of us had to go to the toilet we would say "Keep your eyes on my purse please." I never gave a thought to my coat that held all my wealth, maybe ten or twenty dollars.

Many of the passengers were service men; some accompanied by their wives. One, a young lieutenant and his wife befriended us and said they would look after us. I doubt that they were much older than our eighteen years

My older brother Bud was stationed at the Old Vancouver Hotel on Granville Street. He met us at the old C.P.R. Station at the foot of Granville and said; "Saint Paul's is not too far from here so we'll walk." Both Paulie and Bud were at least eight inches taller than I so I tagged along dragging my suitcase. When we reached an intersection Bud would shout," Oh good the light is with us so hurry". After about ten such intersections I finally said, "Where are these lights that are with us?" My first encounter with traffic lights.

We had been given permission from Sister Columkille to arrive on Saturday January eight so were the first to arrive. On Sunday, after Mass, we decided to do a little discovery walk. On the corner of Burrard and Davie Streets we picked our marker, Cunningham's Drug Store. We knew when we got back

# Random Memories cont



"Curfew was 10 p.m. with one late night, 12 a.m. per month. The war was on, we often had dates with service men or merchant seamen." (Continued from page 5)

to it we would only be two blocks from the Nurses Residence. We found at least ten Cunningham's before we got back to 1056 Comox. Talk about greenhorns.

Monday morning we hung around the entrance to "1056" as we grew to call the Nurses residence, and watched our future class-mates enter. We were really impressed by one who arrived wearing a FUR COAT, carrying a tennis racket, golf clubs and a fish bowl with two fish swimming around. Her bicycle arrived later! The goldfish Cleo and Leo were indistinguishable and were replaced p.r.n.

Through the years friendships were established and Cleo and Leo's owner Charlotte, Bev, Paulie and I, called ourselves THE FOUR MUSKATEERS. Bev's mother had graduated from St. Paul's Hospital and served overseas during WW1. We called her Mother Martin. She nurtured us through our training. Without her encouragement I wouldn't have made it. Her home was ours on our days off.

Proble days were full of exciting expectations and fear. One wasn't supposed to fall of quit. About all I can remember of those four months was putting the gastrocnemius muscle in the stomach on an anatomy test. Miss Benedict's comment, "You have to do better than this if you want your cap," certainly woke me up. Sometimes clues such as 'gasto' can be very misleading.

We received our caps in May and were sent home on our first annual vacation. By this time we had become friendly with three other girls from the Kootenays and made our annual trips on the old Kettle Valley, two nights and a day coming home, two days and a night returning. We always traveled coach. The conductor would turn one of the seats around, put up a table enabling us to travel in comfort. At night we would sit two on one side and three on the other with our legs stretched across to the opposite seat. Lou denies it but I swear she forgot to remove her gum one night and when we awoke we were all joined together at the gastrocnemius muscles with Lou's gum.

To go into detail of our three years would require a novel so I'll limit this to a few random highlights. Because St. Paul's was a Catholic school of nursing we usually had a prep talk by the Archbishop. He always warned us to avoid any men who had a station wagon. Some of us never knew what he was implying; others more mature and daring took up the challenge.

Curfew was 10 p.m. with one late night, 12 a.m. per month. The war was on, we often had dates with service men or merchant seamen. One night I answered the phone on the third floor. A male voice asked if Kay was in, she wasn't, "well then is Jean is" 'She isn't". He then said, "My chums and I met Kay and Jean at the Catholic Seamen Club, there are three of us. Are there three girls who would like to go out?" "Just a minute," I said. Then I persuaded Paulie and Lorraine to join me. I went back to the phone and told the sailor that we would meet them at the desk in half an hour. They arrived, we intro-

(Continued on page 7)

(Continued from page 6)

duced ourselves and then the sailors who had been at sea for six months asked, "What would you like to do?" and I replied, "go for a ride on the North Van Ferry," No wonder I had fewer dates than any other student. Kay and Jean weren't impressed.

I'm sure every student nurses' residence had a door or a window that provided a safe entry to sneak in after curfew. I used to set my alarm for one or two a.m. to get up to let a classmate in. As we sneaked back to our rooms she'd whisper, " I'm so scared. What is we get caught?" My response was always, "I don't know why you are scared. You've been out having a good time and I'll get the same punishment." We never did get caught.

Few of us had any money aside from the pittance from the hospital. Often we never received a penny if we happened to break thermometers as I did when I DROPPED A TRAY. One of our favorite entertainments was to visit all of the millinery shops on Granville St. trying on hats. We always hammed it up but the salesladies took us seriously. When we tired of one shop, or realized that we should leave we would and go on from shop to shop never making a purchase.

It wasn't expensive to go to the movies at that time. One night as we were charging down Comox Street heading for the Bay theatre on Denman Street so we could get there before 6:00 p.m. when prices changed. I asked, "What does it cost before 6:00" "Five cents," someone replied. I gasped, "What does it cost after 6:00" "Ten cents" I stopped running. I was beat and declared, " for five cents I'm not running another step." We just made it before the price went up.

Student nurses learn to become cunning and devious on occasion. Such was the case when graduation approached. We were forbidden to have mixed parties and certainly not with anyone with a station wagon! Our class decided to have a graduation dance at the Commodore. The powers that be were not supposed to know, so we called the event 'Katie Kinishenko's Birthday Party.' Katie was an acquaintance of one of our classmates from pre-training days. What a ball we had. I had a blind date with a man who was hopelessly in love with one of my classmates. She ignored him and he ignored me, I wasn't too concerned because I was a lousy dancer and preferred to watch the experts. If sister Columkille ever knew, she never let on.

When graduation came we held a parent's banquet so that they could meet each other as well as their daughters' classmates. It was a great success and made graduation more meaningful for our parents.

Paulie's parents joined my parents in the ballroom of the Vancouver Hotel to anxiously await our arrival. The graduating class proudly marched down Burrard Street wearing caps, bibs, and aprons with our navy and red capes contrasting with the white uniforms. We had survived three years of study, work and fun during which many of us vacillated between wanting to quit or being afraid we'd be asked to leave.

Thirty-nine of the original probies graduated. Sad to say seven have died. Approximately twenty of us plan to attend Home-coming, following which most of us will head to the Old Dutch Inn in Qualicum for three nights of reminiscing, fun and games.



Being a nurse surely has its rewards.

# Tribute to Gill Thompson

A display of Jill Thompson's Florence Nightingale books, donated to the HoN Group, was set up in the RNABC Library in May. A photograph of Jill, copy of the Memorial Book tribute, Page of History and her Florence Nightingale doll were also on display.







## 2002 CAHN Conference

CANADIAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE HISTORY OF NURSING TORONTO, MAY 24-26, 2002

The conference this year was held at Victoria College, originally the Methodist University of the University of Toronto and was attended by Lois Blais, Sheila Zerr, Glennis Zilm and Associate members, CAROL HELMSTADTER and JUDITH YOUNG of Toronto.

#### THREE OF OUR MEMBERS PRESENTED PAPERS:

SHEILA on Begbie Hall - The Royal Jubilee Hospital School of Nursing Residence: Designation as a Heritage Site.

GLENNIS on Nursing Care at Saskatoon during the Canadian Rebellion of 1885.

CAROL'S paper was on Nightingale Nursing in the Colonies: Conflict in the Victorian Ideology of Class and Gender.

The CAHN Hannah Lecture was presented by Karen Buhler-Wilkerson on No Place like Home: The History of Nursing and Home Care in the United States.

### DO YOU FEEL GUILTY? BY ETHEL WARRINEK

Lois Blais's article published on page one hits rather close to home when considering the difficulty we experience in recruiting volunteers for our various programs. We could not function without the small group of dedicated members who spend so many hours looking after the affairs of the group. Some of our executive members have been involved since our group's inception 12 years ago – a great commitment to the preservation of nursing history in our province. Fortunately new members come along to bring new perspectives and a breath of fresh air. This year we welcome Lenore Radom and Kathy Murphy to the executive. Because no one stepped forward to run for the presidency, it was decided at the Annual meeting to try a new structure. Over the next two years, the position will be shared by 4 members, each having a 6 month term.

### PRESIDENTS 2002

Sheila Zerr May 2002 – October 2002 Ethel Warbinek November 2003 – April 2003 Beth Fitzpatrick May 2003 – October 2003 Kathy Murphy November 2003 – April 2004.

The VICE PRESIDENT position will be shared by Beth Fitzpatrick and Ethel Warbinek

#### MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE ARE:

Secretary: Inga Von Maydell

Treasurer: Lois Blais Member at Large: Joan Doree Membership chair: Glennis Zilm

Displays & Pages

of History Sheila Zerr
Memorial Books: Lynne Esson
Biographies: Janet Gormick
Oral History: Ethel Warbinek

#### **EDITORIAL BOARD**

CO-CHAIRS: Beth Fitzpatrick &

Glennis Zilm

### HIGHLIGHTS

Our 12<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting was held at the Hyatt Regency Hotel with 24 in attendance. President, Sheila Zerr reported on the many gains we have made, such as our solid financial status, growth of the archival collection, and increasing demand for historical presentations and displays. We are also facing several challenges, such as the need to fill executive and committee positions and to more vigorously pursue fund raising for the "home of our own" 2012 project.

One of our exciting ventures has been the development of our web site. The site has been completely revised and expanded by Kevin Lee, our web-master. We now have our own web address: <a href="https://www.bcnursinghistory.ca">www.bcnursinghistory.ca</a> and our e-mail address is <a href="mailto:bchn@canada.com">bchn@canada.com</a>. A Post Office Box was obtained as our official address.

We are pleased to say our membership is increasing. By the end of 2001 we had a record 118 members. A membership list will continue to be mailed out to members. One area that has mushroomed is the request for historical displays. Over the past two years, 28 displays were set up at various sites – a remarkable accomplishment. Much of the original work was done by Jill Thompson. Displays continue to be exhibited in the RNABC Board Room, foyer and library. These are an excellent way to disseminate BC Nursing History and reach a variety of audiences. Try and visit them.

### **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Newsletter, Spring 2002.

### UPDATE ON THE CANADIAN NURSING HISTORICAL COLLECTION (CNHC)

Thanks to the ongoing efforts of Janet Carter and the Canadian Nurses Foundation (CNF), the Historical Foundation awarded \$10,000.00 to support some of the work needed to be completed during the transition of the CNHC to the National Archives, Museum of Civilization, and the War Museum.

The nursing history artifacts in the Museum of Civilization represent 220 schools of nursing across Canada. In order to bring depth and life to the collection, Tina Bates would like a mini-history of each school. For more information on the list of schools, CONTACT DIANA MANSELL - #19, 1420 9™ AVE.S.E. CALGARY, AB T2G 0T5 Or e-mail her at:

djmansel@ucalgary.ca

### UPCOMING CONFERENCES & EVENTS:

AMERICAN ASSO-CIATION FOR HIS-TORY OF NURS-ING, INC AND THE TWENTIETH ANNUAL HISTORY OF NURSING CONFERENCE - MILWAUKEE, WIS-CONSIN, SEPTEMBER 19 - 21, 2003

The American Association for the History of Nursing and the School of Nursing, University of Wisconsin in conjunction with the Canadian Association for the History of Nursing (CAHN) are co-sponsoring this conference. ABSTRACTS ARE TO BE SUBMITTED BY JANUARY 15, 2003.

Information included in the CAHN

CANADIAN NURSES ASSOCIATION ANNUAL MEETING BIENNIAL • JUNE 23-26, 2002 TORONTO, ONTARIO.

Conference title: DIVERSITY Vision, Excellence & Commitment to Achieving Primary Health Care & a Quality Professional Practice Environment.

### WER SITES:

We have a web site
and are really excited
about it. Do visit it at:
www.bcnursinghistory.ca.
You can also email us a
bchn@canada.com

Sigma Theta Tau International Xi Eta chapter's web site has moved to the UBC School of Nursing server and the a d d r e s s i s: www.XiEta.nursing.ubc.ca. This site contains all kinds of excellent information.

### WE ARE A BUSY BUNCH!

Congratulation to HoN members KAREN ABBOTT and LYNNE ESSON who received the prestigious RNABC Award of Excellence in Nursing Education at the awards ceremony in Nursing on April 15, 2002.



Lynne Esson congratulated by HoN on her award

Karen was in Nepal recently working on a collaborative project between a School of Nursing there and the University College of the Cariboo (UCC). Karen and SHARON SIMPSON are making great progress on their work on a history of UCC, which should be ready next summer.

The faculty at UCC also includes members Susan Duncan and Karen Irving. Karen is taking on a number of biographical projects related to early nurses in her family, some of whom were pioneer nurses in remote areas. We will look forward to hearing more.

Members LEONA STEFIUK and HOWARD SEARLE are running for RNABC president elect position on the RNABC Board. More in the next newsletter.

Lois Buais presented The Steve Cowley Memorial Lecture in Hamilton in May 2002. In her talk, "Compass for the Heart" she wove her reflections on the art of living and being through the use of stories, metaphors and life experiences.

# RNABC Memorial Book 2002

We either initiated or assisted with the development of six nominations for the RNABC Memorial Book. We are pleased to report that all six were accepted by the RNABC Awards Committee and were honoured at the Awards Ceremony.

Gwen (Jones) Kavanagh Dorothy ( Byers) Logan Ruth (Littlejohn) McIlrath Jill Thompson

Elsie (McLeod) Ransom Mary Ann Tretheway

Work is starting on preparing for next year's nominations. If you know of a nurse who should be honoured, please contact Lynne Esson.



## A writer would like to talk to you!

R.N. WRITER OF YOUNG ADULT FICTION WOULD LIKE TO TALK TO NURSES WHO HAVE WORKED ON AN OCEAN LINER.

The book is set on a P & O Liner in 1970, but any information re: experience off ship board nursing and/or hospitals would be appreciated.

### MARY NICOL

Address: 3993 West 36th Ave., Vancouver, B.C. V6N 2S7 Phone: (604) 263-5191



# YOU ARE INVITED TO ATTEND OUR ANNUAL SUMMER MEETING

TUESDAY JULY 9, 2002

Time: 10 am - 3 pm

Place: at Glennis Zilm's

Address: #306 - 1521 Blackwood Street, White Rock

Tel: 604.535.3238

Please phone Glennis if you are planning to attend.

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