



## "THE RNABC HISTORY GROUP"

MEMBERS' NEWSLETTER

March 1991

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### ANNUAL MEETING

Annual Meeting of the RNABC History of Nursing Group

Wednesday, April 10, 1991, at 7:30 p.m.

Hyatt Regency Hotel, Vancouver

SPEAKER: DR. BEVERLY WITTER DU GAS

"History of Nursing Education in British Columbia"

Members free

Guests \$2.00

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The annual meeting of The History Group is being held in conjunction with the RNABC 1991 Convention and Annual Meeting, which runs April 7-11 at the Hyatt Regency Hotel. Our meeting date is planned so History Group members will be able to travel to Vancouver for both meetings.

The History Group meeting will be held in a room in the Hotel, but an exact location has not yet been determined. Signs will be posted on the Convention floor and in the Hotel lobby on the day.

We hope to have some sort of reception as well as the meeting, but details are not yet final.

The History Group will have a table and display near the RNABC Convention/Meeting Registration desk on the

Convention floor April 7 - 10. We will be selling raffle tickets. Once again, we will have a one-of-a-kind Doll designed by Sheila Zerr. She plans to do a Vancouver General Hospital turn-of-the-century costume. As well, we will be raffling copies of Patricia Donahue's Nursing - An Illustrated History, which has been donated to our group by publisher C.V. Mosby Co.

If you can help to staff our table and display for a few hours on any of the days, please telephone Nina Rumen at 733-7529. It's fun, for you meet members and prospective members and can exchange stories and ideas.

Note that your 1991-1992 Membership renewal is due April 1, 1991, (see insert) and that you should be paid up to attend the meeting.

Executive Meeting Notes

\* The presentation on Sairey Gamp by Guest Speaker Dr. Anne Bursewicz at the beginning of February was a great success with 24 members and 3 guests attending. Dr. Bursewicz gave an outstanding presentation, with most of us determined to go home and read Dickens' Martin Chuzzlewit with new eyes. Dr. Bursewicz's contention is that Sairey has been unfairly judged by late Victorians and that Dickens himself had not intended her to be so unjustly criticized. Sairey's abilities as a midwife were highly respected by the other characters in the book and her care far outshone that given by most physicians of the time.

\* The Executive has been busy planning for the annual meeting (see page 1). Although we try to share information from the meetings, much of the general exchange is often fascinating as well. It will be suggested at the annual meeting that executive meetings might be "open" to all members who wish to attend. One difficulty with this is finding a location for meetings that will hold a larger group; at present we meet at individual homes.

\* President Bev Du Gas is away in Fiji (Feb. 6 - Apr. 6) as a consultant for a WHO education project. V-P Helen Shore is acting in her role.

\* A Nominations Committee is seeking individuals for executive positions for the coming year. One-half of the positions will be up for election

at the annual meeting. If you are interested in having your name stand for any position, or if you know someone who would be a valuable addition to the executive, please telephone Helen Shore (731-9588).

\* Esther Paulson, a well-known nursing leader, has moved from her home in New Westminster to a Senior's Residence. In planning her move, she found many important nursing artifacts, including some interesting photographs and books, that she believed should be kept with a "nursing collection." The executive agreed to receive these items to hold until we can find or develop a permanent collection.

\* The RNABC now has 28 "Professional Practice Groups," one of which is the History Group. Our Executive is required to send representatives to regular meetings of the PPG Council as well as to regular meetings of the PPG presidents and the RNABC Board of Directors. This important interaction allows us to promote history of nursing goals with various leaders. Our president reports there is considerable interest in history of nursing.

\* Treasurer Nina Rumen visited the Florence Nightingale Museum in London during a recent visit to England and spent a few minutes describing this fascinating place. She recommends that any nurse planning a trip to London should be certain to allow at least an afternoon for a tour. As well, Nina once again visited the Nursing Window in Westminster Abbey.

MEMORIAL NAMES NEEDED

The Executive is assisting the RNABC Board to identify names of B.C. nursing leaders who died in 1990 for the "Memorial Book" kept by the Canadian Nurses Association.

If you know of anyone who should be nominated for inclusion in this prestigious memorial, please telephone Nina Rumen (733-7529).

As well, the CNA is seeking names of nursing leaders who died in the years 1908-1919. If your researches into history of nursing have identified any individual nurses who should be added for this period, please let Nina know. You may wish to keep in mind that CNA next year likely will be looking for names of individuals who died during the 1920-1929 period.

Dates of death are exceedingly hard to come by and any help you can give us in this area would be appreciated.

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200 YEARS OF FASHION

The Vancouver Museum has a display (on until beginning of September) called "200 Years of Fashion." One of the many costumes on display is a Nursing Uniform from World War I. Nina Rumen reports that this is the only occupational dress on display and is apparently shown because the uniform heralded changes from Edwardian fashions, which simply were not functional. She adds the display is well worth a visit.

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The Fourth Annual Meeting of the Canadian Association for the History of Nursing will be held in Kingston, Ontario, June 8-9, 1991. Dr. Joan Lynaugh of the University of Pennsylvania Center for the Study of Nursing History will be dinner speaker on June 8. Dr. William Dray, Professor Emeritus of Philosophy, University of Toronto, will be guest speaker on June 9. He will address "The Nature of Historical Enquiry," which is also the theme of the meeting.

Further information on CAHN and on the meeting is available from Sheila Zerr of our History Group; she is also membership chair of CAHN.

Sheila also has 10 copies of the Proceedings of the 3rd annual meeting held last June in Calgary. This 275 document contains 27 papers presented at CAHN Conferences. Copies are available for \$10. (plus \$2.50 shipping and handling - or you can phone and order and arrange to pick up the copy at our Annual Meeting in April).

The Proceedings provide an excellent insight into the amount and kind of research on history of nursing being carried out in Canada today.

### Book Reviews

Nursing History: The State of the Art, by Christopher Maggs  
(London: Croom Helm, c1985)

by Brenda Flynn, Member-at-Large, The History Group

If you want an easy-to-read, entertaining, and thought-provoking book on nursing, then I highly recommend Nursing History: The State of the Art. It is a collection of articles exploring aspects of nursing history written by a group of nine writers from England, the United States, and Australia. The articles address issues that remain all familiar to us in the nursing field. It is a good feeling to read a work that examines ideas, situations, and problems that we presently encounter within our profession.

The book left me with a desire to learn more about nurses' and women's histories. As the quote says: "If we don't learn from history, we are doomed to repeat it." I have a common bond with nurses, both past and present, from England, the U.S., Australia, and New Zealand. We are in the process now of making history -- nursing history. The book renews a sense of pride with my profession -- not bad for one book!

Ishbel and the Empire: A Biography of Lady Aberdeen, by Doris French. (Toronto: Dundurn Press, [n.d.], 346 pp., \$22.95)

by Helen Shore, Vice President, The History Group

Many of us are interested in learning about Lady Aberdeen's time in Canada as wife of the Governor-General (1893-1898) and her role in the establishment of the Victorian Order of Nurses. This book tells us about that as well as telling us about her early years, her married life and romantic adventures, and her involvement in political and social causes.

Author Doris French has been a journalist, broadcaster, and columnist in Ottawa. She has written a number of books, including biographies of Agnes MacPhail and Tommy Douglas. She has prepared a lively account of the life, loves, and travails of Lady Aberdeen. This softcover book contains many illustrations and the large, clear type makes reading a special pleasure.

It is somewhat startling to realize that Lady Aberdeen's life stretched from 1857 to 1939. Although she lived in a time when many women's activities were severely hampered and constrained, she led an incredibly vigorous and fruitful career. Her interest in politics began in childhood; her father, Sir Dudley Coutts Marjoribanks (pronounced Marchbanks) was active in politics and the family lived part of the year in the Highlands and in London whenever Parliament was in session.

Book Reviews (Cont.)

As well as founding the VON in Canada, Lady Aberdeen founded the National Council of Women and served as its president and as president of the International Council of Women.

After they left Canada, the Aberdeens served a second Vice-Regal term in Ireland (1905-1916), finally returning to England where Lady Aberdeen continued her work for both political and social reforms.

The Newsletter editor welcomes book reviews from members. Books selected for review should pertain to nursing history if at all possible, although books on historical topics generally will be accepted. Send reviews to: Glennis Zilm, Newsletter Editor, 2606 Bayview St., S. Surrey, B.C. V4A 2Z4. Phone 535-3238.

Newsletter Report

ORAL HISTORY VOLUNTEER GROUP

The Oral History Volunteer Group now functions as a Committee of the RNABC History of Nursing Group. Committee members meet every 2-3 months to share progress made in our individual history projects and to encourage fellow members to pursue oral history tapings. We plan to solicit new members at the RNABC Annual Meeting in April.

The Oral History Committee is currently planning future directions for our efforts to record B.C. nursing history. We plan to develop Guidelines to direct taping sessions both to capture the past and to record history as it is unfolding.

Current Committee activities have concentrated on helping new members learn taping skills. We demonstrate techniques by taping an historical incident experienced by one of the Committee members. Equipment is available and can be borrowed by Committee members. Printed guidelines are also available to assist with recording procedures and with labelling of tapes. Copies of these guidelines can be obtained by calling Sheila Zerr at 943-3012 (Delta, B.C.)

The Committee will determine which interviews will be added to the present holdings, which are kept in the RNABC Library. The on-going research and tapings allow members to pursue particular historical interests. We plan to report on these individual interests and projects in future editions of the Newsletter.

-- Sheila Zerr, Chairman, Oral History Committee

"JUST NOTES"

\* The Nursing Sisters' Association of Canada will hold its next biennial convention in Victoria in April 1992.

\* The Vancouver Sister's Unit has had a guest presentation by Joan McCarter of Victoria, the daughter of the architect who designed the Medical Dental Building on Georgia Street in Vancouver. When the 15-storey building was erected in 1928, it was only the third skyscraper in the city. It was demolished in 1989.

The building was decorated at the 10th storey with three 12-foot terra cotta nursing figures on its three corners. The figures were a tribute to nursing sisters who served in World War I. Ms McCarter has the original model for the figures and displayed it for the Vancouver Unit.

Perhaps she would be a good speaker for a History of Nursing get-together sometime soon.

\* The History Group has made a submission to the Registered Nurses Foundation of B.C. to see if we can find a way to establish a History of Nursing Award Fund so that tax-deductible donations may be made for History of Nursing education programs, research, and projects. The RNF Board has expressed interest, but has asked for more information to be presented at its next board meeting in late April.

\* Minutes of the 1st Annual Meeting of The History Group, held last year in Vancouver in

conjunction with the RNABC Annual Meeting, will be distributed at the annual meeting in Vancouver in April. If you cannot attend, but would be interested in receiving a copy of the minutes, please write to: Secretary-Treasurer Nina Rumen, Apt. 306, 1720 - West 12th Ave., Vancouver, B.C. V6J 2E6.

\* Note that there are charges for the RNABC Convention on April 7-9, and for the Awards Banquet on the evening of April 9. Members of RNABC may attend its annual meeting April 10-11 without charge. You may visit our History of Nursing Group table and display in the Convention foyer April 7-10 without charge.

History Group members are eligible for special Hotel rates during the Convention.

Please see RNABC News for details.

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\* Volume 3 of the Shuswap Chronicles, published occasionally by the North Shuswap Historical Society, contains two articles on nursing history.

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The Newsletter is published four times a year by The RNABC History of Nursing Group. The Editor welcomes information and material for the Newsletter. Please write to:

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