



## "THE RNABC HISTORY GROUP"

### MEMBERS' NEWSLETTER

June 1991

#### FIRST YEAR "SUCCESSFUL," ANNUAL MEETING TOLD

The History Group's first year was a "highly successful" and "busy" one, according to the reports presented at the Group's 2nd Annual Meeting on April 10, 1991. The meeting, held in conjunction with the annual meeting of the Registered Nurses Association of B.C., brought together 19 members, four guests, and RNABC Information Officer John Cox.

Among first year achievements mentioned in the report by President Beverly Du Gas were:

- \* approval of the Constitution and Bylaws by the RNABC Board of Directors
- \* receipt of a \$400 initial grant from RNABC
- \* two meetings of the general membership (visit to the Archives of St. Paul's Hospital in Vancouver and the presentation by Dr. Ann Bursevicz on "Sairey Gamp")
- \* five meetings of the Executive Committee
- \* consultations with the Registered Nurses Foundation on charitable donations and the possibility of establishment of a History of Nursing Award

Treasurer Nina Runen reported a year-end bank balance of approximately \$1,250, which leaves the Group in a healthy position for its second year.

Membership Co-ordinator Glennis Iilm reported the group had exceeded its original goal of 50 members for its first year with a total of 65 members, including 50 full members, 10 associate members, 4 student

members, and 1 honorary member. The renewal process for the 1991-1992 year has started, but by the annual meeting only 25 members had renewed, and she expressed concern that the second year should not become a "humbling experience" if membership should drop.

Sheila Terr, chair of the Oral History Committee, moved the motion that the History Group would take over sponsorship of this committee, which had been without funding since dissolution of the RNABC's History of Nursing Advisory Committee. This motion passed unanimously. Sheila described the current projects of the Oral History Group, which has now arranged with the RNABC Library to house the collection of Oral History tapes.

Other business of the meeting is reported in separate stories in this newsletter.

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#### MARK CALENDARS FOR FALL GET-TOGETHER

Speaker: Archivist Laura Coles on History of Nursing Archival Collections in B.C.

Date: Saturday, September 28, 1991 at 2:00 pm

Place: Faculty Room, UBC School of Nursing,  
University of British Columbia

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ARCHIVAL SURVEY COMPLETED

Laura Coles, a qualified archivist who has worked as a consultant with RNABC previously, has completed her "Survey of Nursing History Materials in B.C." and submitted her report to the Board of the Registered Nurses Association of B.C. Copies of her report and the survey have also been submitted to the History of Nursing Professional Practice Group for consideration and recommendations.

Laura Coles was appointed as a Nursing History Coordinator on a part-time basis in early 1990. Her report to the Board contained several recommendations for The History Group; these are under consideration by the Executive Committee.

A major portion of her tasks was to prepare a survey nursing history materials in B.C. contained in existing archives, museums, and libraries. This report, when published, likely will be distributed through the History Group. The Guide should assist researchers interested in nursing history or health issues as well as donors looking for repositories for materials. Watch the Newsletter for further information on this useful document.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS -- 2ND NOTICE

Membership renewal forms for those 1990-1991 members who have not yet renewed for the membership year April 1, 1991 to March 31, 1992 are enclosed with this copy of the Newsletter. If you do not renew your membership this will be the last copy of the Newsletter you will receive.



WINNERS

DOLL

RAFFLE

N. Farrington, a member of Canadian Nurses Association staff attending the RNABC annual meeting, was winner of the History Group's annual fund-raising draw. First prize was a Portrait Doll, showing a turn-of-the-century student uniform of the Vancouver General Hospital, as designed and dressed by Sheila Terr.

Second prize, a copy of Nursing - The Finest Art: An Illustrated History of Nursing by M. Patricia Donahue, donated by the C.V. Mosby publishers, was won by Marie Hewitt, a home care nurse from Mission.

The raffle, which was run during the RNABC's annual meeting, raised \$278. The money is earmarked for the Group's Award Fund, which will be given once negotiations with the Registered Nurses Foundation are completed.

Door prize at the History Group's meeting, another copy of the Donahue book, was won by Marianne McRobert of Richmond, a new member of our Group.

NEWS

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EXECUTIVE CHANGES

Elections were held during the annual meeting for three executive positions. The Constitution and Bylaws approved at the 1990 inaugural meeting called for annual changes in one-half of the six elected positions, with the 1990-1991 Executive Committee to recommend the terms of office for the first slate of officers. Accordingly, the Executive Committee recommended that elections at the April meeting should be for the three positions of Secretary/Treasurer, Membership Co-ordinator, and one Member-at-Large.

Nina Ruken was re-elected for a second term as Secretary/Treasurer and Ethel Warbinek was re-elected as Member-at-Large. Diana Ritchie was elected as Membership Co-ordinator. Glennis Eilm, who had held the position of Membership Co-ordinator will remain on the Executive Committee as Newsletter Editor, an appointed position.

The positions of President, Vice-President, and (2nd) Member-at-Large will be open for election at the 1992 annual meeting.

1991-1992 OFFICERS

- President:  
Bev Du Gas, Surrey (536-8662)
- Vice-President:  
Helen Shore, Vancouver (731-9588)
- Secretary/Treasurer:  
Nina Ruken, Vancouver (733-7529)

- Membership Co-ordinator:  
Diana Ritchie, Vancouver (732-6248)
- Member-at-Large (to 1993):  
Ethel Warbinek, Surrey (538-5066)
- Member-at-Large (to 1992):  
Brenda Flynn, Coquitlam (557-7786)
- Oral History Committee Chair:\*  
Sheila Terr, Delta (943-3012)
- Newsletter Editor:\*  
Glennis Eilm, Surrey (535-3238)

\* Appointed

STATUES REPLACED AT CATHEDRAL SQUARE

Replicas of the statues of the World War I Nursing Sisters that graced the corners of the old Medical Dental Building in downtown Vancouver have been placed on either side of the new "Cathedral Square" building at the corner of Georgia and Burrard Streets.

When the old building was destroyed in the summer of 1989, public outcry about the loss of the statues led the new owners to incorporate the replicas into the design for the new building. The statues are now on the corners of the second floor (rather than the fifth floor as on the old building) and much more visible from the streets.

The History Group Executive plans to discuss ways to make the history of the statues much more available to the public in the coming months.

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BOOK REVIEW

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Lillian Wald: Progressive Activist, Edited by Clare Coss. Published by City University of New York. Available for \$7.95 (US) from The Tallman Company, 150 Fifth Ave., New York, NY 10011.

Reviewed by Helen Shore

This 97-page book contains a chronology of events in the life of the legendary Lillian Wald, founder of New York City's Visiting Nurse Service and the Henry Street Settlement. As well, it contains a brief biography, a one-woman play on Wald, and copies of her letters and speeches.

Lillian Wald was born in Cincinnati, Ohio, in 1867 and attended fashionable girls' schools before she entered the New York Hospital School on Nursing. Her family feared their impulsive and free-spirited daughter would not withstand the discipline of a training school; she did and completed the program in 1 1/2 years, graduating in 1891.

Rather than work as a private duty nurse, she went to a city institution for orphaned, abandoned children and those charged with criminal offenses. After a year she quit, outraged and disillusioned, and enrolled at a women's medical college. In the asylum, she had seen enough of brutal treatment of children and contemptuous treatment of nurses to propel her toward a medical degree, independence, and imagined political power. While at college, she taught weekly home nursing classes to immigrant women and these meetings caused her to cross the threshold into direct care to poor and needy families in their homes.

She quit medical school and she and a colleague, Mary Brewster, went to live in the neighborhood as nurses. In 1895, an international banker, Jacob Schiff, donated a red brick Georgian home on Henry Street, which officially established the Henry Street Settlement and Visiting Nurse Service.

Lillian Wald attracted a powerful group of great nurse pioneers to work with her. Among these were Lavinia Dock, Adelaide Nutting, Anna Goodrich, and others. Jane Addams, founder of Chicago's Hull House, was a trusted political ally.

It does one good to read this story and reflect on the lives of these women, their ideals, and their work. On one hand we may think those times have passed, but it may be only because we are not recognizing or discovering those among us who are fighting similar battles in similar arenas today.

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\* If you want to share information about a book related to history of nursing (old or new), send your notes to the Newsletter editor, Glennis Iila, 2606 Bayview Street, Surrey, B.C. V4A 2H4. Please keep it brief!

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MEMBERSHIP GROWING

Membership Co-ordinator Diana Ritchie reports that The History Group has 50 members for the 1991-92 year as of June 1. A list of members is being prepared and will be mailed to members only with the next issue of the Newsletter.

If you have not renewed, please do so now so that your name will be included in the list. If you know of someone who may be interested in joining the Group, please let Diana Ritchie know. We hope to at least reach 65 members by September 1.

CLASSIFIED

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\* The Oral History Committee would appreciate receiving the information about nurses who should be interviewed for the RNABC's Oral History Collection. Please be prepared to provide a brief resume and give reasons why the individual should be included in the collection. Nominees for inclusion may include recent nurses who have worked in recent innovative projects as well as nurses from earlier times.

Send the information to:

Sheila Yerr, Chair, Oral History Committee  
5333 Uplands Drive, Delta, B.C. V4M 2G3

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\* Interest in military nursing history in Canada has been increasing steadily. Many reasons may account for this: changing attitudes toward women's history and women in war; a heightened interest in the nursing heritage and its influence on present critical issues; possible future demands on nurses and their care. Requests for archival materials to facilitate nursing research and publications has led the Toronto Unit of the Nursing Sisters Association of Canada to question whether a permanent military nursing history resource centre would be a feasible undertaking in the future. If you would care to comment, please get in touch with:  
Dr. Margaret Allewang, Toronto Unit  
Nursing Sisters Association of Canada  
320 Willard Ave., Toronto M5G 3R2

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\* Helen Shore of the RNABC History Group is working on a historical account of the early days of the Victorian Order of Nurses in B.C.

generally and the Vancouver area in particular. She is investigating the kind of work done by the Vancouver VON nurses at the turn-of-the-century and would appreciate any information about articles, books, documents, or other materials related about this period. Get in touch with Helen Shore, 2009 West 18th Ave., Vancouver, B.C. V6J 2W7

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\* Glennis Iila is working on a history of the University of B.C. School of Nursing for its 75th Anniversary in 1994. She would appreciate seeing good quality photographs for possible inclusion in the book and/or inclusion in an archival collection of photographs for the School. Please check with her before sending photographs. Telephone: Glennis Iila (604) 535-3238 or write 2606 Bayview St., Surrey, B.C. V4A 2J4

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\* Several members have book collections related to the history of nursing and are always anxious to receive information about possible addition to their collections. History Group members who have books they would like to donate or sell should send the information to this column care of the Newsletter editor (see p.6).

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\* Members who have not received a copy of the Group's Constitution and Bylaws (passed June 1990 and distributed last year) should get in touch with Diana Ritchie, Membership Co-ordinator.

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EDITORIALS

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The History of Nursing Professional Practice Group of the Registered Nurses Association of B.C. has passed its first anniversary and is progressing successfully. For an interest group to have achieved such an excellent start is highly unusual, but the success may be related to several factors:

- \* an increasing interest among nurses in knowing and understanding our "roots"
- \* an avaking interest in historians and the public generally in nursing history
- \* dedication and hard vork by the members of the Group's Executive Committee.

Much still remains to be done, however. The present state of archival and museum collections related to nursing history is abysmal. As hospital nursing schools have closed during the last two decades, their hospital nursing collections have been eroded and some have disappeared entirely. A few fine exceptions remain, such as the Archives at St. Paul's Hospital in Vancouver and the Royal Jubilee Hospital Archives now housed at the Greater Victoria Hospital Society in Victoria. Without a School of Nursing, however, many of the Hospital Nursing Alumni groups have also disappeared -- and with them much of our nursing history.

Many of the nursing education programs today spend little time, if any, teaching nursing history and the new generation of nurses has little or no understanding of the contributions that nurses of the past have made. Names of important Canadian nursing leaders, such as Jeanne Mance, Marguerite D'Youville, Mary Agnes Snively, Nora Livingstone, and Ethel Johns, are almost unknown

and their contributions unappreciated. Names of important early B.C. nursing leaders, such as Sharley Bryce Brown, Helen Randal, Grace Fairley, and Margaret Kerr, are equally remote. Even contributions of recent leaders, such as Lyle Creelman, Evelyn Hood, and Helen Mussallen, are being forgotten.

The History Group can begin to help bring about change. Through our formal and informal networking, we can help make our organizations and associations aware of the importance of nursing history. Through our researches, we can help make nursing history available. Through our fund-raising activities, we can help finance study and research into nursing history. Through our oral history collection, we can preserve the stories and remembrances of individual nurses for future generations. The Group can be, indeed it must be, instrumental in bringing nursing history alive again. Let's make this our goal.

Glennis Iilm, June 1991

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THE HISTORY GROUP NEWSLETTER

Published irregularly four times a year by the History of Nursing Professional Practice Group of the Registered Nurses Association of B.C. Unsolicited material welcome, but the editor reserves the right to reject, shorten, or edit materials in consultation with the author(s). APA Style preferred.

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