



"THE RNABC HISTORY GROUP"

MEMBERS' NEWSLETTER

December 1991

February Get-Together

NURSING IN THE GULF WAR

Get out your 1992 calendars right now and mark Saturday, February 15, at 2:00 pm. This is the date for the History Group's next "get-together."

Treasurer Nina Rumen has lined up a speaker from Canada's Armed Forces. The speaker will be a nurse who served in the Gulf War earlier this year. She will describe the preparation for the war and her experiences in a field hospital.

Canada's Armed Forces Nursing Sisters have a long and illustrious history, of which the commitments during the Gulf War are the most recent chapter.

Also on display will be artifacts and books related to Military Nursing History from the 1886 Riel Rebellion to the present. Several members of our Group are Nursing Sisters and they are invited to bring artifacts, mementos, and photos to share during the afternoon.

The meeting will be held in the Faculty Lounge of the UBC School of Nursing (Third Floor of the UBC Hospital's Acute Care Building). Coffee will be served. Guests are welcome.

During the meeting, the executive will report on current plans for our annual meeting in April and on the annual meeting

of the Canadian Association for the History of Nursing (CAHN) in Saint John, New Brunswick, in June 1992.

The Executive has arranged for a poster display on the activities of the B.C. History Group to be presented in Saint John. We hope to show the kind of projects on which individual members of the B.C. group are currently working. To date, it is planned to show progress on the RNABC's Archives Survey and Reports, Helen Shore's project on History of the VON in B.C., Nina Rumen's project on the five public monuments to nurses in Vancouver (with photos), and Sheila Zerr's portrait dolls project.

If you have a project that you would like to have described at the CAHN meeting, please get in touch with Sheila Zerr of the Executive (943-3012) and, if possible, plan to attend the February meeting. We would particularly like to have abstracts describing the various history projects. This is an excellent way to make contact with other nursing history researchers who may have information on your area of interest that they are willing to share.

NURSING SISTERS' SCHOLARSHIP

The Nursing Sisters, Vancouver Unit, which for the last two years has been selling the Memorial Window cards, has announced that a \$4,000 scholarship will be offered in 1992 through the Canadian Nurses Foundation.

The Vancouver Unit began its note card project to raise money to restore the Canadian Memorial Church's stained glass window honoring the nursing sisters of World War I. However, donations for the project not only provided enough funds to restore the window, but also to maintain it in perpetuity.

The cards proved so popular that the Unit carried on the project for a scholarship, and the funds now have been turned over to CNF. After the \$4,000 award in 1992, any remaining monies will go into the capital fund for CNF's Agnes C. Neill Memorial Scholarship. Colonel Agnes Neill, who died in 1950, had served as Matron-in-Chief Overseas during the Second World War and her war record was a distinguished one.

A few cards are still available for sale, but once this printing is sold out, the Vancouver Unit does not plan to continue to produce the cards. If you wish a package (10 cards for \$10, plus \$1.50 handling), please telephone

Nina Rumen at 733-7529 or pick them up at the February Get-Together.

CARVED IN CHOCOLATE

The statues of the World War I Nursing Sisters that grace the three corners of the new Cathedral Place Building in downtown Vancouver now have been replicated in Belgium chocolate.

Brussell's Chocolates in Cathedral Place has developed a pure chocolate statuette of one of the statues. The 4 1/2-inch chocolate figure comes in a gift box (\$5 each) and would make a truly different gift for nurses on your Christmas list.

1992 ANNUAL MEETING

The 1992 Annual Meeting of the RNABC History of Nursing Professional Practice Group will be held

Wednesday, April 8, 1992
Time: 7:30 pm

at the Hyatt Regency Hotel
in conjunction with the
Annual Meeting of RNABC

Speaker: Sheila Zerr on
The Memorial Doll Project

More Information Next
Newsletter

* MEET A MEMBER *

KATHARINA KOVAKS OF KAMLOOPS

Until recently, the History Group's only member in the Interior was Kathy Kovacs, a 1962 graduate of Regina Grey Nuns Hospital. During a recent visit to Kamloops (to give a History of Nursing lecture to students at Cariboo College and speak on HoN to the Kamloops Chapter -- and sign up another member!), Newsletter Editor Glennis Zilm and Kathy held a History of Nursing Group meeting all on their own!

Kathy became interested in nursing history in 1986 when she became involved in gathering photographs for the RNABC's 75th Anniversary in 1987. At that time, she lived in Merritt and was president of the Nicola Valley Chapter of RNABC. She also was involved with the Merritt Museum and Archives and encouraged that Museum to become interested in nursing history.

Kathy moved to B.C. in about 1970 -- to Dawson Creek, where in 1976 she was one of the first nurses in that area to care for renal dialysis patients. She said in the interview that nursing needs to record some of the stories pertaining to such "modern" early care, especially away from the major centres.

Because both Kathy and Glennis were interested in what might be in the Kamloops Museum and Archives, we arranged our meeting there. Kathy, however, did a preliminary reconnaissance, based on Laura Coles' Survey of Nursing History Materials in B.C.

Although the Kamloops Museum's record in the Survey was one of the more complete, Kathy found much more material was available there.

Since our meeting, she has compiled a detailed list and made full notes on what is available and how it is catalogued. (As Laura Coles told our September Get-Together, the first edition of the Survey is only a beginning.) Kathy has also been in touch with the Royal Inland Hospital and initiated discussions about their artifacts and record collections.

One fact she has noted regarding nursing photographs in archival collections: they are almost all "posed" photos (graduation photos); there are almost no photographs of "nurses in action." If nursing history's photographic records are to be compiled someday, we need to begin to pay attention now to collection of "action" photographs.

Her own area of interest concerns equipment used in nursing care of newborns, especially incubators, which oft-times improvised by nurses outside metropolitan areas. She would like to start a collection of photos showing nurses working with newborns in incubators. If you have any photos that might apply, please get in touch with her. Her address is 1431 Cannel Drive, Kamloops V2E 2E5. -- Glennis Zilm

BOOK REVIEW

Watch-fires on the Mountains:
The Life and Writings of Ethel
Johns, by Margaret M. Street.
(Toronto: U. of T. Press,
1973).

Reviewed by E. Brenda Flynn

Last Spring, while browsing in a second-hand book store in Oregon, I happened across Margaret Street's excellent book Watch-fires on the Mountains. I was delighted to find a Canadian book in the U.S.A. (and even more delighted not to pay GST!). The book is an in-depth biography of Ethel Johns, a Canadian nurse who contributed greatly to development of standards of nursing in this country, but also contributed to nursing in the U.S. and Europe.

In some circles (such as our History Group), this book is well-known, but 1 1/2 years ago I had heard of neither Ethel Johns nor Margaret Street. When I first heard of the book, its title did not really catch my attention, but because of an interest in women's and nursing history I was led to purchase it. While reading it I discovered that it is well-written, has an extensive bibliography, and clearly illustrates nursing conditions during John's time. But I feel the main virtue of this work is the insight one gains into the attitudes and actions of a Victorian lady brought up with middle-class values and expectations, but

who entered nursing and who "made a difference."

I have talked to many colleagues in nursing who, like me, were and are unaware of Ethel Johns. We need to be made much more aware of our nursing culture and our Canadian heritage.

Unfortunately, this book is no longer in print. However, it can be borrowed through libraries such as the RNABC's Library or the Vancouver Public Library. If you like to read and are interested in nursing issues and women's history, this book is very worthwhile.

Editor's Note: The author of this classic bibliography is Margaret Street, who is honorary President of our History Group. Miss Street, who knew Ethel Johns, did a superb job of combining a well-research academic bibliography and an interesting, easy-to-read text. She tells me that even she does not have an "extra" copy of her book, so if anyone else is browsing in a second-hand shop and finds a copy, please let us know so that we can pass it along. I have been in touch with University of Toronto Press to ask about the possibility of Watch-fires being re-issued. The editor I spoke with will look into the idea and I will be able to report back to our group about this in the New Year. -- GZ

ORAL HISTORY COMMITTEE NEWS

Oral History Committee Chair Sheila Zerr reports that the number of oral history tapes in the RNABC's collection has grown to more than 120.

Among the new tapes available are: Interview with Muriel Down, one of the first nurses in Canada to take parachute training with the Armed Forces (Nina Rumen, interviewer); Beatrice Johnson Woods, one of the first three graduates of the University of B.C. degree program in nursing in 1923 (Sheila Zerr, interviewer); Elizabeth Pence Neil (Nina Rumen); and Evelyn Eastley Waddell (Diana Ritchie).

These tapes are available on loan through RNABC Library.

As well, tapes of the History Group's speakers now are available on loan to members:

Dr. Anne Bursewicz on "The Real Sairey Gamp" (February 1991); Dr. Beverly Du Gas on "History of Nursing Education in B.C." (Annual Meeting Address, April 1991); Laura Coles on "Nursing Archival Collections in B.C." (September 1991).

These tapes are not in the RNABC Library, but may be borrowed by HoN Group members from Sheila Zerr (943-3012).

The Oral History Committee has reviewed its priorities

for interviews and drawn up new background information forms that will be filled out and filed with the tapes. The new biographical information forms are similar to those being used by the Biography Committee for its files, which means that the Group now is beginning to establish permanent vertical files on individual nurses and their contributions. Such files could form the basis for major historical research in future years.

NEW MEMBERS

The following have joined or renewed membership in the History Group for 1991-1992:

Susan E. French (Associate)
3396 Lakeshore Road
Burlington, Ontario
L7N 1B3

M.A. (Marnie) MacLean
(Associate)
1346 West 59th Ave.
Vancouver, B.C.
V6P 1Y7

Gwen Kavanagh (Student)
160 Greenstone Drive
Kamloops, B.C. V2C 1N5

These names are not in your pink Membership List circulated in September. Please add them. The telephone number in the List for Diana Ritchie, Membership Chair, should be 732-6248.

NOTES AND ODDS & ENDS

PROGRESS ON LOGO

The development of a logo is not an easy task. The Executive Committee launched its logo contest more than a year ago. Although there were some excellent submissions, none of those submitted met all the criteria (especially the one criteria of being able to be reduced in size and still be identifiable!).

Recently, the executive approached an artist through Emily Carr College of Art to do final drawings from the submissions. The choice now is narrowed to two, which are reproduced below for your information.



FROM THE EDITOR'S MAILBAG

* Dr. Shirley Stinson of the University of Alberta, former CNA President and well-known nursing leader, keeps me abreast of new books on nursing history. Her most recent suggestion is An Introduction to the Social History of Nursing, by Robert Dingwall, Anne Marie Rafferty, and Charles Webster (London: Routledge, 1988).

* Sheila Zerr of our Group recently visited London and

toured the Florence Nightingale Museum. She reports it is a fascinating place. The editor has a couple of extra brochures on the FN Museum; if you would like to see a copy, drop me a note (with "news" please!) and I'll send you a copy.

* If you know of someone who might be interested in joining the History Group, please call Diana Ritchie, Membership Chair, at 732-6248.

* A Merry Holiday Season *
and
A Happy, Prosperous New Year.

THE HISTORY GROUP NEWSLETTER

The History Group's Newsletter is 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.

Thanks for assistance with this issue go to Nina Rumen.

Please send items of interest to share through the newsletter!

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