



HISTORY OF NURSING PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE GROUP  
***THE HISTORY OF NURSING GROUP NEWSLETTER***  
*Volume 5, Number 4, Winter 1994*

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*Coming Events*

*Mark Your Calendars*

**"IN/VISIBLE PRACTICE"**

**A Historical Perspective of Hospital-Based Nurses' In/Visible Practice**

by

**KIM MACFARLANE**

**2:00 PM Saturday, January 21, 1995**

**Nurses' Classroom, St. Vincent's Hospital**

**749 West 33rd, Vancouver**

Kim Macfarlane, a clinical nurse specialist at St. Vincent's Hospital, Vancouver, will be the guest speaker at the next Get-Together of the History of Nursing Group. Her presentation is a socio-cultural perspective on how historical texts create particular views of nursing practice, which underestimate the value and complexity of nurses' work.

The discussion will also address how nurses might more aptly research the scope and com-

plexity of nurses' practice.

The presentation, which will be in the nurses' classroom, will be preceded by an Executive meeting at 12:00 noon in the Hospital cafeteria. Members and Guests are welcome to attend that meeting as well.

For further information, call Nina Rumen (733-7429) or Brenda Flynn (939-1856) or one of the members of the Executive committee.

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Membership Renewals for 1995 (January-December) are now due.

Fees for 1995 are \$20 for Full (RNABC Registered) or Associate Members and \$5 for Students.

**\* \* PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE \* \***

As we begin a New Year, our thoughts focus on the future. In five short years, we will enter a new millenium; this is an exciting prospect. But before we get carried away with that notion, there are more pressing things to consider.

I spent an afternoon this week in the RNABC Library and was struck by the number of articles written in 1994 that referred to nursing's past. Nurses are writing about stresses they experience in the work place; this is limited not only to those working in hospitals but also to those working in the community. There seems to be an underlying search for some comfort in the past when nursing roles were more clearly defined and nurses remember having more control over decisions.

A recent issue of the *Canadian Bulletin of Medical History* was devoted entirely to nursing history (Vol. 11, No. 1, 1994). As guest editors Meryn Stuart and Kathryn McPherson state: "The collection of papers ... reflects the influences of the 'new' history in Canada and, at the same time, stands as a Canadian contribution to a field dominated by American scholarship" (p. 4). The issue is an impressive contribution to nursing history and one that should be of interest to many of our members.

I also perused a 1995 edition of *Nursing History Review*, which is the annual publication of the American Association for the History of Nursing. I noted that there were papers by some of those who presented at the 1994 conference of the Canadian Association for the History of Nursing (CAHN) Conference in Winnipeg in June.

Speaking of meetings, we are trying a different format for our annual meeting in April. Instead of meeting in late afternoon prior to the RNABC's Awards Ceremony (always a rush), we have decided to try a morning meeting. This is possible as RNABC's meeting is scheduled to begin at 11 am on April 6. More information will be provided in the next issue of the *Newsletter*.

An exciting project for us is assisting CAHN with the planning for an International History of Nursing Conference for June 1997, just prior to the meeting in Vancouver of the International Council of Nurses. A planning committee headed by Sheila Zerr has been meeting on a regular basis. Once plans are further along, we will need your assistance with this event. What a wonderful opportunity it will be for sharing our interest in and enthusiasm for nursing history.

Four executive positions will need to be filled by election at the 1995 Annual Meeting. The positions are: Secretary, Treasurer, one Director-at-Large, and Membership Coordinator. The Group also needs to appoint a new chair for the Oral History Standing Committee and a new editor for the *Newsletter*, both of whom also serve on the executive committee.

Executive committee meetings are held approximately once a month, except during the summer. Please contact me or a member of the executive if you would be interested in letting your name stand for one of these positions or if you wish to recommend someone.

-- Ethel Warbinek, President



**\* \* REPORT ON OCTOBER PRESENTATION \* \***

"One of the greatest experiences of my life and career," is the way Sara Jane Taylor summed up her nine-months' work with the International Red Cross in Armenia in 1989. Ms. Taylor, manager of the Acute Spinal Cord Injury Unit at The Vancouver Hospital, was nurse coordinator of an international Red Cross team that set up a rehabilitation centre in Yarovan to treat some of the victims of the devastating earthquake that had occurred in the area in December 1988.

The rehabilitation centre in Yarovan marked the first time the International Red Cross had used an international team for a long-term project, Ms. Taylor said. Usually, Red Cross projects are short-term immediately following a disaster. This, however, was the first time that the U.S.S.R. (as it was then) had asked for international help and the special nine-month project was established.

The earthquake was one of the most tragic disasters in modern times, she told the History of Nursing Group at its meeting Oct. 21, 1994. More than 50,000 lives were lost and 118,000 people were evacuated. The quake left more than 500,000 people homeless in the middle of winter.

Ms. Taylor showed a short video on the earthquake, then spent almost an hour describing her experiences in setting up a rehabilitation centre that helped treat the 219 victims that had suffered spinal cord injuries. A second objective of the international team, which started with 16 nurses, nutritionists, physiotherapists, and physicians, was to train the Armenians to take over the unit and continue its use. She had taken photographs throughout

her stay and had slides that illustrated her presentation.

She reported that the Armenian concept of rehabilitation for those with serious spinal cord injuries was somewhat different than that in Canada and other western countries. Patients and families initially expected the international team could achieve some sort of "miracle cures" rather than begin the long process of rehabilitation. And, as circumstances and attitudes toward spinal cord disabled individuals were much more fatalistic, the challenges were great. The "quantum change" in attitudes occurred after about three months, when patients began to understand that they could take responsibility for themselves and that they could take an active role in their communities.

At first, the Red Cross team also found their Armenian counterparts were entirely dependent. Care for those with spinal cord injuries was short-term, with no follow-up. The goal was to have a rehab centre that would become independent and self-directed. A major part of the team's work involved the special training of 20 student nurses who took six months of their two-year program working with the team in the unit.

Ms. Taylor, a member of the B.C.-Yukon region of the Canadian Red Cross is also a member of the board of directors of the Pacific Region. Her story of her work with the Red Cross team was a tale of "modern history-in-the-making." The audience of 10 History Group members felt honored to hear her story.

*-- Glennis Zilm*

**\* \* BOOK REVIEW \* \***

*Chief Nursing Officer Positions in National Ministries of Health: Focal Points for Nursing Leadership*, by Richard B. Splane and Verna Huffman Splane. San Francisco: University of California School of Nursing, 1994. (softcover, 282 pp., index; available in Canada from authors [Phone: 224-4506])

*Chief Nursing Officer Positions in National Ministries of Health* is a concise, well written, and informative read. Not only does this book provide the genesis of the Chief Nursing Officer (CNO) position, but incorporates with this movement a rich overview of modern nursing history within the context of political, societal, and cultural influences.

The authors and husband and wife team wisely use their wide variety of educational and personal experiences in the writing of this thoughtful and thoroughly researched book.

When approached to do this review, I had never heard of a CNO. While reading this book, two main thoughts kept returning to mind. First, I was angered by my lack of formal nursing "education." I am a product of two-year community college program. We were taught to be safe bedside nurses. No insight. No vision. Just training. This text gives account after account of strong intelligent women who have influenced change because of a strong social conscience despite obstacles they encountered along the way. I feel many a bedside nurse would benefit from knowing about our collective nursing history.

Second: why isn't our nursing history taught in our schools of nursing? The words of Santayana come to mind: "Those who cannot

remember the past are condemned to repeat it." The climate of today's work place is at best unpredictable and unstable. Bedside nurses must be flexible if they are to survive. I feel in studying our history would better enable us to do this. This work by Splane and Splane would be the perfect text for a first year nursing course.

In conclusion: This work elicited strong feelings and when a piece of written material evokes such a response I feel it is of value. It would be well worth the time of the nursing student, the nursing practitioner, and the nursing educator to read this text.

— E. Brenda Flynn

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Editor's Note:

The book attempts to answer the question "Do government ministries of health need a chief nursing officer?" The research is based on interviews with government and nursing leaders in approximately 60 countries around the world, including 43 countries that have CNO positions. Drawing on an historical perspective that shows the development of this position from the time of Florence Nightingale and details the kind of contributions made by CNOs in the various countries, the authors conclude that all governments should have a senior nursing position at the policy level in the ministry of health.

The book also discusses the attributes of the optimal CNO, the optimal position, and the optimal setting. The book is particularly timely considering that in December 1994 Diane Marleau, federal minister of health, eliminated this position in Canada.



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**\* \* NEWS FROM THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETINGS \* \***

The information summarizes discussions at monthly executive committee meetings in September through December 1994. For further information on any of the points, please get in touch with a member of the executive.

Planning 1995 Annual Meeting

Plans for the 1995 annual meeting are in the discussion stages. The History Group annual meetings are held in conjunction with RNABC annual meetings to help allow members from throughout the province to attend more easily. However, this year's annual RNABC meeting is considerably shorter and timing is difficult.

The Executive is investigating the possibility of a "breakfast meeting" (continental-type breakfast) from approximately 8 am to 10 am on April 6. It was decided that, because of the short time frame, the meeting would be "business only," with no speaker planned. However, special displays will be presented and prize draws and other promotions for members are planned.

The Group is also looking at ways that it could make its presence "visible" during the RNABC meeting so that our goals related to the promotion of history of nursing can be met. However, because the RNABC meeting is so tightly scheduled, this is proving difficult. Some ideas have been rejected as too costly for our budget. However, any member with ideas on how this could be accomplished should get in touch with the president.

Planning for International Meeting

The International Council of Nurses will hold its meeting in Vancouver in June 1997.

The Canadian Association for the History of Nursing (CAHN) plans to hold its meeting at the same time and to host an international conference on history of nursing. As many of the B.C. History Group's members are also members of CAHN, our Group has been asked to assist with local arrangements and program. CAHN has provided "seed money" to start the planning.

Dates for the International History of Nursing Conference are June 12-15, 1997, and the main conference will be held in the meeting rooms at St. Paul's Hospital. Nearby hotels are being approached to provide blocks of rooms at conference rates. A flyer, giving initial details, will be circulated soon to ICN member associations. A "Call for Papers" is being planned for Spring 1995.

Sheila Zerr of our Group, who is also Member-at-Large of CHAN, is chair of the arrangements committee. Several members of the executive have volunteered to serve on her committee as well. Other HoN Group members who would like to work on the committee should get in touch with Sheila Zerr.

Arrangements for the meeting have to be coordinated with ICN, the Canadian Nurses Association (CNA), and the RNABC as well as with CAHN. The executive committee has been working on a "letter of agreement" with CAHN detailing our responsibilities (including any financial obligations). Details of this will be discussed and voted on at the Annual Meeting in April. For example, discussion has centred on whether the Group should be "co-sponsor" and whether this would involve financial responsibility for any debts.

**\* \* MORE NEWS FROM THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETINGS \* \***

Treasurer's Report

Treasurer Nina Rumen reported that the Group's finances looked to be in good shape for year end, with about \$4,500 on hand. Some of this is in an investment certificate earning interest. However, outstanding bills for the remaining 1994 Newsletter and its mailing and for expenses associated with membership renewals will be forthcoming.

The treasurer also is administering a special fund set up for the CAHN International History of Nursing Conference. (See report page 5.) The Group may need to plan to accumulate some funds for its participation in this international conference. For example, the Group may want to organize a special display or host an international speaker during the ICN.

Nina Rumen also reported that the History of Nursing Scholarship Fund, which also is administered by the Group, now has more than \$5,000 invested. This means that it is likely that money for the first scholarship will be available in 1995. The executive committee will be looking at ways to publicize the scholarship funds. (Remember that tax-free donations may be made to the Scholarship fund. The majority of the funds are raised through the Memorial Nursing Portrait Collection -- see below.)

Memorial Nursing Portrait Collection

The Memorial Nursing Portrait Collection of the B.C. History of Nursing Group provides opportunities for special tributes to be paid to friends, family members, or nursing projects. Sponsors wishing to add a portrait to

the collection can donate \$500 (tax-deductible) to the History of Nursing Scholarship Fund. A framed photograph, an individually designed miniature doll, and an inscribed plaque are added to the collection, which is displayed at meetings and at special public functions.

The purpose is twofold: to raise money for the Scholarship Fund and to promote a visual, lasting tribute. A portrait can be sponsored by anyone and can be to a person living or dead or to a project of choice, but the doll must honor a nurse or nursing history event. About 10 nursing portraits are now in the collection. For further information, please get in touch with Sheila Zerr.

Oral History Committee

The Oral History committee did not meet much during the summer or fall, but individual members continue to work on projects. Tapes of interviews with Phyl Payton (Boundary Health Unit), Rose Spencer (Fever Nursing for Plague in India during World War II), and Belle Laird (Training in the 1920s and nursing in P.E.I.) have been added to the RNABC Library collection. An interview with Jean Keyes (World War II Nursing in Africa and Boundary Health Unit) was also taped. Several other interviews have been suggested, but new committee members are needed to carry out these projects. As well, Sheila Zerr would like to find someone to chair the committee in 1995.

The Canadian Journal of Nursing Research requested information about this committee for an upcoming issue. A report entitled "History of Nursing in British Columbia Captured on Tape" was submitted by Sheila Rankin Zerr.



**\* \* MORE NEWS FROM THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE \* \***

Biographical Committee

The Biographical Committee has slowing been accumulating biographical files on nurses who have made lasting contributions to B.C.'s nursing history. Helen Niskala has taken over as chair from Ethel Warbinek (who assumed president's duties). If you wish to recommend names to the committee so that forms can be sent or to be actively involved with the committee, please get in touch with the Chair.

This committee also prepares the information on B.C.'s nominees for the Canadian Nurses Association's *In Memoriam Book*. It also will be responsible for gathering nominees for the proposed *B.C. Nurses In Memoriam* book. The committee has been meeting to draft criteria for the ways this work should progress. If you know of a B.C. nurse who should be nominated for inclusion in either book, please let Helen Niskala know.

Membership Committee

Chair Brenda Flynn reports that membership for 1994 remained about the same as in 1993. Membership Lists were mailed to all members with the *Summer Newsletter*. Since then there have been four new members.

You are also reminded that 1995 membership fees are due January 1, 1995. This year fee increases come into effect, with annual dues for Full Members (who must be paid-up practicing or non-practicing RNABC members) and Associate Members (those who are not eligible for Full or Student membership) are \$20. Student Members (students enrolled, full or part-time, in nursing undergraduate programs or RNs enrolled in any graduate

program) pay \$5. Renewal forms are enclosed with this *Newsletter* for those who have not yet paid. Make cheques payable to History of Nursing Group and mail to Treasurer Nina Rumen, #110 -- 1720 West 12th Ave., Vancouver, B.C. V6J 2E6.

AAAAA Committee

The Archives, Artifacts, And Association Articles (AAAAA) committee has not met recently because of other commitments of the small core group that has tried to get this committee going. The HoN Group needs to organize and preserve its own minutes, papers, and photographs from its first five years, but it also receives many requests from others, such as relatives of nurses, to assist in the preservation of nursing artifacts. Unfortunately, the Group does not have a place to store its items, so the committee finds it difficult to get going on its huge task. If you would like to assist with this challenge, please get in touch with Chair Bev Du Gas.

Program Planning

The Executive has been looking at ideas for programs for 1995. Guest speaker in January will be Kim MacFarlane. The HoN Group Annual Meeting will be in April and the Group has booked Mary Chamard of Port Alberni, one of our HoN members, to speak on the Rise and Decline of Medical Dispensories, a topic on which she has done considerable research. The tentative date for Mary Chamard's presentation is May 27, 1995. The Group has also received an invitation to visit the Archives of the Sisters of St. Ann in Victoria, and would like to plan one of its 1995 meetings there.

\* \* SPECIAL FEATURE \* \*



The "Women in Nursing" display at the Canadian Women's Showcase at the Royal B.C. Museum in Victoria on October 1-2, 1994 was a resounding success. The display, coordinated by Keri Moore of the Victoria Chapter of the B.C. HoN Group, was a highlight for all who attended.

Five nursing groups participated: The Sisters of St. Ann, St. Joseph's Hospital Nursing Alumnae, Royal Jubilee Hospital Nursing Alumnae, Nursing Sisters (Military) Victoria Chapter, and the B.C. History of Nursing Group. The Sisters of St. Ann, under

Sister Mary Cantwell's guidance, provided an outstanding archival display of historical hospital equipment, uniforms, uniformed dolls, and historical photographs. The Nursing Sisters (Military) provided detailed maps, pictures, uniforms, and artifacts to show the nurses' roles in military endeavours. The two hospital Alumnae provided accounts and yearbooks and uniforms that were of great local interest.

The HoN Group's contribution featured the Memorial Nursing Portrait collection, which drew interest from public and press. A flyer,



**\*\* MORE SPECIAL FEATURE \*\***

(continued from page 8)

describing the purposes and criteria for donations, was prepared for the show and widely circulated. The B.C. HoN Group donated a draw prize (a 12-inch doll dressed as a Sister of St. Ann, circa 1858). The doll honoured the first nursing service offered in Victoria. The doll was won by Mada Johnson of Victoria.

Keri Moore felt the efforts of the five nursing groups, and the wide interest from public and press, will give exposure to the HoN Group's Victoria Chapter. She hopes to build on the contacts made to establish a working group of nurse historians in the Victoria area.



*Two of the many visitors*



*Sheila Zerr at the Display Table*



*Keri Moore at the Display Table*

\* \* BITS AND PIECES \* \*

**Take Me to Your Leaders**

One of the many duties of the HoN Group's President (or her delegate) is to attend regular meetings (about five a year) of the Council of the Presidents of the RNABC's Professional Practice Groups (PPGs). As well, the president or delegate attends a once-a-year, two-day Leaders' Conference (which provides information on leadership qualities) for presidents of PPGs and Chapters. Although the events are stimulating and interesting and offer excellent opportunities for networking (the best part is exchanging ideas with other PPGs), they also involve work for the chief executive and executive committee.

The RNABC also expects its PPGs to respond to regular questionnaires, act as advisors on various topics, and serve as a conduit to pass along information to and from members. For example, the History Group takes on many queries from the public if these relate to history of nursing.

In addition to these regular duties, this year HoN President Ethel Warbinek was named PPG liaison person to the RNABC's board of directors, which meets six times a year. All in all, this work means a busy schedule for a volunteer president! (Thanks, Ethel!)

**Interesting Reading**

Strong-Boag, Veronica. (1991). Making a difference: The history of Canada's nurses. Canadian Bulletin of Medical History, 8 (2), 231-248.

**NEW MEMBERS 1994**

Please add the following names and addresses to the 1994 Membership List. The 1995 list will not be available until about June.

Lynn Esson  
4580 Larkspur Ave.  
Richmond, B.C. V7C 2J2

Shirley Holzman  
#223 -- 4411 Grange St.  
Burnaby, B.C. V5H 1P5

Deborah Rink  
2820 Fir St.  
Vancouver, B.C. V3J 3C3

Ann Williams  
Apt. 300 -- 1065 West 11th St.  
Vancouver, B.C. V6H 1K2

Please make the following changes and corrections in your 1994 Membership List:

Esther Paulson  
#511 -- 1755 West 14th Ave.  
Vancouver, B.C. V6J 2J6

Glennis Zilm  
Box 71513 Hillcrest Post Office  
White Rock, B.C. V4B 3Z0

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If you know someone who would be interested in joining the HoN Group, please pass the name/address along to a member of the executive.



**\* \* MORE BITS AND PIECES \* \***

**For Your Bookshelf**

*Battlefield Nurse: Letters and Memories of a Canadian Army Overseas Nursing Sister in World War II*, by W.D.M Sage. Vancouver: Sage Family, 1994. (large format, softcover, 203 pp., illus., b&w photos)

This fascinating book contains the letters and photographs of Elsie Dunnet, a young nursing sister from Avonlea, Sask., sent home to her family while she was overseas. They present a unique view of World War II through the eyes of a young nurse. It is a poignant history full of witty, thoroughly entertaining anecdotal accounts. The book was eventually put together by Elsie Dunnet and her husband Donald Sage and was recently published by the family. Copies are available for \$20 each (includes postage) from: Sage Family Publications, #201 -- 431 Pacific Blvd., Vancouver, B.C. V6Z 2P6.

*North to Share: The Sisters of Saint Ann in Alaska and the Yukon Territory*, by Sister Margaret Cantwell in collaboration with Sister Mary George Edmond. Victoria: Sisters of Saint Ann, 1992. (large format, softcover, 308 pp., illus., b&w photos, index)

This is a story of the more than 200 young women of the Sisters of Saint Ann who went north to Alaska and the Yukon. This Order, which is mainly a teaching order, also does some nursing in isolated areas. The Sisters of Saint Ann were the first nurses in Victoria and they

established the first hospital in Alaska once it came under American rule. Although it is mainly American, it does contain some relevant history on early conditions in Canada's Yukon Territory. Copies are available for \$28.95 (inc. postage) from Sisters of Saint Ann, Administration Centre, 1550 Begbie St., Victoria, B.C. V8R 1K8.

*Nursing Sisters' Association of Canada: Commemorative Issue and Membership Directory*, prepared by the National Executive. [Edmonton:] Nursing Sisters Association of Canada, 1994. (large format, softcover, 83 pp., illus. b&w photos)

This commemorative issue and directory of members was published for the 50th anniversary celebrations honoring D-Day (Victory in Europe). It contains 40 pages of profiles on well-known nursing sisters recalling their service overseas in World War I and II. Copies of the book are relatively rare, but a copy is available on loan in the RNABC Library.

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**Membership Renewal**

HoN Group member Frances Stearns of Chase, B.C., sent us an early membership renewal in December, along with a photo taken on her 95th birthday, a note, and several humorous clippings. We love hearing from Frances, who wrote a series of articles for the *Newsletter* in 1993 on her school of nursing experiences. This time she had to report a badly sprained ankle when her walker did a version of the "rock and roll." Take Care, Frances!

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**\* \* LETTERS AND NAMES \* \***

HoN Group member Dr. Shirley Stinson of Edmonton sent regards to the Group while on a recent visit to Korea as keynote speaker at that country's First International Health Services Research Seminar in October 1994. (We also received a splendid photo of Shirl taken at the conference, but unfortunately there was not room for it in this issue.

Member Betty Robertson in Mission reported that the special nursing history display this summer at the Mission Memorial Hospital was a great success. Betty then was off on a "study tour" (English literary figures) in Great Britain.

Honorary Member Esther Paulson sent a marvellous note in which she commented on the "memories of so many outstanding nurses, many of whom became personal friends and enriched my 41-year career in B.C.'s nursing profession." She feels her selection as an honorary member is a "tribute to those colleagues who gave so much to the development of nursing education and standards of service." She adds she enjoys HoN Group projects and activities. "It is indeed a privilege for me, in my 88th year and a graduate of the 1920s, to be associated with and enjoy the friendship of nurse colleagues active in the 1990s!"

Helen Stoddart, great niece of Alice Wright, a former executive director of RNABC, has written to the HoN Group asking about storage of her great aunt's archival documents. "Our family is concerned that over the years we may misplace or otherwise lose the papers for



Miss Wright and are wondering if you might like to have them.... We have the original documents and would be pleased to give them to you for your records." She enclosed a snapshot of Alice Wright in her nurse's uniform likely taken when she was a student at Vancouver General (she graduated in 1918).

The first meeting of the newly-formed Heather Heritage Society will be held on Jan. 25, 1995 at the Heritage Hall, 3103 Main St., Vancouver. The Society is interested in preserving the original grey stone building that was one of the original buildings (built on the Vancouver General Hospital site). Any member of the public is welcome to attend.

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**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.

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Unsolicited submissions are welcomed but the Editor reserves the right to shorten, reject, or edit materials.