



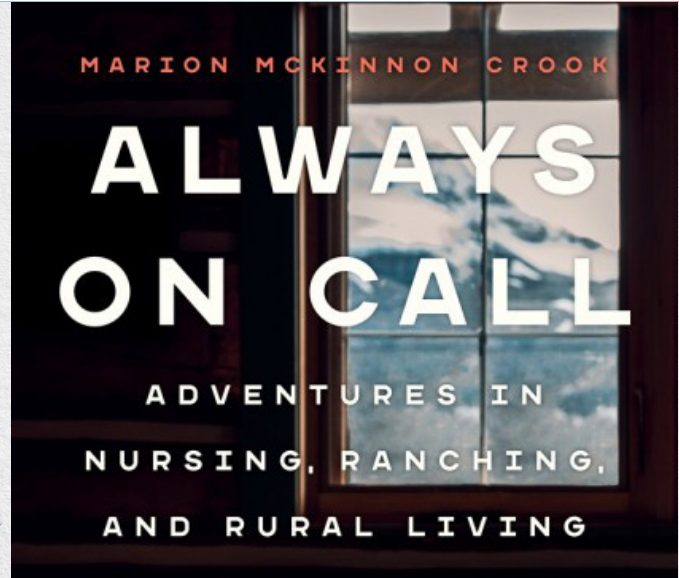
BC History of Nursing Society

NEWSLETTER

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Linda J. Quiney



BOOK REVIEW

Always on Call: Adventures in Nursing, Ranching, and Rural Living

By Marion McCrimmon Crook

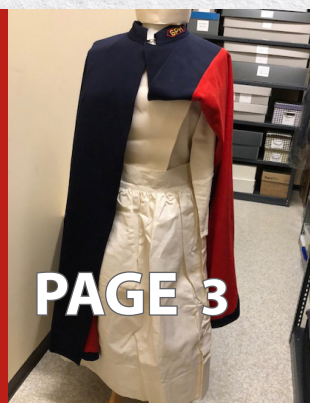
Marion Crook's second volume recalling her years as a public health nurse (PHN) in Northern British Columbia, *Always on Call: Adventures in Nursing, Ranching, and Rural Living*, embraces its title. The book is situated a decade after the initial journal, *Always Pack a Candle: A Nurse in the Cariboo-Chilcotin*, recounting her first year as a neophyte PHN in the early 60s. At that time, Crook was single with only her nursing duties demanding her full attention. The current chronicle is set in the mid-1970s, with Crook now married to a lawyer, raising three young children, and living on a small ranch just outside of Williams Lake, British Columbia. Eighteen months after the adoption of her youngest child, Crook returned to her work as a PHN with

the Cariboo Health Unit. As the book opens, she is working four days a week, supervising the home care nurses on one of those days, and serving as a school nurse on another. It is a busy schedule balancing work, family and ranching, as well as child care arrangements and supporting her two older children in their 4-H Club pursuits.

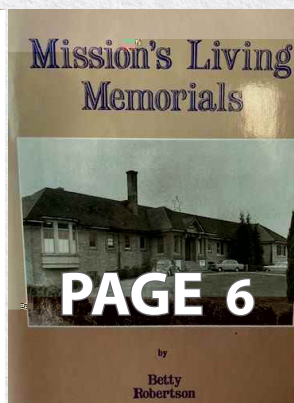
At this stage in her life, the "on call" in the book's title refers to all of her responsibilities, domestic and professional. The narrative moves between accounts of Crook's nursing work in equal proportion to family and domestic concerns, which includes the ongoing demands of ranching. The Health Unit employed several nurses of varying experience and skills,

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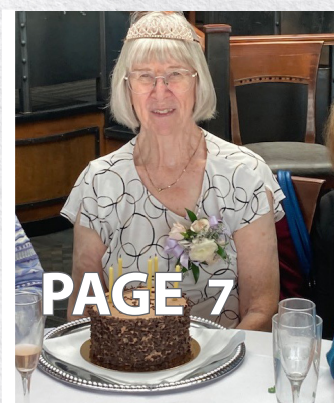
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newsletter committee

Frances Affleck, Angela Long and Lenore Radom.
The BC History of Nursing Society Newsletter is published 2 times per year.

SUBMISSIONS ARE WELCOME.

Deadline for the Spring Issue is March 15th, 2025.
Please send submissions to: biomedic@dccnet.com

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Geertje Boschma

Hello Everyone!

Welcome to a new season of BCHNS meetings and activities. The BC History of Nursing Society is entering its 35th year and we are very much looking forward to celebrate this milestone with you in April 2025. It was exciting to see many of you at our start of the year meeting on September 17. We met and listened to an interesting presentation and discussion with Marion Crook about her new book. Several new members have joined and two new board members have joined as well, following the AGM in April. We presented the new Board in our Summer bulletin. Board of directors now include Lenore Radom, Michelle Danda, Geertje Boschma, Linda Quiney, Margaret Scaia, Suzanne Nixon, Frances Affleck and Brenda Flynn. Frances Affleck has taken on the editing of the newsletter and for the lay-out we draw on the expertise of graphic designer Cassidy Mantle. The renewal of our website is now in the works, led by Lenore Radom and her team. The renewed site will be ready later in the fall, likely in December.



We held the final meeting of the 2023-2024 season via zoom on June 11. Michelle Danda presented an interesting talk on her research and dissertation on the history of the Registered Psychiatric Nursing Profession in BC followed by an engaging discussion. On a final note, we welcome applications for the BCHNS Bursary: Application due dates: *November 30 and March 31*. See our website: <https://bcnursinghistory.ca/bursaries/> – spread the word! Contributions for future newsletters are also welcome. We much appreciate member input. Take note of upcoming news and meetings on our website (<https://bcnursinghistory.ca>), and in this newsletter as well. Have a look, enjoy our newsletter. We look forward to seeing you at upcoming meetings.

Best wishes,

Geertje



Archival Corner

My Uniform

By Denise Mansiere (nee Gudelot)

This uniform represents three years of blood, sweat and tears. But mostly accomplishments of finally having made it. I was born an only child in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan. I would listen to my mother and her siblings talk of this generous and kind sister who died in her last year of training to be a nurse. That became my goal early in life to follow in her footsteps. So, at the age of 18, I entered St. Paul's school of nursing to do just that. It was a three-year course with about sixty-five young girls registered. I think my father had to pay \$100 for me to enter into this school. We were all eager, innocent, and full of hope to become full-fledged nurses. We had a six-month course in anatomy and physiology, followed by examinations, where if you did not pass, you automatically left the school, your hopes dashed or else totally relieved that you would not have to continue on this path. At this point we received our caps and a white dress uniform with one stripe on the pocket, to signify that you were in your first year of training. Now we were in the hospital working but under the supervision of an R.N. We were spread out in different departments, covering mostly the basic departments. We attended class here for three months to cover the basics in the next phase of our training. Another exam, which we had to pass. Then in our second year we had another blue stripe added to our pockets informing the world that we were on our way. We were assigned to Maternity, Pediatrics, and some even went to Essondale*, which was our Psychiatric training. I was fortunate and went to a small establishment that housed mentally challenged younger people or children that had Downs syndrome. It was very traumatic for me as I had never looked after, much less seen, such children before. Another set of classroom studies. Now we were going into our third year and another stripe was added to our uniform. We attended class again to further our training and were assigned to Surgery, Dietetics, Orthopedics, and even the making of formula for the infants. We worked in Central Supply where we had to remove stitches, replace bandages over some ghastly wounds and mix and dilute narcotics. Finally, the big day was approaching when we received our pins, bibs, aprons, collars, and cuffs. The bonus was our capes, which were red inside and blue outside. Graduation had arrived, and we were so proud that we could now wear our dress uniform to work. That lasted about ten minutes in the work force as the bib cracked right down the centre and was most uncomfortable to work in. It was put aside for the graduation exercise, never to be worn again by me. I did have to alter my uniform when I worked in Saskatchewan where the manager of the hospital did not think I was an RN as all that provinces graduates had black bands on their caps, so I added our school pin to the left corner of my cap. When I moved back to BC, it was back to basic St. Paul's uniform or scrubs, as by this time I was working in a newborn intensive care nursery.

*Essondale was the previous name of Riverview Hospital in Coquitlam.

NB Denise donated her 1950s St. Paul's uniform to our archives and attached the above memoir.

Afterword: Mrs. Mansiere recently passed away. Her legacy lives on in this memoir, the donation of her uniform and in the lives of those she touched.



and a Nursing Supervisor who managed the administrative work. Each of the nurses had specific responsibilities, but these frequently overlapped and at times required taking on another's work load. There was also a Medical Health Officer who had little to do with the general nursing work, but was responsible for balancing the nursing budgets against need. It was not always a compatible relationship.

With her family responsibilities, Crook was no longer able to make overnight trips into the logging country. She sometimes missed the adventure, although she frequently made day trips into the remote rural regions to see a patient. Over time she had become more confident in negotiating the often treacherous, icy roads in winter. The heart-stopping episodes on dark, slippery, empty roads, recounted in Crook's earlier book were behind her, and she was now familiar with the vast territory the Health Unit encompassed. Work hours were also regulated by the need to be home when the school bus arrived in the afternoons, and fetching her youngest from the child minder. All are issues very familiar to working mothers generally.

Always on Call resembles a journal entry recounting a particular moment in time. Indeed, Marion Crook states in her introductory note that this "is an account of my life in the Cariboo between 1975 and 1976" (1). She outlines the myriad demands of daily life, including the mishaps and emergencies that peppered the otherwise daily routines of work and rural family living in this era. As with the first book, Crook highlights the ongoing issues of racism directed against the Indigenous population. The caveat is that it now has a personal connection, since the youngest of her two adopted sons is Indigenous. David is just three years old when the book opens, and Crook confesses that she had not envisioned the slights and thoughtless indignities that a small child could encounter in his limited environment. She recounts her shock at hearing her son happily singing a tune from his Kindergarten class which contains an obvious racial slur. The teacher confessed honestly that she was not aware, demonstrating the systemic racism at play in the schools of the era. There were other, more harsh and blatant injustices, serving as jarring examples of what the Indigenous population has had to endure into the contemporary era.

The clattering baby scale, so prominent in *Always Pack a Candle*, makes a reappearance as a familiar link between the two volumes. Crook admits to talking to her scale as

she bumps over dry gravel roads, apologizing for the rough ride. Although most new mothers attended regular well baby clinics in the hospital or clinic, not all had this advantage. Home visits frequently took Marion Crook into remote territory where medical assistance was limited, and communication often non-existent. Overall, most of the cases recounted in the book were routine, ranging from monitoring new mothers, guiding teenage girls through pregnancy to ensure they had proper medical care and support, helping to solve the unending issues surrounding long-term care placements for seniors, or just the general health and medication of those unable to come into the clinic for appointments. There are still a few disturbing accounts of potentially disruptive or even violent patients, and possible cases of parental sexual abuse.

A significant portion of the book focuses on the children's participation in 4-H clubs, a dominant activity in the Cariboo region at the time. Crook's daughter was a keen participant and regular prize-winner, and intimately engaged in overseeing the care of her pig Cleo and her regular litters. The two boys were less involved, either from interest or age, but participated with the family as a regular community event. Equally highlighted are the many chores of ranching. In addition to their professional work, the Crooks kept sheep and a small herd of cattle. Marion Crook became adept at sheep shearing, and was proud of her abilities as a rancher. With husband and wife sharing the work of the ranch and family, plus their own demanding jobs, at this stage in their lives both were always on call.

This second edition of Marion Crook's time as a public health nurse in the Cariboo provides a positive overview of a world of nursing now largely lost to time and technology. In the 1970s, nursing had to find a place within the many other demands on Crook's time and focus. The transition from an untried PHN to one of experience and confidence moves Marion Crook's life experience from one of adventure to necessary practicality. We find her navigating the personal tragedies of her co-workers, and inevitable office politics, balanced against the daily demands of work and family. It is a good synopsis of the transition from full time nursing, to the work /life balance that challenges many women when they assume family duties, whatever the time or place.

Linda J. Quiney

THE 2024 CONFERENCE OF THE CANADIAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE HISTORY OF NURSING (CAHN-ACHN)

JUNE 22-23, IN HALIFAX, NOVA SCOTIA

In June, the CAHN-ACHN held its annual conference at St. Mary's University in Halifax. It was an opportunity to connect, meet colleagues, students and members from the nursing history community, and to learn about new work in nursing history. Presentations from junior and seasoned scholars as well as several students addressed a wide range of topics and generated lively discussions. Participants joined from across Canada and internationally, including from the US, Germany and the UK. For a peak at the full program, visit the CAHN-ACHN website:

<https://cahn-achn.ca/annual-conference-2/>

The conference theme was "Nursing Crossroads: Action, Inaction, and Reaction", with papers addressing intersections between nursing history and other historiographies, including women's history, education history, the history of labour, but also focussing on ways nurses reacted to a rapidly changing health care environment, in relation to various groups and circumstances.

Dr. Dominique Tobbell, Centennial Distinguished Professor and Director of the Björing Center for Nursing History Inquiry of the School of Nursing at the University of Virginia, US, delivered the Hannah Lecture on her new book "Dr. Nurse: Science Politics, and the Transformation of American Nursing." She gave a very interesting analysis of the development of university nursing education in the US, expanding from BSN to PhD programs, as well as specialized nursing practice and NP roles. Her discussion of the development of nursing knowledge and research in this context generated a vivid discussion with the audience.

Other international guests presented on German pediatric nursing history (Karen Nolte and Christoph Schwamm) and NP practice in Britain (Kelly Swaby). Noteworthy was the presentation by Gloria Stephens, founding leader of the Nova Scotia Nursing History Society, on nursing and health history aspects associated with the Halifax Explosion of 1917. In addition, several students presented, including David Hrag Yacoubian and Tamasha Hussein from UBC. To-

gether with Lydia Wytenbroek, Tamasha presented on the history of South Asian nurses in BC, drawing from a recent oral history project. A student from the University of New Brunswick, Delaney Beck, received the Vicky Bach Prize for her excellent paper on the wartime correspondence of Lieutenant/Nursing Sister Bertha Merriman, unearthing rare familial correspondence Bertha had with her family during WWI. On Saturday evening, we enjoyed a lovely conference dinner, just a few floors up in the Sobey Building on campus. We are indebted to Peter Twohig, CAHN president and faculty at St. Mary's University and team for organizing a superb conference. Also, either prior to, or following the conference, there was ample opportunity to visit Halifax and make a stop at one of the interesting museums or go for stroll along the boardwalk downtown. All in all, a most valuable event.

Submitted by Geertje Boschma



[photo: Delaney Beck, winner of the Vicky Bach Prize, with CAHN board member Lydia Wytenbroek]

PAGES OF HISTORY

In Honour of Elizabeth [Betty] Robertson 1924 – Sponsored by Glennis Zilm



[photo of Betty Robertson]

Elizabeth Robertson, known as Betty, was born in Calgary, Alberta, February 4, 1924.

Betty and her husband Tom were married in 1952. They raised together 5 children and she states they were “content with living a simple life”.

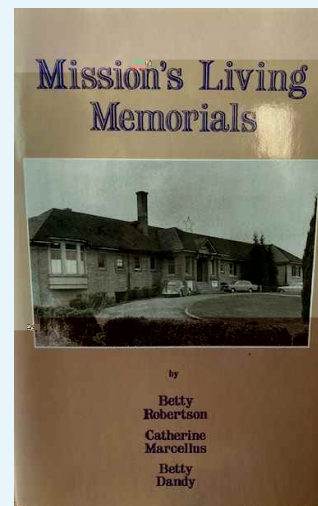
Betty says she “always wanted to be a nurse, I suppose because my mother was a nurse, but also always interested in anything medical”. Betty took her nurses training at Calgary General Hospital 1943 – 1946. Upon graduation she moved to the smaller hospital of Wetaskiwin, AB, working there for 3 years. Family friends knowing Betty wanted to move to BC, asked her to come to nurse the ailing man, which she did for 4 months. Betty then began work at Shaughnessy & the Royal Columbian Hospitals, during which time she met her husband to be. Betty worked in all areas of the hospitals, but the Surgical ward was where she liked it best. Betty states that she ‘kept her hand in nursing from 1946 to 1987, with some stretches of time off when children were small or if her husband was away working on the boats’. She states they “balanced each other”. Betty

finished her career as Nursing Supervisor at the Mission Memorial Hospital from 1969 retiring in 1987.

Upon retirement from nursing, Betty became involved with the Mission Community Archives. It is about this time that she also got involved with the BC History of Nursing and has always looked forward to the Newsletters. It is her involvement with the Mission Archives that she became President of the Mission Studies Group. Along with two other women volunteering with the Archives, they produced the book “Mission’s Living Memorials” in 1992. Betty happily says “it took 4 years of interviewing and researching”, and then says, “they are all gone except me!” Betty gifted the BCHNS with a signed copy of the book & her signature is beautiful!! Betty is a spry 100+ woman and a pleasure to meet.

Betty’s Awards include:

- **2006 Lifetime Achievement Award from the District of Mission.**
- **2010 Recognized by the Mission Community Heritage Commission for her work on book.**
- **2018 Honoured with Freedom of City Medal.**



[photo of Betty Robertson’s book cover]

News & Upcoming Events

Birthdays

Congratulations & best wishes for one of BCHN founding members, Ethel Warbinek on her 90th birthday”



[photo of Lenore Radom; Anne Wynes; Ethel & her daughter Anita Petersen; Liz (family friend) & Lynne Esson.



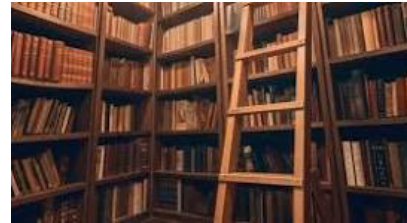
Of Interest

With Remembrance Day nearing you might be interested in exploring the latest exhibition at the British Normandy Memorial site where earlier this year Standing with Giants erected multiple metal silhouettes in memory of servicemen who had been killed on D-Day. The exhibit also included two nursing Sisters. You will find details in the link below along with a host of photos.

<https://www.standingwithgiants.co.uk/normandy-80>

Linda Quiney and Frances Affleck were wondering if there might be some interest in starting a book club. The nominal ideas are a group of 6-8, meeting virtually every 4- 6 week. Nursing history, would be the central theme, in all

of its forms, even fiction. As well we would keep a broad definition of nursing from professional to casual, military, civilian, national, and international.



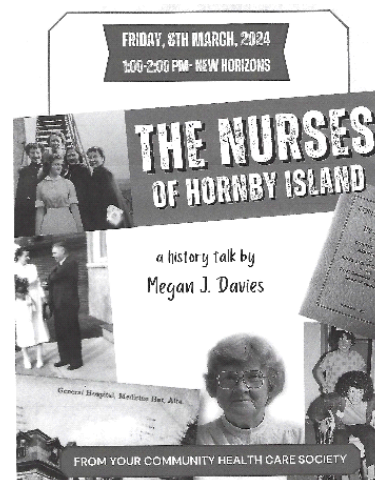
If you are interested in exploring creating a BCHNS Book Club do send an email to:
Linda lquinney@telus.net and
Frances biomedic@dccnet.com

Future Open Meetings with Guest Speakers (TBA) followed by Board meeting

Wednesday November 20th at 4pm
Tuesday Feb 11 at 4pm

Save the Date

Nursing History Symposium, BCHNS 35th Anniversary
Cecile Green Park House
April 14, Monday! 10 am - 2 pm
Guest Speaker Megan Davies



PUBLISHED TWO TIMES A YEAR

Thank you to all who contributed to this issue of the BCHNS newsletter

BC History of Nursing Society

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www.bcnursinghistory.ca
www.facebook.com/BCHistoryofNursing

Special thanks to all who contributed to this issue of the BCHNS newsletter

Next Meeting: November 20, 2024

Articles, news, and ideas for items to be included in the Spring 2025 issue should be sent by March 15th to
Frances Affleck: biomedic@dccnet.com