

# HISTORY OF NURSING NEWS

December 2006

Volume 17, Issue 4

## **LABOR OF LOVE**

† *Memoir of Gertrude Richards Ladner 1879 to 1967*



### **Book Launch**

The three authors of *LABOR OF LOVE: A Memoir of Gertrude Richards Ladner 1879-1967* had book launch at the Ladner Pioneer library on September 23. Among those attending were the Minister of Health, George Abbott, the local MLA, Val Roddick and Vancouver City Councillor Peter Ladner. Shown here are Glennis Zilm, Sheila Zerr and Valerie Grant cutting a cake which was decorated to replicate the cover of their book. The book includes copies of Gertrude's notebooks in her student years. Those pages elicit smiles about the struggle to spell unfamiliar words and the recording of early *Materia Medica* drugs.

### **President's Message**

After a busy year leading this active group, Ethel Warbinek was thanked for her effective leadership at the October Executive meeting. Now it is my turn to carry on.

Although there are many ongoing activities of this group, each year a summer workshop is held to review the progress and to set goals for the coming year. Once again Glennis Zilm welcomed us to her residence to discuss and plan and to enjoy a wonderful buffet lunch. The results of our deliberations were nine objectives which the Executive reviewed at the November meeting.

The 2007 Objectives are: 1. **Website Development/Explore the Virtual Museum Project/** Organize joint meetings with other Nursing Archival Groups to discuss joint projects

2. Recognize a nurse through the National Parks Canada award system .

3. Explore ways to raise our Scholarship Fund to \$25,000

4. Plan the Annual Tea at Hycroft (The date has been set for Friday , April 20,2007)

5. Develop criteria for our Honourary Life Membership nomination

6. Develop contact and linkages to publicize BC History of Nursing

7. Maintain the quality of our Newsletter

Should any members be interested in helping with any of these projects the Executive members would be delighted to hear from you. Kathy Murphy- President

## **Borders, boundaries and political context in nursing and health care history**

**An International Conference devoted to Nursing History Research will be held in Toronto, Canada, 5-7 June 2008 – Call for Abstracts**

The conference is organized by the Canadian Association for the History of Nursing/Association Canadienne pour l'Histoire du Nursing and co-sponsored by the Faculty of Nursing, University of Toronto, the School of Nursing, Ryerson University, the School of Women's Studies, York University, the Allemang Centre for the History of Nursing, and the AMS Nursing History Research Unit.

**Aiming** for a critical understanding of connections between health and nursing, the conference welcomes papers that explore borders, boundaries **and** the political context in nursing and health care history. The conference seeks to explore the history of nursing practice, religious and missionary roots of modern nursing, as well as critical questions on the history of specialty areas and regions of practice. Looking at critical and under-examined areas of nursing's past, questions of practice, power and health policy will be examined. How did local, regional and global contexts of health care shape nursing practice? How did colonial, imperial and political regimes impact on health care practice and administration? How did communities respond to special needs, **difficult** behaviour and vulnerability? How did nurses influence or participate in (inter) national health politics? What tensions arose over claims of knowledge, skill and identity? Priority will be given to abstracts addressing these themes. The conference brings together scholars from many different countries and many different areas of nursing and health care history. We especially welcome abstracts from students. CAHN/ACHN will seek to provide some financial assistance to students who present papers. The two Hannah Lecturers for the conference will be

Karen Schultheiss, Assistant Professor of History at the University of Illinois, Chicago, author of *Bodies and Souls: Politics and the Professionalization of Nursing in France 1880-1922*.

Catherine Choy, Associate Professor of Ethnic Studies at the University of California Berkeley, author of *Empire of Care: Nursing and Migration in Filipino American History*.

Please submit a one page abstract on completed research by e-mail of no more than 300 words. State the title of the paper at the top and at the end list name, institutional affiliation or city, contact information, and whether you are a student. Let us know if you would like your e-mail to be published along with the abstract, and if you have any audiovisual or other special requirements. Abstracts will be peer-reviewed.

Submit abstracts to [geertje.boschma\(at\)nursing.ubc.ca](mailto:geertje.boschma(at)nursing.ubc.ca)

Abstracts must be received by Nov. 15, 2007. Notification of acceptance will be sent out by Feb. 1, 2008. For **further** information contact Judy Young ([judithy\(at\)primus.ca](mailto:judithy(at)primus.ca)) or [Caro1.Helmstadterfat@rogers.com](mailto:Caro1.Helmstadterfat@rogers.com)

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**Visit our website [www.bcnursinghistory.ca](http://www.bcnursinghistory.ca)**

**2007 CAHN/ACHN Conference at the University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, May 31<sup>st</sup> to June 2<sup>nd</sup>**

**Call for Papers**

The **2007 CAHN/ACHN** conference will be held jointly with the **Canadian Society for the History of Medicine (CSHM)**. The CSHM meets once a year in conjunction with Congress of the Social Sciences and the Humanities.

The conference will be chaired by Barry Edginton, University of Winnipeg, for CSHM and co-chaired by Geertje Boschma, University of British Columbia, for CAHN. Local arrangements will be chaired by Sandra Bassendowski and Lisa Smith, both at the University of Saskatchewan. The AMS-CAHN-Hannah Lecturer will be Maureen Lux, Assistant Professor of History, Brock University, the author of *Medicine that Walks: Disease, Medicine and Aboriginal People in the Canadian West 1880-1930*.

The theme of the 2007 Congress of the Social Sciences and Humanities will be, **"Bridging Communities: Making public knowledge, making knowledge public."**

Abstracts on other topics are also welcome.

CAHN members and/or nursing history scholars may submit their abstracts, including a one-page c.v., for consideration by **15 December 2006** to: Geertje Boschma, RN, PhD

Associate Professor

UBC School of Nursing

2211 Wesbrook Mall

Vancouver BC V6T 2B5

phone 604 822 7457 fax 604 822 7466

e-mail [boschma@nursing.ubc.ca](mailto:boschma@nursing.ubc.ca)

Abstracts must not exceed 350 words. **Submit abstracts by mail or e-mail.** By mail, send one original and 3 copies, typed single-spaced on one sheet of paper. The Committee will notify applicants of its decision by January 22, 2007. For students invited to present, some travel support may be available. Indicate student status on your abstract. N.B. If invited to present at the meeting, the author must undertake to provide a translation of the abstract in French for the bilingual program book. For more information on the Congress arrangements, please visit the CSHM website:

<http://meds.queensu.ca/medicine/histm/cshweb/cshhome.html>

**History of Nursing: Luncheon**

On November 10, 2006, 48 members and guests attended a delicious Luncheon at the Vancouver Lawn Tennis Club. The theme was Military Nursing and 10 former Military Nursing Sisters and one current sister were introduced. Before a moment of silence to remember those who have served our country, the names of those who have passed away in the past year were read. Following lunch, three speakers provided their stories and memories. Glennis Zilm, dressed as Mrs. Kate Miller who was the first Nursing Sister in Canada, described the Riel Rebellion, June Newton told of nursing in Italy in WWII, and Nina Rumen shared some post war memories.

Sincere thanks was expressed to Lorna Radom for organizing this successful event.

Kathy Murphy



**Nursing Sisters attending the luncheon.**

**Front Row: L to R, Margaret Mainwaring, Jean Dorgan, Bertha Hull, Rosamond Watson, Nina Rumen**

**Back Row: L to R Joan Doree, Shirley Ridalls, Moya Jack, June Newton, Helen Niskala, and Vanessa Daniel (in uniform). Vanessa had just returned from a tour of duty in Afghanistan.**

### Atlin Hospital

The first provincial Government Hospital in Atlin was "a low log building sunk in the hillside overlooking the lake. Its shed roof was made of poles covered with dirt. its floor was six inches of sawdust, and as I stood my head was not more than six inches from the roof poles. Lying on a low cot was the **man** I had come to see, and on pole bunks around there were five others injured and diseased. The only nurse was a so-called abandoned woman who nursed, cooked and washed for the hospital without reward. God bless her for her work."

Reverend John Pringle wrote the above when he first visited in April 1899. He immediately fired off an urgent request to Presbyterian Church Headquarters in Toronto. The Presbyterian ladies had already raised \$1500 for the **Klondike Nurses** Committee and the Victorian Order of Nurses sent a contingent to the Yukon. The Toronto ladies then turned their full attention to Atlin and began looking for suitable nurses to fill Pringle's request.

Miss Elizabeth Mitchell and Miss Helen Bone accepted the challenge to care for the sick in a distant, isolated place called Atlin. They departed on June **30**, 1899 with six large bags packed with medical supplies, bedding and winter clothing. By July 22 they were in Atlin where their hospital had yet to be created. They were given a tiny house and a tent was put next to the cabin to provide some shelter. There were four cots made of canvas stretched between poles driven into the ground. Pillows were improvised and stuffed with hay.

Elizabeth Mitchell was 50 years old, strong, healthy and deeply dedicated. Her training in Philadelphia and many subsequent years of experience made her invaluable to Atlin. Helen Bone was a graduate of Grace Hospital in Toronto. She worked the 9 am to 9 pm shift and Elizabeth Mitchell took over at night. Meals were cooked by the "off duty" nurse. They received salaries of \$25 a month, plus **furniture**, food, firewood, **uniforms** and rent free home. These nurses soon attained a position of honour within the camp where the miners regarded them as true angels of mercy.

In January 1900 Reverend Pringle sat with parishioner James Stables to discuss his plans and dream of building a hospital. Stables promptly enlisted the help of miners, storekeepers and professional men who were willing to donate materials and time to build a **hospital**. It was **not** easy working in cold weather but there was warm camaraderie amongst the workers. On extremely chilly days the nurses warmed up frozen nails for the carpenters. When Pringle returned **from** out of town duties the hospital was almost completed at the cost of \$25.

St. Andrew's Hospital faced Discovery Avenue at the corner of Third Street. Its numerous windows made the interior light and airy. It was finished with drop siding and the outside walls were filled with **sawdust** for insulation. There was a nine bed ward, a bath room and an operating room. The kitchen was a tent behind the hospital with a fine cooking range donated by Mr. Charleson of Dominion Telegraph. Patients were transferred to the new St. Andrew's Hospital on 24 February 1900. Donations arrived from all over Canada. Blankets, sheets and pillows came from Vancouver Presbyterian Churches, Books and a sewing machine from Ontario, Slippers from a manufacturer in Toronto, and clothing from Nova Scotia.

The following year an outbreak of scarlet fever made it necessary to provide an isolation hospital. Then in the **summer** of 1902 money was sent **from** Toronto for construction of a six bed woman's ward as Atlin was becoming a family community. Also added was the Nurses Residence. The salary was raised to \$50 per month (half the **amount** paid to a teacher , a policeman or a cook ). Elizabeth **Mitchell** and Helen Bone **declared** they had enjoyed their stay in Atlin, and worked tirelessly for three years though their contract stated **two**. **They** asked to be relieved of their duties In the fall. **Replacements** were found.... but their stories can be shared later.

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Thanks to Christine Dickinson and the late Diane Smith for permission to quote from *Atlin: The Story of British Columbia's Last Gold Rush* and Allison Mitcham for *Atlin: The Last Utopia*,

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**Report from the Canadian Museum of Civilization**  
**By Tina Bates, 18 October, 2006**

Sadly the exhibition, *A Caring Profession* has been dismantled. We had hoped to send it across Canada but were unable to secure funding. The exhibition was a great success with a total of 187,000 viewers. The quality of the visitor experience was very impressive. (Some comments will be shared on the next page)

We have been adding to the database of artifacts of the Canadian Nursing History Collection Online. If you would like to check out the **website**

[http://www.civilizations.ca-tresors\\_nursing/ncinto01e.html](http://www.civilizations.ca-tresors_nursing/ncinto01e.html) and use a **keyword search** "kindle" you will see the letters written by Katherine Kindle while a student at the Montreal General Hospital in the 1930s.

The book, *On All Frontiers* had a total print run of 1500 English and 1000 French. So far the sales have been 500 at CMC and 522 at University of Toronto Press. Sans *Frontieres* 279 at CMC and 144 at UTP.

Meanwhile I have been on a six month special research leave to research nursing uniforms. This combines my nursing history knowledge with methodology of dress study. I have been to the alumnae collections at the Montreal General, Toronto General, Winnipeg General and touched on others. I have tried to figure out the antecedents for uniforms in these institutions, and what the choices made for uniform design meant for the creation of the profession. This has been a fascinating topic. The title of my first article is: "A Cultural History of Nurses Uniforms 1870-1910."

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### Comments

A wonderful Exhibit! Many times as I walked through I felt my eyes well up and my throat get tight. I **am** so proud to be a part of this tradition. A **remarkable legacy**.

The war time nursing stories moved me to tears. I'm **thankful** to be nursing at the present time with all our technology and advances.

A wonderful celebration of nursing – worth the drive from Hamilton, Ontario. Simply great to see the bi-cultural influences on the profession.

I have always been happy to be a nurse but this exhibition has only increased the pride in my profession. Thank you for this opportunity to share what we have accomplished with others.

Merci d'avoir **reconnu** le travail, le devouement, le courage d'un grand nombre de femmes qu'on oublie !

FINALLY! A tribute to nurses. Well done! Long overdue.

### More Comments on the Exhibition *A Caring Profession*

I was one of those VON nurses in Montreal in 1973-75. I had a walking district then later was given a Volkswagon with lettering “VON and French l'Ordre des Infermieres on the side. I boiled syringes and made newspaper bags for soiled items. I've been nursing for **33** years.

Yes, I remember much of what I see here. I worked in 1959 as a RN in a small hospital in Ville St. Laurent. When I was the only Anglo we did meal serving, meds, treatments including VENTUSE (a glass cup, cotton ball soaked in alcohol, lit and clapped on the patient's back to administer heat for TB.

My grandma is a very special nurse. She loves her job almost as much as she loves me. I hope everyone realizes how much she helps people. Jake

My dad is the most important nurse in my life.--- not only as a health care professional but as a role model for life. Facing many gender bias outlooks on the modern day nurse, he maintains a love of the job and fights a silent march for male nurses today.

This was a very nice tribute to nursing in Canada! As a hospital nurse practicing near Washington, DC, I recognize that Canada faces many of the same challenges as the USA. What a rich history you have with pride and compassion in nursing!

This was a fun day. I have learned so much . I never thought that history stuff would be much fun and so interesting. I didn't know that nursing went so far back in time. Things are different now. I will be sure to come back.

I thought some of the medical equipment was scary. Old needles were huge! What a painful way procedures were performed back then.

And one comment from a young visitor: **When I grow up I want to be a nurse.**

### Joanna Lum Emery

Joanna, born in Banff in 1932, grew up in a very rural setting at Fort Steele, BC. She set her sights on a nursing career when she was about ten years old and graduated from St. Joseph's Hospital in Victoria in 1954. She worked in many different hospitals across Canada and maintained her enthusiasm for her profession throughout the years. She inspired two younger sisters and five nieces and one daughter to follow in her footsteps.

Joanna was a shy girl raised in the Anglican faith who entered training in St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Hospital in Victoria in the fall of 1951. St. Joes was close to a family friend who promised to "keep an eye on" the apprehensive young lady. The Sisters of St. Anne were conscientious and strict. Of the 70 students who started, only 35 graduated in 1954.

In the summer of 1954 Banff Mineral Springs Hospital offered therapy for post polio patients, as well as handling emergency cases from climbing or automobile accidents. Joanna and her friend Jackie Sunnus worked there from April till September then applied for jobs at Vancouver General Hospital. Joanna shared her apartment with her younger sister Lorna who came to study at UBC. Joanna requested to work at the Health Centre for Children at Vancouver General Hospital. Prior to her staff appointment in Pediatrics Joanna was assigned to the Men's Medical Ward. There she saw one of the first uses of electric shock of the heart (defibrillation). When she moved to Pediatrics she furthered her aim to become a very special friend to little patients. And, in an era when parents were not always able to be at the youngster's bedside, Joanna's sister sometimes came to visit and play with the loneliest children.

She met John Emery, a navigator with the Search and Rescue service of the RCAF, as a member of her circle of friends. A casual friendship blossomed into romance. The two were married in December 1956 at St. John's Anglican Church in Victoria. John was transferred to Comox. The new Mrs. Emery worked casual at the Comox Hospital, pausing when her first child, Susan was born but continuing till the spring of 1959. In Vancouver two more children (David and Hope) were born to the couple. Her husband, after serving six years, left the regular air force to take engineering studies at UBC. John remained in the Reserve Forces doing shifts with the Air Force on weekends and all summer. Upon graduation as a Civil Engineer he followed work opportunities first with private companies then eventually served with the Federal Government. The family moved to Winnipeg, then London, Ontario and finally to Ottawa.

Joanna watched her children grow and gain in confidence. Something bothered her! She calculated that if she worked for 6 weeks she could afford a new carpet for their home. Immediately after she had been interviewed at the Salvation Army's Grace Hospital in Ottawa she received a call to come in to Special a patient seriously ill after a self-induced abortion. Once that patient was healed and discharged Mrs. Emery went on staff for seventeen years.



During the affiliation with Grace Hospital Mrs. Emery attended the University of Ottawa to obtain her degree in Public Health nursing. The employers directed her new found administrative skills. She became Relief Supervisor and Obstetrical Co-ordinator and soon upgraded training programs for nurses plus pre and post partum patients. No longer were still births dismissed with, "You can still have another child". The whole being, emotional, psychological and physical were to be considered. Finally Abortion Counseling was permitted to look at the total picture for Women. Joanna was pleased with the many improvements in the program to serve women in a sensitive, efficient long term way. However, further advances in practice and procedure were put on hold when male Hospital Administrators replaced the Hospital Matron or Superintendent. (And, to add insult to injury, the office staff under male administrators were paid more than nurses.)

By 1983 John was transferred to Calgary. Joanna applied to work at the Grace Hospital there. This time it meant she became a member of a union. The hospital board welcomed the opportunity to have all levels of staff upgraded to the standards recently implemented in their Ottawa unit. Three years later when the upgrade was done, rather than bump another union nurse she chose to leave. Mrs. Emery then found a position as Director of Nurses for a privately owned medium sized (123 patients) nursing home in Calgary. She quickly established good working relations with the staff and left there, reluctantly, at age 60.

John and Joanne Emery prepared for their retirement years by purchasing a 38 acre block of benchland at Fort Steele. It had been ravaged by a forest fire so needed considerable cleanup. They built a cabin in 1985 and a house in 1993. When they settled in in 1993 Joanna opened a Bed and Breakfast which has proved very popular with tourists from around the world. Special care brings some back again and again. One feature appreciated by locals is a "Wedding Garden" with an ornamental arch and flower gardens plus a magnificent panoramic view of the Rocky Mountains, Kootenay River and Purcell Mountains. Joanna now lives where she and her siblings often played in those days before she commenced her nursing career.

Your editor regrets that the pictures accompanying Tina Bates Report from Canadian Museum of Civilization were so pale that they would not register in black and white.



The happy co-authors of *LABOR OF LOVE* are shown here receiving congratulations from Minister of Health, George Abbott.

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Pictures for the story of Atlin Hospital also would not cooperate, so at right is a sketch of the two nurses to show their choice of wearing apparel. The figure at left wore black with a starched white collar. The uniform at right appears to be a pastel colour with white collar, cuffs and apron.. Neither nurse wore a cap or other headgear. In Dickinson's book both Elizabeth Mitchell and Helen Bone wore black dresses with white collars and small straw hats. Ladies achieved a slim waistline due to the mandatory corset. Women like these early nurses might not resort to overly tight lacing.



**News About Members**

**Genelle Leifso**, our Membership Chair, was in Cambodia from Nov 15-29th with Operation Rainbow Canada helping with a surgical mission in Phnom Penh - cleft lip and palate surgery. Genelle is teaching a program for Operating Room Nurses at the B.C. Institute of Technology, and said she appreciated that her BCIT faculty colleagues took up the gap for her mid-term so that she could participate.

New Member **Suzanne Tytler** is moving to Cold Lake, Alberta, in early December to begin a new chapter in her career. She recently received confirmation from the Canadian Forces that she will be working with them as a civilian nurse as a Case Manager. Suzanne is interested in the history of military nursing and in October attended a "Trench Dinner" at which 20 others interested in military history met to recreate a World War I dinner in the trenches of France. She sent an email to Glennis Zilm in which she described it: "There were about 20 of us and over the campfire, the host cooked Bully Beef: tinned meat of some kind (?) & peas served over 'hard tack,' which one of the other guys had made. Someone else had cooked potatoes and scrambled eggs together, which would've been what the French & Belgian women served the soldiers, along w/ wine & not too sure about Stella beer- don't know if it was around in 1916, but it certainly was around in 2006!! Of course, everyone had their daily ration of rum (courtesy of a rum jar bought in Europe). After chowing down, we had our platoon picture taken with 2 four-legged mascots & I had the rum jar in hand... We retreated to the bunker (basement) as the rain was not friendly & proceeded to watch war movies. I left just before the host made tea in a petrol can.... those poor soldiers!!" In March she spent 2 weeks visiting French and Belgian cemeteries, museums and memorials created for and honoring the soldiers and health care providers of both World Wars. Especially moving was a visit to a cemetery off the beaten path where they saw the graves of three Canadian Nursing Sisters killed on May 30, 1918 during a bombing raid on their hospital. This trip has stirred an even deeper interest in military history and specifically in health care during wartime.

**Frances Marion (Hewgill) Mitchell 1911-2006**

Fran was born in Moosomin, Saskatchewan, trained in the Winnipeg General Hospital graduating in 1934. She became a Public Health Nurse in the East Kootenay Area, following the term of Esther Paulson. She met a widower teaching in Galena School and married him in August 1956. Charlie Mitchell moved to the West Kootenay when Galena closed down. Fran served many years as PHN in Salmo, BC where she and Charlie worked till their retirement in 1965. They moved to Penticton where they gardened, supported the Penticton United Church and Fran was welcomed by step-grandchildren and great grandchildren.

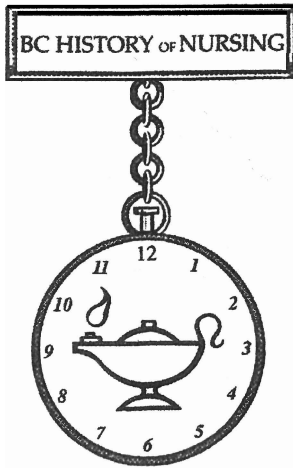
**Glennis Zilm** continues to give guest lectures on history of nursing each term to first year students at Kwantlen University College. She dresses in costume as Mrs. Kate Miller, Canada's first Nursing Sister. Mrs. Miller was in charge of the hospital at Saskatoon during the 1885 North-West Rebellion (the second Riel Rebellion), and Glennis has done a great deal of research into her life. This fall, she also gave a history of nursing seminar with fourth-year students at Douglas College in New Westminster.

# HISTORY OF NURSING NEWS

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## EDITORIAL BOARD

Members of the Board are Beth Fitzpatrick (Chair) Sarah Baker, Lois Blais, Diana Bright, Lynne Esson, Beverly **Leipert**, Naomi Miller, Ethel Warbinek and Sheila **Zerr**.

A warm welcome is extended to Sarah Baker who has just joined the board. Sarah is an experienced RN, a 1988 graduate of Langara College. She is working on the last course for her BSN degree through UBC. Sarah lives on Vancouver Island, is the mother of three children and currently works in emergency rooms in local hospitals. Her specific area of historical research is evolving, but she definitely enjoys articles about nurses who, in the 1920s **an'30s**, left big cities to work in remote Red Cross nursing stations.

The History of Nursing Newsletter is published four times a year. Please submit articles and news for the next edition by February 15, 2007 to Beth **Fitzpatrick** at **bethfitz32@shaw.ca** or mail to Box 444, Brackendale, BC V0N 1H0

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