



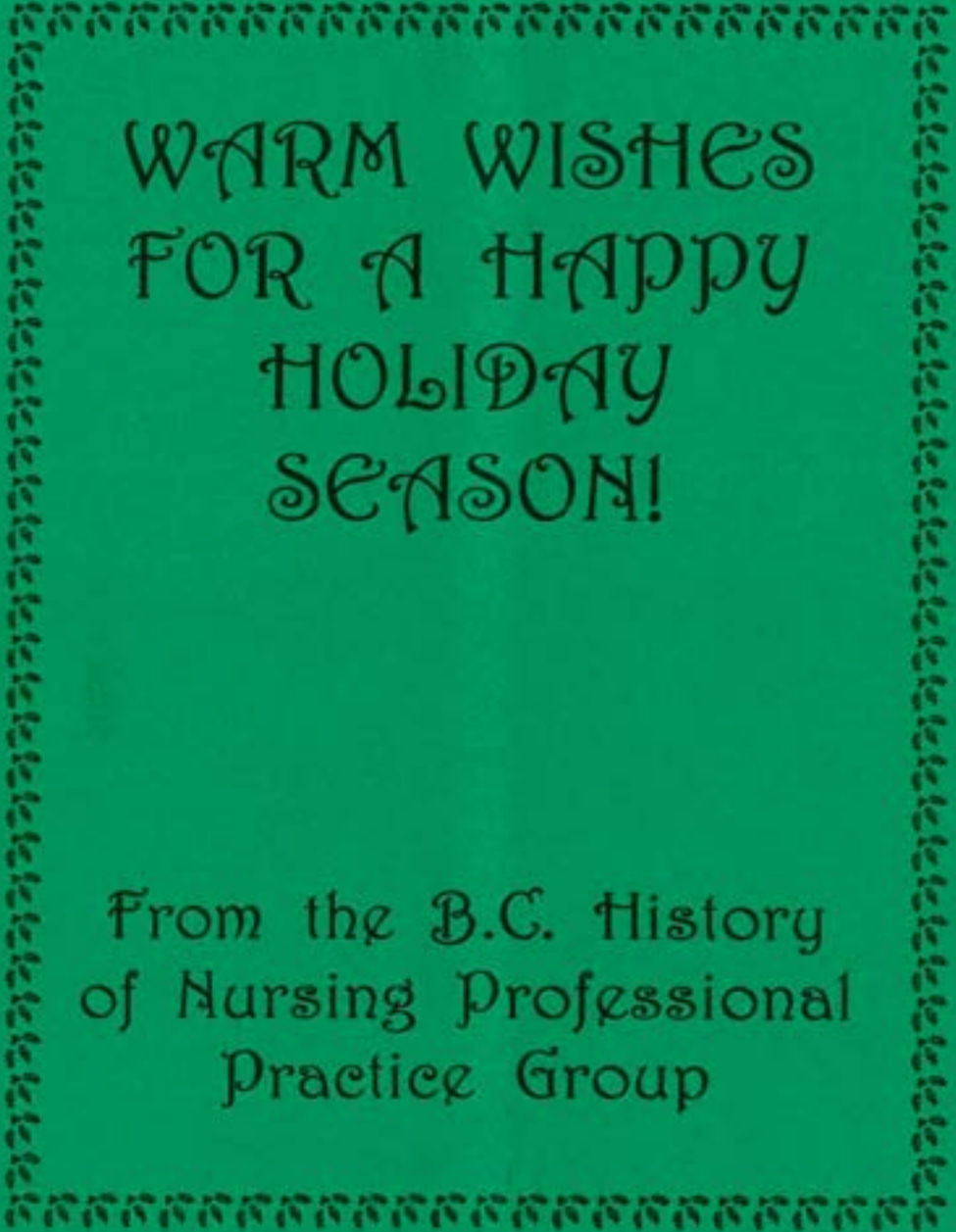
SEASON'S  
GREETINGS

## CHRISTMAS AT GUY'S

Recently I was able to travel back in time and place when visiting London, England with my husband. I returned to Guy's Hospital where I had worked and lived during one wonderful winter in the early sixties. Much had changed but much had not. The cobblestone courtyard with its wrought iron railings still featured Sir Thomas Guy's statue, now totally surrounded by parked cars! The original nurses' home, which I had seen formally reopened by the Queen Mother following extensive upgrading, still looked out over grassed quadrangles, albeit more crowded now with kiosks, walkways and signs. The "new" surgical building where I had worked as a staff nurse looked considerably older on the one hand but much brighter, due to fluorescent lights replacing the softer incandescent lighting of previous times.

Guy's had always reminded me of The Vancouver General Hospital where I had been a nursing instructor prior to this time of travel through Europe. It wasn't hard to see where some of VGH's procedures, policies, traditions and protocols might have originated, in the British ways of providing nursing care, and in the medical model and hierarchy of authority figures. Florence Nightingale's vision was apparent. I immediately felt at home at Guy's and the nurses were surprised at how familiar I seemed to be with what needed to be done, and that I could "get on with it" so quickly. And a good thing too, as orientation to one's ward consisted of a quick tour by Sister and "please, would I mind dishing up the lunch from the trolley for our patients?". I indeed did, managing to apportion just the wrong amounts and types of the rapidly cooling meal to each patient.

How courteous the Brits were to me, a Canadian, and therefore a welcomed novel addition to the ward. "Queen Ward" was an open orthopedic unit of 32 beds in an "L" shape reminiscent of the old Heather Pavilion at VGH. My 48-hour fortnight of 10-hour days was enhanced by



WARM WISHES  
FOR A HAPPY  
HOLIDAY  
SEASON!

From the B.C. History  
of Nursing Professional  
Practice Group



every other weekend off from Friday at 1pm until Monday at 8am. Plus a day and a half off during the other week.

Living in the nurses' home was a great boon – London's theaters and historic sites were only a "tube" ride away. But Christmas was the highlight of the year in the hospital and many staff preferred to stay and work to share the celebrations with patients and staff. Each ward was beautifully decorated with evergreen trees. Turkeys and all trimmings along with beer and wine were provided. Surgeons arrived before noon Christmas Day to carve. Visitor's flowed in and out all day with gifts. Our patients for the most part were allowed to convalesce for a longer period of time in hospital than is now possible.

Christmas Day had started early for the nurses who circulated through wards from 5am. in full uniform, capes reversed to display red linings, singing carols by candlelight and generally reducing everyone to tears. A light snow had fallen Christmas Eve and throughout the night. Christmas Services were held in the hospital chapel for staff. Nurses, surgeons, physios and students gave of themselves and their time to be with patients, most of whom were far from home for a long time in a large institution.

As one of the first non-Guy's trained nurses to work at Guy's, I was warmly welcomed and "orientated" informally by patients and student nurses, even to learning to say "dust bin" instead of "garbage pail" and yes, to not say "eh" after each sentence.

I have wondered how my life might have turned out had I accepted the offer to stay on at Guy's and eventually to become a ward sister. But Canada and home and particularly Vancouver beckoned with all they had to offer. The familiar won out over the novelty of being a Canadian nurse and a rarity at Guy's.

Jill Thompson