

December 2003

Margaret Allemang Centre
for the History of Nursing

NEWSLETTER

Membership Renewal

Membership renewal is due now for 2003
(form enclosed). Please renew now.

**Please encourage your friends
to join - pass along the
Newsletter.**

FEATURES

Evelyn Moritz - Student Nurse

by Evelyn Muller

Evelyn Muller is a member of the Allemang Centre for the History of Nursing. She immigrated to Canada from Germany in 1973, having survived a critical period in German and world history. Evelyn was sponsored by the North York General Hospital and they hired her in a non-nursing position because, as a foreign-trained nurse, she was required to take courses and write a registration exam. She was successful in accomplishing this in August 1974, but prior to that she was already working as a 'pre-grad' at the new Mount Sinai Hospital. For the next nineteen years, until her retirement in 1993, she worked at Mount Sinai. We are pleased that Evelyn is writing her personal story, and present Part I of her story in this Newsletter.

The new post-war government offered me the opportunity to complete my education. I was at that time not prepared to return to school and prepare for university and instead completed a course at a commercial college in Berlin. My family was not so certain that I

PART I - Remembering

I was born in Berlin, Germany and grew up

there during the years of World War II. By the time I was 18 years old, I had survived not only the holocaust but also the Battle of Berlin. My experiences in this period of history convinced me I wanted to become a nurse.

Because my mother was Jewish, I was forced to leave school aged 14 and was not considered acceptable for higher education. At that time it was mandatory for every girl in Germany to work one year in a household or on a farm after finishing school. Consequently, for a year I looked after twin girls who were three months old when I began.

After the war, when people could move about in the city again without fear of being shot at, I decided to visit the twins. Then I learned that during the Battle of Berlin both those children (them aged two and a half years) died within six weeks of each other, mainly because there was no access to medicine or medical help during the battle. People were isolated in their basements or shelters during the battle and could not get out for any kind of assistance. As a result of this experience, I wanted to be able to assist my family should I ever be in such a situation again. Nursing seemed a logical choice.

was suitable for nursing, particularly the heavy work of caring for sick adults. Reluctantly, my father agreed to let me undertake the two-year training at the Berlin City Hospital for Sick Children to become a pediatric nurse.

I knew that this experience would represent a change of my lifestyle, but I was not quite prepared for how much of a change this would entail. I dressed in uniform and starched cap, not to forget the starched apron with starched apron-strings brought forward into a bow, provided by the hospital. Thus I appeared on my first ward - and was promptly sent to my room to pin up my shoulder-length hair under the cap!

The room in the nurses' quarters was a bit of a shock. The nurses' residence had been destroyed during the war and the student nurses were accommodated in a converted patient ward above the dining hall. As a student nurse I had to share my room with four other students. Our room was furnished with: 5 white hospital beds, 5 white bedside tables, 5 white chairs and 5 white wardrobes lined up against the walls. The lighting was one bluish-white globe hanging from the ceiling in the middle of the room. Needless to say, we had to make our quarters more comfortable. We found old pieces of furniture in the hospital attic that were promptly moved into our room, for example, old medicine cabinets that, resting on the floor, could be used as coffee tables. We shifted all the wardrobes into one corner of the room creating a kind of cubicle that we used for changing and gave us some privacy. From home we brought some bedside lights and painted a face on the globe in the middle of the room. Eventually we removed the head and foot boards of our beds and rested the iron mattresses on bricks at each corner to make them look more like day beds. We thought that made our room look much more comfortable. Matron, who made her daily inspection rounds, got one little shock after another when she discovered our
In August 1949 I immigrated to London, England to care for two small cousins and be a mother's help to my aunt. After a few months I decided to commence my general nursing training at one of the leading medical schools in London - the Royal Free Hospital. This training was an additional three and a half years. I did not apply for recognition of my previous pediatric training in Germany. I was

initiative in finding extra items of furniture. In the end she laughed and approved our changes.

The night nurse woke us at 6:00 a.m.; we breakfasted at 6:30 (in our room) and reported for duty at 7:00 a.m. If we were on duty the next day, we were required to be in bed by 10:00 p.m. Off duty amounted to one and a half days per week not necessarily all together. We did two weeks of night duty at a time from 8:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m. There were no scheduled breaks during this time. We had one week off after nights.

The training course at the Berlin City Hospital for Sick Children was considered a modern program. Starting October 1946, we were the second course commencing after World War II. We were given one full day per week for protected lecture and study time. Many nurses' programs of the day did not provide this and student nurses were required to attend their lectures during their off-duty time either in the afternoon or in the evening after a full day of work on the wards. Sometimes they had to come in for lectures on their days off!

Many of my memories of this time are a little blurred because I had not thought about this for so many years. My environment changed much over the years, however, I do remember how great the shortages were in a Berlin that had almost completely been destroyed during the war. Hospital supplies were almost non-existent and antibiotics, with the exception of sulfonamides, were unknown to us.

I passed my State Examination as a Registered Sick Children's Nurse in Germany in October 1948.

not sure if I would have problems training in a different language. I graduated from the Royal Free Hospital in June 1953 and began to practice in a very different world from the one in which I had begun my nursing career - at the British Military Hospital in West Berlin!

I visited Canada for the first time in 1970 when the Berlin Wall was still in place and I was

living in West Berlin. Travelling out of Berlin by road or rail was rather irritating because of the long delays by border controls as one passed through communist East Germany (DDR). Small wonder, therefore, that on my first visit to Montreal in 1970 I fell in love with the vastness and beauty of this country and the fact of those many cultures and races living together peacefully. This impression was reinforced when I visited Toronto in the summer of 1972. During this visit I had the opportunity to tour the North York General Hospital in Willowdale, and as a British-trained nurse I was invited to come to work there. In 1973 I came to live in Canada and began work as a receptionist in Emergency at North York General Hospital. My courses prior to my registration commenced in January 1974. The new Mount Sinai Hospital hired me in May of 1974 as a 'pre-grad' and I remained there after I was registered.

I will continue in Part II with some of my memories from my pediatric training in post-war West Berlin.

NEWS ITEMS

Awards and Special Recognition

Lavinia L. Dock Award for Exemplary Historical Research and Writing

We are delighted that **Carol Helmstadter** has been recognized with this prestigious award for the best article in nursing history published in 2002. Carol's article, "Early Nursing Reform: a Doctor Driven Phenomenon" was published in *Medical History*, the Wellcome Trust's history of medicine journal.

Nurses administered blood transfusions "all the time" and "penicillin q3h." Mary could not understand the earlier "fussing" around the giving of penicillin to "those few cases" at Number 18 (Canadian General Hospital in England). Her patients were "extremely ill . . .

McMaster Faculty Recognition

Alma Reid, a long-time director of the McMaster University School of Nursing, was recently inducted into the McMaster *Community of Distinction*. Myrtle Kutschke, a former McMaster faculty member now in Sudbury, attended the ceremony. We hope to publish in the next Newsletter some of the speech and the citation that honoured Alma.

New Acquisition

Judith Young reports:

A Nurse's Letter from the Front

In July 1944, six weeks after D-Day, Canadian Nursing sister Mary Bray (Hutton) wrote from "somewhere in France" to a nurse friend in England. Mary was with the Number 3 Casualty Clearing Station (CCS) in a tent hospital at Caen. The letter is remarkable for its detailed insights into conditions at the time.

Mary wrote, "Be thankful you are in England. Believe me I have never ever worked so hard, seen such grim horrible sights nor felt so exhausted." Her unit was close enough to the Front that "we can't sleep for noise despite our extreme weariness." Number 3 was the first Canadian CCS to open and several "bigwigs" had visited to see "our set up." Mary "nearly died" when she discovered it was a General she had pushed aside in her haste "to save an intravenous from gumming up." Water was scarce particularly for personal use and the food limited and boring (stew three times a day). There was little time for personal care and Mary wrote that the rations "play havoc with one's complexion . . . I'm one horrible mess and don't care."

sucking chest wounds, abdomens" (a ward full of colostomies). She wrote that "Looking down the ward one would swear it was a morgue. You could weep to see those young chaps." Mary had no time to celebrate her birthday though she had a date "lined up." The bottle of scotch, saved for

the occasion, remained in her locker. Despite the conditions, Mary commented that she was “quite happy” with little time to “worry about oneself.” Even so, she urged her friend not to be “too keen on getting here it’s quite tough going.”

The History of the Letter

In 2000, the recipient of the letter returned it, still in the original envelope, to Mary who passed it on to Margaret Allemang. Contacted recently, Mary Hutton lives in Toronto and attends Nursing Sister Association events. She was recently widowed.

New Books

Lights Out! by Kate Wilson is a reprint of the memoir by World War One Nursing sister Kate Wilson first published in 1981. It is updated with a new preface and maps and is available in December from CEF Books (price \$19.95). It can be obtained via the Web or from CEF Books, PO Box 40083, Ottawa ON K1V 0W8.

RECENT & COMING EVENTS

History of Nursing Writing Prize

The Allemang Centre is offering a prize of \$300 for the best essay in the history of nursing written by a student in the year September 2003 through August 2004.

Criteria for submissions:

- 1 The paper may deal with any topic in the history of nursing in any period and in any country.
- 2 Papers should be a minimum of 8 pages, **CANADIAN SOCIETY FOR THE HISTORY OF MEDICINE** will hold its **Annual Conference** at the University of Manitoba, Winnipeg on June 4-6, 2004. The

and a maximum of 25 pages in length including footnotes.

- 3 Both undergraduate and graduate students may submit.
- 4 The student must be enrolled in a university or community college in Ontario. Students **from any faculty, including nursing, social science, humanities and science**, are invited to apply.

The deadline for submission is August 31 2004. The prize will be awarded on October 1 2004.

Papers may be submitted either by e-mail or in hard copy. Electronic copies should be in either Microsoft Word or Word Perfect and include academic affiliation, address, telephone and fax numbers. Students submitting in hard copy should send three copies. The first copy should have the name, academic affiliation, address, telephone, fax and e-mail. The remaining two copies should have no identification.

Please send papers to the vice-president of the Allemang Centre:
Ms. Dorothy Wylie
304 - 65 Scadding Avenue
Toronto ON M5A 4L1
e-mail: WylieDM@aol.com

Upcoming Conferences

CANADIAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE HISTORY OF NURSING/ L'ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE POUR L'HISTOIRE DU NURSING will hold its annual conference at **York University, Toronto, Friday 11 June to Sunday 13 June, 2004**. There will be a special student rate, and rooms can be booked in the York residences as well as in the conference hotel. Registration form attached. See: www.ualberta.ca/~jhibberd/CAHN_ACHN

conference theme will be “Confluence: Ideas, Identity, Place.” For further information about the conference please visit the CSHM website at meds.queensu.ca/medicine/histm/ or contact the

Conference Chair, Dr. James Hanley at
j.hanley@uwinnipeg.ca

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Call for Abstracts

**CANADIAN ASSOCIATION FOR
THE HISTORY OF NURSING/
L'ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE
POUR L'HISTOIRE DU NURSING**
(See announcement of conference) invites
abstracts for papers on any topic in the history
of nursing. Papers must represent original
work not already published or in press. The
program committee is seeking papers from
community scholars, students, full-time
researchers and academics. Papers should be
20 minutes in length. Proposals for
symposiums are welcomed. These sessions
should include three 20 minute papers, a 20
minute comment from the chair or moderator,
plus another 20 minutes for questions and
discussion from the audience.

Guidelines for submission of abstracts

Abstracts should be 250 words in length, can
be in either French or English, and may be
submitted in hard copy or by e-mail (in either
WordPerfect or Microsoft Word). The abstract
should include a complete title, the author's
name, address, and institutional affiliation if
there is one. Please also include contact
details: telephone number, e-mail address, fax,
and full postal address.

**Deadline for submission of abstracts:
on or before 15 January 2004**

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