

*January 2003*

*Margaret Allemang Centre  
for the History of Nursing*

# NEWSLETTER

## *Membership Renewal*

Membership renewal is due now for 2003 (form enclosed). To keep you up-to-date with plans for the coming year, you will find some highlights of the January 10<sup>th</sup> planning meeting on page six.

## *Upcoming Meeting*

April 5th is the tentative date for the next Allemang Centre meeting. This will be the Annual General Meeting followed by a speaker (tba).

## *Leave a Legacy*

Last year we joined the Leave a Legacy programme. This organisation assists non-profit groups by encouraging fundraising through bequests. The enclosed brochure provides general information about leaving a gift.

## **FEATURES**

### **A Crimean War Excursion**

by Carol Helmstadter

#### **Part 1: Scutari**

Last September together with my Australian colleague, Judith Godden, I presented a paper at the International Society for the

History of Medicine in Istanbul. I was sorry that there were only two sessions devoted to nursing history, but the papers which were given had a very international flavour. There were several by English nurses, one by an Iranian nurse, one by a Russian doctor, and of course our own paper by a Canadian nurse and an Australian historian. It is always one of the great pleasures of these conferences to meet with people from other countries and to get their perspectives on our work, and I was very pleased by the number of people who were very interested in the nursing history papers. We had many excellent questions after our presentation, both during the session and at the various lunches, dinners and tours which followed.

The conference was magnificently organised with a wonderful balance between social events, sightseeing tours and papers, and it was held in the best hotel in the city. The rooms were beautiful, we had gorgeous views of the Golden Horn, and quite frankly, I have never enjoyed such luxury. The tours were wonderful with visits to historic hospitals, the Hagai Sophia, the magnificent mosques of Sinan, a concert of Turkish court music, whirling dervishes and a dinner cruise on the Bosphorus. I found it thrilling to sail down the Bosphorus and see the sights so beautifully described by Nightingale and her nurses who enjoyed taking the caiques across the water to Constantinople where they visited many of the same sights.

There was also a special tour to Scutari where what was the Barracks Hospital during the Crimean War is once again a military barracks. Unfortunately that meant that we were only allowed to visit the two rooms set aside as a museum. The first room is a museum of the Turkish Army. It commemorates the establishment of the Turkish Republic after World War One more prominently than the Crimean War in which the Turkish Army played a less heroic part. Upstairs, however, was the room which Nightingale used for her office. The views of the Bosphorus from its windows were, as she wrote, very beautiful, and the furniture was all the same furniture which she used. I even sat at the desk where Nightingale worked! However, the museum authorities have restored the room so that it looks quite elegant and not at all the way nurses described it in 1854. They spoke of the roof leaking so badly that they were soaked at night, absolutely no heat, and many rats with dreadful flea infestations in their blankets and the cushions on the window ledges. I was surprised to learn that the barracks were almost brand new in 1854, having been built only three or four years previously. I had always associated the leaking roof, rats and fleas with an old building.

I immediately recognised one of the corridors so frequently pictured in the *Illustrated London News* where soldiers lay on straw mattresses which the nurses had hastily put together after the Battle of Inkerman, but we were not allowed to take pictures of it. I was anxious to see the other rooms where the nurses were quartered but the young officer who took us around was very firm that we they were off limits and no exceptions could be made. We went to the British burial ground where the Turks buried soldiers in mass, unmarked graves. There were a few graves of nurses which Nightingale had marked with gravestones.

Following the ISHM conference we went on to Sevastopol. This visit will be described in the next newsletter.

## Isabel Black – An Appreciation

by Joyce MacQueen

Isabel Black, a distinguished public health nurse, died on the 8<sup>th</sup> of February, 2002. She was a long-time member of the Allemang Centre.

Isabel Black was born in St. Mary's, Ontario in 1910 and graduated in nursing from Victoria Hospital in London in 1931. She worked at Victoria Hospital and at the Tuberculosis Sanitarium in London where she became committed to the ideal of prevention. She spent the rest of her career in public health. After receiving a certificate in public health from the University of Western Ontario she worked in Hamilton, Orillia, Kingston, Kirkland Lake, New Liskeard and North Bay. In 1950 she received a Bachelor of Science with a major in Public Health Nursing Administration from Columbia University and began work with the Ontario Division of Public Health nursing under the leadership of Edna L. Moore. Prior to becoming Director of Public Health Nursing for Ontario she completed a master's degree in Public Health Nursing Administration at Columbia.

Isabel Black involved herself in the education of public health nurses and in 1973 was awarded an honorary doctorate from the University of Ottawa. National and international public health circles respected Black's knowledge and ability. She worked with the National Nursing Committee of the Canadian Red Cross, and was a fellow of the American Public Health Association. In 1975, a year after her retirement, she was made a member emeritus of the Registered Nurses Association of Ontario and remained a vocal supporter of that organization. She was made an honorary member of the Canadian Red Cross Association and received the Queen Elizabeth 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Silver Medal.

Black enjoyed a full and happy life. She was a member of the Soroptimist Club of

Toronto, the Canadian Nature Federation, the Ontario Federation of Naturalists; she was a United Church elder, a trustee of World Literacy of Canada; she participated in the Foster Parents' Plan. She loved music and continued to attend concerts after she moved to a retirement complex in Stratford, Ontario. She will be remembered affectionately as a woman of intellect, strength and integrity.

For further details on Isabel Black's career please see Joyce MacQueen's article in the "Portrait of Leadership" series *RN Magazine* Jan/Feb 2000.

## **Two Ontario Nursing Schools : Hamilton General and Quo Vadis**

Founded in 1890, the School of Nursing of Hamilton General Hospital was one of the earliest in Ontario. In contrast, Quo Vadis, a Toronto school, did not open until 1964. The Allemang Centre has some materials in its collection related to each school.

### **Hamilton General Nursing School**

Started in 1890, the school came about following a "management crisis" at the eight-year-old hospital. Details of events are murky but at the time of the crisis the resident physician and the most capable nurses resigned. Dr Ingersoll Olmstead - asked to step into the breach - decided a new regime was in order, hired a trained nurse as Superintendent, and the school opened.

Up to this time, nurses at the Hamilton Hospital were "untrained" but obviously some were well thought of as Olmstead persuaded two to return; Jean Caldenhead and Annie Ross became the new school's first students. Given credit for their experience, the two nurses received certificates in less than two years. It is

interesting to note that Toronto General gave a similar training opportunity to its staff when the TGH school opened in 1882.

At the turn of the century, robust health was a prime requisite for training and, in 1900, a new recruit was more or less told by the Superintendent not to bother to turn up unless she was "perfectly healthy." She was needed for duty right away. Of the early Superintendents the name Grace Fairley (1919-1924) stands out. She was a President of the Canadian Nurses Association and a Vice-President of the International Council of Nurses.

A scrapbook by Helen Palmer (1932-35) gives a picture of life at the school in the early 1930s. As well as photos and cards, the scrapbook contains many tongue-in-cheek poems depicting the trials of the student nurse. Palmer went on to a long career at the Hospital for Sick Children and was likely the first staff nurse hired by that institution who was not one of its own graduates!

For a short period in the 1940s a combined BA and diploma course was set up between the Hamilton General School and McMaster University but this was discontinued when McMaster set up its own programme.

The school continued to the early 1970s when all Ontario hospital programmes moved into the community colleges. The Alumnae Association, founded in 1901, continues to meet and a member recently donated a 1940s nursing procedure book to the Centre. We currently have Helen Palmer's scrapbook on loan from her niece.

(see *The Hamilton General Hospital School of Nursing 1890-1955* by Marjorie Freeman Campbell, 1956).

### **Quo Vadis**

Although Quo Vadis existed for barely ten years its success as a unique programme,

designed for women and men aged thirty to fifty years, gives it a special place in the nursing history of the province.

The school was an outcome of the Quo Vadis Project; a study by the Catholic Hospital Conference of Ontario concerned with the future of nursing schools. The title Quo Vadis, meaning, Where are you going? was thought appropriate for the project and when the school opened, in September 1964, it took on this name.

The early 1960s were a time of great concern about nursing shortage and the attrition from schools of nursing. The Quo Vadis organisers decided to tap a different population for potential recruits and to be truly innovative in gearing a programme to the life circumstances of the students. The first thirty who entered were mostly married and mostly over forty. To suit their needs, the programme was non-residential, took two calendar years, and ran weekdays 9-5. There was a nominal tuition fee.

Initially classrooms were located at St Joseph's Hospital, Toronto but in 1968, the school moved to its own site at the Queensway Hospital in the western part of the city. The Director was Margaret Mackenzie and chair of the board was Abbyann Lynch. The uniqueness of the programme, and the success of its students, led to a speight of articles in newspapers, journals (Canada and overseas) and even the *Reader's Digest*. The National Film Board of Canada made a documentary on Quo Vadis entitled "Experienced Hands." Applicants went through a careful selection process and attrition was low. Many applied but classes remained relatively small with a 1969 photo showing 34 graduates that year.

With the move to community colleges, despite efforts to retain the school, plans were made in 1973 to integrate Quo Vadis into the Humber College nursing programme. The Alumni Association continues to meet annually and one of its members has published a book about the

school. The Allemang Centre has a small collection of reports, newspaper cuttings, and articles about Quo Vadis donated by Margaret Mills who was librarian at the school.

## **NEWS ITEMS**

### *Acquisitions*

Margaret Allemang has graciously agreed to donate her archival collection to the Centre. Part of this collection (the World War 1 and 11 materials) has already been catalogued and is listed on our website. Further items are related to Margaret's career in nursing research and teaching.

### *Exhibition 2005 and Book*

A report in the September newsletter detailed the proposed nursing exhibition planned for 2005 at the Museum of Civilization. A few more details can be given regarding the book due to come out to coincide with the exhibition. Intended as an overview of the literature on Canadian nursing history from New France to the present, the book will be published in French and English. It will be fully illustrated, modestly priced, and will be marketed as a general interest history book. The editors are historians Christina Bates, Dianne Dodd and Nicole Rousseau. Many of the chapter authors are members of the Canadian Association for the History of Nursing.

### *Update on the Toronto East General Museum*

Jill Robertson (Alumnae President) reports that the museum will likely open in May. It

will house materials related to the history of the hospital including nursing. More information in the next newsletter.

### *HSC Alumnae Centennial*

There are plans to celebrate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Hospital for Sick Children Nursing Alumnae this year. As well as a festive luncheon in November, centennial events include a commemorative edition of the fall newsletter. Members are currently being canvassed for their “most significant memory” of HSC for possible inclusion in this newsletter. Ethicist Abbyann Lynch will give the Jean I. Masten lecture May 13<sup>th</sup> during Nurses’ Week. A calendar for 2004 is planned highlighting HSC nurses through the last century.

The HSC Alumnae was founded in 1903 though the first nurse graduated in 1888. Early in its existence, the Alumnae decided to actively support the “crusade” against tuberculosis so formed the Heather Club. This group organised, equipped and ran the Heather Club Pavilion on Toronto Island which provided needy children with a summer in the fresh air. Preventoriums were seen as an important means of treating children thought to be susceptible to tuberculosis and the Heather Club continued this work for a considerable number of years. Today, the HSC Alumnae remains an active, well-supported organisation and has plans to remain in existence for a further 25 years or more.

### *Archives at Bridgepoint*

In November a small group spent a day at Riverdale/Bridgepoint. The aim was to organise our stored materials so that we have space for acquisitions. Future work will involve cataloguing and further re-arranging within this storage space.

### *New Book on Northern Nurses*

The book *Northern Nurses: True Nursing Adventures from Canada’s North* recently received a very positive review in the *Globe and Mail* (January 25<sup>th</sup>). This is a small volume of personal reminiscences by nurses who have lived in northern villages, missions or nursing stations, or worked as flight attendants. Edited by J. Karen Scott and Joan E. Kaiser, the book is published by Kokum Publications and sells for \$25. It can be ordered through the website [www.abebooks.com](http://www.abebooks.com).

### *RECENT EVENTS*

#### *November Meeting*

On November 2<sup>nd</sup> Jocelyn Hezekiah gave an entertaining, illustrated talk which focused on the three nurses featured in her book *Breaking the Glass Ceiling: The Stories of Three Caribbean Nurses*. Nita Barrow of Barbados, Berenice Dolly of Trinidad and Tobago, and Mary Jane Seivright of Jamaica played an exceptional role in advancing nursing both in their own countries and internationally. Jocelyns’s book received a truly excellent review in the recent issue of *Nursing History Review*.

#### *Planning Meeting Jan 10th*

The directors, with Elizabeth Kovac our advisor on strategic planning, and five members recently got together for an afternoon discussion and planning session. After looking at the goals, accomplishments, strengths, and weaknesses of the organisation, we broke into small groups to focus on specific ideas for the upcoming year. The discussion was lively and productive. The groups made suggestions for accomplishing the following this year:

- 1) A 20% increase in membership through a membership drive.
- 2) Enhanced public profile through improvements to the website and continued upgrading of the newsletter.
- 3) The creation of two types of movable displays.
- 4) Clarification of our acquisitions policy and continued work on organising our archival materials.

### *Upcoming Conferences*

The Canadian Society for the History of History of Medicine will have its annual conference May 30 - June 1, 2003 in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

The Canadian Association for the History of Nursing and the American Association for the History of Nursing will hold a joint conference in Milwaukee, Wisconsin September 19 – 21, 2003. The deadline for abstract submission was January 12<sup>th</sup>.

### *Next Newsletter Editor*

Joyce MacQueen will edit the next newsletter. Please contact Joyce by mid-April regarding any news items, short articles, announcements, ideas you may have for the newsletter.  
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### *Allemang Website*

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