

May 2003

*Margaret Allemand Centre*

*for the History of Nursing*

# NEWSLETTER

## *Membership Renewal*

If you have not already renewed your membership for 2003, please do so now. We are anxious to keep your membership.

## *Annual General Meeting Cancelled*

Due to concern about SARS for nursing personnel, the Allemang Centre Annual General Meeting followed by a speaker planned for 5 April was cancelled. In order to continue the work of the Allemang Centre, the Board met in a teleconference on 6 May. Please see the report of this teleconference on page 3.

## **FEATURE**

### **A Crimean War Excursion**

**by Carol Helmstadter**

In Part 1 Carol described the conference of the International Society for the History of Medicine in Istanbul at which she and Australian colleague, Judith Godden, presented a paper.

#### **Part 2 Sebastopol**

Following the conference we went on to Sevastopol where we visited all the wonderful Todleben fortifications which

survive, plus some which have been reconstructed. We saw the site of Tolstoy's command. The siege of Sevastopol was a defining moment for the Russians so there were many very beautiful memorials to the soldiers and sailors who put up such a heroic defence. There was a fabulous panorama depicting Sevastopol as seen from the Malakoff. It included all the efforts of the besieged army, with the sailors manning their naval guns, the sappers countermining the French sappers, and the nurses at work under fire. Unlike the British, French and Sardinian nurses, the Russian nurses actually worked on the battlefield and in the fortifications. The Russians had a brilliant medical service where the great surgeon Nikolai Pirogov first introduced the concept of triage, a few years later used to such good effect in the American Civil War. Florence Nightingale considered the Russian nursing service the best of those in the four armies.

We also visited the area where the British Army was encamped and walked through some of the trenches which they dug. They were very shallow compared to World War I trenches, in large part because the ground is so rocky, which of course is also why the trenches survived while those dug in earth collapsed over the years. The Nazis used these same trenches in their defence of Sevastopol in World War II. We also experienced the Crimean mud which all the nurses described in such detail. Our minivan was stuck in the deep mud on the site of the British camp and

we had to call a taxi to get back to Sevastopol! By 1855 the nurses were living in pre-fabricated huts sent out from England which were far superior to their quarters in Scutari but which still let the snow in through the roof and still were infested with rats. They described going out from their huts to visit the hospital huts and being met by armies of rats that were not the least bit afraid of them. Unlike the deep mud, there was no trace of the huts left on the site and I was pleased not to see any rats.

We visited the harbor of Balaklava where, during the Cold War the Russians hollowed a nuclear submarine base out of the mountains. Again, I was surprised at how much it looked like the nineteenth century pictures. The sites of three of the four pitched battles, however, were not so easily recognizable because they were quite barren in the nineteenth century pictures but are now well treed. The place where the battle of the Alma was fought is still a field, but the river itself, where a number of the British soldiers drowned as they tried to cross it, is now a tiny trickle of water no more than three feet wide at best. We stood on the very spot where the Thin Red Line suddenly rose up to confront the Russian cavalry at Balaklava and surveyed the valley down which the Light Brigade erroneously charged. We did not try to climb the mountains to the Inkerman Heights, feeling that we were not in as good shape as the Russian soldiers who surprised the allied soldiers, but we did walk along the Heights. We also explored the area where the Russians were slaughtered during the Battle of the Tchernaya. It was a very moving experience and we felt ourselves extremely fortunate to have the opportunity to see the Crimean War from a Russian perspective.

*Margaret Mills - An  
Appreciation*

### **By Judith Young**

We were saddened to hear of the death in February of Margaret Mills, a member of the Allemang Centre. Margaret's long and varied nursing career included service in World War Two and subsequent positions in nursing service and education. Margaret was born in Manitoba and entered the School of Nursing, Women's College Hospital, Toronto, in 1939. After graduating, and following a year's work experience, she enlisted in the Royal Canadian Army Medical Corps (June 1944). Her war service included postings to England (with No. 23 Canadian General Hospital) and to Belgium where she cared for prisoners-of-war as well as Canadian soldiers. Her time in war-torn Europe made a deep impression, particularly the weariness of Belgian civilians with the deprivations of war and with the military presence. She returned to Canada in August 1946.

Like many of her wartime colleagues, Margaret used a post-war grant, offered by the Government to former service personnel, to attend university. She received a BA from the University of Toronto and later completed a Diploma in Nursing Education. Subsequently, she worked as a supervisor at the new Peterborough Civic Hospital and then returned to Toronto to teach at the Wellesley and at Women's College Hospital. The last year of Margaret's career was spent as librarian at the Quo Vadis School of Nursing (see January Newsletter). She was proud to be part of the Quo Vadis experiment and maintained contact with former students. Margaret died in Toronto.

Note - The Allemang Centre has a copy of the tape and transcript made by Margaret Mills as Part of Margaret Allemang's Canadian Nursing Sisters project.

*Quo Vadis*

In our last Newsletter Judith Young described the Quo Vadis Nursing Program and its later integration into Humber College. She would like to add that the last Quo Vadis class graduated in 1982 even though it was part of Humber College by then.

## **NEWS ITEMS**

### *Display Workshop*

At our strategic planning meeting in January one of the four goals for this year was the creation of displays to enliven interest in the history of nursing and in our organization. With Margaret Allemang's donation of her collection of Nursing Sister artifacts and records, in addition to those we already held, we now have a rich collection on military nursing in two world wars.

Carol Helmstadter reports:  
Since none of us had any experience in designing displays we asked Dr. Phaedra Livingstone of the Faculty of Museum Studies at the University of Toronto to hold a workshop for us. Phaedra and Carol Helmstadter spent a morning at Bridgepoint choosing artifacts that would make the most interesting displays and get across the message we wanted to convey – the actual work which nurses did during the wars. Then Professor Kate McPherson arranged for a workshop to be held with Phaedra in the History Common Room at York University on Friday 11 April. In attendance were a number of Allemang Board members and four graduate students who are working in the history of nursing.

Phaedra gave us a brief historic overview of displays in museum settings, stressed the importance of targeting our audience, discussed design principles, and pointed out difficulties in preservation. Then we went into break-up groups and planned displays

using the catalogue which we had made of some of Marg's military holdings. The afternoon was most productive and stimulating as well as a lot of fun. We all agreed that the young people were an enormous addition to the discussions. Phaedra was also pleased with the session and is anxious to give us further help when we mount the displays.

We hope to put on the first display at Bridgepoint where we think many non-nurses will see the display case. There are also many other places where we can take the display, including the 2004 CAHN Conference.

## **RECENT EVENTS**

### *April Board Teleconference*

While the Board is elected at the Annual General Meeting, the officers of the Board are selected by the Board itself. At the Teleconference which convened on 6 May at 8:00 p.m. the following officers were elected unanimously:

President - Kathleen McMillan  
Vice President - Dorothy Wylie  
Secretary-treasurer - Judith Young  
Chair of Acquisitions Committee  
- Carol Helmstadter

Kathleen has agreed to be president for one year, following which Dorothy is willing to become president.

The Board expressed its gratitude to Carol for her dedication, vision and all the hard work she did as president to promote the goals of the organization.

The Board approved in principle awarding a monetary prize for the best student essay in nursing history in Ontario. A committee will work out the details of the award.

### *Upcoming Conferences*

**The Canadian Society for the 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 Canadian Association for the History of Nursing/ L'Association Canadienne pour L'Histoire du Nursing** (CAHN/ACHN) is pleased to announce that our 2004 annual conference will be held at York University in Toronto Friday 11 June through Sunday 13 June. We are especially encouraging students to attend and submit abstracts. There will accordingly be a special student rate for the conference, and rooms can be booked in the York dormitories as well as in the conference hotel. Please watch for further details on our website, [www.ualberta.ca/~jhibberd/CAHN\\_ACHN](http://www.ualberta.ca/~jhibberd/CAHN_ACHN). We will have more information in the fall.

## *Calls for Papers*

**16<sup>th</sup> CAHN/ACHN Annual Conference  
June 11-13, 2004 , York University,  
Toronto, Ontario  
Call for abstracts**

The Canadian Association for the History of Nursing invites abstracts for papers on any topic in the history of nursing. Papers must represent original work not already published or in the press. We are seeking papers from community scholars, students, full-time researchers and academics. Papers should be 20 minutes in length. The program committee welcomes proposals for symposiums. These sessions should include

three 20 minute papers, a 20 minute comment from the chairman or moderator, plus another 20 minutes for questions and discussion from the audience.

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

**Deadline:** Please submit an abstract **before 15 January 2004** to Carol Helmstadter.

**E-mail:** [carol.helmstadter@rogers.com](mailto:carol.helmstadter@rogers.com)

**Mail:** CAHN 2004 Conference  
c/o Carol Helmstadter  
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## **Canadian Museum of Civilization Call for Vignettes**

The last Newsletter reported on the book being published on Canadian Nursing, 1608 to the present, by the Canadian Museum of Civilization, edited by Christina Bates, Dianne Dodd and Nicole Rousseau. Within each chapter, they plan to include short "vignettes" or sidebars featuring specific people, events and themes. They will choose approximately 25 vignettes for the book. However, they hope to find an alternate venue to publish any that they are unable to include in the book.

**Description:** Each vignette will tell an interesting story - avoiding a list of facts and dates - using a narrative and anecdotal tone. The vignette should also illustrate some important theme in the history of nursing in Canada. A biographical vignette could be a brief portrait of someone who has had a significant impact on nursing, for example nursing education leader Kathleen Russell, or a nurse who has had a unique approach to

nursing, such as outpost nurse, Myra Bennett. An event could be either a pivotal point in Canadian nursing such as the founding of a religious community devoted to health care, or the achievement of registration legislation in the 1920s. An event could also show nurses playing an important role, such as during the Halifax explosion, the polio epidemic, or D-Day. Vignettes should be very focused. For example, a military nursing vignette could focus on a specific location, such as the Canadian hospital ship, the Letitia.

We are particularly looking for vignettes relating to specialized nursing, male nurses, nurses of colour, nursing in the international scene, Aboriginal nurses, mental health nursing, children's nursing and military nursing prior to 1885.

**Length:** Texts should be 200-300 words (no more than 300), doubled spaced, without endnotes. Authors may include one or two pertinent publications related to their topic, as sources for additional reading.

**Format:** Font: Times New Roman. Please avoid use of macros or other complicated formatting. Style: Chicago Manual of Style (History, not Scientific) with Canadian spelling.

**Deadline:** September, 2003.

**Contact for more information or to submit vignette:**

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## *Next Newsletter Editor*

Joyce MacQueen will edit the next newsletter. Please contact Joyce by early September regarding any news items, short articles, announcements, ideas you may have for the newsletter.

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## *Allemang Website*

Please visit our website at:  
[www.allemang.on.ca](http://www.allemang.on.ca)

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