

May 2005

Margaret Allemang Centre
for the History of Nursing

NEWSLETTER

MARGARET ALLEMANG: AN APPRECIATION

Judith Young

It is with sadness that we report the sudden death on April 14th of Margaret Allemang, aged 90. Characteristically, Margaret's final week was filled with engagements. She attended our April 9th meeting and was at the symphony with her good friend, Louise Jamieson the day of her death. The funeral, April 20th at Margaret's church, St. John's Lutheran, was attended by many family and friends.

Margaret was born in Toronto July 19th, 1914, one of twins. The family settled in Bloor West Village and Margaret attended Humberside Collegiate. But illness (chronic osteomyelitis) shadowed her childhood and considerably delayed her high school graduation. At aged 22 years Margaret entered the School of Nursing, University of Toronto (U of T), graduating in 1940. She had many happy memories of student life at the School's Queen's Park residence, of Director Kathleen Russell, and of teachers such as Jean Wilson and Dorothy Percy.

Early Career

Margaret's first nursing position, as assistant head nurse on a cancer ward at the Toronto General (TGH), was initially funded by the U of T School of Nursing. In negotiating this position for Margaret, Kathleen Russell aimed to show that university graduates were as well prepared as their hospital counterparts. After a successful year at TGH, Margaret joined the growing numbers of Canadian nurses who eagerly

volunteered during World War Two. She enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force and between 1942 and 1945 served in air force hospitals in Ontario and Alberta. Post war, through the Federal Re-establishment Program, she was able to complete a BA and BScN at the University of Toronto. She then spent two years teaching "nursing arts" at the Belleville General Hospital School of Nursing.

The School of Nursing University of Toronto

In 1951, Margaret was invited to teach at her alma mater and she remained there, except for time studying in the United States, for the rest of her career. She taught medical/surgical nursing and guided many undergraduate students through their clinical experience at the Toronto General. Later, she became closely identified with the Masters Program, supervising many MScN theses and teaching a graduate course in nursing history.

Further Studies

In the 1950s Canadian nurses frequently sought graduate education in the US. Margaret chose the Department of Education at the University of Washington in Seattle where she hoped to gain a good grounding in research methodology. For her master's thesis she looked at the effect of sleep on patient recovery, apparently the first clinical nursing study at that university. Back at the University of Toronto, Nettie Fidler, Director of the School of Nursing, encouraged faculty research and, in 1958, Margaret completed a patient care study "The Experience of Eight Cardiac Patients in a General Hospital." The published report was quoted by Alice Girard, as an example of nursing research, in her submission to the Commission on Health Care (the Hall Report). In the 1960s, Margaret decided to embark on PhD studies also at the University of Washington. U of T professors had earlier sparked an interest in philosophy and

history and, for her doctoral thesis; Margaret hoped to develop a theory of nursing based on existential philosophy. Her committee, however, was less than enthusiastic. Luckily a proposal to study the history of nursing education in Canada and the US met with approval. Margaret had found her niche and the promotion of nursing history became a “crusade” for the remainder of her life.

Preserving Nursing History

In the mid 1970s Margaret received funding from the Hannah Institute for the History of Medicine to interview World War One, and later World War Two, Canadian nursing sisters. As a member of the Nursing Sisters Association, Margaret was known to many of the nursing sisters who gave her photos, uniforms, medals and other memorabilia from their time in the services. Margaret’s dining room began to resemble a mini-museum. Her interviews with the nurses were transcribed and copies made accessible to historians. In the 1980s, interest in nursing history was on the rise and, in 1987, with Barbara Keddy of Dalhousie University, Margaret organised the inaugural meeting of the Canadian Association for the History of Nursing/Association Canadienne pour L’Histoire du Nursing (CAHN/ACHN). Margaret became the first Vice President and organised the first two conferences (in Charlottetown, PEI and Quebec City). Throughout this time a small group continued to meet at Margaret’s house, often over a tasty casserole, to discuss issues in nursing history, listen to a speaker, or to encourage each other’s work. Known informally as the Ontario Society for the History of Nursing, the group incorporated in 1993 as the Margaret M. Allemang Centre for the History of Nursing with aims to promote nursing history and to save nursing archival materials. Margaret maintained a strong interest in both CAHN and the Allemang Centre to her death. She only recently asked to step down as a director of the Centre.

Margaret led a full life. She admitted to a stubborn streak, a quality which no doubt enabled her to achieve many goals in her life.

She was loved and highly regarded by family and friends. As a colleague and teacher Margaret generously gave of her time and expertise. She will be greatly missed.

Membership Renewal 2005

Have you renewed your membership for 2005? If not, please remember to do so. We rely on member fees to continue the work of the Centre and further the goals.

Share this newsletter with a friend or colleague and encourage them to join.

Check our web site: www.allemang.on.ca

Editor Newsletter

Dorothy Wylie. Please contact her regarding news items, short articles, announcements, etc. 304 - 65 Scadding Avenue Toronto ON M5A 4L1. e-mail: wyliedm@aol.com

News Items

Kathleen MacMillan, President of the Allemang Centre for the History of Nursing and Dean, School of Health Sciences, Humber Institute of Technology and Advanced Learning was awarded Honorary Membership in the Registered Nurses Foundation of Ontario in recognition of her work with the Foundation and support for the ongoing education of nurses.

Seeking Historical Information

The Centre receives requests for information mainly through our website. Following are some of the enquiries from the past year.

Dorothy Percy

A relative of Dorothy Percy was missing some details of Dorothy’s life and career. Natalie Riegler supplied the missing biographical

information from her extensive files. Dorothy graduated from Toronto General in 1924 and was an instructor at the School of Nursing School, University of Toronto in the 1930s where she taught Margaret Allemang. She served in the Canadian military in the World War 11 and post-war became the first Nursing Consultant with the Federal Department of Health and Welfare.

Richard Booth, a nursing student at McMaster University, asked for some tips to help him find information on his uncle's World War 11 military service and the illness which caused him to be invalided home (he died of tuberculosis in 1945). Cynthia Toman provided information on accessing war records in Ottawa. Richard has since set up a website at <http://fidius.servebeer.com/history> detailing his uncle's story.

York University 4th year history major, Jennifer Sellecchia has borrowed a selection of Margaret Allemang's World War 11 nursing sister transcripts which will provide the primary source material for a research essay.

Author Elaine Clow is working on a book based on the diary of a World War 1 nursing sister. She has borrowed several of our World War 1 transcripts in order to obtain further background information and verify certain information in her diary.

We were unable to help a Peterborough author who is revising his 1973 biography of Norman Bethune. He sought information on Bethune's mother who may have practised as a nurse in Toronto between 1880 and 1889.

Trillium Award 2004

The final report on the Trillium award of \$6100 was submitted 1 April 2005. The award provided the opportunity for the Allemang

Centre to hire an archivist and catalogue the majority of our collection by the end of March 2005. Archival boxes and folders were purchased and further supplies will be

obtained with the remaining \$382.43.

Purchase of a traveling display board provided the opportunity to create the display "Canadian Nursing Sisters in World War 11". The display was seen by about 500 people in 2004 and was shown at the RNAO annual meeting April 2004; Allemang Centre special event May 2004; CAHN conference, York University June 2004; and three locations in Sudbury November 2004.

Obtaining the award allowed the Centre to enhance its programs and services, and provide some organizational and financial stability to the Centre.

Student Sponsorships for CAHN Conference

The Allemang Centre is sponsoring the fees for 5 students to attend the CAHN Conference in Ottawa. Sponsorship covers registration fee and attendance at the Banquet

The Year of the Veteran 2005

The Federal Government has declared 2005 to be the year of the veteran to celebrate and honour the contribution of the war veterans. 2005 marks the 60th anniversary of the end of WW11, 8 May 1945.

The following excerpt from the Globe and Mail 19 March 2005 portrays a fine example of the contribution of Canadian nurses in WW11:

Elizabeth Lawrie Smellie 1884-1968

Nurse born in Port Arthur, Ontario on 22 March 1884.

After attending the Johns Hopkins Training School for Nurses, she joined the Canadian Army during the First World War and was sent to work in hospitals in France and Britain where she was decorated and awarded the Royal Red Cross. In peacetime, she returned home to help establish the Victorian Order of Nurses. Soon after the outbreak of the Second World War, she was named Matron-in-Chief of the Royal Canadian Army Medical Corps. In 1944, she was promoted and became the first woman ever to hold the rank of Colonel in the Canadian Army.

(submitted by Gloria Kay)

During nursing week we hear about the achievements of a few nurses, but little is mentioned at other times about the valuable contributions nurses have made in the World Wars and in peace time. If you have stories to share please pass them on to the editor for publication in the newsletter.

Obituary

Margaret (Peggy) Jeannie Baskerville Thompson

Born at Casa Loma in Toronto, daughter of the Head Gardener, on 26 August 1917, passed away peacefully at the Victoria General Hospital on 26 March 2005. She graduated with a BA from Victoria College, University Of Toronto, and later in 1943 as a Registered Nurse. She worked for 30 years as a nurse, rising to the position as head of Nursing at the Queensway General Hospital, Etobicoke. Peggy then taught nursing for 15 years at Quo Vadis, and later at Humber College. Peggy also wrote a nursing textbook. She was a long time member of the North York Dog Club, bred dogs and was a qualified National Obedience Judge. She leaves family in Toronto and Victoria. The funeral service was conducted at The Church of St. Barnabas on 1 April 2005.

Article

MARY SEACOLE: THE JAMAICAN NIGHTINGALE

Part 2

Judith Young

Mary Seacole practised as a nurse in the nineteenth century. A contemporary of Florence Nightingale, Seacole was also an adventurer, humanitarian and social activist as well as an entrepreneur who considered gold prospecting. We would know little of her life had she not published a book in 1857 which detailed her experience in Panama and the Crimea.

At home, Seacole was quickly preoccupied with an epidemic of yellow fever. Again she nursed British military men, their wives and children. Army authorities asked her to provide nurses for their camp near Kingston and she went there, leaving her sister in charge at home. She returned to Panama, briefly considered gold prospecting near Colon, and while there, met a Mr. Day, later to become her business partner. In the summer of 1854 she learned distressing news concerning conditions in the Crimea, where many of her Kingston military friends were now fighting; she vowed to offer her services in the care of the sick and wounded.

The Crimean War (1854-56) was fought by Britain and France against Russia on behalf of Turkey. The British army was ill-prepared with inadequate arrangements for the care of the sick and wounded. When reports of the horrendous conditions reached the public, an outcry ensued and Florence Nightingale came on the scene. We all know about Nightingale's herculean efforts in transforming the military hospitals in the Crimea, but very few know of the less public work of Seacole. In late 1854, Seacole traveled to London and applied to the War Office to serve as a nurse in the Crimea attempting to join a second group of nurses leaving to join Nightingale. Seacole considered her experience a valuable asset but was unsuccessful in her quest and wondered if her colour had counted against her. Undaunted, she decided to go anyway and joining forces with her acquaintance Mr. Day planned to set up a store and hotel near the Front. Mary would run a "mess table and comfortable quarters for sick and convalescent officers". She sailed to Constantinople in January 1855.

We know that Seacole met Nightingale as her book provided a description of this brief encounter. On her way to the Front, Seacole visited the hospital at Scutari and armed with a letter of introduction from a physician friend, was granted a meeting. Seacole's only request was a bed for the night, she would then continue on her way. Although Nightingale was very courteous; accommodation was scarce and

Seacole was given a bed in the home of a washerwoman who housed invalid nurses.

Seacole first spent several weeks in the harbour at Balaclava guarding her supplies, selling some wares and assisting with the wounded on route to ships in the harbour. After choosing an area two miles from Balaclava, close to army headquarters, she and Mr. Day erected a temporary building as their base which they named the British Hotel. For the remainder of her stay, she ran a restaurant, bought and sold goods and worked as an independent nurse.

Seacole provided nursing care at the British Hotel and at the Front and prescribed and supplied her own “medications” and treatments which included nourishing food. Treatments and medications consisted of wound applications; medicine for jaundice, dysentery, and chest inflammation; her cholera remedies; bitter sherry for bowel complaints, and chicken broth. She was known for her kindness and willingness to go into dangerous areas. Army doctors appeared to appreciate her assistance and perhaps unlike Nightingale, felt she did not present a threat to the physicians. She watched the final siege of Sebastopol from a hill near the British Hotel and was given a permit by the army to enter the fallen city. Following this final siege, the war was essentially over and armistice was declared in February 1856. Seacole was “among the last to leave the Crimea”. We know little of Mary’s life following the publication of her book in 1857. She returned to England from the Crimea somewhat broken in health and strength, with little money, having used up her savings and earnings on charitable work for the troops. A group of influential army personnel in England did subscribe to a fund for her. She was given medals and by France and Turkey. It is presumed that she spent her remaining years in London as she was buried there in 1881. A sculpture of Seacole is now displayed in the National Library of Jamaica.

References:

Mary Seacole, *Jamaican Nightingale: Wonderful Adventures of Mary Seacole in Many Lands*. George Cadogan ed. (Stratford, Ontario: William-Wallace Publishers, 1989). First published by James Blackwood, London, July 1857.
(Reprinted from RN Journal. January/February 1998, 10-11.)

Footnote: Until recently there was only one known portrait of the Crimean War nurse, Mary Seacole. Then a local (British) art dealer took apart a framed print and discovered that the backing of the frame was actually a portrait. An historian identified it as the famous black nurse Mary Seacole. Named the Greatest Black Briton for her service in the Crimea, she was awarded the British Crimean Medal and the French Legion of Honour. She lived from 1805 to 1881 and was known to the troops as “Mother Seacole”. The portrait by Albert Charles Challen is now on loan to the National Portrait Gallery, London, UK.
(Realm, No.122, June 2005, p.6).

Dates to Remember

Upcoming Conferences

**CANADIAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE HISTORY OF NURSING/
L’ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE POUR L’HISTOIRE DU NURSING
OTTAWA, JUNE 17-19, 2005**

The annual meeting of CAHN/ACHN will be held in Ottawa at the Library and Archives of Canada in conjunction with the opening of the Museum of Civilization’s exhibit: **Nursing: The Caring Profession. CAHN-ACHN is encouraging groups and individuals to sponsor a student to this historic event.**

Early registration closes 10 May 2005.

Web site: www.CAHN-ACHN.ca

FOR THOSE UNABLE TO ATTEND THE FULL CONFERENCE

CAHN-ACHN is offering a package for retired people to attend the Hannah History of Nursing Lecture and the Banquet on Friday 17 June, and

tour the exhibit **The Caring Profession: Centuries of Nursing in Canada** on Saturday 18 June.

The Hannah History of Nursing Lecture will be held at the Library and Archives of Canada from 3-4:30 pm on Friday 17 June. The title of Dr. Margarete Sandelowski's address is: **Making Matter Mean: The Material World of the Nurse.**

Keynote speaker at the Banquet is Christina Bates, curator of the historical exhibit being held at the Canadian Museum of Civilization from 17 June 2005 until 4 September 2006. She will discuss her progress in creating the exhibit from idea to reality.

A bus will pick people up at the Novotel Hotel on Saturday 18 June at 10:00 for a tour of the exhibit conducted by nurse volunteers of the Museum. The bus will return to the Novotel at 1:00.

Cost \$75.00

For more information contact the web site:

www.CAHN-ACHN.ca

For accommodation contact the Novotel (1-866-677-3033) and mention you are with CAHN-ACHN.

Send cheques payable to CAHN-ACHN to:

Dr. Gaye Greaves
1193 Anderson Drive
Kingston, ON K7P 3K2
greaves@sympatico.ca

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, 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 31 August 2005.

The prize will be awarded in October 2005.

Papers may be submitted either by e-mail or in hard copy. Electronic copies should be in Microsoft Word 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 Allemang Centre:

Dorothy Wylie
304 - 65 Scadding Avenue
Toronto ON M5A 4L1
e-mail: wyliedm@aol.com

History of Nursing Writing Prize

The Allemang Centre is offering a prize of \$500 for the best essay in the history of nursing written by a student in the year September 2004 through August 2005.

