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Jefferson joins parade of progress in mid-century, pp.59

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THE DECADE OF the Fifties was crowded with momentous events. A tidal wave of nationalism and revolution engulfed the world. India gained independence, China went communist, Castro seized power in Cuba, the Korean conflict broke out, and Russia launched Sputnik. The first nuclear-powered submarine started to prowl the Seven Seas, and Alaska and Hawaii achieved statehood. Headlines were filled with the McCarthy investigations, the Supreme Court ruling against segregation in the public schools, and the development of the new Salk polio vaccine. It was the era of rock ‘n’ roll and the “new look” in feminine fashions.

Philadelphia was in the throes of a revolution of its own. In 1951, the citizens approved a new charter and threw the Republican “rascals” out of City Hall. Democrats Joseph S. Clark and Richardson Dilworth were elected mayor and district attorney, respectively. The rehabilitation of the city began and continued after Clark ran for the U.S. Senate and Dilworth became mayor. The old Chinese Wall on Market Street came tumbling down, and the Penn Center Complex was transformed from a dream into reality. It seemed like the return of the Golden Age.

Jefferson Expands Also

Freed from such wartime fetters as a dire shortage of manpower
Mabel C. Prevost, '29, (left) served as Director of Nursing (Nursing Service and School of Nursing) from 1953 to 1958. She was succeeded by Doris E. Bowman as Director of the School of Nursing from 1958-1982.

The opening of the spanking new James R. Martin Residence in September, 1959 was a crowning achievement of the decade. The $2 million, eight-story structure was built to accommodate 336 student nurses.
and lack of growth capital, Jefferson was eager to dust off and set in motion a much needed expansion program. One of the first steps in this direction was the opening on November 8, 1954, of the new 14-story, 300-bed Foerderer Pavilion. Built at a cost of six million dollars, it had an immediate effect in relieving overcrowding in the Thompson and Main Buildings. In addition to patient facilities, the Pavilion included a new X-ray suite, clinical laboratories, surgical suite, and delivery suite and nursery. Now, nearly 30 years later, the building is being renovated at a cost of over $20 million to incorporate a number of modern improvements.

The School of Nursing had its own special day of triumph with the opening of the spanking new James R. Martin Residence at 11th and Walnut Streets in September, 1959. The two million dollar, eight-story, air-conditioned structure, built to accommodate 336 student nurses, seemed like the Promised Land to those familiar with the travesties of Spruce Street and other previous nurses' homes. As a matter of fact, living accommodations were at such a premium during the mid-1950's that an additional temporary residence had been set up at the old Whittier Hotel, 15th and Cherry Streets. Students living there had to be bused downtown to classes and clinical assignments.

Each tastefully decorated room in the Martin Residence housed two students and had built-in furniture. A student lounge and kitchen were provided on each floor with a reception area on the ground floor. This section quickly became known as the "Fish Bowl" because of all the mirrors on the walls and supporting columns. Unfortunately, it was not an area conducive to romance for students and their "dates." Any attempts at stolen goodnight kisses would be spotted by a watchful housemother, whose desk was nearby. One of these guardians was the stern but beloved Frances Bard, who earned the sobriquet "Voice of the Turtle" because of the sonorous tone in which she issued summonses and relayed messages over the inter-com.

The Renaissance of the Fifties found expression, however, in ways other than new physical facilities. For example, as a harbinger of the future, more graduates were seeking advanced education. Those who had been in uniform received aid under the GI Bill of Rights. Non-veterans sought help through scholarships.
The lounge (top) of the old student nurses' residence at Spruce Street, as shown in 1955, was pleasant and restful, but could hardly compare with the modern decor of the reception area in the new Martin Residence, as pictured at Christmastime in 1959.
Similarly, the needs of the postwar crop of student nurses were recognized and fulfilled in several ways. For instance, a full-time counselor, whose responsibilities included extra-curricular activities, was added to the staff. The Nursing Library collection was also updated, and two part-time librarians came on board.

In 1953, after the resignation of Miss Katherine Childs, Miss Mabel C. Prevost, '29, B.S., M.S., became Director of Nursing. During her administration, the school gradually increased its enrollment through vigorous recruiting efforts; a campaign was waged for a modern nurses' home (Martin Residence) and NLN accreditation; and classroom and faculty office space were secured in the hospital.

But, in view of a continuing nationwide shortage of nurses, the students adhered to a tough schedule of classroom work and clinical practice. Night shifts in the hospital were particularly grueling when, for example, a student might be called upon to change and feed 25 or so howling babies. Imagine the distress of one student who, in the midst of a 1,000 chores, was followed into a storage closet by an amorous intern and got locked in. When finally released by a glaring night supervisor, she wanted to sink right through the floor.

Alumni of the 1950's have commented, though, that the education and discipline they received were priceless assets. Better correlation between formal classes and clinical experience was certainly a factor. On this score, a new “block” type program was adopted. Half of the students attended class for two weeks, while the remainder were assigned to clinical practice. At the end of the period, the groups switched. This system provided a more in-depth approach to both theoretical instruction and “on-the-job” training.

As evidence of the refined curriculum, all members of the Class of 1956 passed the State Board examination for R.N. licensure, the first class to do so in at least ten years. That same year, several students and faculty members appeared on television as part of the recruitment effort. Several years later, a Student-Faculty Committee was formed to discuss common problems, a new school newspaper titled “Caps 'N' Capes” was published, a card club was started, the dramatics club was reshaped, and a new type of uniform dispensed with the old-fashioned bib and apron.
The Solarium on the top floor of the Martin Residence was a comfortable place to chat on a sunny afternoon. Door in right background leads to the roof, where student nurses sunbathed on what they called the "Asphalt Beach."

An interdenominational chapel with symbols of several faiths was opened during the era. It is located between the Foerderer Pavilion and the Thompson Annex.
In 1958, a significant organizational change took place when Miss Prevost was appointed Assistant Director of the Hospital with administrative responsibility for the School, nursing service, operating rooms, pharmacy, and several other departments. Miss Doris E. Bowman was named Director of the School of Nursing to succeed Miss Prevost. A graduate of the Class of 1942, Miss Bowman served with General Hospital No. 38 in World War II. After obtaining her bachelor’s and master’s degrees in education, she taught in New Jersey before returning to Jefferson as an instructor in pediatrics in 1954.

The School made numerous impressive and progressive strides during Miss Bowman’s administration of 24 years—the longest tenure ever held by a single director. One of the major achievements of her reign was the attainment of full accreditation from the National League for Nursing in 1960. While an application for accreditation had been submitted to the NLN as far back as 1948, it was rejected at that time as being premature. In May, 1957, after many significant improvements during Miss Prevost’s tenure, the Board of Trustees gave her the green light for initiating steps toward NLN accreditation and another application was submitted. Provisional accreditation was granted in March, 1958. Finally, after the School had been put under a magnifying glass of seemingly endless questionnaires and surveys, the long-sought full accreditation blessing was bestowed in December, 1960, and everyone concerned shared and rejoiced in this triumph—the concerted efforts of faculty as well as administration and the midnight oil burned by Miss Prevost and Miss Bowman had finally paid off. While this NLN “seal of approval” is voluntary, it is a drawing card in attracting well-qualified students and first-rate faculty members.

Indicative of the interest in and support provided to the School of Nursing throughout its history by the entire Jefferson “family” was the formation of an Advisory Committee in 1958. Its membership included representatives from the Board of Trustees, Medical Staff, Hospital Administration, Nurses’ Alumnae Association, and the Director of the School, plus a clergyman and general educators, representative of the community. The Committee was chaired by Baldwin Keyes, M.D.

The general purpose of the committee was to advise and assist
the administration of the School in refining, garnering financial support for, and promoting its program in Nursing Education. These functions included studies of the School's curriculum, facilities, and its image in the nursing field; investigations of sources of scholarship aid, endowment funds, and other financial aid; and pinpointing areas where recruitment of eligible candidates might be worthwhile. The committee's contributions to the general welfare of the School from 1958 to its phase-out in 1973 were countless. Of special interest were the untiring efforts of committee member Revelle Brown from the Board of Trustees. Mr. Brown was, for all practical purposes, a supporter of the School in Board affairs and forcefully presented the case for its financial and physical needs.

Jefferson stood on the threshold of the Sixties with its physical plant greatly improved, its manpower far better organized, and its long-range development program carefully thought out. A progressive administration was ready to meet the challenges of the decade ahead.