March 2009

Nursing education swings to new tactics in 1970's, pp.79

Follow this and additional works at: https://jdc.jefferson.edu/shearer

Part of the History of Science, Technology, and Medicine Commons

Let us know how access to this document benefits you

Recommended Citation

https://jdc.jefferson.edu/shearer/11

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Jefferson Digital Commons. The Jefferson Digital Commons is a service of Thomas Jefferson University's Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL). The Commons is a showcase for Jefferson books and journals, peer-reviewed scholarly publications, unique historical collections from the University archives, and teaching tools. The Jefferson Digital Commons allows researchers and interested readers anywhere in the world to learn about and keep up to date with Jefferson scholarship. This article has been accepted for inclusion in A Commitment to Excellence (TJU nursing school history) (1982) by an authorized administrator of the Jefferson Digital Commons. For more information, please contact: JeffersonDigitalCommons@jefferson.edu.
FROM AT LEAST one standpoint, the 1970's might be called one of America's more glorious decades. The economy absorbed two staggering increases in the cost of energy, provided 18 million new jobs despite a severe recession in 1973-1975, and extended basic civic and economic rights to those who hitherto had been wrongly denied them. Yet a pastoral decade it was not. The first Earth Day in 1970 drew millions of anti-pollution protesters to keynote an era of growing social consciousness and self-involvement.

The Nixon Administration's achievements in opening the door to China, establishing détente with the Soviet Union, and the withdrawal of United States troops from Vietnam were drastically diluted by the shame of Watergate. The U.S. Supreme Court overturned all state laws limiting a woman's right to an abortion during the first trimester of pregnancy. Motorists lined up at gas stations after the Arab oil embargo was imposed in late 1973.

In 1976, the nation embarked on a birthday bash in honor of the Bicentennial of its independence with festivals, parades, and other ceremonies. Jimmy Carter, a former political unknown, became the 39th president in January, 1977. He was hailed as a great peacemaker after the historic Camp David agreements in September, 1978, and then was savaged by the Iranian hostage crisis that began in November, 1979. The U.S. Senate, after a bitter debate, voted in April, 1978, to return the Panama Canal to Panama by the year 2000. Pope John Paul II was widely acclaimed
Gail Johnston, president, leads the Class of 1970 through the traditional Rose Arch at Commencement.

Rose Mary Drigan, '70, receives Thomas A. Shallow Award for proficiency in surgical nursing from Revelle W. Brown, a member of the Board of Trustees. A steadfast friend of the School of Nursing, Mr. Brown was a valued spokesman for its physical and financial needs in Board affairs.
on his first visit to the United States in October, 1979. An accident at Three Mile Island in Pennsylvania the preceding March kicked off a series of anti-nuclear power demonstrations.

Philadelphia, the cradle of liberty, rocked and popped during the 1970's. There was hardly a dull moment in town after the colorful and controversial Frank L. Rizzo took over City Hall as a two-term mayor in 1972. A former tough law-and-order cop and police commissioner, his celebrated tiffs with nightclub owner Lillian ‘Tiger Lil” Reis and ecdysiast Blaze Starr had made racy newspaper copy in the early 1960's. His administration was marked by a teachers' strike, internal power struggles, and political scandals. On the other hand, there was a resurgence of civic pride and progress on many fronts, although at considerable cost. All in all, the Rizzo years made those of preceding administrations (and the present one) look as bland as pudding by comparison.

The renaissance of downtown Philadelphia continued apace with new office buildings of gleaming aluminum and glass springing up on every corner. The revitalized Penn’s Landing area boomed as an oasis of promise on a decaying waterfront. The tall ships and the Queen Elizabeth II sailed up the Delaware River to salute Philadelphia, where it all began, on the 200th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Sad to say, the city's birthday ball was marred by the outbreak of a mysterious disease at the American Legion Convention in 1976 that killed 34 people and sickened 150 others.

Jefferson Attuned to Progress

In keeping with the vibrant spirit of the times, Jefferson moved ahead with its carefully conceived expansion program and adroitly buffed and polished its growing image as a leading medical center. One of the initial steps in a dynamic plan for sophisticated additions to the university's facilities was the opening of the Scott Memorial Library in the fall of 1970. Combined under one roof are some 120,000 volumes that constitute an unmatched medical university collection. Among the new library's features are individual and group study rooms and soundproof carrels for audiovisual materials.
Commencement in 1970 was a family affair for this couple. Dr. Peter Pizzutillo graduated from Jefferson Medical College, while wife Bonnie (the former Barbara M. Schultz) received her diploma from the School of Nursing. Daughter Lara seems duly impressed with the achievements of her parents.

Judy Ferraro (left) and Eleanor Costello, both members of the Class of 1975, go over an assignment in their Martin Residence room.
The other major construction event of the 1970's was that of the $51.4 million New Thomas Jefferson University Hospital, an addition of nine stories to the complex which also includes the Thompson Building, Main Building, and Foerderer Pavilion. It was completed on June 1, 1978, and dedicated at special ceremonies on June 9. Innovative in design and operation, the new building incorporates the "mini-hospital" concept, whereby most diagnostic facilities for the average patient are located on the same floor where he is admitted, treated, and discharged. Each patient floor also has its own intensive care unit. Physicians' offices are a single floor away from patient care areas.

Nor were nursing functions overlooked in planning for the New Hospital project. For example, nursing command and teaching posts (nearly a dozen on each floor) enable the nursing staff to observe and tend to the requirements of 8 to 16 patients. By contrast, 20 to 35 patients are still served by nursing stations in many large metropolitan hospitals. Margaret C. McClean, a faculty member of the School of Nursing, and Catherine W. Lupinacci, president of the Class of 1972, were members of the Steering Committee for the New Hospital project in its planning stages and were able to contribute valuable input regarding the School's anticipated educational needs.

On September 17, 1977, Thomas Jefferson University Hospital celebrated the 100th anniversary of its founding in 1877. During the course of a century it grew from a small 125-bed hospital, the first to be associated with a medical college, into a 687-bed teaching institution dedicated to specialized and general patient care. This mission is undergirded today by Jefferson's affiliation with 21 other hospitals offering clinical experience to students in all three colleges of the university.

Evolution in Nursing

Jefferson's advances in the 1970's were not confined to bricks and mortar alone. Equal attention was devoted to surveying, refining, overhauling, and expanding its academic programs. One of the most significant of these was the introduction of a baccalaureate degree program in nursing in 1972, chaired by Charlotte E. Voss, Ed.D., with an initial enrollment of 46 students, including four males. Then, as now, students admitted
Virginia Corotto (left) and Bonnie Esten dig into the annual spaghetti dinner served in Jefferson Alumni Hall. Both girls are members of the Class of 1973.

During National Nutrition Week in 1978, Melody Loux, '81, teaches elementary school class about the importance of proper diet.

Patricia Jones, '74 (holding ball), looks for a receiver in a student nurses’ basketball game.
The rationale for the establishment of the B.S.N. degree was termed a logical response to changed views within the profession and in society regarding the role of nursing and health care in general. Presumably, the baccalaureate nurse would be better able to assess patient needs from a broader theoretical base, make sound judgments, and act as a true colleague to the physician.

Thus, early in the 1970's, Jefferson's investment in nursing was segregated into three independent programs—baccalaureate, diploma, and practical nursing—each with its own facilities, faculty and resources. This somewhat paradoxical situation did not escape the attention of the accreditation team from the Middle States Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools during its evaluation visit to the campus of the university in 1975. The team's findings and recommendations in its 1976 formal report were duly noted by Lewis W. Bluemle, Jr., M.D., newly appointed president of Thomas Jefferson University, on his arrival on campus in 1977, and by Lawrence Abrams, Ed.D., who was named Acting Dean (later Dean) of the School (later College) of Allied Health Sciences in 1976.

In 1979, in keeping with one of the recommendations of the aforementioned accreditation team, an Ad Hoc Committee was formed to evaluate the current status of nursing education at Jefferson and develop a plan for the future with an eye toward an eventual unified curriculum. The School of Nursing was represented on this committee by faculty members Joan K. Amick and Linda Kofroth.

Nursing School Carries On

While mindful of the fact that it was an endangered species, the School of Nursing marched on to the beat of its own drummer throughout the 1970's, as it had since 1891, in turning out well educated and capable nurses. Graduates continued to have a mean score well above the state and national means on the State Board Examinations. During the early part of the decade, the School rode on a high wave of optimism with steady increases in the number of inquiries received, applications, and actual enroll-
ments. Between 1970 and 1975, enrollment ranged from 211 to 297. From 1976 on, there was a consistent decline to 201 in 1979.

The size of the faculty remained relatively stable throughout the period in varying from 32 to 38 members in proportion to the number of students. An effort was always made to maintain an even balance between those faculty members who were Jefferson graduates and those from other nursing schools to provide for a livelier exchange of academic ideas. In September 1974, two new positions were created: 1) Assistant Director for Administration and Student Affairs; and 2) Assistant Director for Curriculum. Margaret C. McClean assumed the former position, and Eloise Hippensteel, '52, stepped into the latter post at a later date.

After the shortening of the school program to 33 months in 1970, few major changes were made in the curriculum. However, two English courses were added in 1976 with three college credits granted for each. Credits had previously been assigned to freshman courses in Psychology (3), Sociology (3), and Microbiology (5). In 1978, Nutrition also earned three college credits. Community Health became an 11-week course in the senior year curriculum in 1974. That same year, the Strong Vocational Interest Blank was administered to freshman students as part of a three-year study to determine aptitude. During the 1974-1975 period, 11-week quarters were established for the junior and senior years, and the affiliation in Psychiatric Nursing was changed from Philadelphia State Hospital to Philadelphia Psychiatric Center. In 1977, a certification program in Cardio-Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) was started for all senior students. Also in 1977, the student admission procedure was transferred to the Office of Admissions in the College of Allied Health Sciences, and students were no longer required to live on campus.

While still concentrating its recruiting efforts on top-notch high school graduates, the School of Nursing did not remain aloof from the social concerns of the times. In the summer of 1970, a remedial program was launched for a group of 10 disadvantaged students in an attempt to assist them in becoming qualified for admission to the School. Two were admitted in September, 1970 but soon left for personal reasons. Another remedial program was presented for six weeks in 1971 for 15 potential students. One of this group
graduated in 1974. Beginning in 1972, the School of Nursing was awarded a number of capitation grants authorized under a new section of the Public Health Service Act for the support of nursing school educational programs. Three projects were approved and accomplished during the initial 1972 year: 1) A Model Unit for Team Nursing; 2) A Recruitment Development Program; and 3) A Graduate Follow-Up Study. Subsequent grants covered the following general subjects: geriatric nursing, health education for the elderly person, and team nursing for students. Unfortunately, the Capitation Grant Program for Jefferson was discontinued in mid-1978 because the School of Nursing could no longer meet a requirement that participants show an increase in enrollment or maintain a stated level each year.

Changing Times

The tidal wave of social, economic, and educational changes that swept across the nation in the 1960's and 1970's had a ripple effect on long-standing traditions of the School of Nursing. Night duty in the hospital became a thing of the past, and relief assignments for students were limited to four weeks under the supervision of an instructor. The "women only" admission policy was shattered in 1973 when two male students were accepted. One of them, David Snyder, also made history at Commencement in 1976 with his wife, Elizabeth, as the first married couple ever to graduate from the School.

This revolutionary removal of marriage as a barrier to School admission and retention was also reflected in the fact that four of the 1973 graduates were married before their senior year, one the mother of a two-year-old boy. Of 273 students in the School in 1974, ten were married and two had children. In days gone by, only single young ladies of impeccable propriety were admitted to the School. Marriage while a student was cause for immediate dismissal, and pregnancy (even though sanctified) was deemed tantamount to one of the Seven Sins.

The morale of the School's administrative staff and faculty rose in August, 1975, with a move to newly renovated and more spacious offices in the Health Sciences Building (Edison) from its
On the eve of graduation, Andrea Portner, '79, cheered on by classmate Diane Foley, dangles her student uniform out window of room in Martin Residence.

Several scamps (best left unidentified) in the Class of 1970 stole out one dark summer night to "dress" statue of the distinguished Dr. Samuel Gross in a student nurse's uniform. The School administration did not appreciate the prank, but the culprits escaped with impunity on the grounds of pre-graduation exuberance.
former rather cramped quarters in the Martin Residence. Classrooms were also transferred to this new location, and three previously occupied floors in the Curtis Clinic were assigned to other departments. Almost from its inception, the headquarters of the School of Nursing had been shuffled from pillar to post with little concern paid to the adequacy of its physical facilities nor the practical aspects of its location. Unfortunately, the lease on its long-sought comfortable home was to expire in just seven years.

In 1975 also, responsibility for supervision of the Martin Residence was transferred from the Director of the School of Nursing to the Director of Housing of the university. One of the major reasons for the switch was the admission of students other than nurses to the residence. Curfews were extended, overnight female guests were permitted, and "open houses" were held monthly. Representatives from all groups living in the dorm sat on a new House Council, which assumed the judiciary functions of the former Student Council.

Since it no longer was obliged to enforce residence rules, the reorganized and newly named Student Affairs Council was able to devote its attention to coordinating all School social events (e.g., Halloween, Valentine's Day, Christmas, Easter, and other parties). Fund-raising activities, such as candy, poster, bake, plant, "white elephant"; and popcorn sales, and such ever popular events as the annual senior spaghetti dinner, continued apace. Basketball remained the sport that rallied the support of the entire School behind its league games. Patricia Jones '74 and Donna Ranieri '75 distinguished themselves by winning a local free-throw competition and a chance to enter the national competition in San Diego, California.

The Countdown Begins

As the decade of the Seventies passed the equinox, the diploma schools of nursing found themselves on a toboggan slide toward an unwelcome fate. The principal reservoir of nurses for the nation's health needs since time immemorial began to dry up at an alarming rate. Total reported applications to diploma programs fell by more than 8,000 or 12 percent from 1974-1977. Admissions declined by about 5,000 and the number of graduating students
In informal ceremony in 1973, "Big Sister" Linda S. Bingaman, '75 (rear), then a junior, caps freshman "Little Sister" Janice E. Richmond, '76 (above photo). Rear view of the pert Jeff organdy cap shows the spread of the "wing tips" across the back of the nurse's head (below).
dropped by over 3,000 during the same three-year period.

There is no single answer to this phenomenon. For one thing, until the mid-1950's, the diploma school student's tuition was comparatively low because of the service she rendered to the hospital in exchange for part of her expenses. But, then, as the National League for Nursing (NLN) raised its educational standards for accreditation, hospital hours decreased, and tuitions rose accordingly. The NLN also lent its tacit support to the American Nurses' Association (ANA) position paper published in late 1965 (see Chapter 7) to the effect that: 1) professional nursing education should take place in institutions of higher learning (i.e., colleges, not hospitals); and 2) nurse practitioners should hold either a baccalaureate degree (B.S.N.) or a master's degree in nursing. To all intents and purposes, diploma school graduates became anachronisms.

As enthusiasm for diploma nursing cooled, interest in baccalaureate and associate degree programs grew like Topsy. Low-tuition community and/or junior colleges granting two-year associate degrees in nursing graduated 36,815 students in the academic year 1976-1977, as opposed to 24,850 in 1972-1973, an increase of nearly 12,000. In spite of the much higher tuition and other costs involved, the number of baccalaureate graduates rose from 13,132 to 23,632 during the same period, an increase of 10,500. On the other hand, the number of diploma school graduates declined from 21,445 to 18,014, a loss of about 3,300. Source: "Educational Preparation for Nursing - 1977." Nursing Outlook 26 (September 1978), pp. 568-569.

While the defenders of the diploma schools donned their armor and took to the ramparts, the winds of change in nursing education concepts were sweeping across the land with hurricane force. Between 1974-1979, close to 100 diploma programs were blown out of existence. Inevitably, the storm broke in the Philadelphia area, and the number of diploma schools shrank from approximately 35 to less than a dozen in a few years.

For a time the Jefferson School of Nursing nestled in the eye of the storm, reluctant to relinquish a program built on a sturdy foundation. The alumni in particular piled on sandbags of support for their school. But the die had been cast, the handwriting was on the wall, the devil of change would not be denied his due. In 1974,
502 prospective students applied to the school, and 111 actually matriculated. By contrast, only 361 applications for the class to be admitted in the fall of 1979 were received, and enrollment in the first year dropped below 60. Total enrollment was too low to qualify for federal capitation support.

Thus, on March 22, 1979, the faculty of the school resolved by consensus to bite the bullet and recommend to the college administration that the class admitted in September of that year be the last accepted into the school. It was not a decision made in haste, but one reached only after much soul-searching and agony. Several members of the faculty had served the school loyally for over 15 years, and this wrench in their lives was a painful prospect to face. But, as always, their prime concern was what was best for Jefferson. The future of nursing education in the university seemed to be at the baccalaureate level.

On April 19, 1979, Miss Doris E. Bowman, Director of the School of Nursing, wrote with heavy heart to the Dean of the College of Allied Health Sciences to convey the decision of the faculty to recommend that the school be phased out over a three-year period. His acceptance of the proposal was endorsed shortly thereafter by the University's Board of Trustees. The Class of 1982 would thus be the last to pass through the portals of a school renowned far and wide for the high quality of its graduates on every frontier of nursing. This knowledge muted and softened the shadows of twilight descending.