

Faculty Interview

A Profile of Helen Shore, UBC Nursing Leader and Patron

By Jennifer M.L. Stephens, PhD Nursing Student



On May 2nd, Helen Shore proudly accepted the 2013 UBC Nursing Partnership Award presented at the second annual Gala celebration and awards ceremony of the UBC School of Nursing (SON). Widely acknowledged as an important and influential nursing leader, Helen created the Helen Shore Nursing Endowment award granted by the SON. This philanthropic award has been used to support initiatives aimed at enhancing the care of adults with chronic disease. A 1961 graduate of the UBC School of Nursing program herself, Helen continues to exhibit a passion for nursing and compassionate care that remains exceptional. Helen has been active in many local organizations, including a pivotal role as

founding member of the BC History of Nursing Society (BCHNS) in 1989. More recently, she has also been supporting history of nursing initiatives, including a recent scholarship award to a current UBC graduate student. Helen was a founding member of the BC History of Nursing Society (BCHNS).

Helen was born in Calgary. Her father, a physician, and mother, a nurse, were pioneer settlers in Northern Alberta in Bowden and Alix in 1911 and provided much-needed medical care to the locals. Later in life this background gave Helen a notion of care for *all* members of the community. Helen enrolled in the Vancouver General Hospital (VGH) diploma nursing program and graduated in 1946. She was assigned to open a polio ward in the Infectious Disease Hospital at VGH in 1947. Going back home for a change of pace, she worked as an intravenous nurse at the Calgary General Hospital (CGH) for a year while deciding what to do next. Then with a friend, Helen went to Bermuda to work at the King Edward Memorial Hospital enjoying the travel opportunity and the work outside Canada.

Returning to Canada, Helen received a diploma from UBC in nursing education in the early 1950's and worked at Royal Columbia Hospital (New Westminster) until 1960 teaching nursing arts. Desiring both to advance her skills as an educator and "to remain competitive," Helen pursued a BSN at UBC and graduated in 1961. She landed a position with the interdisciplinary Metropolitan Health Services (MHS) Vancouver as a public health nurse. At that time, the Director of Public Health Nursing was Trena Hunter. Helen recalls the major impact that Ms. Hunter, a former President of the Canadian Nurses Association, had on her career: "The thing about Trena Hunter was that she wanted public health nurses to demonstrate the difference a degree could make in public health nursing and she supported innovation in nursing practice. She reminded me to treat nursing not as a job, but as a *profession*. This was something that I hadn't really thought about before, and working with her increased my professional pride and confidence."

One of Helen's most memorable experiences while working for the MHS was tackling the overwhelming needs of a very large public housing project newly constructed in her district. The public health approach at the time was directed to the health needs of populations: infants, teens, adults and seniors. Helen and a BSN colleague Joan Frost developed a plan to strategically approach the overwhelming needs of the housing project population. Nurses were to take the lead and use the resources of the Health Unit for consultation and referral. Ms. Hunter developed a plan to allow Helen and another public health nurse to give immunizations without the presence of the Medical Health Officer (MHO). This was unheard of before, as usually the MHO gave immunizations at Baby Clinics. Ms. Hunter and her nurses braced for the backlash. There was none. This was a great victory for nursing autonomy.

At the same time that public health nursing was offering her deep career satisfaction, change was coming. A phone call from Miss Evelyn Mallory, director of the UBC SON, invited Helen to join the faculty. Professor Betty Cawston was going on education leave, and Helen was asked to fill in as junior public health professor during her absence. "It was a great offer," recalls Helen, "and not one I could turn down." After fulfilling this term Helen was offered the junior public health nursing position. Helen decided that she would still be working with clients through the crucial role of teaching new nurses. She accepted the professorship and notes, "I went for a year and stayed for 26 more!"

During this time at UBC, Dorothy Smith, who was founding dean of the University of Florida College of Nursing, visited campus as the Woodward lecture speaker. Smith spoke on the process of nursing. Helen remembers that, "Dorothy was a massive influence on my thinking at the time, and she helped me to realize that, in general, nurses were poor at implementing nursing care plans." Helen then went on to develop a workshop on the process of nursing, presenting these workshops throughout British Columbia through UBC Continuing Education. She notes, "later Muriel Uprichard and I put nursing process on the map in B.C." This experience led her to understand that she needed additional training. "I was really concerned about improving my method of teaching adult clients," Helen says. For this reason, she chose to do a Master of Arts (MA) degree in Adult Education as the Master of Nursing Science (MSN) was just being rolled out at UBC. She received this MA in 1971. Her master's thesis focused on what nurses implemented into their nursing practice after attending one of her process workshops.

Helen recalls the excitement of becoming nursing faculty under the leadership of UBC SON Director Muriel Uprichard. Dr. Uprichard was a nursing leader who came to UBC from UCLA, where she had experience with the behavioural system developed by Dorothy Johnson. Helen was asked to join a committee of other faculty to develop and implement a behavioural model for the curriculum. "This forced me to take a giant leap in my thinking!" says Helen. The process was exceedingly challenging. With a short timeline the committee, which included nursing faculty members Margaret Campbell, Rose Murakami, Mary Cruise, and Janet Gormick, developed an entirely new four-year BSN curriculum.

When asked to reflect on the current status of nursing, Helen takes a thoughtful pause before remarking with conviction that nursing *is* an applied science "that draws from several sciences but that also is a science in itself." She continues. "The schism between 'real' (or diploma) nurse and university nurse has existed for a long

time. Theory, skills, critical thinking – these are what the BSN nurse brings to practice.” Could there be a world without nursing? Not for Helen. “I can’t see a world without nursing,” she affirms. “If we didn’t have them, they would have to be invented!”

Never mind that she laughs off being related to Florence Nightingale. “My Dad used to say she was a 42nd cousin, and I think he was trying to teach me a lesson,” shrugs Helen. Helen’s third great-grandfather William Shore and Florence’s grandfather John Shore were brothers. Being related to the mother of nursing hasn’t gone to her head, but it does influence her reading material. “Dr.Geertje Boschma recommended I might like to read the book *Notes on Nightingale: The Influence and legacy of a nursing icon* (Sioban Nelson and Anne Marie Rafferty, Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 2010).and I love it! I find this a very powerful book of essays on Nightingale by nurse historians.” Helen has been a nurse for almost 70 years: “I am not sorry I became a nurse. I am grateful. It has given me a wonderful life.”