

MEMORIES FROM THE SARNIA GENERAL HOSPITAL NURSING ALUMNI

These excerpts come from a souvenir book released by the Sarnia General Hospital Nursing Alumni Association reflecting on their memories of the program.

- “The first big shock of training days was moving in to a large dormitory with 12 strangers! Within a week we knew each other ‘quite’ well and never looked back. An unpleasant memory was when Miss Beamish took away a classmate’s ring (her boyfriend’s class ring) and didn’t give it back until the last day of training.”
- **Bernice Brown Winder, ‘51**
- “I remember the night that some of my classmates and I spent in a barred room at Canada Customs. We were on our way to our first affiliation at the Children’s Hospital of Michigan in Detroit and Immigration wouldn’t let us cross the bridge! Later in the evening they took us back to the hospital and put us in private rooms while the lawyers worked all night on our ‘case’. After breakfast the next morning we left for Detroit without further trouble. I think we were the first class to go to Detroit.”
- **Taidie Dodge Needham, ‘40**
- “My first memory of probationary days was when I failed my bed bath exam! I never did figure out if I washed or rinsed too vigorously or not vigorously enough but when I finally got it right on the second try Miss Beamish asked me why I hadn’t done it that way in the first place. I of course replied that I thought I had! What nerve!”
- **Marjorie Lethbridge Paisley, ‘51**

- “Eons ago, as I dusted, washed, scrubbed, ironed and cooked I dreamed of shedding my chores and marching down the halls of Sarnia General Hospital in a crisp white uniform and sparkling cap. Little did I realize I would just change my home for the hospital and add washing bed pans to the list. The three years of training were filled with highs and lows. How proud we were to survive the probationary period and then to be brought low by the superiority of our seniors. We were constantly taught, directed, badgered, encouraged and coerced by seniors and supervisors. There was always a senior to make sure we didn’t overstep the bounds of propriety but usually, after a ‘dusting off’, she offered a helping hand. I so longed to be a senior and have a class of juniors and intermediates below. It all came and went too quickly and I was a graduate nurse. Nursing has change[d] greatly since 1944. Now I consider myself lucky to recognize the contours of a bedpan and the four slots in a toaster. However we were lucky to witness the miracles of insulin, sulpha, penicillin and the polio vaccine. The most important thing through fifty years of maturing has been the friendships formed through homesickness, tears, laughter, illness and night shifts! The memories are still fond for those noble ladies of endless patience, Cairns, Elrick, Finch, Gallaway, MacFarlane, McPhedran, O’Malley, Peake and Shaw and our wonderful friends Carrie, our cook and Albert, the orderly.”

- Merle MacFarlane MacJennett, ‘44.