

The Alumni Newsletter

Columbia University-Presbyterian Hospital School of Nursing Alumni Association, Inc.

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The Newsletter is published to bring together members of the Columbia University-Presbyterian Hospital School of Nursing Alumni

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- profiles
- membership
- pensions
- sick benefits
- scholarships
- research awards
- news

COULD YOU LIVE ON \$5800 A YEAR?

Seems impossible, doesn't it? Yet, our pensioners have to deal with great financial hardship of varying degrees. Remember, they worked when contributions to Social Security were small and those who nursed at the bedside never enjoyed high income levels. With increasing longevity, spiraling costs of medications and illness care, these meager incomes are not enough on which to live.

The founders of our Alumni Association were realistic about their peers. Eleanor Lee wrote in *Neighbors 1892-1967*:

"The Benefit Fund, started in 1899 with the proceeds totaling \$27 from demonstrations of nursing procedures, was increased rapidly by generous contributions from Mr. Kennedy, Mr. Sturges, John Crosby Brown, and John Sloane. The Benefit Committee held a successful fair in Florence Nightingale Hall, November 1906, the proceeds of which amounted to \$6,625. In December 1908, Mr. Kennedy gave an additional gift of \$25,000, thus increasing the Benefit Fund to \$50,000. A second fair held in December 1909, raised \$4,076, \$1,000 of which was used to start the Pension Fund.

In May 1912, a Committee on Ways and Means was appointed to devise methods of securing money for the Pension Fund. In May 1914, each alumna contributed \$20 in honor of the twentieth anniversary of the school. A total of \$4,118 was raised, including a gift of \$1,000 from Edward S. Harkness. From the sale of blue pencils

marked "Our Nurses Pension Fund," a gift of \$1,500 was received from Mrs. Russell Sage. In 1917, \$5,000 was raised by a symphony concert, at which souvenir programs, with a sketch of a nurse in the blue-and-white striped uniform, were sold by student nurses in uniform. As a result of all the alumnae activity, several large contributions were received.... In 1921 the year in which pensions of \$300 per year were first given to alumnae, the Pension Fund totaled \$140,000."

We currently have eighteen pensioners from the Classes of 1934 through 1972. Nine of them have been divorced, five are widows, one is married and three are single; most are retired although several continue to work part-time to supplement their incomes. Two have incomes under \$10,000; five receive between \$11-15,000; seven have incomes between \$16-20,000 and only four have above that. Many of these alumni have chronic illnesses or limited mobility; some are caring for disabled children. A few have recently retired, having worked as long as they could to ensure that they would have something upon which to live.

Several of the pensioners have been good enough to send us descriptions of their lives and the meaning of the monthly check that our Alumni Association sends to them:

I have just received my pension check and the wonderful Christmas check. Such a welcome and lovely gift! How I do thank you.

When I was admitted to Presbyterian Hospital School of Nursing, it was represented to me as "Miss Young's Finishing School" – because of the Quality Care of its students. That was in 1931. Little did I realize how much that school's alumni association would mean to me in 2005.

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To begin with, I never expected to live to be 94 years old and have my finances disappear so fast – trying to maintain a quality of life, even a basic one.

The longer we live, the more we are in need of using the advances made in medicine to keep us active. I now have two aortic stents, a pacemaker and hearing aids and am able to continue a very active life. Now as a volunteer, but still using my training as a “Neighbor” the name inscribed on our pin and part of our medical training that had its emphasis in our ethics classes.

The pension, which I now receive from our Alumni Association, makes so very much difference in my livelihood - the difference between *QUALITY CARE* and basic care. I am so grateful for the individual attention I’m receiving. Thank you, thank you.

I applaud your desire to make these benefits better understood; I would even go so far as to allow specifics regarding me made known. Various costly health issues the last few years have at times for me been frightening and I am grateful for every check I have received. I am very proud that I am a member of the Columbia University-Presbyterian Hospital School of Nursing Alumni Association, and I am very appreciative of all the associations many missions.

It was a delightful experience to hear from the Finance Committee so promptly and I am very happy to receive your very generous boost to my modest income. Thank you for the sick benefit also. So far I am solvent and back in my own home. My granddaughter is living with me – so I feel most fortunate.

I’m so glad that our Alumni Association was not exterminated. You have fought the good fight. Remembering the spirits of Anna Maxwell and Helen Young (from Ethics days) I know they were rooting for us. Having been the recipient of today’s “nursing” in both hospitals and extended care facilities for six months this year, I feel we learned our profession at its best. Compassion and dedication are mostly in short supply.

My husband divorced me in 1965. I took a very good refresher course and worked as night supervisor in convalescent and nursing homes until I reached social security age in the 80’s, so my training has sustained me.

I’m 85 now and have had a miracle of healing in that I can walk again after having a pathological fracture of my left femur and my right femur “rodded” to prevent fracture – all due to multiple myeloma. (I also had cancer of the breast in 1998 with total mastectomy).

So again, I say thanks for my wonderful training, a life in a profession I love – and now this generous help when it really counts.

It is once again Christmas time for me and once again I have received the generous gift from the Board of Directors of an additional payment with my pension check. Every year that this comes it brings me extra pleasure and I want to be sure that it is known how much I appreciate it.

Each year I feel that I want to give you all the details of my life and let you know how much this money I receive each month makes it possible for me to live a level of life that wouldn’t other-

wise be possible. But my life actually reads like a Grade B movie and I have wanted to spare you the details! The bare bones story would let you know that I went through a very sad divorce, that I have a family member who ended up in prison after taking most of my money that I had saved over the years, that I lost my home because of this, that I had to declare bankruptcy, that I have had two back surgeries that have left me with traumatic arthritis that makes my mobility a problem, and that soon after that I was hit by a car that broke my ankle. Actually, I don’t think Hollywood would be interested since I am sure they wouldn’t believe this plot could actually happen.

All through these times I could count on my pension money coming and helping me to make the proverbial ends meet. I kept on working as long as I could and just retired this year (at age 71). Now that money is more important than ever.

Would you please pass along my thanks to the Board of Directors and let them know that the concept of “Neighbors” continues to be a source of comfort to me. I am proud to be a graduate (50 years this coming year!) with a pin that proclaims me to be “Neighbors-3238”. I attempt to be a neighbor in my community.

The increase in my pension amount last year, took the pressure off my monthly obligations. The Medicare D plan is a further insult on Senior Citizens. A monthly supplement amount for BlueCross/BlueShield, before any cost of medication, further creates our debit position. Any thing else, I can add, you have but to ask.

You are making my Holiday and every other day of the year, **PROUD ONES.**

I am here to tell you that the monthly pension from the Alumni Association has been a distinct God-send.

It makes all the difference between existing and living. What with increased costs in everything – the pension has been a real lifesaver. I could never adequately express my appreciation to the Alumni Association.

To my knowledge, the ways that the Alumni Association helps its graduates is quite phenomenal. In speaking with graduates from other schools of nursing – they have no such help. This only deepens my appreciation, and makes me very proud to be a graduate of Presbyterian Hospital – now almost 66 years ago.

Discontinuing the pension plan would put me in a serious situation.

Receiving my pension check, monthly since May 2005 means a great deal to me, as it has helped with medication, dental and cataract surgery twice.

I have been divorced since 1978 with no support and have worked at various RN positions. I am now 73 and can no longer work full time, I’m working per diem in Home Care and average 13-14 visits/per month at \$40 per visit. I have no other pension except for the help you give me. I have managed fairly well. The pension has eased my anxiety over my expenses the last two years.

I am very grateful for the help you have given me.

When my husband died eleven years ago, my income was reduced to my Social Security check every month and a very small pension from New York State pension plan.

After paying my rent and utilities I had very little left for food, clothing and other expenses. In desperation I decided to state my case to the Alumni Association in the hopes that it might help me with my financial problem.

I must say that I was treated with kindness and respect and the decision was made by the committee to grant me a monthly check starting immediately. I cannot find adequate words to thank the Alumni Association for coming to my aid at a very low point in my life and I will be eternally grateful for the help it gave me.

Having found myself in the role of "patient" for six months and realizing that my Alumni Association could and wanted to

We are pleased to know that we continue to be good "Neighbors" especially to our own. For that reason, it is imperative that this organization continues to pursue its mission with the hope that one day the University will see the wisdom of what we do and what it means to our graduates.

For those of you who know of someone who may be eligible for this support of \$300 a month, please notify Mrs. DiFilippo in the Association office. While there are income ceilings, each application is treated individually and all information is confidential.

We thank our alumni who have been willing to tell us about themselves so that we could share their life stories with you.

help me in my financial distress, I applied for and have received much needed and appreciated help towards medical and pension needs.

Asked to contribute input to our Newsletter, I immediately hunted up all the printed matter I had and began studying it. Previously I had naively believed that the conflict between the two "Alumni" groups could be reconciled and was primarily over money. When I actually carefully read and thought over every word I had from the "Columbia" group, I was horrified and could not believe what I was learning. In the main, hospitals now do their procedures in the shortest possible time – preferably "Day Stay" or at most seven days. Nursing is no longer available to most passing through this new system.

Meanwhile, be strong and of good courage, PHer's. Let us hold on until the last of us old timers is laid to rest.

Excerpts from

Exploring Parental Grief: Combining Quantitative and Qualitative Measures

Joan Arnold ('69), Penelope Buschman Gemma ('64), and Linda F. Cushman (Mailman School of Public Health)

Purpose. This study explores parental grief on the death of a child of any age.

Study design. The sampling frame for the study consisted of 74 respondents reporting that they experienced the death of a living child. With the exception of standard demographic measures, the quantitative and qualitative items in the instrument were designed specifically for this project. The content validity of the instrument was assessed by a panel of experts on grief. Key quantitative items related to child loss and grief were formatted with between three- and five-point ordinal answer categories. Two types of qualitative items were developed by the authors. The reliability of the instrument designed for this study was not determined.

Results. This survey of parents who experienced the death of a child during their lifetime explores and extends current understanding of the complex emotional response of grief. The study offers empirical support for the notion of grief as ongoing in the life of a parent whose child had died. The findings have significant implications for further clinical research supporting studies to explore commonalities in the experience of grieving families regardless of the cause of and time since the death of their child. In addition, the findings may serve to inform the development and provision of services for bereaved parents.

Summary. Overall, the findings of this study support an understanding of parental grief as complex, non-linear, and ongoing. Correlates of continued grieving were identified and include feeling connected to one's child, feeling they will not let go of their child, feeling part of them is missing, and experiencing a hollow empty space inside them. These emotions form a composite of parental grief. Findings suggest that grieving continues and can be associated with a myriad of other emo-

tions, including those that are positive and life transforming. Continued grieving is highly individualistic and is associated with heightened and variable emotionality, life satisfaction, and improved relationships with surviving children. Furthermore, parental grief on the death of a child is profound, regardless of the years since the death, the age of the child at the time of death, and the cause of the child's death.

Suggested Clinical and Research Implications. Recognize the importance of including child death as part of family history; provide support services and resources on an ongoing basis over the life course of the family in all health care settings; treat child death, regardless of age, cause, or time since the death, not only as a woman's health concern in obstetric and gynecological care but also in pediatrics, men's health, and geriatrics; explore grief as an ongoing process with diverse sample populations of bereaved parents; support studies involving loss of a child in pregnancy, at birth, in infancy, in childhood, in adolescence, and in adulthood to explore commonalities in the experience of grieving parents, regardless of the cause of death, the time since the death, or the age of the child.

We would like to thank the Columbia University-Presbyterian Hospital School of Nursing Alumni Association for providing access to the alumni who so graciously participated in this study. Our gratitude goes to Phyllis DiFilippo, CUPHSONAA, for her ongoing assistance and support. Please address reprint request to Joan Arnold, PhD, RN, The College of New Rochelle School of Nursing, 29 Castle Place, New Rochelle, NY 10805. E-mail address: jarnoldphd@aol.com. Full text published in Archives of Psychiatric Nursing, vol. 19, no. 6 (December), 2005: pp 245-255.

**Columbia University-Presbyterian Hospital
School of Nursing Alumni Association, Inc.**

INVITES YOU TO JOIN US

FOR OUR 113TH ANNUAL MEETING

**- REUNION LUNCHEON and COCKTAIL PARTY
FRIDAY, APRIL 21, 2006**

Special Recognition to the Classes of

'31, '36, '41, '46, '51, '56, '61, '66, '71, '76, '81, '86, '91, '96, '01

RSVP by April 15, 2006

The Annual Meeting & Reunion Luncheon will be held at:

The New York Athletic Club,

**180 Central Park South, Between West 59th Street & 7th Avenue,
New York, NY 10019, 212-247-5100**

A 15 minute stroll from the NYAC brings you to the bright lights of Times Square and the Theater District, to the shopper's paradise of Fifth Avenue, to the intriguing expanses of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and to the bustling restaurants of Columbus Avenue. A quick trip on the A train will take you down to the World Trade Center site where you can see the memorial that has been erected to commemorate the September 11 disaster.

Dress Code requires that male guests wear jackets and ties and female guests wear professional business attire. Jeans and athletic shoes are not permitted.

Parking is available at the LLC/ICON Garage at 166-172 West 58th Street. Rates are \$14 for 12 hours if parking before 10AM, discount with ticket validation at end of event. There is an additional \$10.00 surcharge for Sport Utility Vehicles (SUV).

Room accommodations: 15 single or double occupancy rooms available April 20-22, 2006. 10 Queen at \$225, and 5 Two-Twins at \$225. NYAC will hold rooms at this price until March 30, 2006. Call 1-800-699-3293 for reservations. All over night quests will have athletic club facility privileges.

Keynote Speaker: MARGARET (Peggy) FRACARO '70, MA, RN, CIC, "Emerging Infections... real threat or hype..." Director of Infection Control New York Presbyterian Hospital. Peggy graduated in 1970 from Columbia University School of Nursing. She received a MA in Nursing Administration from Teachers College, is certified as an Infection Control Practitioner and has worked in the field for 32 years. She has published numerous abstracts, articles and chapters on IC; lectures extensively and serves on a number of advisory committees. Peggy recently provided information on hospital associated – infections to a congressional committee investigating the extent of this problem on a national level.

Presentation: JILL F. N. KILANOWSKI '77, PhD (c), RN, "Health Disparities: Carnival and Migrant Worker Children." Jill is a doctoral candidate at The Ohio State University in Columbus and is graduating this summer. She received her bachelor's in nursing and master's degree in pediatric primary care, both from Columbia University. She is a pediatric nurse practitioner who has served in public health, private pediatric practice, school based health clinic and has taught nursing on various levels for thirteen years.

Class News

**Alumni Notes deleted in online publications
to protect the privacy of the alumni.**

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