

# WHAT DID YOU DO ON SUMMER VACATION?

BY NORALEEN DUVALL YOUNG, AX/PURDUE

Back in the summer of 1918, 20 recent Theta graduates representing 13 chapters spent the summer at the Vassar Training Camp for Nurses. This intensive training program was a response by the United States Red Cross, the Council for National Defense, and Vassar itself to fill the need for nurses due to World War I, as well as raise the level of nursing education by attracting college-educated women.

The camp, which began on June 24 and ended on September 14, provided an intensive but well-rounded program. Students attended labs and lectures six days a week, with their wake-up call at 5:50 am and lights out at 10:30 pm. Classes ranged from chemistry and pharmacology to history and public health. Dr. Margaret Floy Washburn, Iota/Cornell, who was head of Vassar's psychology department at the time, was one of the few female faculty members of the training camp. Students did make time to have some fun. They created basketball, baseball, swimming, and tennis teams, competing among themselves and with other young women in the area.

Upon admittance to the program, the students had to establish the equivalent of a two-year internship with a participating hospital to be completed after the training camp. Out of the 435 women who enrolled, 419 completed the camp and almost 200 became registered nurses. By the 1920s, all those who had received their RN were in leadership roles in hospitals, university-based nursing schools, or in public health-related organizations.

Fourteen of the 20 participating Thetas went on to earn their RN certification, and two of those women became physicians. The Theta magazine reported that the Thetas were the largest Greek group represented and even found time for a joint picnic supper on their July 4 half-holiday.

## PARTICIPATING THETAS:

**ELEANOR BLAKEY BLACKMAR, K/KANSAS**, earned her RN at Mt. Sinai Hospital in New York.

**RUTH WHITED BUDGE, AII/NORTH DAKOTA**, did not continue her training when World War I ended.

**MARGARET CARRINGTON, AM/MISSOURI**, earned her RN through Rochester General Hospital and then focused on public health and nursing education. She served as superintendent of nurses at Columbia University and became an instructor at Yale University's School of Nursing. She wrote for the Theta magazine about nursing as an occupation for college-educated women.

**VIRGINIA TOLBERT FOWLER, AO/OKLAHOMA**, earned her RN from Brooklyn Hospital and then received one of ten fellowships to study medical social work at Columbia University. She organized the medical social work department at the University of Oklahoma Hospital.

**EVELYN MILES KRASE, Δ/ILLINOIS**, began her training but was unable to finish due to a death in her family.

**MARY MILLMAN, Σ/TORONTO**, earned her RN through Bellevue Hospital, New York. She returned to Toronto, became assistant professor the University of Toronto's School of Nursing, and was very active

in Canadian nursing and public health professional associations.

**KATHERINE RAWLES NANGLE, B/INDIANA**, received her RN from Barnes Memorial Hospital in St. Louis and later served at Ginling College in Nanking, China, as head of physical education. She became active with the League of Women Voters and the conservation movement.

**LYNNE WOOTE PLATTER, AΘ/TEXAS**, did not complete her training, but later earned her MA in English from the University of Texas and became a teacher in Dallas.

**ELIZABETH MILLER RITSCHARD, AB/SWARTHMORE**, received her RN from Boston's Children's Hospital. She was in charge of the children's wards of Philadelphia's Presbyterian Hospital and later served as a district president of a New Jersey nurses association.

**FRANCES ROTHERT, B/INDIANA**, received her RN and then went on to earn her MD. She served as head of the Maternal and Child Health Bureau of Arkansas until her retirement in 1962, when she planned to work with Catholic Relief Services in Guatemala for one year. She remained until 1979. She received the Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice Medal from Pope John Paul II for her work with the charity.

**ETHEL ROTTMAN, A/DEPAUW**, continued her training at Cincinnati General Hospital and then became a teacher in Idaho.

**AGNES SMITH, M/ALLEGHENY**, received her RN from Bellevue Hospital, New York. She served for five years in Rio de Janeiro for the Rockefeller Foundation on public health issues.

**ALMA SPEER, AΘ/TEXAS**, received her RN from Johns Hopkins and her MD from George Washington. She established her private practice in Washington, DC; during World War II, she assisted in securing commissions for female doctors in the military.

**CHARLOTTE WHEELER STEPHENS, A/DEPAUW**, contracted the flu during the 1918 epidemic and was unable to complete her training.

**DOROTHY WILKINSON, Ω/UC BERKELEY**, received her RN from Bellevue Hospital. She served as the visiting nurse for a baby hospital in Oakland, Calif., and then worked with the agricultural extension service of the University of California.

**ELLEN DUFFY WISE, AH/VANDERBILT**, did not finish her training but volunteered for the YMCA for the rest of World War I.

**DOROTHY WORRELL, AM/MISSOURI**, did not immediately complete her training but later earned her RN from the University of California. She later became assistant director of the nursing school at Washington University-St. Louis.

**NYDIA ACKER YOUNG, BΔ/ARIZONA**, completed her training in dietetics at Bellevue Hospital. She became an agricultural extension worker in Arizona, responsible for all the northern counties in the state.

**CORNELIA OGLE ZAHN, B/INDIANA**, was not able to continue nursing training as she was caught up in the 1918 flu epidemic. She eventually became a high school mathematics teacher in Indiana.

**ESTHER PHILIPS ZEREGA, AB/SWARTHMORE**, earned her RN from the Boston Children's Hospital. She later was in charge of the semi-private floor at Muhlenberg Hospital in New Jersey.

*About the author:* Noraleen DuVall Young, AX/Purdue, is a Life Loyal member and has served Theta as staff archivist for 15 years. ♦



Martha Carrington, AM/Missouri, in 1939



Dorothy Worrell, AM/Missouri, in 1918