

Porirua Hospital Museum / Resource Centre Oral History Project

Recorded: 20 October 2003

2 SIDES

Interviewer: Helen Reilly

Abstractor: Helen Reilly

NGAERE THOMPSON

- 029 Describes HOW SHE BECAME A NURSE in 1936: 1st visit to PORIRUA HOSPITAL with friend, meeting Matrons Miss RYAN (?) and Miss KELLY (1930 – 1944), given tour, then signs up as a junior nurse. Describes her UNIFORM.
- 088 Describes FIRST DAY IN ADMISSION WARD (RAUTA): met a friend of her father's; came to love RAUTA.
- 128 Describes DUTIES AND TRAINING AS JUNIOR NURSE: attended lectures given by Tutor Sisters and Doctors, sat exams. Explains different exams: 'Junior State' then 'State Finals', qualified as a psychiatric nurse.
- 150 Describes LIVING IN NURSES' HOME: her room, hearing 6 am daily rubbish removal by draught horse, curfew restrictions, rules, food. Explains having temporary break from PORIRUA HOSPITAL and nursing to help mother with 3 little sisters.
- 184 Describes WORKING AS STAFF NURSE in PSYCHIATRIC WARD in WELLINGTON HOSPITAL. Describes being in sole charge: dramatic incident with a patient who needed sedation.
- 211 Describes WORK AS NURSE at PORIRUA HOSPITAL: in the laundry, kitchen, and sewing room, doing the cooking in the villas with help of patients. Describes clothing patients wore.
- 235 Explains her SALARY AS A NURSE: as junior, as staff nurse – 'board taken off first'.
- 253 Gives details of SHIFTS NURSES WORKED. Always short-staffed and over-worked.
- 273 Describes ECT TREATMENT (Electroconvulsive therapy) as 'barbaric' but effective, especially on schizophrenics. Describes process: injection by doctor, her job when patient had seizure, care taken by staff during procedure. Mentions 1st patient who received ECT in early 1940s. Describes how patients felt about ECT, length of treatments, overall success of ECT.
- 322 Mentions OTHER TREATMENTS (?) USED BY DOCTORS: Dr MEDLICOTT, and others. Explains how doctors trained nurses, her own close involvement with Dr MEDLICOTT as staff nurse.
- 345 Describes RELATIONS BETWEEN STAFF AND PATIENTS: relates incident about another staff nurse and patient. Describes how staff never intentionally hit patients. Mentions visiting days.
- 372 Describes DIFFERENT TYPES OF PATIENTS: long-term, 2 year old mental defective child, other children who spent entire lives in PORIRUA HOSPITAL, how nurses trained them to take care of themselves. Describes a deaf-mute girl who alerted nurses when a patient needed help. Explains nurses had no time for favourites and how busy the nurses were always, especially on night shift.
- 412 End of SIDE 1

SIDE 2

- 000 Gives more BIOGRAPHICAL DETAILS + GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT MALE AND FEMALE STAFF: number of years NGARE worked at PORIRUA HOSPITAL, meeting her husband there; he was a staff nurse. Mentions many staff married other staff, male staff lived out.
- 030 Describes LIVES OF LONG-TERM PATIENTS: hospital their home, had jobs in laundry, kitchen, gardens, on the farm. Refers to cows walking past the nurses' home. Describes different restrictions placed on patients, some allowed out. Explains what doctors wore and how nurses knew them.
- 084 Describes how NURSES and DOCTORS DISCUSSED TREATMENT OF PATIENTS: explains need for cooperation between all staff especially before there was effective medication and when wards were chronically overcrowded and understaffed.
- 105 NGAERE fiddles with microphone.
- 110 Describes EFFECT OF NEW DRUGS (Largactil) in RAUTA. She demonstrates how nurses persuaded patients to take them.
- 128 Describes her DUTIES AS NIGHT SUPERVISOR: reading the day's notes, going round all the wards accompanied by other staff, writing up notes, being on-call, walking round everywhere during 1940 – 1950s, and driving 1970 – 1980s.
- 181 Explains IMPORTANCE of ROUTINE FOR MANAGING PATIENTS AT NIGHT: problems nurses had when patients could not sleep. Recalls going round to check after earthquakes. Mentions enjoyment in doing her night-time rounds.
- 218 Describes routine of being woken at 6 am in NURSES' HOME.
- 231 Describes SOME INCIDENTS WHEN SHE WAS NIGHT SUPERVISOR: patients having psychotic episodes, calling out doctors, meeting male Night Supervisor on her rounds, males and females separate. Mentions patients having babies.
- 274 Describes her involvement in SETTING UP the MUSEUM with THOM VAN ARENDONK (Director of Administration 1976 – 1992): choosing F Ward, later working there. Refers to current curator of Museum, BRUCE SHEPHARD. Describes (in whispers) collecting the artifacts. Explains why F Ward was suitable, but is reluctant to repeat on tape about the story "getting rid of the smell" she related at our pre-interview meeting. Explains about PATIENTS in F WARD being incontinent. Describes why F ward is suitable for the Museum.
- 342 Describes her FONDNESS FOR SOME PATIENTS. Mentions one woman who lost her baby. Describes how she let them talk to her. Explains these were her happiest days.
- 384 Explains how PSYCHIATRIC NURSING has CHANGED: no medication before 1960s – only talk, warm milk. NGAERE whispers a typical patient's request and how she responded. Reflects on current use of medication.
- 411 Concludes that she still knows the friend from 1936 who became Night Supervisor in a Borstal.
- 419 End of SIDE 2