

## **Reflections on the St. Olaf Nursing Department**

### **By Kathie Gronseth Hart**

St. Olaf student nurses spent three semesters “in the real world” off-campus in Minneapolis, plus one independent nursing Interim experience. Examples of these “real world” experiences were many. For instance, while there were anti-Vietnam War protests on campus (and some nurses did support this), we were also working with young men returning from Vietnam with what became later known as PTSD during our psychiatric nursing unit at the VA Hospital in Minneapolis. Diane Forsythe adds that she and Karen Kildahl trooped around in the snow visiting homes and facilities for their Interim research paper on child abuse. Penny Cassady Ortmann began her thirty-year career in obstetrical nursing at Hennepin County General Hospital serving a low socioeconomic high-risk population. Ann Garwick Williams adds that she remembers during our public health nursing unit visiting community clinics and patients’ homes, using city buses because we had no cars.

Of course, there were many lighter moments as Ann also remembers city walks and visiting parks, going to plays and concerts, and invitations to medical fraternity parties at the University of Minnesota. When rides were available, MANY hours were spent on I-35 going back to Northfield to keep in touch with friends, past roommates, and boyfriends! We became close to our nursing professors, especially “Tolley” who, as I was once changing a patient’s bed linens said, “Let me do that-you didn’t pay St Olaf tuition to learn how to make beds”!

Our careers have been richly varied and our locations far flung but we can look back at a very formative time in our lives when we struggled together, laughed together, and grew in so many ways together. As we were required to be accepted to the St Olaf Nursing Program before we applied to St. Olaf College, we made a decision at age eighteen that would impact the rest of our lives.

On a closing note, did you know that a recent Gallup poll showed that nurses continue to rate the highest in honesty and ethics among a list of twenty-two professions(85%)!