Virgie M. Pafford

February 3, 1931 - October 7, 2012

Excellence in Public Health Nursing Education

Virgie Pafford was born in Melbourne, Florida. She attended Florida State University, where she was a member of the second graduating class of the College of Nursing in 1955. **Pafford** later recalled that one of the patient treatments taught in her curriculum was the application of turpentine stupes (endnote 1). Public Health was her favorite course. She was sent to study at the Jacksonville City Board of Health, the state psychiatric hospital in Chattahoochee, and the W. T. Edwards Tuberculosis Hospital in Tallahassee (Smith, 2002).

She then accepted a position at the Alachua County Health Department, where she was assigned to the communities of Micanopy and Archer. Her duties included home visits as well as general, immunization, and obstetric clinics.

In 1956, **Pafford** attended the School of Public Health in Chapel Hill, North Carolina for an advanced degree. While there, she received a job offer from the University of Florida College of Nursing. She joined the faculty in August, 1959 and remained for more than 26 years, retiring in January 1986.

Some of **Pafford's** memories of her time spent as a faculty member include involvement with students in a campaign to end measles. The vaccine for measles was licensed in 1966; several years after **Pafford** started her work as a nursing professor. (See endnote 2, also Ward and Christian, 2007). **Pafford** also recalled nursing during the time when the health department and hospitals practiced racial segregation, when granny midwives were common, and hookworm was endemic in rural children.

While serving as Associate Professor of Community Health Nursing, **Pafford** contributed to a book, "Pearls for Nursing Practice: A Choice Collection of Tips, Hints, Timesavers, and Bright Ideas that Make Nursing Easier and Patients Happier" (Nichols and Day, 1979).

In 1987, the University of Florida College of Nursing established the **Virgie Pafford Award** to recognize students who provided excellent community-based nursing care.

Sources:

Smith, Ann. Interview with Virgie Pafford. January 15, 2002. Samuel Proctor Oral History Program, Smathers Library at the University of Florida. Available at: http://ufdc.ufl.edu/UF00066597/00001/2j. Accessed January 21, 2013.

Ward J, and Christian W. (2007). Silent Victories: The History and Practice of Public Health in Twentieth Century America. New York: Oxford University Press. P. 71.

Nichols A, and Day J (1979). "Pearls for Nursing Practice: A Choice Collection of Tips, Hints, Timesavers, and Bright Ideas that Make Nursing Easier and Patients Happier". Lippincott.

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Gainesville Sun. Obituary, Virgie M. Pafford. October 19, 2012.

Endnotes:

1. A description of turpentine stupes can be found in Pope's Manual of Nursing Procedures, by Amy Elizabeth Pope, copyright 1919. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, publisher. The stupes consisted of hot wet compresses of turpentine essential oil and mineral oil. They were used to treat abdominal, kidney, and joint problems.

2. Prior to the introduction of the measles vaccine, measles outbreaks occurred annually, with more than 500,000 cases and nearly 500 deaths annually during the 1950's, reflecting a rate of 336.3 cases/100,000 population. After the introduction of the vaccine, rates fell to 1.3/100,000 population by 1981. It was not until 1981 that all 50 states required measles vaccine as a condition for entering school. Further information can be found in Ward (above), also in Hindman AR et al, (1983). Impact of Measles in the United States. *Review of Infectious Diseases*. Vol 5(3): 439-44.

Compiled by Kim Curry, PhD, ARNP

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