

Everyone has a story: Reflections on the 35-year career in nursing

July 10, 2023

"I loved it. I loved it. I never regretted being a nurse," says Anne Doering reflecting on her 36 years of working as a Licensed Practitioner Nurse, of which she spent 35 at Langley Memorial.

"At work, I'd imagine what it was like to walk in my patients' shoes to understand the world from their perspective. My advice for young nurses: always remember that patients are people, and everyone has a story."

Anne has a story too. She was born in the bounteous foothills of the Okanagan Highlands in north-central Washington in a small town called Omak.

"I was always a caregiver. At seven years, I looked after the neighbourhood kids, changing their diapers and sneaking food to them."

At ten years old, her father bought land in Houston, northwestern BC.

"We moved from the land of everything to the land of nothing," says Anne. "Lots of snow and two frost-free months a year. The only thing we could farm was root vegetables."



Anne remembers more than a few nights of going to bed hungry as a teenager.

Leaving the tiny town of Houston, she trained in Prince George and Dawson Creek and did a 14-month stint in Burns Lake after graduation. In September 1967, she escaped to the milder climes of Langley, where she lived in the hospital's staff residence until 1972.

"It was so much fun," she reminisces. "There were 19 residents living on two floors and a basement. The laundry was in the basement. We shared three toilets with squeaky doors that banged at night and two bathrooms with bathtubs."

The cost of the staff residence, at \$20.00 a month, was considered pricey by Anne. In Burns Lake, \$20.00 got her room and board.

"The kitchen was a battle for space with one stove and one small fridge and freezer, and some nights I would opt for crackers and cheese rather than stand in line for the stove. But I loved the camaraderie, the banter among friends and the activities."

Anne was an excellent athlete and ball player, playing on the Aldergrove Ladies' softball team.



"I did experience being a patient at Langley Memorial," she mentions. "I had my gallbladder out by Dr. Gilham. He was a real character and would sometimes arrive to an emergency call straight off his fishing boat, literally scrubbing fish scale off his fingers."

She took an eight-year break from Langley Memorial while she remained home to raise her three children, returning to work to support her children when her marriage ended. "It was my home away from home. Langley Memorial was my family."

Anne was on staff when the hospital's fourth floor opened in 1974, then the pediatric and medical ward. However, the most significant change for Anne during her nursing career was the introduction of ceiling lifts to help turn patients and get them in and out of bed.

"I was so grateful, most especially when it came to heavier patients. The work was physically taxing," she says, remembering waiting for the firemen to arrive and help the nurses get a fallen patient back into bed. "Medications are more sophisticated today than in my day," she adds, "so the focus has changed."

In the later part of her career, Anne devoted her time to student training.

"I enjoyed teaching. I had many immigrant students from as far afield as the Philippines and Hungary, and I became very fond of them."

In her retirement, Anne continues to provide service.

"I did a foot care course specializing in working with people with diabetes or cardiac complications, seniors and shut-ins, and that keeps me busy. I have two grandchildren who I adore and who make me happy."