

Memories of the Early Days of the Nursing Station

COLLECTOR: Gertie Fowler

CONTRIBUTOR: Mary Barney

Gertie Fowler:

Today is September 14, 2009 and my name is Gertie Fowler and I'm here in L'Anse au Loup with Mary Barney and Mary is gonna share some memories with me today of the early days of the Forteau Nursing Station. So Mary would you like to share some memories with me today.

Mary Barney:

Yes.

Gertie Fowler:

Okay.

Mary Barney:

Okay. The first time I went to the went to the Nursing Station in Forteau was January 1949.

Gertie Fowler:

Okay.

Mary Barney:

And I went there to have my first baby. At them times there was no transportation only dog team.

Gertie Fowler:

Yeah.

Mary Barney:

And sometimes we had to go early perhaps you'd be there almost a month and while we were there waiting for our babies we'd have to help around the hospital we had to make our own beds in the morning. If there were any male patients we would help the aids to make their beds.

Gertie Fowler:

Hmmmm.....hmmm..

Mary Barney:

And then we would get up in the morning and have our breakfast and first thing we would have to do after breakfast was to wash the lamps.

Gertie Fowler:

Clean the....

Mary Barney:

Clean the lamp chimneys.

Gertie Fowler:

Oh. Okay.

Mary Barney:

Because they were all smoked up. Sometimes they'd be smoked up from the night where they have them turned up a little to high so you'd have to make sure that they was all shined up. That was one of the things that we had to do, we had to shine them.

Gertie Fowler & Mary Barney:

Make sure they were shining.

Mary Barney:

So you could see through them good.

Gertie Fowler:

Yeah.

Mary Barney:

And what else did we have to do. Then we had to.... and do the dishes every morning and we had to make our beds.

Gertie Fowler:

Yup.

Mary Barney:

And we had to help with the set the tables too. And then we had to help peel the vegetables if they...when they're cooking. That was a must we had to do that, we had noslack time....we never had no.... we had to be working.

Gertie Fowler:

(laughs) Yeah, if you was there waiting.

Mary Barney:

Yes.

Gertie Fowler:

...you still had to fill in and do what you could.

Mary Barney:

Oh, yes.

Gertie Fowler:

Yeah.

Mary Barney:

And they were ah... then we helped the nurses... helped the... yeah. We had to ... if they washed any clothes...

Gertie Fowler:

Yeah.

Mary Barney:

....and there was any holes in any sheets. If you knew how to sew at all, you had to Put a patch on the sheets, they wasn't never hove away for the first patch. They made sure thatthey even patched their sheets.

Gertie Fowler:

Alright.

Mary Barney:

It wasn't like now. And then we had to make pads for the

Gertie Fowler:

So what was the pads used for now.

Mary Barney:

Oh. Okay. The pads were there for when the women.... maternity patients would have their babies, they'd have to be all sterilized so the ...the...the...ladies would have to make the pads and they...then they'd give them to ... pass them over to the nurse and they would have to put them through ah... sterilizer big pot on top of the stove.

Gertie Fowler:

Oh. Okay.

Mary Barney:

And they had to be sterilized because it was a big thing foryou know, when they had their babies they had to make sure that everything was sterilized.

Gertie Fowler:

Yeah.

Mary Barney:

So we had to do that.

Gertie Fowler:

So what about now when you had your baby?

Mary Barney:

When I had my baby that was like I said there was no doctors in Long Point then and there was no phones. They couldn't contact the hospital in St. Anthony, so I had my baby the 14th of February. I went there in January and I had my first baby the 14th of February.

Gertie Fowler:

Okay. So did.....

Mary Barney:

Okay..no... and ah.. had a real bad time. Wilfred my husband then was staying atat Aunt Liz Saulters.

Gertie Fowler:

Yeah.

Mary Barney:

So Willis Flynn, he was working as janitor at that time, and the nurse called him up. It was an old English nurse.

Gertie Fowler:

What was her name?

Mary Barney:

From English...ah...from England ... she was from England.

Gertie Fowler:

What was her name?

Mary Barney:

Iris Mitchener.

Gertie Fowler:

Oh. Okay.

Mary Barney:

I was so bad, that she said it was time to call my husband in. So she sent Willis over to the home where he was staying that was 6:30 in the morning.

Gertie Fowler:

Yeah.

Mary Barney:

....to get him to come in to see what he was gonna be able to do because the baby was born.

Gertie Fowler:

But ah...

Mary Barney:

I mustn't have been very well because she asked him at the door ... she met him at the door, he said she was nothing but blood.

Gertie Fowler:

Yes.

Mary Barney:

And he said.... she said to him well who would like for me to save, Mary or the baby? And he said well, he said save Mary he said, we can get another baby. So anyway, it turned out good because both of us lived through it all.

Gertie Fowler:

Yeah. So then you called your baby after the ...

Mary Barney:

I called my baby after Iris, her name was Iris Mitchener, so I called my first baby after Iris the only English nurse.

Gertie Fowler:

Yeah. Nice. So how long did you have to stay now after you had your baby?

Mary Barney:

Well nine days. We always had to stay nine days.

Gertie Fowler:

Yes, b'y.

Mary Barney:

After we had your baby. You had to stay nine days.

Gertie Fowler:

Couldn't get out to do nothing.

Mary Barney:

Oh, no you wouldn't be allowed out.

Gertie Fowler:

No maid.

Mary Barney:

Yeah. You had to stay around the hospital. You'd stay there all that length of time then you come home on dog team again. Give you another ride home on dog team again.

Gertie Fowler:

Yeah. So now what about clothes and that for the baby, Mary did you???

Mary Barney:

Well the clothes and that for the baby, they use to have aa clothing store at the hospital.

Gertie Fowler:

Yeah.

Mary Barney:

And they was burning wood at this time all through them years now, so the hospital use to buy wood from the people, we call it "billets", I don't know where they got the name but it was called billets, it had to be six feet long.

Gertie Fowler:

Yeah.

Mary Barney:

So what we would do most....and they bought berries.

Gertie Fowler:

Oh.

Mary Barney:

Partridge berries.

Gertie Fowler:

Yeah.

Mary Barney:

And what we would do they would sell the clothes they called it bundles. When you go to the hospital you'd get a bundle for the baby, what the baby needed to come home in, but they would take the wood, the billets and the berries and that was good for payment for. The first thing they wore would come from the hospital and this would be a bundle of baby clothes.

Gertie Fowler:

Yes, maid.

Mary Barney:

And then other things for other children too. If you had enough of money worth there, if you went to have a baby, you was going to get the baby clothes but then we also sold wood and berries, enough to buy clothing that you could go like in a store go around themselves and pick them up, pick up what you wanted. The baby clothes was done in bundles but if there was anything else you needed, you'd look down the shelves and you picked it up what you wanted and then you bring it to the counter and they just made up the amount of money that it was worth for the berries and the billets.

Gertie Fowler:

Yeah, that was nice wasn't it. I don't know where they got the name billets but that's what it was called. So Mary you breast feed your first baby and that didn't you?

Mary Barney:

Yeah.

Gertie Fowler:

Yeah for sure.

Mary Barney:

Yeah, breast feed her for thirteen months.

Gertie Fowler:

Did you maid? Yeah. So when you was up the hospital now, was you anytime there at Christmas time.

Mary Barney:

I was there once at Christmas, I was there when Marilyn was born, in 1953.

Gertie Fowler:

Yeah. So what was it like, living there at Christmas time.

Mary Barney:

Oh, it was great. Plenty of food.

Gertie Fowler:

Was it?

Mary Barney:

Yes lots of fresh pork and turkeys and then they'd always make this steamed based...fruit steamed pudding and while I was there and had my baby, Marilyn, Joe Hancock, Susie Hancock, and Harold Hancock, had Joe.

Gertie Fowler:

Yes, maid.

Mary Barney:

And so, the nurse brought in a table, right into the ward. In the maternity ward and put thebrought in the dinners to them two. So they had there dinners with us that day, Christmas Day.

Gertie Fowler:

Oh nice.

Mary Barney:

Yeah.

Gertie Fowler:

Yeah. Anything else now, you'd like to ah....you remember about it.

Mary Barney:

I think that's it.

Gertie Fowler:

Oh. Okay. So it seems like you enjoyed it, even though you know, you never had no doctors.

Mary Barney:

We enjoyed it, I must say even though it was a long stay and we enjoyed doing the work because it past away our time.

Gertie Fowler:

Sure.

Mary Barney:

You know and they use to have big crowds there. There was one aid and a cook so we was a good help to them.

Gertie Fowler:

Sure.

Mary Barney:

Like I say, set the tables...

Gertie Fowler:

Yeah.

Mary Barney:

And help to do the meals. The cook would cook the meal but then we would help to do

the vegetables, not only me, that was the thing that was ...that each person was asked to do and expected to do, do your own bed and to get up from the table and clean up like in your own home. It was like a home away from home.

Gertie Fowler:

That's right.

Mary Barney:

Because you felt comfortable there and ah... if you wasn't sick to the bed, well then you would get up like you would do when you was home. When you eat you get up and help clear....help to clean up.

Gertie Fowler:

That's true.

Mary Barney:

And that would pass away some time.

Gertie Fowler:

Okay. Well Mary, I'd like to thank you very much for your memories.