

1925 Alumna Memories



**Aurelia Phyllis
(Beauchaine) Leary**

This is written in honor of my mother, Aurelia Phyllis Beauchaine Leary, who graduated from the University of Minnesota School of Nursing on her 24th birthday, December 17, 1925. She was instrumental in guiding many young women into a professional Nursing career, including her two daughters.

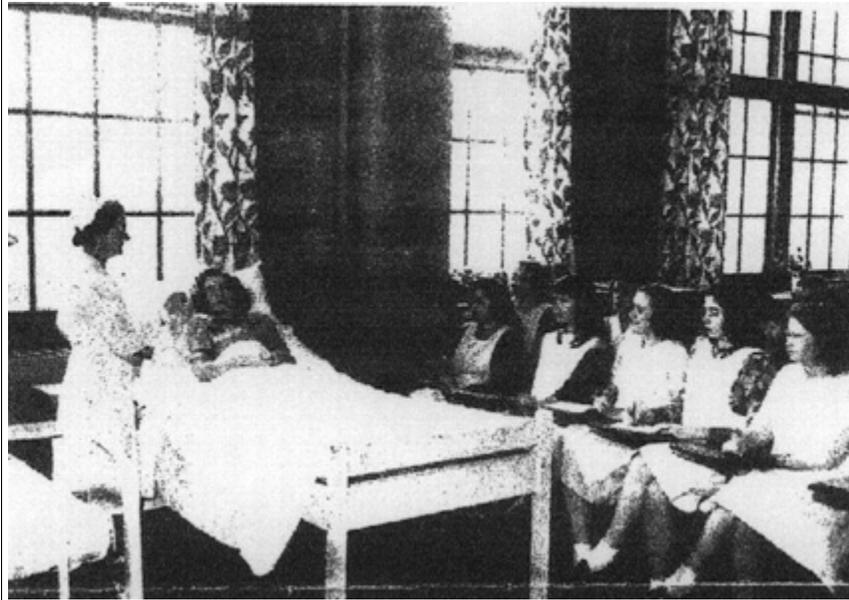
She had a long and varied career over a span of forty years, beginning with her first job as an operating room supervisor at a hospital in Watertown, SD. After answering an ad in the Minneapolis paper, the Dr. (surgeon) came to Minneapolis to interview her and offered her the job. He told her that if she wanted the job, she could return with him the following day on the train and live with him and his family in their house (in her own room), which she did. She returned to Minneapolis after contracting septicemia and lived with her family until she recovered.



**Public Health 'summer' uniform (Family
Nursing Service)**

She became interested in public health nursing because of friendships with Guila Lucas and Pearl Shalit, both U of M School of Nursing grads, continuing in this field after her marriage to Ed Leary in 1927. During the depression and her first child was born in 1903, she worked as a volunteer nurse at a settlement house (nursery school) in NE Minneapolis. In 1935, she left nursing for a brief time to care for her newborn twins; she returned to her nursing career in 1938. After earning her certificate in Public Health, she continued in that field in both Minneapolis and St. Paul, retiring from Family Nursing Service in 1965.

During WWII, as nurses were departing for wartime duty, she was a relief and private duty nurse at various hospitals to help out during the nursing shortage. Her support for the American Red Cross programs was a lifetime commitment. During the war years, she taught many American Red Cross Home Nursing and First Aid classes. After the war ended, she was instrumental in the organization of the first Practical Nursing Program at Vocational High School in Minneapolis, and she was the first instructor of this program. She was also the Chief Nurse of the St. Paul Red Cross Bloodmobile for several years in the late 1940's and early 1950's.



Teaching a vocational nursing class at Vocational High School, Minneapolis, MN (1947)

In her 75th Anniversary "Diamond Jubilee" School of Nursing book, our mother had written that she and her daughter Phyllis Anne (Leary) Simonson were the "First Mother-Daughter" combination to have graduated from the U of M School of Nursing. It is noted that there have been other mother-daughter combinations since then. One of her proudest moments was that she was able to assist in the "capping ceremony" of the class of March 1953, as her daughter was one of the graduates.

Over the years, she had many friends from a variety of nursing fields from all over the USA. She was truly a renaissance lady in all her endeavors in life regarding her devotion to family, the nursing profession, and traveling after retirement. She died at the age of 97 1/2 on May 25, 1999, and is sorely missed by her 3 children and their families.



Graduation photo of Phyllis (Leary) Simonson and Joan (Ludwig) Workum - March