

Rena Bell's dedication to Midland hospitals spans three decades

by Shirley Whittington
For eighteen years, the last Monday of every month has been "Board Night" for Midland's Rena Bell. "And I expect at the end of this month I'll automatically reach for my car keys and my coat," she smiles. "Then my head will tell me that I don't have to go out, but my heart will be up at that hospital."

Board, her interest in hospital affairs remains high. "I'm particularly interested in the quality of nursing care," she says. "And somehow, I fear that in becoming ultra-sophisticated, we may be losing that special atmosphere that one finds in a smaller hospital. We call ours a District Hospital, but in the truest sense, it's a community hospital and we shouldn't lose that community feeling."

Rena's lifelong interest in hospital affairs stems from the days when she trained at old St. Andrew's Hospital under Emma Baker. After post-graduate training at the

University of Toronto Rena returned to St. Andrew's to teach student nurses. "I was the first qualified instructor they ever had," she says. Later she moved to Orillia, where she taught for five years.

For many years, the hospital board was an inner sanctum of men. It wasn't until 1956 that a woman served on the Board. In 1958, Rena Bell was appointed to the Board as the representative of the Nurses' Alumni.

In 1962 she was appointed secretary, a position she held until 1974. Probably the busiest

time in her board experience occurred during the years of planning for the Huronia District Hospital. "I was on the planning and building committee," she says. "Some weeks we had seven meetings."

Unofficial historian Rena Bell's interest in Midland's hospitals had

led her to become the unofficial historian and she has photographs and documents that date back to the days of the original hospital in Sunnyside.

One of her proudest possessions is an armless rocking chair that was used for many years in the nursery at old St. Andrew's. It now sits in

the Bell family room. Rena bought it at a Nurses' Alumni garage sale, and refurbished it.

She drew upon her considerable store of memories and memorabilia when she spoke at the "AFarewell to St. Andrew's" dinner held in May of last year. The speech, filled with in-

teresting tid-bits from the past, was reprinted in the press when the new hospital opened.

Of Rena Bell's service to the Hospital Board, Elaine Nicholls, vice-chairman of the board, says this: "Rena has always kept foremost in her mind that the hospital exists for the care of the

patient. It's easy to forget that at board level, where one deals more with intangibles like budget figures. Few people will ever know the countless hours of service that Rena gave, particularly as secretary. I'm grateful for the opportunity of working with her."

Would Rena Bell have continued to serve on the Board if the changed by-law had not forced her to resign? "Naturally I would have continued," she says. "My interest in the hospital will never wane."

John Cooper retired from the Board this year too, after 12 years, nine of them as chairman. "Rena

Bell is a fabulous person," he said recently. "As secretary, she did a tremendous job. The load got heavier and the meetings got longer but she did an outstanding job of keeping up and getting those minutes out on time. She was a real asset to the board, with her nursing background."



"Sometimes when cuts have been made, they've been made on the nursing side. I'm aware of this, and against it, and I've made my feelings clear on that point." - Rena Bell

Poems for Mom

Midland mothers have again this year been honored in poem.

Public and separate school students in Midland were busy last week rhyming, dedicating, and alliterating mothers and Mother's Day for the Chamber of Commerce sponsored Mother's Day Poem Contest.

Two winners, one in the grade 1-4, and one in the grade 5-8 group, were chosen from dozens of entries submitted.

Winners each receive a \$25 dinner voucher and a bouquet of roses for mother; runners-up receive one rose each for their mother. The contest is sponsored by the businesses of Midland Town Centre.

Judges this year were Mrs. Loraine Wilde, Mrs. Barbara Hacker, Mrs. Judy Bales, Mrs. Elaine Patchell and Mrs. Lynn Palmer.

Special thanks go to the teachers who assisted in making the contest possible.



Mother's Day
My mother is sweet
She is very neat
She sews as well
As she knows.

She works very hard
And makes pies with lard
She makes cookies that
We like
And she also rides a bike.

She likes flowers
And april showers
She goes to church
And fixes our hurts.

This is my mom
I love her dearly
And I couldn't put it
Any more clearly.
Elizabeth Bourgeois
Monsignor Castex School

My Mother
My mother is neat and is
very sweet,
My mother is so nice,
she's hard to beat,
She puts me to bed, and
makes my lunch,
I think my mother's the
best of the bunch!
Lisa McBride,
Grade 4,
Bayview School.

Category 'A'
Grade 1-4
winning poem
For Mother

I love my mother
I wouldn't want another
I would buy a present for
her
A ring, a rose, a coat of
fur
I can't buy those
But I'll do this
I'll give my mother,
A great big kiss.
Heather Whiteside
Grade 3,
Regent Public School

What are Mothers for?
What are mothers for?
To hug and to squeeze
To tickle and tease
To play games and talk
with
To run and walk with
To help catch a dove
To like and to love
To be patient and friendly
To do things tenderly
Mom hardly ever gets
mad
She comforts us when
we're sad.
That's what Mothers are
for!
Susan Van Klink,
Huron Park School
Grade 3

My Mommy
My mommy is nice,
She gives advice.
My mommy is kind,
She helps me find,
Something that I lose,
Like my shoes.
Stephanie Toole
Grade 1,
S.H.S.

On Mother's Day
I love my Mom, my Mom
loves me,
And that is very plain to
see.
Together we do things
every day,
So now I feel it's time to
say
Happy Mother's Day,
Sherril Moreau
Grade 2,
Parkview School.

**More poems
Friday**

Winning poem and
runners-up in the grade 3-
8 group will be carried in
the Friday Times. Look
for it at your doorstep or
on the newstands.

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