



## **Decades of Caring: Nursing Education at Seattle University**

### **By Mary Bartholet**

“Seattle has the most beautiful parks with the softest benches you will find anywhere”, Sister Mary Ruth responded. I had just called her to tell her that I would accept her offer of a job teaching in the School of Nursing at Seattle University “for a year or two”. I had added that I knew no one in Seattle, and had no place to live when I heard her unexpected comment. I was intrigued, and wondered, “Who is this lady? Where did she get her sense of humor? What kind of school can she be directing? Is taking this job really a good idea?” What will working in Seattle be like?

The school evolved from the Providence School of Nursing. In 1877 the Sisters of Providence responded to a request to care for those in the “Poor House” where care was provided for the poor and sick in the area. This eventually became Providence Hospital. As the needs for nursing care increased, the Providence Hospital School of Nursing was opened in 1907 with four lay students. As the years went by, it affiliated with the University of Washington for specific science courses. After Seattle College became the first Jesuit school to admit women, it also affiliated with Seattle College. The entire collegiate program was transferred to Seattle College in 1941, and the department of Nursing was given the status of a School. Seattle College became Seattle University in 1948.

Looking back, I have been fascinated by the changes in the school over the decades, as well as the consistent quality of the program, and the many avenues the lives of the graduates have taken. Instead of writing a factual account of the history, I plan to focus on learning about the experiences and memories of our graduates during the years they were at Seattle U., as well as how their education affected their lives. I am in the process of contacting as many alumni as possible, and hope to gather information from them through a questionnaire or “oral histories” about their experiences and memories. Eventually, I hope to write a book, which will be organized by decades after the introductory background material is provided. The final chapters of the book will concentrate on their lives after graduation, and the different paths they have taken.

Contact information: Mary Bartholet, [maryb@seattleu.edu](mailto:maryb@seattleu.edu)