



Dorothy A. Mereness papers, 1910-1991 PU-N.MC 55

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Summary Information

Repository:	University of Pennsylvania: Barbara Bates Center for the Study of The History of Nursing
Creator:	Mereness, Dorothy Ann
Title:	Dorothy A. Mereness papers
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Date [inclusive]:	1910-1991
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Abstract:	Dorothy Ann Mereness, R.N., Ed.D., F.A.A.N., was Dean of the School of Nursing, University of Pennsylvania from 1965 to 1977 and a pioneer in the development of psychiatric nursing. This collection consists of personal papers and institutional files. The personal papers document Mereness's professional development. Although largely incomplete, the organizational files show the extent of Mereness's involvement in the development of nursing at both regional and national levels.

Preferred Citation

Dorothy A. Mereness papers, Barbara Bates Center for The Study of The History of Nursing, University of Pennsylvania

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Biographical / Historical

Dorothy Ann Mereness, R.N., Ed.D., F.A.A.N., was Dean of the School of Nursing, University of Pennsylvania from 1965 to 1977 and a pioneer in the development of psychiatric nursing.

Born 1910 in Kearney, Missouri, Mereness started her career as an elementary school teacher in Las Animas, Colorado. However, in 1938 with "parental scorn", as Mereness later recalled, she resigned her position as sixth grade teacher to become a nurse, a profession that her father

had earlier forbidden her to enter, and enrolled at the Frances Payne School of Nursing at Case Western Reserve University.

Only after two years at Case Western Reserve did Mereness's interest in psychiatric nurse develop. During the summer of 1940 she took psychiatric and communicable disease nursing. This class was among the first to use the textbook *Psychiatry for Nurses* by Dr. Louis L. Karnosh, a professor at Case Western Reserve and Director of the Psychiatric Division of Cleveland Hospital. Karnosh's work fascinated Mereness. She often traveled across town by public transportation to hear Karnosh's lectures, and she eventually became co-author and finally sole author of Karnosh's book. Even after Mereness stopped authoring the popular textbook, now in its thirteenth edition, the publishers kept her name as part of the title.

After graduating from Case Western Reserve in 1941, Mereness became Instructor of Psychiatric Nursing at City Hospital in Cleveland, Ohio, a position that she accepted only after learning that Dr. Karnosh had recommended her. However, Mereness stayed at City Hospital for four years. The War Department listed her position as "essential," since few medical personnel were qualified to treat soldiers suffering from the traumas of war. When the war ended, Mereness left Cleveland City Hospital to explore other professional opportunities. After a brief stay as Educational Director of a hospital-based nursing program, Mereness returned to psychiatric nursing, a specialty that she held to for the rest of her career. Mereness enrolled in the graduate psychiatric nursing program at the University of Pittsburgh,

and became part of the faculty upon graduation. Later an innovative approach to psychiatric care at the Massachusetts Health Center, which involved nurse/patient therapeutic interactions, aroused her interest and on that account Mereness accepted a position at Boston University.

However, after only a year in Boston, Mereness left to pursue her doctoral studies at Teacher's College, Columbia University. During this period, Mereness co-wrote the graduate psychiatric nursing curriculum for New York University. Before even finishing her dissertation, Mereness became Head of Psychiatric-Mental Health Nursing at NYU. After ten years at the University, Mereness moved south to Philadelphia to be the Dean of the School of Nursing, University of Pennsylvania.

Throughout her career, Mereness devoted herself to the full development of her chosen profession. From 1965-1969, she hired four black faculty members at Penn, a bold and imaginative action given the circumstances of the times. Mereness also strongly believed that it was essential to participate in nursing organizations. Even while serving as Dean, she chaired numerous committees of various nursing organizations including the National League for Nursing and Nurses' Educational Funds. After her retirement in 1977, Mereness continued her amazing volume of work. She served as Emeritus Professor at Penn until 1979, taught for a year part-time at Villanova University, and was Educational Advisor for the Pennsylvania State Board of Nursing from 1981 to 1984. From March 1984 until just a year and a half before her death, Mereness served as Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Nurses' Association.

Mereness published more than 45 articles and books between 1951 and 1991. Her last article was published posthumously in *Nursing Outlook*. She was the recipient of many awards including distinguished alumni awards from every nursing program that she attended and

honorary doctorate from Villanova and Holy Family College in Philadelphia. She was also honored by the American Nurses' Association, the Pennsylvania League for Nursing, and the Southeastern Pennsylvania League for Nursing. Mereness died at 80 at Chestnut Hill Hospital in Philadelphia after a brief illness during the Spring of 1991.

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Administrative Information

Publication Statement

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Accessions were received from various donors, including Susan B. Dickey, Louise Fitzpatrick, Joan Lynaugh, Jan Smith, and Neville Strumpf.

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Controlled Access Headings

- Nursing schools -- Faculty
- Psychiatric nursing

- Nursing
- Nurse
- Personal papers
- Faculty papers
- University of Pennsylvania. School of Nursing
- Mereness, Dorothy Ann
- Columbia University. Teachers College

Collection Inventory

Personal, 1910-1991

Scope and Contents

This series contains Mereness's personal papers. It includes biographical information such as autobiographical writings, biographical sketches, resumes, obituary materials and newspaper clippings. Also included are Mereness's speeches and papers--mainly on the topics of the therapeutic role of nurses and nursing education--commencement addresses, awards, correspondence and programs in which she participated.

Biographical information

Title/Description	Instances	
Autobiographical sketches (includes MS for Fifty Years of Nursing and an oral history transcript edited by Patricia D'Antonio, PhD), 1968-1991	box 1	folder 1
Biographical sketches and resumes, 1976-1990	box 1	folder 2
Birth certificate, 1910	box 1	folder 3
Newspaper appearances, 1951-1985	box 1	folder 4
Obituary materials and correspondence, 1991	box 1	folder 5
Partial History of Mereness's family, undated	box 1	folder 6

Papers and speeches

Title/Description	Instances	
The Therapeutic Role of the Nurse "Factors Influencing the Psychiatric Nurse's Role and Function," circa 1958; "Improving the Emotional Aspects of Nursing Care," circa 1958 "The Nurse's Role in the Rehabilitation of the Mentally Ill," circa 1958; "Understanding the Psychological Needs of Patients and Families," 1958; "Nurse as an Individual in a Changing World," circa 1968; "Psychiatric Nursing in Today's Hospitals", 1959	box 1	folder 7

The Relationship of Professional Nursing to the Care of the Aged, 1962; "Implications of the Full Professional Role of the Nurse," circa 1962; "Bibliotherapy: Its Use in Nursing Therapy," October 1962; "The Potential Significant Role of the Nurse in Community Mental Health...", 1962; "What is Mental Health Content," 1963; "The Role of the Psychiatric Nurse in Therapy," 1963; "Improving Our Therapeutic Inter-personal Skills," June 1963; "The Role of the Nurse in Community Mental Health Centers," 1964	box 1	folder 8
"The Nurse in the Psychiatric Setting," 1965; "Improving the Nurse's Therapeutic Potential in Psychiatric Situations," 1967; "The Nurse's Developing Role in Community Psychiatry," March 1967; "Evolving Roles for the Nurse in the Psychiatric Situation," March 1967; "Family Therapy: An Evolving Role for the Psychiatric Nurse," April 1967; "Psychotherapeutic Nursing," May 1967; "Take a Look at Your Self Image and the Effects on Your Nursing Practice," June 1965; "Your Self-Image and Your Practice," January 1966; "The Practice of Therapeutic Nursing in the Clinical Setting and in the Community," July 1967; "The Nurse as an Individual Caring for the Alcoholic Patient," September 1967; "Identifying and Determining Patient Needs," March 1968; "The Image of the Professional Nurse," March 1969; "Maintenance of Optimum Mental Health...", March 1969; "Nursing-One Step Toward Total Individuality," October 1969	box 1	folder 9
The Potential Contribution of Nursing in Solving the Health Care Crisis, April 1972; "The Nurses' Role in Primary Care," March 1975; "The Psychiatric Patient's Right to Know," April 1976; "The Nurse's Use of Interpersonal Relationships as a Therapeutic Tool," November 1978	box 1	folder 10

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Education for Meeting Changing Responsibilities in Psychiatric Nursing, 1964; "The Dynamics of Teacher-Learner Relationships," May 1965; "Your Education-Your Future," May 1966; "Providing a Democratic Educational Climate," June 1966; "The Nurse Faculty Member in a Diploma School Can Teach in a College Program," November 1968; "The Baccalaureate and Higher Degree Programs," May 1971; "Baccalaureate Education in Nursing," 1971; "An Overview of the Educational Opportunities Available to Nurses in the Middle Years," November 1974; "History of Nursing Educational Patterns and the Impact...", April 1974; "What Has Happened to the Philosophy of Integrating Mental Health Concepts into the Basic Curriculum", May 1976; "Evaluation and Research for Improved Graduate Education Curriculum...",	box 1	folder 11

February 1977; "Graduate Education, as One Dean Sees It," October 1975; "Meeting Health Care Needs Through Graduate Education in Nursing," August 1977

General

Title/Description	Instances	
Nursing Travels the Road to Professional Maturity, circa 1959; "The Hospital Administrator's Role in Improving Patient Care" 1960; "Problems and Issues in Contemporary Psychiatric Nursing," 1964; "Looking Ahead at Psychiatric Nursing," 1966; "Psychiatric Nursing-Today and Tomorrow," October 1966; "The Dynamics of Change," October 1966; "The Changing Situation in the Health Care Picture," November 1970; "A Look at the Future with the Zodiac Nurse," November 1970	box 2	folder 12
Psychiatric Nursing: Past, Present and Future, October 1972; "The Growth of the Physician's Assistant and its Effect Upon Professional Nursing," 1972; "Historical Perspective: Nursing in the Twenty-first Century," April 1977	box 2	folder 13
Commencement addresses, 1952-1982	box 2	folder 14
Sigma Theta Tau, National Honor Society for Nurses, speeches, 1960-1973	box 2	folder 15
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Title/Description	Instances	
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Textbook foreword, 1990	box 2	folder 19
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Awards

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Correspondence with American Association of Colleges of Nursing, 1989	box 3	folder 31a
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Letters of references written by Mereness, 1965-1984	box 3	folder 34
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List of Mereness's addresses from 1933-1991, 1991	box 4	folder 43
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Materials from graduate education psychiatric nursing conferences in which Mereness participated, 1967-1970	box 4	folder 47

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Organizational Files, 1941-1987

Scope and Contents

This series contains materials of the organizations in which Mereness participated. They include the University of Pennsylvania, School of Nursing, the National League for Nursing, the Pennsylvania League for Nursing Steering Committee for Continuing Education in Psychiatry, the Southeastern Pennsylvania League for Nursing, the Nurses' Educational Funds, the Pennsylvania Nurses' Association, the Pennsylvania Nurses' Association Commission on Nursing Practice, Pennsylvania Nurses' Association Conference Group on Psychiatric Nursing Practice, and Pennsylvania Nurses' Association District One. The series begins with the file of the University of Pennsylvania, School of Nursing. Perhaps the most important item in this section is a rewritten history of the School of Nursing prepared by Mereness. The rest of the School of Nursing's file includes a few annual reports, programs, correspondence and publications. The remaining organizations are arranged alphabetically with state and local chapters as well as committees attached as subseries to the parent institutions. Thus, Pennsylvania League for Nursing (PLN) is arranged as subseries to the National League for Nursing, the Southeastern PLN is created as a subseries of PLN, and the PLN Steering Committee for Education in Psychiatry, a committee to study psychiatric nursing education, is also a subseries of PLN.

University of Pennsylvania, School of Nursing

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Poem read by Mereness to graduating class of 1972-1972	box 4	folder 7
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Scope and Contents

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Speaking at a workshop at Tuskegee, Visiting Association, 1963	box 8	photo 9
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Conducting a workshop from a podium with shot of audience, Topeka, Kansas, March 1968	box 8	photo 13
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Dressed for the Silver Anniversary of the School of Nursing, University of Pennsylvania, May 1975	box 8	photo 14.1
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Books, Tapes, and Artifacts, 1935-1989

box 8

Scope and Contents

This series contains collected books and cassette tapes and artifacts. The two books are Karnosh's A Psychiatrist's Anthology and Faddis's A School of Nursing Comes of Age. The two cassette tapes are the recordings of a speech by Gaylord P. Harnwell, former president of the University of Pennsylvania, and of a television advertisement for nursing. Among the artifacts are plaques and Mereness's Emeritus Professor medallion.

Books

box 9

Title/Description

Instances

Karnosh, Louis, M.D. A Psychiatrist's Anthology, 1935, presented as gift to Mereness, October, 1940; Faddis, Margene. A School of Nursing Comes of Age, 1973, signed copy from author to Mereness, 1973

Tapes

box 9

Title/Description

Instances

Ad for Nurses for television, 1981; Gaylord Harnwell, President of the University of Pennsylvania, addressing Council of Deans, 1965; Scotch recording tape from President of the University of Pennsylvania to Dean Mereness

Artifacts

box 9

Title/Description

Instances

Four plaques; One Emeritus Member medallion from the American Association of Colleges of Nursing; Framed Certificate of Recognition, American Association of Colleges of Nursing, 1976

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Unprocessed Accessions

box 10

1993.21

Title/Description

Instances

Correspondence, Interview, Speech outlines, Handwritten drafts, Notes

Chapter 5 handwritten script, interviews with June Maner, Theresa Lynch, Mary Beam and Miss Woodruff

Draft 2 with Claire Fagine notes

Typed drafts of academic reports and manuscripts

General Info

Handwritten notes

Letters received after obituary

Mereness Book

Draft

2016.06

Title/Description

Instances

2 notebooks on meeting notes c. 1972

Christmas cards 1969-1972

Clippings

CV

Christmas greetings from Dorothy Mereness c. 1940-1980

Papers, speeches and misc.

Brown Publishing Company correspondence and other materials related to book Essentials of Psychiatric Nursing c. 1970-1973

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