

# Harlequin image real?

By DOROTHY CONSTABLE

"For a long time Candida Jones had set her heart on becoming a nurse . . . It was a hard life for a girl, her uncle reminded her, unless she had a real vocation for it. . . . And sure enough, Candida turned out to be a born nurse, and found nursing even more rewarding, exciting, and—with the advent of Doctor Randon Lord—more romantic than she had ever imagined."

That's what Harlequin romance stories have to say about nursing, but is that the way it really is?

It's a whole different world—the Royal Alec nursing residence. "You are kind of isolated from the rest of the world," said one nursing student. "You eat with girls, sleep with girls and talk with girls — about nursing." There are no men allowed in residence, not even fathers.

It's a kind of unwritten law that nursing students live in residence, but not compulsory. You can get married and live in your own place.

There are other circumstances that warrant living outside of residence. One girl, the only child in her family, went home to live with her mother when her father died.

But for the most part everybody lives in residence. It has its advantages. Room and board is supplied, each girl has her own room, uniforms and sheets are washed once a week, and it's close to the hospital.

There are lounges, game rooms, sewing rooms, shampoo rooms and a myriad of other facilities which are available to the students. Lining the main lounge are a number of small rooms which used to be "beau"

rooms until the locks were taken off the doors. Now they are used mainly as study rooms.

"It gets the same as residence life anywhere after awhile," said one student. "You see people taking music or dancing or swimming lessons just to get away from it for a few hours."

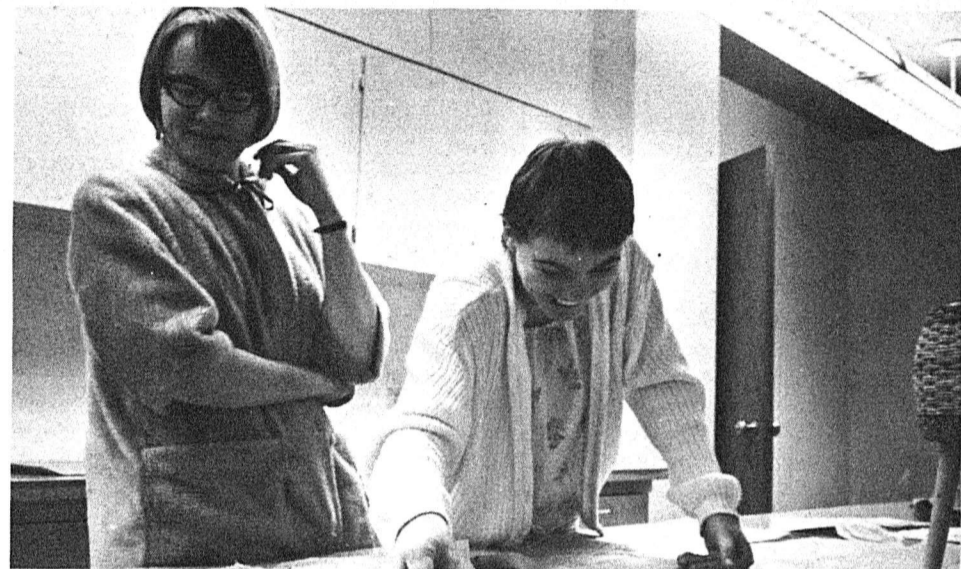
Curfew hours range from midnight in first year to 3 a.m. for third year students. Nursing students also get eight days off every four weeks, when they are free to leave residence.

The nursing program at the Royal Alec is three years long. During the first two years students take courses in such things as physiology, anatomy, microbiology, psychology, sociology and basic nursing.

Basic nursing is a practical course in which the student learns how to do some of the things she will be doing in the hospital. Ward work is an essential part of the nursing program. The third year of the program is almost exclusively ward work. (There is a great desire among many of the students for the institution of some philosophy courses where they can just sit around and talk.)

As time progresses and the student nurse becomes more experienced her responsibilities in the hospital grow. She begins with such things as making beds, taking temperatures, pulses, and blood pressures until, in her final year, her responsibilities are almost as great as those of graduate nurses.

She becomes responsible for all the patients in the particular unit in which she is working—making sure



**NURSING STUDENTS LAY OUT**

. . . dress patterns in their off hours

that proper medication is given and that everything that needs to be done is done.

The relationship between the nursing students and the hospital staff was described as fairly good. "If you really profess an interest in something, most doctors will go out of their way to explain it to you."

Emergency is one of the most exciting units to work in, said one student. "You come in contact with all kinds of people and all kinds of cases—people with slashed wrists, people that are high on LSD, and wives who have been beaten up by their husbands. You are really confronted with some of the realities of life."

"And then in the midst of it all, someone will come into emergency because he's constipated."

But in spite of everything, it's a lot of hard work and just plain drudgery, at times.

People come into nursing with a "Florence Nightingale glow," said one student. "You read all the Harlequin romance stories and dream about being locked in a linen closet with some handsome intern and when you get to the hospital you find that there's hardly room for one person in the linen closet, let alone two."

"It's not really dedication that keeps a student in nursing," she continued, "but more of a selfish gratification that comes from being able to help other people. And besides that you have a kind of power over the patient just because he's in a strange environment and you're in your own environment."

More than anything else, though, it's the patients that keep you in the hospital. There are really a lot of wonderful people."

Still the dreams don't all disappear—dreams of working up north or in Vietnam.

"Those are places where you could really be a nurse, more so than in any hospital," said another student.

"If you come out of nursing with nothing else, you'll come out a little less pure and simple—just because of the nature of the work. Some of the doctors are really crude," said a student.

There are 352 students in nursing

at the Royal Alec at the present time and because of their numbers, they play an important role in the functioning of the hospital.

"We run the hospital," said one student, half in jest and half in earnest. Each student puts in calculated \$60 worth of labor per month, \$40 of which covers the cost of room and board, \$5 of which goes to such things as the pension plan, leaving the student \$15 spending money.

However, this stipend may be cut out in the near future as the hospital is working under a rather tight budget. There seems to be very little feeling of being taken advantage of. "Where else can you live this cheaply?" questioned one student.

Once a nursing student has graduated she can expect to earn about \$500 a month, and there is the added advantage of being able to work part-time for several shifts during the week.

Students are required to pay an \$80 fee at the beginning of their first year. This money goes to their students' union.

The students' union is primarily a service organization. They are presently trying to raise money for a swimming pool. "We've been trying for the past ten years, but the price keeps going up. We've supposedly got a hole in the ground in the basement for it though."

"We have a fair amount of say in such things as curriculum," said Pam Bradley, president of their students' union. "Almost all the recommendations that we make are carried out."

Compulsory unit work in the operating room is one of the aspects of the nursing program which has been discontinued.

Every year hospitals receive more applications to enter nursing than they can accommodate. Nursing very obviously does have an appeal for a great number of people.

Whether it be a desire to serve mankind, or the "challenge and drama" of hospital life, or the thought of romance with a handsome young doctor, or something entirely different, only each individual nurse can say.

And as to whether one is "born to be a nurse", only Candida Jones can say.



**THIS IS BRAIN SURGERY???????**