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When I think of nursing research, and I do that a lot, I can't help but think about how it started for me.

This is many thousand years ago, before the “evidence based practice” movement, before there were Cochrane Collections of meta-analyzed studies, before there was a National Institute for Nursing Research in NIH (whose first nurse Director was Ada Sue Hinshaw, YSN '63. This is not a coincidence).

This was, in fact, at the dawn of clinical nursing research, only we students didn't realize it was that early in the morning. Research simply *was*, enthusiastically taught by Robert C. Leonard, feistily supported by Florence Wald '41, MS '56 as Dean, definitively placed in context by Virginia Henderson, and brilliantly practiced by Rhetaugh Dumas '63.

As I write this in February, we have just celebrated Rhetaugh's memory with a fine afternoon of reminiscences and an enduring exhibit. Her death last summer came at the end of a career notable for its orchestration of themes: research, mental health service, and leadership. To me, the greatest of these was research.

Rhetaugh came to YSN to “learn about new work in mental health,” she wrote in her admissions essay. She was referring to Ida Orlando's mental health concepts for nursing practice and we mourn Ida's passing this year as well. Rhetaugh's first study of the effects of preoperative preparation on postoperative recovery was a term paper in her research methods class in her first year. With Bob Leonard's urging and energy, she turned that into a research grant application before she had even finished her graduate program. We found that document as we were searching the archives for exhibitable material. The PI's credentials were listed as “Master's Degree candidate, degree to be awarded June 1961.” Eventually there were three replications by Rhetaugh of the original study, for a grand sample size of 51, reported in an article by Dumas and Leonard in *Nursing Research* in 1963, and recognized as the first genuine randomized controlled clinical trial (RCCT) in nursing.

Bob recalled in an email to me that Florence Wald asked for his assistance when the Chairman of the Department of Surgery at Yale New Haven Hospital went up in smoke that a nurse was doing research on *his* patients without his knowledge, consent, or approval. Bob extinguished the fire. They had the even more important ally in Anna Ryle '33 as Director of Nursing at YNHH who would brook no interference with YSN's right to do research in *her* hospital.

In the early 1960's, YSN students either did clinical experiments or analyses of nurse-patient interactions, reflecting the emphasis on understanding this aspect of nursing using the theories of Ida Orlando and Ernestine Weidenbach. I did one of the interaction studies, carrying around a tape recorder for years. This is a kind of research that never quite goes anywhere although my classmate, Angela McBride '64 took the work to its logical extreme to inform operational definitions of nursing approaches for her experimental study of the effect of nursing on patient pain.

Oh, those were heady days! We were out there showing that nursing made a difference in well-designed and executed clinical trials, the gold standard. We weren't exactly popular in the wider nursing community, still stuck in studies of “the workers rather than the work” in Virginia Henderson's immortal words. But our master's theses became presentations at national meetings, and articles in nursing journals. *Nursing Research* was only 11 years old when Rhetaugh's work was published. The curious bibliophile might note how many articles in that journal in the 1960s came out of Yale articles by Rhetaugh, Angela, Perry Mahaffy '64, Roslyn Elms '63, Barbara Anderson '62, and Jean Johnson '65.

I didn't come to YSN to study nursing research and I don't imagine many of our master's students do today. But I got hooked on the possibilities and the challenge and the sheer joy of making nursing visible in ways understood by the scientific community outside the discipline.

As the stories in this issue show, nurse researchers at YSN are still pushing forward the boundaries of nursing's gifts. Researchers today can't get by with an almost-master's credential, and the contemporary rules of engagement for competitive funding are brutal. It must be the love of the work that keeps us going.

Surely I didn't know, nor did any of us those many thousand years ago, where nursing research might lead me.

The study I'm working with now has a sample size of 10 million.

In New Zealand.

The study is an extension of Barbara McCloskey's '03 DNSc dissertation. With a grand team of colleagues, we are studying the relationship between nursing resources and patient outcomes to make a difference in public policy for health in that gorgeous, graceful country.

Who woulda thunk it?