The AANA Archives: Documenting a Distinguished Past

Key words: Archives, history of American Association of Nurse Anesthetists, history of nurse anesthesia.

Background

The discovery of the anesthetizing property of diethyl ether in America more than 150 years ago rivaled the discoveries of professional nursing and the germ theory of disease as the most significant advance in healthcare of the 19th century. These three advances led to the development of modern surgery. Ether was administered by a disinterested medical student or by some other untrained individual. However, by the 1880s, enough anesthetic morbidity had been encountered that surgeons demanded clinicians who would dedicate themselves solely to the care of patients under anesthesia. For that reason, and perhaps due to a desire for gender-based superiority over their anesthetizing colleagues, surgeons recruited nurses as anesthetists. Thus was born the subspecialty of nurse anesthesia.

Although it is not known who the first nurse anesthetist was, the earliest recorded was Sister Mary Bernard, a Catholic nun from Wichita, Kansas, in 1887. The most famous nurse anesthetist of the 19th century, Alice Magaw (Figure 1), worked at St. Mary's Hospital (1889), in Rochester, Minnesota. Ms. Magaw earned international respect and the sobriquet "the mother of anesthesia," for her mastery of open drop inhalation anesthesia. Many important advances have been made by nurse anesthetists since then. Among them have been establishing the first formal education training programs in anesthesia (1909) and the founding of a national organization.

The American Association of Nurse Anesthetists (AANA), originally named the National Association of Nurse Anesthetists, was founded in 1931 by nurse anesthetist Agatha Hodgins (Figure 2). The AANA is the oldest specialty nursing organization in the United States. Nurse anesthetists were first publicly recognized in 1953 by the publication of History of Anesthesia with Emphasis on the Nurse Specialist by Virginia S. Thatcher. The history of American nurse anesthetists and the AANA was published in 1989, entitled Watchful Care: A History of America's Nurse Anesthetists by Marianne Bankert.

History of Anesthesia was the first major investigation into nursing's contribution to anesthesia history, a subject overlooked or denigrated by other historians. Watchful Care contributed significantly to the public's understanding about nurse anesthetists by arguing that nurses have overcome economic and gender-based obstacles to retain the right to administer anesthesia. The book also educated many nurse anesthetists to their own heritage and thereby generated among them a renewed interest in history.
Creation of the AANA Archives

Several events grew out of the revival of interest in history that followed publication of *Watchful Care*, events that ultimately led to the establishment of a formal archival program at the AANA. An exhibit entitled “Marking CRNA Footsteps in History” was held at the 1990 AANA Spring Assembly of States. The exhibit displayed important documents, photographs, and memorabilia dating back to the founding of the AANA. The exhibit drew attention to the fact the AANA possessed a large and valuable historical collection. A History Focus Session was held to assess the level of interest in history and educate members to its importance at the 1992 AANA Annual Meeting. A proposal for a formal archival program was considered by the AANA Board of Directors, and funds were appropriated to hire a staff archivist in 1993. Key staff members visited the well-established Oncology Nurses Society Archives in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, on a fact-finding mission in April 1994. A full-time archivist (Mr. Fosburgh) was hired to begin the overall program in October 1994.

One of the first steps in establishing a successful archival program is determining its mission. Accordingly, a mission statement was written. It was approved by the AANA Board of Directors at its February 1995 Board Meeting. The mission statement becomes policy and gives direction to the people who work in the archives. The mission statement lays out the scope of the collections and the range of services provided by the AANA Archives. The mission statement also describes how the Archives is integrated into the overall structures of the AANA and the anesthesia community.

Mission statement of the AANA Archives

The American Association of Nurse Anesthetists (AANA) Archives is charged with the responsibility of appraising, collecting, organizing, describing, preserving, and making available for research and reference use those official AANA records of sufficient historical, legal, and/or administrative value to warrant permanent preservation. “Official AANA records” include any and all documentation in any form produced or received by any employee or member of AANA while engaged in the conduct of official AANA business.

The AANA Archives strives to provide adequate facilities for the retention and preservation of official AANA records. In addition, it facilitates efficient records management to further assure that permanently valuable records are preserved and to encourage efficient use of space within the AANA headquarters. In collecting these materials, the AANA Archives undertakes to recognize and honor matters of privilege and confidentiality.

The AANA Archives promotes knowledge and understanding of the origins, aims, programs, and goals of the AANA, and of the development of these aims, programs, and goals. The Archives provides informational services that will assist the operation of the AANA in addition to serving research by making available and encouraging use of its collection by AANA members, office staff, and approved researchers.

The AANA Archives also collects, organizes, describes, preserves, and makes available for research and reference, records of individuals and organizations engaged in work which is reflective of the work of the AANA. Such individuals and organizations may operate within the AANA as a supervised unit or as an advocate of the AANA.

Collections

Collections are the centerpiece of any archives. Thus far, the AANA Archives consists of records groups representing its committees, subsidiary organizations, and offices. These are described in some detail here. Of all the inactive records on hand at AANA headquarters, approximately 30% are now processed. That is to say, they are permanently stored in a protective environment, indexed, and catalogued on the *Minaret* database. The Archives catalog will be accessible to on-line services in the near future. The records are stored at 222 South Prospect Avenue, and access for research purposes can be arranged by contacting the AANA Archives (708-692-7050, ext. 378).

The AANA Archives will access more records and undertake other history-related projects in the future. Among the AANA Executive Office records that still need to be processed include Education and Research, Programs and Meeting Services, Accreditation, Public Relations/Publications, Finance, Membership and Information Systems, State and Government Affairs, and Federal Government Affairs in the Washington, DC office. An oral history collection program is underway and projects making use of the public relations potential of historically important materials are being contemplated. Members and others in possession of material that may be of importance to the history of nurse anesthesia should contact the AANA Archives. Although the Archives is not yet prepared to accept donations, it is helpful to know in advance of the existence of potential acquisitions.

The AANA Archives contains records such as agendas, annual reports, bylaws, constitutions, class notes, correspondence, financial records, legal files, memorabilia, minutes, newspaper clip-
Figures:
1. Nurse anesthetist Alice Magaw
2. Agatha Hodgins, CRNA
3. Verna Rice, CRNA (front row, third from right)
4. William H. Teller, MD, and Hilda Salomon, CRNA (1930)
5. Florence A. McQuillen, CRNA (right) is commissioned with the honor of Kentucky Colonel by Elizabeth Mulroney, CRNA, president, Kentucky Association of Nurse Anesthetists (1963-64).
6. John S. Lundy, MD
7. AANA past-presidents in this photo of the Union Hospital, Lynn, Massachusetts, Nursing Class of 1920 are Hilda Salomon, CRNA (top left), and Lucy Richards, CRNA (middle row, far right).
8. George Crile, MD
9. The second Annual Meeting banquet in 1934
(The above photographs are courtesy of the AANA Archives.)
The Archives’ collections include the subject files of the AANA’s first executive director, Florence McQuillen, CRNA (1948-1970) (Figure 5), who created a successful accreditation program, the organized body which was the forerunner of the Assembly of States, and an optional continuing education program. Ms. McQuillen was a staff nurse anesthetist and instructor of anesthesia under John S. Lundy, MD, (Figure 6) at the Mayo Clinic. She also edited Anesthesia Abstracts, from 1937 to 1965, which embodied the work of the Journal Club of the Section of Anesthesiology at the Mayo Clinic. She was responsible for the initiation of a major reorganization of the AANA executive office and increased membership from 3,200 to 14,539. Ms. McQuillen’s subject files contain primarily agendas, correspondence, and minutes from AANA committees such as the Approval of Minutes Committee, Bylaws Committee, and Government Relations Committee. The records also contain collected memorabilia such as an Indiana Association of Nurse Anesthetists guest book, a song from the 1956 AANA Silver Jubilee held at the 25th Annual Meeting, and a telegram from U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower commemorating the 25th Annual Meeting.

Records from other AANA executive directors include: Bernice Baum, CRNA (1970-1976), J. Martin Stone, MHA (1977-1979), Nancy Fevold, CRNA, MBA (acting 1976-1977, 1979-1983), and current AANA Executive Director John F. Garde, CRNA, MS, FAAN. The records contain committee agendas and minutes, annual reports, correspondence, financial records, memoranda, printed material, and reports; AANA Board of Directors’ background files, weekly mailings, manual of procedures and policies, and meeting minutes; and business meeting minutes. Subjects documented include creation of the Councils on Accreditation, Certification, Recertification, and Public Interest. Other topics include the Manpower Study (1980) which was conceived by the AANA Long Range Planning Committee, the founding of the AANA Education and Research Foundation (AANA Foundation), relocation of the executive office building, the formation of the AANA subsidiaries (Anesthesia Professional Liability Services, Inc., AANA Publishing, Inc., and Prospect Travel), and the publication of Watchful Care: A History of America’s Nurse Anesthetists.

Files concerning AANA’s role in the education of nurse anesthetists are the largest and one of the most important subjects documented in the Archives. As Agatha Hodgins stated, “My chief interest is in education. From whatever angle the subject is considered, the school remains the repository of our hopes, the guarantee of security for our association.” Topics documented include accreditation, certification, and publications. The Archives also holds the records of the Baylor School of Nurse Anesthesia in Dallas, Texas, which closed in 1978.

Records documenting accreditation consist primarily of lists of approved schools (Figure 7) for nurse anesthetists from 1954 to 1974. Correspondence and reports document the AANA’s required curriculum for nurse anesthetist schools and the formation of the Council on Accreditation of Nurse Anesthesia Educational Programs in 1975. The records also include a list of original schools “recognized” by the AANA from 1937 to 1954 and a statement of purpose, history, and criteria of the accreditation program from 1952 to 1972.

The AANA’s role in certification of nurse anesthetists is best documented by the original qualifying examinations from 1945 to 1974. Qualifying examinations mark “a credentialing record among nursing specialty organizations, of which the AANA is the oldest.”6 Passage for the examination was an eligibility requirement for membership in the AANA.

Education subject files contain agendas, minutes, correspondence, questionnaires, school curriculums, surveys, lecture notes, and outlines generated by the Approval of Schools Committee, Curriculum Committee, Education Committee, Educational Exhibits Committee, Educational Loan and Scholarship Committee, and the Examination Committee. The files include correspondence between Executive Director Florence McQuillen, Education Director Clarene A. Carmichael, CRNA, and Curriculum Committee member Alma Webb, nurse anesthetist, concerning AANA’s initial attempts to create accreditation, certification, and continuing education programs for nurse anesthetists.

The Archives also houses many AANA publications, such as the AANA Journal and the AANA...
NewsBulletin, which pertain to the education of nurse anesthetists. Most publications were created for students and instructors in the field of nurse anesthesia. The most significant technical publications include AANA Education Director Clarene A. Carmichael's anesthesia education notes or the “Rainbow Series” from 1956 to 1959. Other educational publications include the Junior Anesthetists' Bulletin (1966-1969) and its predecessor, the Student Nurse Anesthetists' Bulletin (1961-1965). Also present is the School Directors Exchange from 1955 to 1956, a newsletter for nurse anesthesia instructors.

The Archives holdings include more than one thousand photographs which document AANA membership and events since 1931. Individuals who are documented include the founders of the AANA, board of directors, presidents, and office staff. The archives also has photographs of long-time AANA advocates such as George W. Crile, MD (Figure 8), who worked with Agatha Hodgins at Lakeside Hospital in Cleveland, Ohio, and Verne C. Hunt, MD, who supported nurse anesthetists during the Dagmar Nelson Case in 1934. AANA events documented include the AANA Annual Meeting (Figure 9), Fall and Spring Assembly of States, and award ceremonies from 1933 to the present.

Conclusion

The success and recognition the AANA has achieved has been the result of the labor of many individuals. The AANA has benefited from those who are members of the nurse anesthesia profession and those who have been close supporters of the profession. The AANA Archives emphasizes a representative section of the profession's shared heritage and is devoted to both the past and future achievements of the Association. It serves the AANA membership, executive office, and everyone interested in the roots of nurse anesthesia. The Archives should be a source of pride and information to all AANA membership.

REFERENCES


AUTHORS

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