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Obituaries - News

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Article published Sunday, June 17, 2007
STELLA J. 'PETE' PIOTROWSKI, 1916-2007

Ex-nursing board head also was at St. Vincent

Stella J. "Pete" Piotrowski, 90, former head of the Ohio Board of Nursing who was head emergency room nurse and associate director of education at what is now St. Vincent Mercy Medical Center, died of cardiac arrest June 10 in Riverside Methodist Hospital, Columbus.

Miss Piotrowski closed her career in Columbus as an executive with what was then called the state nurse education and nurse registration board. She retired in 1981 as its executive secretary, which was the equivalent of executive director. Before that, she was a consultant to the state board and its assistant executive secretary.

She continued to live in Columbus after retiring.

With the state board, she was able to travel to nursing conventions nationally and travel Ohio extensively, visiting hospitals and nursing schools.

"She enjoyed [her jobs with the nursing board] in more than one way," said Dorothy Pakulski, whose late mother, June Daly, was a close friend and high school classmate. "It presented her with a lot of opportunities she may not otherwise have had. She thoroughly enjoyed it, the experience of meeting other people. As my dad would say, she had the gift of gab."

Miss Piotrowski's association with Toledo remained strong. She belonged to the St. Vincent Nursing Alumni Association, of which she was a former board member. She was unable to attend the association's annual dinner last month, but she sent a letter, which was read aloud in its entirety, said Pat Yancy-Felton, alumni association president.

St. Vincent graduates of the 1950s who best knew Miss Piotrowski "held on to every word. There was a lot of ooohing and aahing," Ms. Yancy-Felton said. "She was always a champion of the cause of nursing. She was a person who impacted nursing and nursing at St. Vincent. All those she taught - that's her legacy."

Joan Olnhausen, St. Vincent class of 1950, recalled that Miss Piotrowski was a supportive instructor.

"She was a great instructor and a great human being," said Mrs. Olnhausen, who retired from St. Vincent in 1994 as an emergency room nurse. "She never had notes. She just stood there on the podium and just talked right to you. It came so natural to her."

But Miss Piotrowski also offered guidance on good nursing practice: A nurse walking down the hall should respond when she sees a call light, even if another nurse is assigned that patient.

"All the patients are your patients. If that light is on, and the patient needs something,

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you take care of it," she'd advise, Mrs. Olnhausen recalled.

Miss Piotrowski was a 1934 graduate of Libbey High School and a 1937 graduate of St. Vincent. She later became head nurse in the emergency room.

She completed a bachelor of science degree in nursing education at St. Louis University and, in 1945, returned to St. Vincent as a faculty member. She was a clinical instructor, then coordinator of clinical instructors, and finally associate director of education.

She left St. Vincent in 1955 to complete work on a master's degree. She attended the University of Detroit and received the degree from Columbia University.

Besides teaching and administrative duties, Miss Piotrowski directed the nursing school's plays and musicals.

She was 4-feet, 9-inches tall and could deal with anyone, often with humor, Mrs. Pakulski said.

"She was kind of a spitfire," Mrs. Pakulski said. "She had a very strong will and a great determination, and she had goals to achieve, and she went after them. She had an awesome life and an awesome career, and she needed to be acknowledged for that."

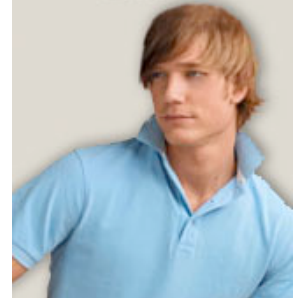
There are no immediate survivors. Services were Friday in Columbus, with arrangements by the John Quint Treboni Funeral Home.

Tributes are suggested to the St. Vincent Alumni Association for nursing scholarships.

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