

a v.i.p. and me

(very interesting person)

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By KATHLEEN A. HICKS

JILLIAN HEAVER:

Student: Credit Valley School of Nursing;
South Peel Unit's Miss Hope;
Miss Hope of Ontario;
Representative: Canadian Cancer Society.

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April 18/73
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ME: You were given the Canadian Cancer Society's Ontario Miss Hope title in a contest involving 14 other Ontario nursing students on Jan. 14 at the Four Seasons Hotel in Toronto. How exciting was this event for you?

JILLIAN: It was really exciting because we got to go down there for a day and they had everything planned for us. They really made us feel important, they made each one of us feel important, not just the person who won. I got quite close with all the girls that I was with, which was nice, too. I thoroughly enjoyed myself and I got to meet a lot of wonderful people.

ME: What kind of procedure did you have to go through for this contest?

JILLIAN: First of all, to reach the Ontario Division we had to go through three levels; first we competed at our unit level — mine is South Peel; then we competed at our district level, which is Central Counties; then if you won there, you went on to the Ontario Division. We had to prepare a three-minute speech on cancer nursing or the cancer problem. The judges asked us questions about cancer, cancer nursing and cancer statistics. We were judged on appearance in uniform, our personality, our intelligence, how we presented ourselves and our presentation. In the afternoon program, we had the speaking contest, which was limited to parents and directors of the schools of nursing. That's where they

questioned us and we had about 15 minutes with each judge. Then in the evening, when they had a big dinner for the Ontario Cancer Society's Campaign Conference, John Dolan of CFRB was the master of ceremonies. It was just a terrific time for me.

ME: How different has your life been since you became the South Peel Unit's Miss Hope on October 27?

JILLIAN: When I was chosen for South Peel, I wasn't kept that busy. I went to the odd meeting, branch functions, and several events around Christmas. As it got closer to campaign month, we went on an anti-smoking campaign to the high schools. I've been to quite a few campaign meetings and kick-offs and speaking engagements at different women's groups. Then when I was chosen Miss Hope of Ontario, I really became busy. I recently went to the New York State Division's kick-off campaign, which was really exciting and interesting. It was for three days, and I went with Harry Rowlands, the Ontario division chairman. We flew down, which was great and I roomed with their last year's Miss Hope, Caroline Bryzinski. We really had a good time. They had quite a few celebrities there, which was kind of nice for me. I got to meet Kitty Carlisle, who is the honorary chairman and Peter Graves from Mission: Impossible. I was so nervous speaking there because I had never spoken with celebrities in the audience. They had their Miss Hope Contest with 43 contestants. I had to speak to them at their luncheon and I spoke at the afternoon program; then in the evening, I got to help crown Miss Hope with Caroline. They made me feel like a celebrity — they were so good to me and it was all very exciting.

ME: I can tell you are a quiet and sensitive person. What is your feeling about the exposure you have received as Miss Hope?

JILLIAN: It has given me a lot more self-confidence for one thing. It has inspired me to want to work for the Cancer Society after my year is up as Miss Hope. It is really rewarding. So often people say to me, "Thank you for coming to speak to us." Sometimes I would like to say, "Thank you for inviting me because I really learned a lot from it, too." For instance, my trip to New York; they had some great speakers and I learned quite a bit from each one. I've always been used to speaking in front of people because I took drama all the way through high school. And also from meeting Caroline, who works at the Rosewell Park Institute in Buffalo, which is a big cancer research centre, I plan to go back there at the beginning of May for a weekend to go on a tour.

ME: How would you best describe your function as the Cancer Society representative of hope?

JILLIAN: The Miss Hope contest was designed three years ago to inspire interest among young people in the Cancer Society. My role is more or less an ambassador of hope, travelling around to spread our message of hope, informing people of the latest research developments, how they can protect themselves from cancer, and telling them there is hope against cancer. I found one of the mottos down in the States very interesting; it was "We want to fight cancer in your lifetime."

ME: Cancer isn't the most pleasant subject. Does it bother

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Public's image of student nurses has been distorted

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you to be continually discussing it, and what special message do you give the public?

JILLIAN: No, not really. A lot of people are afraid to discuss cancer, but I'm quite used to it from being a nurse. The Cancer Society puts out seven warning signals and I think quite a few people are aware of them, but people won't follow them up because they are afraid. So what my purpose is as Miss Hope is to explain to them what happens after they go to the doctor, because there is hope. These warning signals are early signs and if you can catch it in the early stages, there is a cure, and that is the most important thing. I have met a lot of people who have been cured; we consider a cure when they survive more than five years. One lady I met had a mastectomy and hysterectomy 25 years ago and she's 70 now. I met a woman in New York who was cured of Hodgkin's disease. She told a touching story and it really made me feel good. If people could hear stories like these, it would take away some of the fear.

ME: What motivated you into the nursing profession?

JILLIAN: Well, it's kind of funny, because I didn't decide to go into nursing until about June of my year in Grade 13; I was all set to go into the school of dramatic arts at the University of Windsor. I got kind of discouraged by the people I met in the acting profession. I found that it was just every man for himself, and you have to be so self-centred and self-assured and I just wasn't like that — I needed other people. I had worked in a hospital for one summer and I enjoyed it very much, so I thought, "Well, why not, I'll give it a try." And it's been great for me.

ME: The Credit Valley School of Nursing was incorporated in 1968, and is one of 60 nursing schools in Ontario. You are from Whitby; why did you choose to get your training here?

JILLIAN: I knew a couple of girls who had come here from Whitby and I had seen the school and really liked it. It was far enough away from home to give me a little independence and yet close enough — it was just right.

ME: Give me a brief description of the curriculum and hospital training this school provides.

JILLIAN: It's a two-year program that teaches basic nursing care. The first year we do our training in the Mississauga, Brampton, Oakville, Georgetown and Milton Hospitals in areas of medicine, obstetrics and surgery. For our second year we just go to the Oakville, Brampton and Mississauga Hospitals and we have six-week rotations of psychiatry, pediatrics, medicine and surgery. The last six weeks of school is what's called pre-grad experience, where you work on the ward by yourself with no teacher to look over you. So you're kind of thrown into it to work things out on your own, which is good to do before graduation.

ME: Is the admission criterion Grade 12, and what time is involved in academic study and how much in hospital care?

JILLIAN: You can get in with Grade 12, but I think they encourage students to take Grade 13 so they get biology. We spend two to four days a week in the hospital and the rest of

the time in the classroom. We have all our weekends off; right now we aren't working shifts, but this will change when we graduate. I think first year is hard because you're getting adjusted to an entirely new situation, not only school, but a lot of girls find it hard being away from home. You have mixed feelings; you really don't know whether you like it or not.

ME: One hundred and thirty nurses have graduated since the school began. There are now 183 presently enrolled. How many does the school accommodate and do you find living in residence satisfactory?

JILLIAN: The school can accommodate about 300 students — 150 for each year. I'm quite happy here. Each of us has our own room, which is nice. We have laundry facilities; we have kitchens — we can eat at the hospital, but we prefer our own cooking; we have lounges with television; a hairdressing room; we have a gym, vending machines, seminar rooms, a library, a music room, and the grounds are great for walks; and we have a courtyard, which is set up with umbrellas and chairs in the summer. It's got everything that you could ever need. We don't want for much.

ME: Is the basic hospital training for a nurse as demeaning as we have been led to believe?

JILLIAN: I think the public's image of a student nurse has been distorted by the advertising media of television and radio. It is hard and rough, but you can take it if you really want to be a nurse. The thing is, the teachers become super critical of you because they want to find out who's going to stick it out and who isn't. And if you can't take criticism, then you can't come into nursing. It really helps you build character though; because you have to become a stronger person. They weed out the strong from the weak.

ME: Have you known any girl who has quit because she couldn't handle the disillusionment and pressures that evolve during the training?

JILLIAN: Quite a few. One girl I knew had thought about quitting for a long time; she knew that nursing wasn't for her, but she kept on going so as not to upset her family. That's no good, because the time she's wasting here she could be out working at something more suitable to her. So finally she quit and it was more upsetting than if she had quit when she first decided. I think you know by the end of your first year whether nursing is for you or not.

ME: Can you tell me any funny experiences that have happened to you during your hospital duties?

JILLIAN: Oh, yes — I've had some funny things happen. I remember the first day I was ever on wards in my first year, we all had to change in this little washroom and we all got into our nice clean uniforms and white hats and I knocked my hat into the toilet. I got so upset, I was ready to quit there and then.

ME: I read there are seven men enrolled here. The word nurse evokes female connotations. What is your opinion about males invading the nursing profession?

JILLIAN: I think it's a good move. With the human rights code, people aren't to be discriminated against because of age, sex or marital status; and I don't see why that should just apply to women. There may be guys who are interested in medicine but don't have the marks or the intelligence to go through to be a doctor, but really like the hospital environment. So why not be a nurse? An orderly is not as challenging a job because they can't do half the duties that a nurse can; they more or less do the heavy jobs around the hospital. Whereas in nursing, you have more responsibility and you get to make more decisions. Some male patients would prefer a male nurse. I have no objections whatsoever. I think they need male nurses.

ME: Your two-year program comes to an end when you graduate in July. Where do you hope to go from here?

JILLIAN: I hope to work in one of the larger downtown hospitals for a year and get some experience; then I would like to go back to university to get my public health so I can become a Victorian Order Nurse. The trend in nursing today is toward community nursing. People aren't being kept in the hospital as long as they used to and they can be treated at home. Being a public health nurse is more diversified and interests me much more because you are involved with the home environment and get to see people as they really are.

ME: What other areas of endeavor do you want to pursue?

JILLIAN: I would like to pursue my dramatic work; I really enjoy amateur theatre and when I get out of school I would like to join an amateur theatre group. I love attending drama, speech, and acting classes — I just love things like that. I belonged to the Oshawa Little Theatre, which was quite good and I had some terrific parts. I think it was good for me. I've always had a very active life, but there's so many things I would like to do yet. One exciting thing that has come up is the making of a commercial for the Cancer Society. The CBC-TV people came to the school to film it and it will be seen on all the Canadian TV stations during our April campaign.

ME: What philosophy does a nurse adhere to?

JILLIAN: I think personal philosophy differs with how dedicated you are. My philosophy is I love nursing and meeting people; it's so diversified that you never know what's going to happen every day. I like that — I don't like to know what's going to take place. So nursing is great like that. I don't think I can really say I have a philosophy about nursing until I'm a graduate, because when you're a student you have so many mixed feelings. Right now nursing means everything to me; it's an accomplishment. When I see so many of my friends who are just wandering, trying to find themselves, I feel glad that I have something behind me. It's a personal goal, a personal achievement, and it makes me feel good that I have achieved something after high school.