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Time

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TIME

If only we could hold time in a bottle, letting it seep out slowly when we wanted it to move forward. Instead, we try to tuck it into a closet shelf or dresser drawer, trying our best to save the memories. We hold on to them for years, piling more and more on top of the ones already saved. How many years pass before we notice and remember?

Yesterday I opened a drawer in my bedside stand. I had a Goodwill bag handy in preparation for the disposal of years of collected things. In my possession, I had a pair of 30-year-old boots, sweaters from the '80s and, surprise, my cap and cape from nursing school in the '50s. It's time to start clearing out the things I've saved for years.

Holding the yellowing cap, I was reminded how we washed it, then dipped it in undiluted starch. Dripping wet, we pasted it onto a refrigerator door to dry. A day later we peeled it off and folded it into the shape of the cap we so proudly wore. A piece of tissue, pinned with two bobby pins to our hair, held it to the top of our heads as we proudly walked the hospital halls. The rustle of our starched, white aprons announced our approach.

The day of our capping, we also received the top bib of the apron. It was affixed to the apron by two buttons that were sewn to the back, between which, our scissors fit, *Semper Paratus*, always ready. Along with the bib, white cuffs and a removable collar, which attached to the blue dress we'd been given on our first day in training, were also issued to complete our student uniform. We were student nurses and could not be misidentified as cleaning women nor anything else. Our uniforms labeled us, and we proudly looked the part.

The navy-blue cape no longer fits. I weighed 118 lbs. when it was issued. I question why I've kept it? To whom will I give it? It's warm, and lovely with no moth holes in the one hundred percent wool, navy-blue fabric. No one wears capes any longer, though it could be a costume for Halloween. It has a red-wool lining and a mandarin collar with gold initials, PHSN, on each side that stands for, Pottstown Hospital School of Nursing. It's a fine-looking article of clothing. Maybe, I'll start a new trend and wear it.

In September of 1952, when I entered training, we student nurses were given all our uniforms, the cape and all the books we'd need for the three years of study. Along with all that, we received new shoes every six months. The cost for those three years of training was \$200.00. Hard to digest today when loans are keeping our young people in debt for years.

I must say, the hospital got the better deal, as their place was manned by the students on all shifts. We were the nurses they didn't have to pay and yet the hospital was fully covered. One supervisor per floor was all they had need of while we did the work. It was good training at a time when things were simpler. There were always older students with us as we learned. The second- and third-year girls helped teach us probies. We would get our chance to pass

on what we knew as we advanced. We worked year-round, with only two weeks off in the winter and two weeks in the summer. It really was equivalent to a four-year college.

My, my, but the memories have flooded in by writing this, which brings me back to the disposal of items. I put the cap and cape back in the closet. It's not time to rid myself of these memories, yet. Just touching the starched cap and soft wool of the cape put me back in time for a few moments. There are plenty of items to be disposed of in the many drawers left to explore. I'd best get to it while my energy is high.

If only time could be held at bay a little longer to allow the crevices in my brain time to reveal what else is lodged there.

LEONARD BRESSLER



Hold On. Brittany Schloderback, Hair Pin