

Stress plagues nursing students

By BEVERLY SHEPARD

"Nobody understands the stress nursing students are under except other nursing students," said Annette (not her real name), a senior nursing major. "Sometimes, I ask myself 'Is it worth it?' I know it is, but you question it sometimes."

For UNC's 309 nursing majors, the challenges of becoming a licensed nurse lie within the classrooms of Carrington Hall, the UNC School of Nursing, and in areas of practical application outside that building as well. When undergraduates enter their very first nursing course on day one, they encounter a set of obstacles—academic, financial and clinical—that make the road to obtaining a bachelor of science degree in nursing all but an easy one.

Criteria for admission include a "B" grade point average, a minimum of two letters of reference and a written statement giving reasons for choosing nursing as a career. An admissions interview may or may not follow these procedures. Students usually are notified of their semester acceptance or rejection in the spring of their sophomore year.

Undergraduate majors must take 61 hours in nursing courses and clinical practice, in addition to two upper-level elective courses during their junior and senior years.

Most students describe the nursing curriculum as being very rigorous. In addition to the normal academic load, there are final exams, which for juniors, are scheduled consecutively. Annette remembers her junior finals—one every day for five consecutive days—all too well.

"I was crazy . . ." Annette said. "I came home one day, and I just cried like a baby I was so exhausted. I had my hardest one—pathophysiology the last day. By that time, I was so exhausted and so frustrated, I was numb."

In addition to the classes, nursing students also are required to practice clinical rotation—10 hours a week for juniors and 16 hours a week for seniors. N.C. Memorial Hospital, and other medical centers including those in Fayetteville, Burlington and Raleigh.

For students assigned to out-of-town centers, considerable inconvenience is caused by the travel. Alma Halley, a junior nursing major from Wilson has been assigned to Raleigh's Wake Medical Center for the second half of spring semester. Her rotation begins at 6:45 a.m.; for Holley, that means setting her alarm clock for 5 a.m.

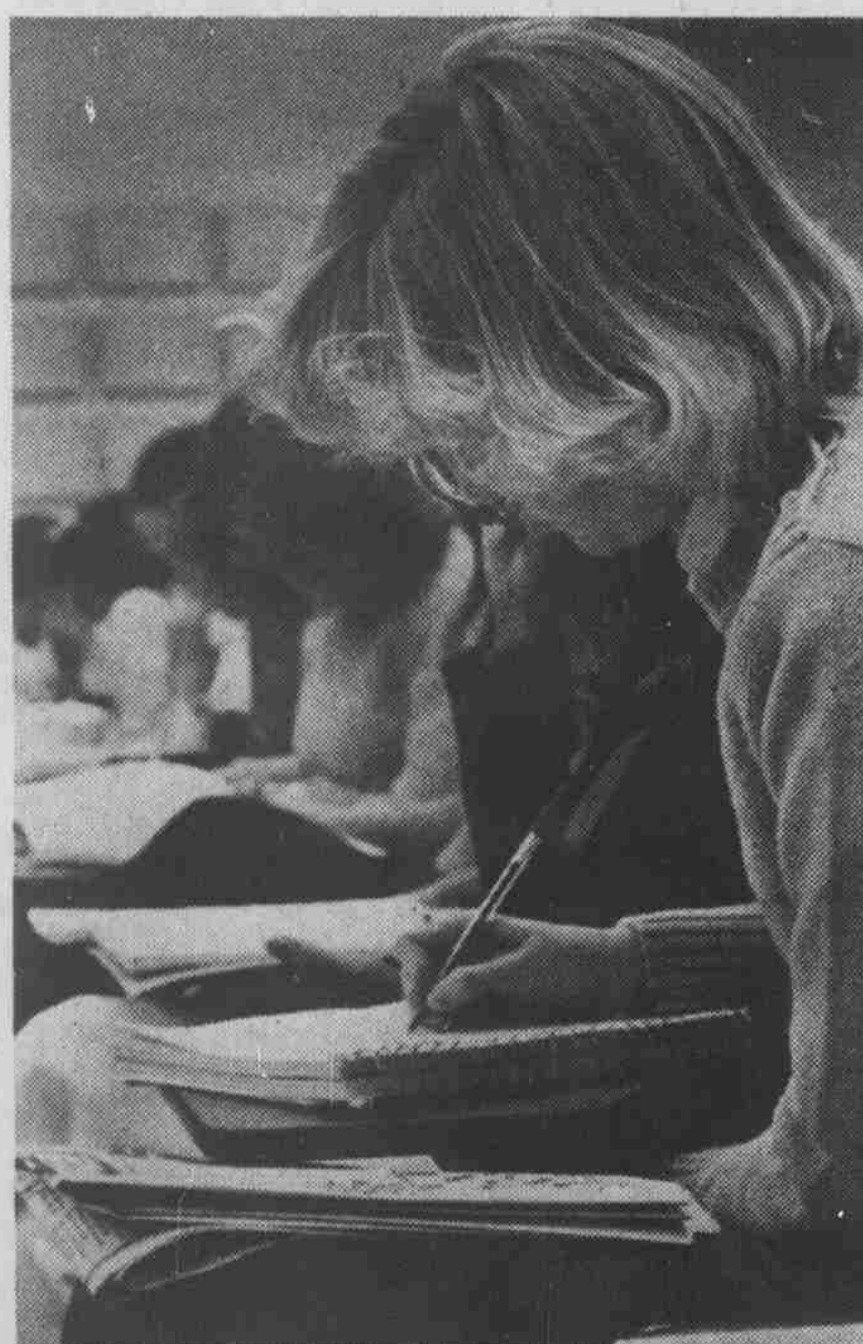
For nursing students, the stress extends beyond the classroom into practical clinical experience. Mike McGinnis, a 1981 UNC nursing graduate and a medical staff nurse at N.C. Memorial Hospital's intensive care unit, agreed.

"Anytime you're working with people, anytime they're sick, . . . that's stressful," McGinnis said. "That's not like you're working on a machine—you can make a mistake. (But in nursing), you're working on a human being."

It is also the type of major that does not allow students to forget about their daily experiences once they are away from the hospital setting, said Laurel Copp, dean of the UNC School of Nursing.

"Students go home from work, but they don't go off duty. They worry," Copp said. "Nursing is highly personal with people in pain, dying and in great need . . . you don't get used to those things. Sometimes, it gets harder by the cumulative number."

"Some nursing students say, 'well just forget it' . . . and I see where they are coming from," Annette said. "There's been people who drop out of my classes fall break because they can't handle the stress anymore."



DTH/Jay Hyman

In addition to the demanding academics, nursing school is also very expensive, Halley pointed out.

The cost of one nursing text may be as little as \$4 or more than \$300 on books and her uniform alone. It is not unusual to spend up to \$200 for nursing texts in one semester, Annette said.

Halley's semester syllabus cost \$16, her books totaled \$170. Two uniforms, two name tags and two caps cost her \$102. The student handbook for the UNC School of Nursing estimated expenses for an in-state junior nursing major to total \$4,271.50 for an academic year and \$762 for one six-week summer session.

Perhaps it is the pressure—the rigorous academic studying combined with the clinical challenges—that binds nursing majors with a distinct sense of camaraderie.

"We try to help each other, even if it's nothing but to listen to each other complain," Annette said.

"There's hardly any competition between (nursing students) because everyone is trying to do their best, not better than someone else," Halley said. "Nursing isn't like business administration where whoever makes the best grades gets the best job. It's more a responsibility to yourself to know your job because you're the one that has to give the care to someone else."

Of UNC's 310 nursing students, only 24 are black. No formal support system exists for nursing majors and the lack of such a group is felt more acutely by the small numbers of blacks who have formed an informal support group of their own, Annette said.

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"It may be true that we (blacks) segregate ourselves but if we do, it's because (Black students feel they) need each other," Annette said.

"I haven't faced any overt racism but I feel under a lot of pressure being in an all-white clinical setting. All eyes are on you."

"Right now, most of the nursing students are in a panic state because of the decreased scores in the state boards," Annette said. "I can hear my classmates everyday when they make a low score (on a test) say, 'I'm not going to pass (the state boards).'"

Indeed, there has been a lot of publicity surrounding the test scores. According to a report published by the UNC Board of Governors, all 69 of UNC's nursing graduates passed the exam in 1973 for a 100 percent passing rate. In 1981 however, only 104 out of 125 passed for 83.2 percent passing rate.

But both Copp and Audrey Booth, a professor and associate dean of the UNC School of Nursing, said other factors—the increased numbers of nursing majors and a decline in the scores of standardized tests in general—may have contributed to the decreased scores in the nursing board exam.

"I think (the scores have) been reported out of context with the rest of the story," Copp said. "The bulk of the students not only got more than 350 but they got excellent scores."

McGinnis, a 1981 graduate, with a 3.8 average is one example, she said. Out of 800 possible points, McGinnis scored more than 700 points on one part and more than 500 points on each part of the exam.

Other nursing officials have disagreed with Copp and say more emphasis should be placed on the passing of every section of the test in which 350 is the minimum passing score. While these officials continue to disagree over the causes of and the anxiety felt by nursing majors yet to take the exam. They know that failure to pass the exam means failure to attain a license to practice nursing.

A new test, used for the first time in July, will substitute the five separate scores for a combined score.

"Some nursing students say, 'well just forget it' . . . and I see where they are coming from," Annette said. "There's been people who drop out of my classes fall break because they can't handle the stress anymore. People drop out everyday."

Still, others remain. Some, like Halley who has 10 relatives who are nurses or nursing majors, are certain that nursing is their only possible career choice. For others, there is the satisfaction gained in helping people.

"But you don't get that satisfaction everyday . . . that's why you have to be intrinsically motivated to help people," Annette said. "You have to deep-down want to help in order to be satisfied with your nursing career."

"You get burned out, (too)," Halley said. "You give so much of yourself . . . you need somebody to give to you sometimes."

But even more important to the students who eventually do become licensed is their self-made commitment to a career that will demand that they give even more of themselves than they have given already.

"Survival of the fittest describes the students at UNC's nursing school," Annette said. "I have shed tears . . . I have come too far. Only the strong will survive and I'm going to make it."

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George Wallace during a 1975 visit to North Carolina

Wallace!

The campaign trail beckons an old demagogue

By GEOFFREY MOCK

John Patterson out-niggered me. And boys, I'm not goin' to be out-niggered again.

—George Wallace, 1958

George Wallace has defined much of the political contours of the South for over a decade. His style has been one of a salesman of bottled miracle potions and his followers in Alabama have been of the rural dirt farmers and smalltown Elks and Shrine members. A refusal to quit is the essence of such a man, and after four unsuccessful presidential campaigns, it seems now that not only is Wallace unwilling to fade quietly away, but is ready once again to run for governor of Alabama.

If Wallace was to quit, he would have done so long ago. He knows little of life other than that of a politician, and if his persistence makes him look foolish to some, it also gives him the qualities that have made him one of the few genuine American political folk-heroes. "The political breathing in him is as essential to him as water is to a turtle," said Marshall Frady, author of *Wallace*, a political biography of the former governor.

Certainly Wallace cannot be running for any lack of accomplishments. While the presidency may have eluded him, his campaign of "Send Them A Message" and his stunning success in urban blue collar areas in the north in 1968 and 1972, paved the way for another southerner to that office. "There probably would never have been a Jimmy Carter without a George Wallace," Frady said. "Carter was an extension nationally of what Wallace was doing by going directly to the populace."

Wallace failed nationally because popular conceptions had pegged him as a politician of a past period. Carter, free of the stigma of Wallace's racial appeals, could nevertheless take advantage of the path laid out by Wallace. "In the end Wallace would have been a touch too tacky for national tastes," Frady said. "Jimmy Carter was the great synthesis that could win. Wallace could make colossal mischief, but he would not have been the one to breakthrough."

Nationally, Wallace was to Carter what in Alabama Big Jim Folsom was to Wallace. In the 1950s Folsom was the first populist politician to oppose successfully the conservative hierarchy that had dominated Alabama since the end of Reconstruction. Folsom was a six-foot-eight giant of a man whose mannerisms showed every bit of his rural upbringing in the wiregrass counties of southeast Alabama. He was also years ahead of Wallace and almost every other Southern politician at the time in racial views.

"Folsom didn't believe in legal segregation," said Coleman B. Ransone, a political science professor at the University of Alabama. "He believed in black people voting. He couldn't get that part of his program through the legislature."

When Folsom won re-election to the governorship in 1954 he seemed on the verge of crushing the state's conservative power structure. Following in his steps was a young George Wallace. "Folsom's opposition was the combination of big planter and banker interests," Ransone said. "He went out getting small contributions from the populace for his support. He was a real populist."

But 1954 was also the year of *Brown v. Topeka Board of Education*, and southern politics was never the same again. "When Folsom was in power, segregation wasn't discussed," Ransone said. "It was clearcut, legal segregation. He was at the end of an era."

Segregation became the issue in Alabama politics. Folsom's heavy drinking habits were publicized and his position on race was untenable. Wallace, who had served under Folsom as a member of the board of the then all-black Tuskegee Institute, saw that political expediency demanded a split with his mentor.

"Folsom offered a great promise for the South," Frady said. "But he systematically bombed himself into oblivion with the bottle. Wallace broke with him after Folsom invited Adam Clayton Powell to the governor's mansion. That would be innocuous now, but it had apocalyptic implications back then."

Folsom populist coalition broke along racial lines. Wallace's transformation from liberal populist to racist demagogue was completed in 1958 when after losing the gubernatorial campaign to conservative John Patterson. Awakened along with other Southern whites to the battle for segregation, Wallace promised never to be "out-niggered" again.

But with the exception of the race issue, Wallace continued to carry much of Folsom's platform into the 1960s. Through Wallace's efforts, the conservative elite's stranglehold on state politics continued to be diminished. "He didn't have the support of the newspapers and big brokers," Frady said. "To him that meant nothing against the excitement and relish of his popular support. That was a simple perception, but still one of a mark of genius."

His almost clownish, demagogic appeals led many of his conservative opponents to belittle him, but to those who were stirred by his appeals he could do little wrong. "He talked like the people," Frady said. "He ate like them. He dressed like them. He was the

articulate in the flesh of the general populace's way of life."

"Wallace's reputation outside the state is not like the way he is in state," Ransone said. "He was conservative on only one issue—race. He was a populist of the old system. He helped higher education in the state. He believed in spending on poor people and on highways and education."

Numerous other demagogues rose to influence in the South along with Wallace. Unlike Wallace, however, men like Lester Maddox and Orval Faubus were easily co-opted into their state's conservative elite. Only Wallace remained true to his support. "He relished his position as an outsider," Frady said. "Wallace once snorted that 'Maddox doesn't have any character.'"

But those who fondly remembered Folsom could only view Wallace with a feeling of betrayal. He touched legitimate concerns of a needy populace with illegitimate means. Entering the 1960s, the state was 49th in almost every social index in the nation and going nowhere. Wallace brought political improvement, but the state is still paying the racial costs of his rule.

"In that he changed the political dynamics of the state he did benefit Alabama," Frady said. "But what he did with that change didn't benefit it. Alabama was a dark state to be in during the 1960s and that is attributable to the tone Wallace gave it. That should never be forgotten."

The lesson clearly is that the radical change Alabama needed could not be made through Wallace's racist appeals. "He could have done it through other means," Frady said. "But he did it through anger. That anger often took the form of racism."

Because of the nature of Wallace's appeal, his reform was incomplete. When the segregationist fervor died out, so did the spirit for reform and during the 1970s the conservative elite has maintained its position. "If I am looking for money (for a campaign) in Tuscaloosa now," Ransone said, "I'd look toward the same people that Folsom ran against."

Now he is testing the waters for a race for governor. It is hard to tell whether the spectacle that is George Wallace reflects the old sly political instincts or is instead a sign of hanging on for too long. Certainly he has mellowed his racial line and already has picked up an endorsement from one black leader. But he has shown little of this characteristic vitality. Without that he becomes just another politician.

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Alcohol-related accidents force second look at legal drinking age

By KERRY DeROCHI

The drunken driver always has been a deadly threat. But where the number of alcohol-related accidents once was a mere cause for concern, the increasing highway fatalities now approach emergency proportions. Each year more and more people are killed at the hands of a stranger who has had too many martinis after work or that last glass of champagne at a cocktail party.

An estimated 26,000 people died last year on the nation's highways because of a drunk driver. In North Carolina the number of drug- or alcohol-related accidents increased by 13.9 percent from 1979 to 1980. About 83,000 people were arrested for driving under the influence in 1980, a 16 percent increase from the previous year.

The alarming statistics have sent government officials nationwide searching for plausible solutions to the problem. Their attention has been directed toward the legal drinking age. Since the ratification of the 26th amendment in 1971, which gave the right to vote to 18 year olds, 29 states have lowered the legal drinking age for this same age group under the philosophy that a person old enough to vote was old enough to drink.

Today, that philosophy has changed. Legislators now acknowledge that the lower drinking age may have caused more problems than they had expected. The accessibility of beer and liquor to minors has increased by allowing teenagers to purchase beer and wine in most states, and liquor in others.

There needs to be more concern on the part of the public. They need to realize that driving under the influence is basically a crime.

Lt. Arnold Rector

Because of the high rate of alcohol-related accidents in the 18-20 age group, 15 states since 1976 have raised the legal drinking age back to 20 or 21. State officials based their actions on statistics that support when a drinking age has been raised, the number of highway accidents decline. For example, when Michigan legislators raised the legal drinking age from 18 to 21 in 1978, the number of non-injury accidents dropped 17 percent for 18-20 year-olds; accidents involving a death dropped 28 percent.

In North Carolina, state officials have discussed the possibility of raising the drinking age for beer and wine to 21. Edwin C. Guy, coordinator for the

governor's traffic safety program, said he believed the General Assembly would reconsider the drinking age in the next session. "I think the support will basically come from our office and the people of North Carolina," he said. "And when it comes from the people of North Carolina, it will go through."

Perhaps a more critical problem facing government and law officials is the problem of penalty enforcement. Under North Carolina law, a person guilty of DUI for the first offense, must pay a \$100 fine plus court costs and lose the driver's license for one year. But in 1980, of the 83,000 arrested, only 50.1 percent of them had to pay this penalty; 25 percent received lighter sentences for a lesser offense, such as reckless driving.

Lt. Arnold Rector coordinator of traffic safety for the N.C. Highway Patrol, said the reduced sentences have resulted from misuse of a clause in the General Statutes that allows a judge to grant the convicted driver driving privileges if a job or item of equal magnitude was at stake. "Of these restrictions or non-restrictions, some are very lax," Rector said. "Some so lenient, it's almost as if (the people) were never charged for driving drunk."

The low conviction rate and the light sentencing has reduced the strength of state highway safety

programs by thwarting law officials' enforcement efforts. "For a traffic safety program to be effective, there has to be an effective judicial system, the deterrent to keep people from violating the law," Rector said.

Recognizing the enforcement of DUI as a prob-

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lem, the governor's office began a program in November designed to help localities such as Raleigh, Hickory, and Henderson strengthen their enforcement tactics. Guy said the office also has renewed efforts to educate the public on the risks involved with driving under the influence. By circulating pamphlets, they have attempted to enforce the idea that the chance of being apprehended while driving drunk was very high.

"There needs to be more concern on the part of the public," Rector said. "They need to realize that driving under the influence is basically a crime."

On the national level, 303 congressmen have signed a letter recently urging President Reagan to form a commission to construct a realistic solution to the problem. Reagan earlier had said he would not support a congressional bill that required states to set mandatory jail sentences for repeat offenders or risk losing federal highway safety money. Reagan said he believed this type of federal government's involvement in this problem would be an infringement on state's rights.

As federal government officials begin considering and debating the differing solutions to the problems of drunk driving, the states must take the initiative in halting the number of highway deaths. Raising the legal drinking age may provide the first step toward a final solution, but it in no way can be considered the answer. Instead, stringent penalties and public appeals against excessive drinking followed by driving must be reinforced. Then, perhaps that last round of Long Island ice teas may wane in importance with the realization that once on the road, human lives will be at stake.

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