In CIN’s second issue of the 25th anniversary year, we pay tribute to the remarkable contributions of Dr Harriet Werley. Dr Werley is very well known in informatics for her visionary leadership, her contributions to the development of the science of nursing informatics, and her work in development of the Nursing Minimum Data Set.1 Countless tributes to her career acknowledge her unending work as a respected academician, benevolent mentor, and an advocate for nursing research.

My own research for this homage provided insight into her far-reaching and remarkable career. Dr Werley received her nursing diploma from the Jefferson Medical College Hospital School of Nursing in Philadelphia, PA, and went on to earn a BS in nursing education from the University of California, Berkeley in 1948. She received an MA in nursing administration from the Teacher’s College at Columbia University in 1951, and earned her PhD in Social Psychology from the University of Utah in 1969.

Dr Werley began a 20-year career with the United States Army during World War II, serving in various locations, including the Mediterranean. She became the Army Nurse Corps’ first Career Guidance Counselor. Later she would become the first Chief of the Department of Nursing Research at the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research. Her last assignment was as Chief Nurse for the US 8th Army Headquarters in Korea.

She earned her PhD after retiring from the US Army as a lieutenant colonel and began her academic career. Dr Werley served in the Colleges of Nursing at Wayne State University, University of Illinois–Chicago, and University of Missouri–Columbia in positions ranging from faculty member to associate dean. In 1983, she was appointed distinguished professor at the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee School of Nursing. She remained at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee until her retirement in 1991. The College of Nursing’s Center for Nursing Research and Evaluation is named in her honor.2,3

Dr Werley was a charter member of the American Academy of Nursing. She was the founding editor of Research in Nursing and Health and the Annual Review of Nursing Research. In 1996, she was presented with a distinguished service award from the University of Illinois–Chicago.2 During that same year, she was also honored with the American Medical Informatics Association (AMIA) President’s Award.

Dr Werley’s efforts to promote nursing research and nursing informatics throughout her career are summarized best by those who worked with her. In prior publications, her colleagues Rita Zielstorff and Judy Ozbolt said:

“Far earlier than other nurses, Harriet recognized the power of computers to structure, store and facilitate analysis of nursing data. She believed that, armed with data, nursing would be in a much better position to improve practice, control costs, and advance the profession. ‘Harriet began to survey nurses’ work in informatics, convening the first national conference on the subject in 1977. At this meeting, nurses presented papers on nursing projects in data and information systems. Out of this meeting came the first book of original papers on nursing information systems published in the United States. Harriet’s belief and interest in the need for comparable, essential, core nursing data led to the national invitational Nursing Minimum Data Set Conference, held in May 1985 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Out of that meeting and its post-conference came the Nursing Minimum Data Set, which now serves as a guidepost in developing information systems that deal with nursing data. Harriet’s contributions are...
so fundamental and far-reaching that it is hard to think of nursing informatics without thinking of her work.”

*Rita D. Zielstorff, RN, MS, FAAN*

“Werley’s contributions helped to shape those endeavors in the 20th Century. Those who knew her, however, will remember her at least as much for her generosity and her wit. The ‘first nurse’ in many contexts, Werley made sure she was not the last. She nominated and encouraged those who would follow her. Whether by sharing her hotel room at SCAMC so that a graduate student could afford to attend, or by nominating a junior colleague to a position that Werley had formerly held, or by reviewing draft proposals and manuscripts with a razor-sharp but unerring critique, or by supporting a nurse informatician for fellowship in an honor society, Werley nurtured the generations that would follow her.”

*Judy Ozbolt, PhD, RN, FAAN*

Dr Werley (October 12, 1914–October 14, 2002) was truly a nursing research and informatics pioneer. She left a legacy that is humbling to review. She is missed by those whose lives she touched, directly and indirectly.

**REFERENCES**