

Karen Kane McDonnell '79

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Thank you, Claire, for the very kind introduction and nomination.

Cornell University – New York Hospital School of Nursing impacted my life and career in unexpected ways. Over the next few minutes, I would like to share with you the impact of a compassionate role model, encouragement from a respected leader, and trusted friendships had on my life.

First, I would like to dedicate this award to the memory of Assistant Professor Agnes Betty Morgan. Ms. Morgan had a fulfilling career as a nurse. Born in New York City, she was a graduate of St. Vincent's School of Nursing class of 1943. She was a veteran of both WW II and the Korean War having served in the United States Navy Nurse Corps. She went on to receive her undergraduate and graduate degrees from Columbia University. She worked as a Registered Nurse at Cornell University New York Hospital for 31 years. She retired from Cornell University New York Hospital and the School of Nursing in 1979. She passed away in 2014.

She served as my instructor for three clinical rotations. She had a strong clinical background and I wanted to lean on her expertise and strength. She seemed stern but was very kind and calm. Calm was good! After my first rotation at New York Hospital with her, the following rotations were all located at Sloan Kettering Memorial Hospital. I was greatly impressed by the beautiful environment of the comprehensive cancer center and the caliber of the clinical nursing staff. The nursing staff wore lab coats over their uniforms and cared for seemingly critically ill patients with numerous disease, treatment, and social related concerns on general units. The nurses worked at the patients' bedsides alongside the physicians and other disciplines like a respected team player. As a student, I was very impressed by their professionalism and wanted to be like them.

Forty-four years later, my life as an oncology nurse, as an oncology clinical nurse specialist, and as an oncology nurse scientist is still dedicated to improving the quality of life for persons with cancer, their family members and close friends.

As a role model, Ms. Morgan planted the seeds and led the way for my dedication. I respect and appreciate her efforts in this way. I have enjoyed a meaningful work life.

Another faculty person, Janet Swanson boosted my confidence as a young woman and nurse. At our last meeting, which seemed like an exit interview, she encouraged me to go to graduate school. I had to double-check that she was truly speaking to me. As the youngest daughter of Irish immigrants, it never occurred to me to go to graduate school. The thought never crossed my mind! In 1981, I enrolled at Yale University School of Nursing. Janet Swanson's encouragement gave me strength and perseverance and fueled my ambition.

Most importantly, a few trusted friends supported me along the way and helped me to grow up. In particular, Claire Nagel (then Claire Wisner) and I walked this path together. I believe she led the way. In our first semester, we traveled to Boston for a long weekend. It was a lot of fun and I fell "in love" with the city. She encouraged my independence. An upper classman (Robin from New Jersey) told me how she spent a summer working at the Cambridge, MA Visiting Nurse Association as a home health aide. It seemed like a safe decision, and she encouraged my independence. I went to live in Cambridge for the Summer. It was a great experience. After

graduation, I moved to Boston to work at Massachusetts General Hospital and the Dana Farber Cancer Center.

Lessons learned from these early experiences are countless. I never want to undervalue the influence of the role models, encouragers, and friends who impacted my world along the way. This award gave me the opportunity to recognize others and I appreciate that opportunity. Rest assured; I pay it forward. I am committed to being a good role model and encourager to undergraduate and graduate students of all disciplines and my academic and clinical colleagues. My early experiences at Cornell University New York Hospital School of Nursing set that stage.

Thank you to the **Alumni Association** for this special honor.

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