From Truman to Afghanistan

as told by Navy Nurse Cheri Smith ’05

I was accepted into the Navy Candidate Program after completion of my sophomore year at Truman. Upon graduation in 2005, I headed for Officer Development School in Rhode Island. Five weeks later, I was in Naval Hospital Camp Pendleton in California working a Maternal-Infant/Pediatric unit. It was there that I began to realize what a quality education I had received at Truman. I was ahead of other new graduates and was a charge nurse after only six weeks. I later transitioned to the Same Day Surgery Clinic. I loved working Same Day. For the first time, I really felt like my nursing skills and knowledge were respected. I picked up rank and became a Lieutenant Junior Grade.

In 2008 I took orders to Naval Health Clinic Hawaii and one year later became Lieutenant. I was a Clinic Nurse Manager on Marine Corps Base Hawaii in Kaneohe. In January 2010 I learned that I would be deploying to Afghanistan. I soon found myself in training at Fort Jackson, South Carolina. Training was comprised of convoy operations, pistol shooting, rifle shooting, land navigation, and other weapons training. We also went through egress training, where we were put into the cab of a Humvee and they roll it over with you buckled in. You then have to undo your seat belt, open the door, and get out with the vehicle on its side. I was three weeks of getting up at 4 a.m. and training as late as 8 p.m. While we were there, we were issued protective equipment such as a kevlar helmet, body armor vest, gas masks, chemical suits and cold weather gear. We were issued a rifle and a pistol, which we carried with us everywhere. Training was fun, but very cold. By the end of it, I was qualified to shoot a rifle with a marksman rating, and increased my score on the pistol from marksman to sharpshooter. Before leaving South Carolina, I turned my rifle in but kept my 9mm Beretta pistol. Every military member is required to carry a weapon in a war zone, unless you are a chaplain.

I arrived in Kuwait on March 7 for a week of additional convoy training, weapons training, and MRAP (Mine Resistant Ambush Protected) rollover training. Similar to a Humvee, but bigger and mine resistant. We were also there to get used to the drastic weather difference. We went from 30 degrees outside to 90 degrees in Kuwait and slept in a 106-man tent in sleeping bags.

We left Kuwait on March 13, stayed a night in Bayram, Afghanistan, and flew into Kandahar Air Field (KAF). I moved into a 20-man tent and started working four days after arrival. Our hospital consisted of three tents put together. We had an eight bed ICU, a 20-bed Acute Care Ward, an eight bay Trauma Bay and three operating rooms. A new hospital was being finished and we were to move in upon its completion. It was to be the best hospital in Afghanistan.

May 22 started out like any normal workday. Around 8 p.m. we started receiving rocket fire to the base and were directed to shelter in place. By 9:15 p.m. we were instructed that the base had come under a ground attack. This was not the first time the base had received rocket attacks, but it was the first time that we had seen a more complex attack. It started with rockets and advanced to forces coming toward the base with rifles, pistols, etc. At 9:30 p.m. the entire medical staff component was called in to

—cont. on next page
Greetings! We just recently celebrated homecoming with perfect fall weather and a wonderful turnout from our alumni. The Class of 1970 organized several class events, tours, and meals. I am amazed at the details different group members shared after 40 years away from campus. One class member started a story and others finished the story...just like a family. Thanks to our alumni and guests who stopped by the nursing reception or participated in some part of the weekend. We enjoyed seeing you again. Thanks to Sarah Delaware, we enjoyed looking at yearbooks, scrapbooks, photos, and uniforms.

We are in year two of three of the “Caring for Missourians” funding for health professions. As you may recall, Nursing and Communication Disorders received funding of $750,000 for a three-year period for additional faculty, equipment, and other forms of support. We welcome Angella Shuey ‘97, who is working as a part-time clinical instructor this year. All four of our cohorts, freshmen through seniors, are full.

We plan to move into Peshawar Building in summer 2011. The new nursing lab in Peshawar continues to be a focus for planning and growth. If you have been considering making a contribution to the Department, we would welcome your support of the nursing lab fund. Please accept my appreciation for contributions to the nursing development funds.

Our faculty and graduates have been very busy during the fall semester. Kim Hadwiger returned from sabbatical leave and is sharing findings from her research project. We are proud of our faculty, staff, and students for the contributions they make to the health of others, locally and globally.

We would be happy to see you at Truman. Please stay in touch.

Best wishes,

Dr. Stephanie Powelson
Chair, Department of Nursing

Insole multiple casualties. We worked until 1:00 a.m. Then, those of us scheduled to work the next morning were dismissed. We went back to our barracks, which were built to bunker specifications, and were told to be prepared to move the entire hospital the next day. My team and I went to work on May 23 at 6:45 a.m. and moved all the patients out of tents and into a new brick structure that was also built to bunker specifications. The new hospital was state of the art, but we sometimes found ourselves missing the old tents. The new hospital had a 16-bed ICU, 12-bed Trauma Bay, 35-bed Acute Care Ward and still only three Operating Rooms.

What we did was amazing. We treated many types of patients, including the Afghan population. We had several interpreters who translated for us. Some were humanitarian cases, such as pneumonia or sepsis. Most were casualties of war with amputations, severe breaks, lost eyes, or decapitated in their bodies. The hardest people to treat were the detainees. These patients were identified as persons of interest and had been injured by our special forces. They were brought to us with the knowledge that they had shot at our NATO troops, had weapons caches, or many other reasons.

The most heart-wrenching to treat were the kids. The majority of them were children of nomadic farmers. Most of them were injured when a sheep or goat triggered an IED. It made us wonder why they continued. Their own children were being injured and killed because of devices they were trying to use against Americans.

We also treated the Afghan National Army, Afghan National Police, American, British, Dutch, French, Canadians, and Romanians. If you think of a country, we probably had them in our hospital. Sadly, some of the most memorable cases were our own American soldiers. We saw an increase in the number of NATO forces getting injured and losing their lives. We acknowledged every service member keeping those fighters alive, but sometimes what we had to offer wasn’t enough.

I’m not sure if it was a result of having more footprints on the ground due to the 30,000 extra troops in the country or it was because we were moving closer to a very critical stronghold in Afghanistan. It was probably a combination of both.

In July, our tour began to wrap up. We moved from bunker-style barracks into tents in preparation for the new group coming in to relieve us. We were all very excited to get home, but not quite ready to let go of the friends and experiences of Afghanistan.

Graduate Update: Smith returned to Hawaii Sept. 4, 2010 and was asked to start a Women’s Health Program at the clinic on Marine Corps Base Kaneohe Bay. We thank her for her service to our country and for providing a glimpse into the life of a navy nurse. She may be contacted: cherinerle394@gmail.com
Student Life

Nursing History Project: KSTC, NMSU, TSU

Stephanie Bedford '11 (left) models a 1970 student uniform. Amber Watels '11 (right) models the 2010 purple scrub suit worn by students today.

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 Steph Brandon, 11, is working on a project to gather oral histories from nursing alumni, former faculty and friends of the Department of Nursing. The ultimate goal is to compile a history of the various nursing programs associated with the university. Informal interviews have already been conducted with Myra Baiso (faculty member in the 1980's and 1990's) and Jill Wimp McGord (daughter of Sarah Grim Wimp, nursing program director from 1960-1970). Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval has been received to conduct formal oral history and audio/visual recordings for future reference. The first nursing education program began in 1923, in cooperation with Dr. E. Grim of the Grim Hospital (later named Grim Smith Hospital). Sarah Delaware is the faculty sponsor for Stephanie's research, along with assistance from Assistant Professor Emeritus Sharon McGahan. If you have anything to offer this project, please contact Sarah Delaware at delaware@truman.edu

Homecoming 2010

Fall semester is busy, exciting and a time to welcome back our cherished alumni to Homecoming. It was a perfect fall weekend with mild temperatures and exciting events. We were especially glad to see the class of 1970 back for the weekend to celebrate their 40th reunion. Alice McEwen of Waco, TX and Joneane (Smith) Parker did a wonderful job of planning a full weekend for them. It was great fun listening to them reminisce about their days as nursing students and showing them some of our new simulations. Following the parade, approximately 25 alumni, faculty, family, and friends gathered at the SUB for a come and go reception. Special "guests" were senior nursing students Stephanie Bedford and Amber Watels dressed in student uniforms from 1970 and 2010. Yearbooks and scrapbooks from 1965 through 2005 were available at the reception and provided much discussion and reminiscing.

Class of 1970 Front L-R: Cindy Stittar Stephens, Jefferson City, MO; Naomi Volkert Spinelli, Clarkston, WA; Pat Burch, Norwalk, IA; Kama Kruckenbor Schofer, Greeley, CO; Joneane Smith Parker, Fairfield, IA

Back L-R: Sharlene Henkle Taylor, Kirkville, MO; Alice McEwen, Waco, TX; Cheryl Wall Smith, San Antonio, TX; Roberta Steffler Still, Stanford, KY; and Carolene Robinson, Bodeig, IA.
Truman State University's 10th Annual Capstones of Nursing was held April 29, 2010. The Capstones Day promotes nursing scholarship and is co-sponsored by the Nursing Program and Rho Omega Chapter of Sigma Theta Tau International Nursing Honor Society. Kathi D. Holloway '95 presented the keynote address, The Impact of Death upon Nursing Professionals. The following awards were presented to nurses during the luncheon:

- "NEMO Nurse of the Year" Award: District 2 State Representative Rebecca McClanahan '75
- Preceptor of the Year in an Acute Care Setting: Family Nurse Practitioner, Kelly Freeland, FNP, for Northeast Missouri Health Council and Crown Clinic.
- Preceptor of the Year in a Community Setting: North Shelby County Schools Nurse Edie Finke, BSN, RN.

Kelly Freeland, FNP, was honored as Acute Care Preceptor of the Year 2009-2010. Freeland is a Family Nurse Practitioner at Northeast Missouri Health Council and Crown Clinic. L-R: Pam Melvin, Tina Raybalt '10, Freeland, Karl-Rae Kerr '11 and Sarah Delaware.

School Nurse Edie Finke, BSN, RN at North Shelby County High School was honored as the Community Health Preceptor of the Year 2009-2010. L-R: Pam Melvin, Bryan DeGuzman '10, Finke, Ashley Swain '10, and Karen Wallberg '10.

Keynote speaker Kathi Holloway '95 presented The Impact of Death upon Nursing Professionals.

http://nursing.truman.edu
IN THE Spotlight...

Class of 2010 Thirty-five senior nursing students were honored at the Nursing Recognition Ceremony that took place May 7 in Baldwin Auditorium. First Row (L-R): Kadi-Rae Kerr, Kongkeo Vorachack, Erin Herbst, Barbara Sehy, Christina Roybal, Ameda Osiley, Sarah Thompson, Kelsey Mason, and Pamela Gardner, Class Advisor. Second Row: Alyssa Canfield, Megan Campbell, Lauren Wilson, Suong Nguyen, Alyssa Lewellen, Bryan DeGutierrez, and Jennifer Jackson. Third Row: Kristin Kimsey, Melissa Brochman, Emily Reinsart, Lindsay Walsh, Emily Schroeder, and Britney Snodgrass. Fourth Row: Megan Laughter, Haley Hamlin, Loren Lally, Emily Bonser, Ashley Swain, Jamie Menown, and Jessica Evelizer. Fifth Row: Karen Wolberg, Benjamin Hairline, Kristen Nissen, Theresa Weinhold, Elizabeth Brink, and Kathryn Hinrichs.

Scholarship Recipients 2010-2011

Pictured Front L-R: Rebekah Hall ’13 (Sarah Grim Wimp Memorial); Stephanie Bedford ’11 (Thomas Family); Emily Garlock ’13 (Bertha Saxson Miller Memorial); Rebekah Weidner ’11 (Alice McElwain). Back L-R: Lindsey Mollick ’12 (Nancy Lee Lindsey Memorial); Megan Memmel ’12 (Gretchen and Pete Cornell); Lauren Weise ’12 (Nursing Alumni); Taylor Bales ’13 (Richard M. Keith Memorial). Not pictured: Danielle Beverwater ’11 (Lewis and Margaret Balagna Memorial) and Clinton Navayan ’11 (Lu and Bill Heilman).
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Alumni News/Notes

Share with us your news, accomplishments, plans, travels, marriage, births, etc. Don’t forget address changes so the newsletter can keep up with you. Please send updates and notes to Shirley Riley, sriley@truman.edu, or to nursing@truman.edu, or by postal mail.

Dr. Gretchen Cornell (former Truman faculty member) is living in Edinboro, OK to be near her son, Bob. She teaches both beginning students and seniors in the RN program at the University of Central Oklahoma.

Don Creamer 97 is working on her NP from Remedial College of Nursing and will obtain her degree in December 2010.

Casey Cochrane 98 is a CNM and is currently teaching in the Women’s Health NP program at UMCKC. She became the program director for the Midwifery program at KU last May.

Michele Lewanska 99 has been a family nurse practitioner for the past six years and has worked with the same internal medicine practice for 5 years. She is currently working part time so that she can spend time with her two children.

Tonya (Fleming) Haynes 99 completed her MSN degree in 2006 and became a unit-based advanced practice nurse at Barnes-Jewish Hospital. She has since obtained her DNP.

Lena Fairless 91 completed the Marine Corps Marathon in Washington, D.C. on Halloween. The money she raised will help defeat findings care for leukemia, lymphoma, and myeloma. lea_fairless@hotmail.com

Karin Ellis-Riker 93 currently lives in Omaha, NE with her husband, Phillip, and her two children, Ellis (age 3) and William (age 1). She has worked for the Utilization Management Coordinator Visiting Nurses Association of Omaha for the past 3 years. karinriker@winonaistan.org

Adrian Schulte 94 is working at Oklahoma State University at Kramer School of Nursing as a Clinical Instructor of Nursing.

Rashid Smith 97 works at Missouri Baptist Medical Center in St. Louis, where she works full-time on the Acute Care/Critical Care unit. She is pursuing her MPH at Saint Louis University.

Elizabeth Smooker 97 spent 17 months overseas in Africa and Europe and is now working in Quincy, IL. She was recently in Kirksville for her induction into Sigma Theta Tau.

Shannon Kelly-Salas 98 has recently taken a position in the ICU at St. Louis DePaul Medical Center and hopes to become a CRNA.

Kim Church 98 lives in St. Louis with her husband, Ben, and her son, Asher, and works at Children’s Hospital. She has joined the New City Fellowship and is working with the Weekday Ministry with “Restor’ St. Louis.”

Kate (Cleveland) Garcia 99 has recently moved to Fairbanks, AK with her husband.

Michelle Hernandez 99 has recently moved to Washington and is practicing at St. Clare Hospital on the Med/Surgical Unit.

Robyn (Glover) Hope 98 currently works in Las Vegas, OK in the community education coordination/immunization nurse with the Comanche County Health.

Lauren Wilson 98 is working at a hospital in Carbondale, IL as a Labor and Delivery nurse. Future plans might include either a medical school or CRNA school. Thanks for your e-mails and e-mails.

Drive Code 74