



School Nurse Legend

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Muriel G Softli MPA Med BSN RN

Muriel was born in New York City in 1936, the third of nine children. Her parents were immigrants from South America. Her father was educated in NYC but discrimination against Black engineers made it difficult for him to find employment. He used his skills to open a radio repair business. Her mother managed the home. Muriel's parents modeled and emphasized the need for their children to be ready for life by obtaining an education, working hard and being a responsible individual in their community. The entire family actively participated in their immigrant community and church activities. Muriel thrived in school academically and in sports. Her introduction to the nursing profession came when public health nurses came to the Softli home to do post-delivery examinations of mother and baby. She told the nurses she wanted to do the same type of work when she grew up. In her junior year of high school, the family moved to Sacramento, California where her father got a job as an engineer at Monahan Air Force Base. The Soroptimist International Organization of Sacramento awarded her a scholarship that paid her tuition to Sacramento Junior College Nursing Program. After graduating she moved to Seattle, where her family had relocated for a Boeing engineering job. Muriel was

hired at Harborview Hospital in 1958 -assigned to work on the post-partum floor. She met many of the Black nurses working at Harborview who were founders of Mary Mahoney Professional Nurses Organization (for Black registered nurses). She joined Washington State and King County Nurse Association. In 1959 she was accepted into the University of Washington, School of Nursing Bachelor of Science Program. Upon graduating with the BSN degree and Public Health Nursing Certificate she returned to NYC to work for the Department of Health to fulfill her childhood dream. Muriel joined a group that took college student and medical teams to Africa, to study the various nations' transfer from colonial governance to self-rule. In 1963-1965 her summers were spent in Kenya and Nigeria, Africa. In 1966 she returned to Seattle and Harborview Hospital, assigned to the Pediatric Allergy and Asthma Clinics. Shirley Gilford BSN RN encouraged her to apply for a school nurse position with Seattle Public Schools. In 1968 she was assigned to Madrona Elementary School and continued there as the school nurse for 29 years. The year 1970 was busy: Muriel earned a master's degree in education at Central Washington University and she was commissioned as a Captain in the US Air Force Reserve (flight nursing). She retired from the Air Force Reserve with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel after 26 years of service. She was in the top three nurses for flight hours at Lewis-McChord and she served in Operation Desert Storm in Germany. Her students sent her letters while she was there. Muriel was one of five Seattle Public School Nurses to complete the special school nurse, University of Washington School of Nursing Nurse Practitioner Program offered in

1974. She had the idea of working for the World Health Organization and earned a master's degree in public health in 1985. Muriel was active in both education and nursing unions, being the first Seattle school nurse to be elected to National Education Association Annual Convention. She attended WEA and NEA conventions for many years. In 2000 Muriel was inducted into the Washington State Nurses Hall of Fame. In 2017 she was awarded the Community Health Nursing Preceptor of the Year Award by the University of Washington, School of Nursing for mentoring a UW graduate students for six years at First Place School UW School of Nursing Alumnae honored her as one of the most influential UW nurses at the UW Centennial Celebration in 2018.

Muriel stated, "*Nursing, my chosen career, opened doors for me that I could never imagined as a youngster, providing me with a secure, wonderful and exciting life. As a Black nurse, I did have negative experiences (with Whites) but would not let them define how I view my life experiences. Nursing taught me tolerance and love for all people along with watching my mother and aunt interaction with others.*"

When Muriel retired from SPS in 2010 she had worked at Arbor Heights, Concord, Fairmount Park, Gatewood, Hay, Martin L King (Brighton), Lafayette, Leschi, Madrona, Maple, McGilvra, TOPS, Montlake, Stevens and now-closed schools Fairview, TT Minor (Seattle World School now), Nova (Horace Mann) and Seward. SPS nurses gave her a large gift to enable her to buy medical supplies for her next mission. Muriel continued to do medical mission trips yearly until COVID stopped her travel plans in 2020. Muriel your work has touched thousands of lives here and in Africa.