

Cathryn Schrubbe Bliss Memorial Scholarship



Amount: \$400

Offered: One per year

Deadline: Refer to Allen College Institutional Scholarship Application

Established: 1997

Special Criteria: Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) student

Cathryn (Kay), born in Decorah in 1919, was the youngest of the three daughters of Fred and Martha Schrubbe. In this close-knit family of limited resources, education beyond high school was never questioned. Each, in turn, helped the next until all had earned degrees – the two older in education and Kay, always the spirited, independent one, in nursing.

By the time she enrolled at St. Luke's Hospital School of Nursing in Cedar Rapids, the sisters were already high school English teachers, one in nearby Marion and the older at Henry Ford's Edison Institute in Michigan. After graduation, Kay continued at St. Luke's until she became intrigued by a chance for an advanced degree in a favorite field, orthopedic nursing, particularly with children. A New York hospital for crippled children took her out of Iowa to the eastern city, a path a favorite aunt had followed years before the training at the well-known Bellevue.

Kay's plans were abruptly halted by a pedestrian traffic accident that brought her back to Decorah with serious injuries. After she healed and with these being the "war years," she wanted to enlist in the Navy Nursing Corps but was rejected due to a new skin allergy on her hands. This would limit hospital work anywhere, but industrial nursing met her capabilities and soon she was working at the Buick Aviation engine plant in Chicago, the closest she could get to a patriotic contribution. There, in the offices, she met her future husband, Jerry Bliss. After marriage, he associated with the A. O. Smith Manufacturing Company (silos, water heaters, pipelines) in a position that required frequent long transfers – from Illinois to Wisconsin to Texas and back. Kay devoted her life to each new home, using her nursing skills in the raising of their four children and in volunteer work.

After retirement, the Blissess, having kept the home in Texas, returned to Baytown to be near their married children's families with the nine grandsons, all established in the eastern part of the state. They anticipated many good years ahead, but the cancer Kay had battled for years finally defied treatment and, after long months, she died at age 64 on March 7, 1984.

A memorial given by a daughter and husband is one of the 12 stained glass windows in their new Lutheran church in the small town of Dime Box, Texas. Her name and hometown on the plaque at its base seems so far away from Iowa but is a fitting memorial to one who contributed so much love and caring for others in many places.

This scholarship also bears her name. Winifred Deeds, her Waterloo sister, established the scholarship with a double purpose – to honor Kay by helping in a small way someone like her attain a wished-for nursing degree and as a small tribute to Allen Memorial Hospital. Surely the wisdom of its leaders and the dedicated staff can be credited with the phenomenal growth of the Hospital and its college – reflected throughout northeastern Iowa. We who use its services benefit from both and are indeed fortunate.