

Senior finds 'work expands to fit space and time'

Susan Fox
Community Post

Peggy Bensman may no longer be the Vice President of Academic Affairs at Owens Community College, but this dynamic Minster woman said that even in retirement, "work expands to fit space and time."

Today, instead of concerning herself with developing the instructional curricula of a growing community college, she spends her time doing volunteer work for the parish of St. Augustine Church. She also serves on the Auglaize County Library Board, and travels. She recently returned from a trip to Germany with other members of St. Augustine parish.

Bensman is the daughter of the late Walter and Clara Bensman of Minster. When she graduated from Minster High School in 1956, she attended Mount Saint Joseph College in Cincinnati and graduated with a bachelor's degree in nursing and was licensed as a registered nurse in 1956. She began a clinical residency and became a clinical instructor, working at the college until 1960 when she went to Lima to begin teaching at St. Rita's Hospital School of Nursing.

"The nursing schools in Lima, at St. Rita's and Memorial hospitals, both agreed to support the new associate degree program being established at what is now Rhodes Community College at the Lima Campus of Ohio State University," she said, "and I went to work there in 1968 for Owens Community College, which started the technical programs at the Lima Branch. When Lima Technical College was established in 1971, I decided to stay with Owens and went to Toledo where I became the Dean of Health Services, and in 1985 became Vice President of Academic Affairs." Bensman received her master's degree in Cincinnati and her Ph.D. from Bowling Green State University. That's the condensed version.

Bensman, who spent her career training nurses, said that she thinks nursing is an excellent career choice.

"When I was young and looking at careers, women had the limited choice of clerical work, or being a teacher or a nurse," she said. "When nursing went from being a certificate position to a professional one requiring a degree, men began to be interested in the field, and we see men

becoming nurses today, but nursing remains an excellent field for women to work in."

She said she sees the current nursing shortage, which has led to higher salaries and better working conditions for nurses, as being a result of the many career options that young women have today.

"If a woman is interested in medicine today, she can pursue a medical degree, and become a doctor. That wasn't a very realistic goal when I was young," she said. "And there are just a huge number of choices in the opportunities for women in the workforce, now."

Nursing has changed and Bensman said the patients are more acute in hospitals today, making good nursing extremely important, and more stressful than it was when she entered the profession.

"People would stay in the hospital for days or weeks after surgery, and now they go home almost immediately. Medical personnel have limited opportunities to recognize potential problems, and act to circumvent them," Bensman said.

Bensman retired in 1992 and returned to Minster, when she said she felt she was being left behind by the technology



of modern medicine, and she was ready to step down.

"I spent several years going to the Dominican Republic for a week each year to work with a surgical team sent by the Midwest Medical Missions, and working in the clinics in the Dominican Republic was like working in the hospitals of my early career," she said. "And it was very rewarding. The people who took time to volunteer to go were dedicated, and the people we provided medical care for were desperate for our services."

Today, Bensman still visits local hospitals, daily as a communion distributor, and she is also active in the RCIA program at St. Augustine Church, assisting to instruct people who wish to convert to the Catholic faith.

"I had more time to keep my house cleaned up and presentable when I was working," she said.