



Margaret Dolan -- National Nursing Leader

By: **Dr. Phoebe Pollitt, RN**

Abstract

Margaret Baggett Dolan was the fifth of nine children born to John and Allene Keeter Baggett on March 17, 1914, in Lillington, North Carolina. She graduated from Georgetown Hospital School of Nursing in 1935. Dolan began her career in community health working for health departments in Washington, DC, Baltimore, Maryland, and Greensboro. In 1944 she earned her Bachelor of Science degree in Public Health Nursing from UNC-Chapel Hill and in 1953 earned a master's degree from Teachers College, Columbia University, New York City. In 1950, Dolan became a faculty member in the UNC School of Public Health's Public Health Nursing program. She immediately became involved with the North Carolina State Nurse Association and served as its president from 1957-1959.

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By NCNA Member Dr. Phoebe Pollitt, RN; Nursing History Council Vice Chair

Margaret Baggett Dolan was the fifth of nine children born to John and Allene Keeter Baggett on March 17, 1914, in Lillington, North Carolina. She graduated from Georgetown Hospital School of Nursing in 1935. Dolan began her career in community health working for health departments in Washington, DC, Baltimore, Maryland, and Greensboro. In 1944 she earned her Bachelor of Science degree in Public Health Nursing from UNC-Chapel Hill and in 1953 earned a master's degree from Teachers College, Columbia University, New York City.

In 1950, Dolan became a faculty member in the UNC School of Public Health's Public Health Nursing program. She immediately became involved with the North Carolina State Nurse Association and served as its president from 1957-1959.

Dolan was a major figure on the national nursing stage. She is the only nurse to serve as President of the American Nurses Association (1962-1964), the National Health Council (1968-

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1969), the American Journal of Nursing Company (1960) and the American Public Health Association (1973). In 1964, she received the ANA Honorary Membership Award for distinguished national or international service to the nursing profession and in 1968 the ANA bestowed the Pearl McIver Public Health Nurse Award for significant contributions to public health nursing on Dolan.

President Kennedy appointed Dolan to two national advisory committees: the President's Committee on the Status of Women (1960-1964) and the President's Committee on Health Resources (1962-1968). Dolan was in the Oval Office with the

President when he signed the Medicare and Medicaid Acts into law. Dolan also served as a consultant to the U.S. Department of Defense, the U.S. Surgeon General, and the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. In 1968, President Johnson appointed her to a 4-year term to the Social Security Administration's Health Insurance Benefits Advisory Council.



Dolan also found time to serve as the national treasurer for Sigma Theta Tau, vice president of the American Nurses Foundation, and she held various offices in the North Carolina and U.S. Tuberculosis Societies, the North Carolina and National League of Nursing and in the American Association of University Professors. Dolan represented the United States at International Council of Nursing meetings in Frankfurt, Germany and Melbourne, Australia. She consulted about health matters with the governments of Ghana and Thailand. Working with Dean Lucy Conant of the UNC School of Nursing and Dean Isaac Taylor of the UNC School of Medicine, Dolan was instrumental in developing one of the first nurse practitioner programs in the country.

Dolan was a sought after speaker, a prolific author and a gifted teacher. She was an advocate for racial minorities, the uninsured and vulnerable people everywhere. Believing health care ought to be a right, she worked tirelessly through education, legislative advocacy and public persuasion to bring changes to law and policy to ensure high quality health care would be available to all who needed it. To this end, she was an early proponent of advanced practice for nurses, universal health insurance, and government funding for expanding healthcare facilities and training health care personnel.

Dolan remained at the UNC School of Public Health serving as Chair of the Public Health Nursing Department until her death in 1973. Her legacy lives on in the Margaret B. Dolan Award given each year to an outstanding North Carolina public health nurse. ■