



THE NURSE

In an attempt to give you a snapshot of what we were in for, I wrote about the coronavirus in the February issue of the Bow Times. Since then there has been non-stop information appearing in print, on the TV and all over social media. If you are awake, you know more about the coronavirus than you ever dreamed necessary. I trust you are following CDC guidelines for preventing the spread of this virus. I thought it appropriate to look at the heroes in our health care system who are truly on the front lines of this war.

Since the World Health Assembly has designated 2020 the “International Year of the Nurse” I thought that would be the best place to start. There is no question that nurses are a vital part of the health care team, be it a hospital, a clinic, a third world mission, or in our case, a first world disaster mission.

I should start with a disclaimer. For the following reasons I am biased. The woman I married is a nurse, and not only was that a great help in our family, but she was and continues to be a help to many. She even agreed to be my surgical scrub nurse on mission projects as long as I agreed to her “just use what I give you” line. My sister and two cousins are in the nursing profession. Three aunts were nurses.

Let me highlight my Aunt Sal. She spent over thirty years dedicating her life to the people in the hills of Kentucky. She was the only source of medical help for the people who lived in Lucky Fork, Mistletoe, and Bee Branch. When I was a college student I visited her and made “rounds” with her on horse and mule following the little creek beds to local homes. She, like many nurses, epitomized self-sacrificing dedication to help those in need.

Today in the war on coronavirus there are untold thousands of nurses answering the call, putting themselves on the front lines, to care for the sick. Yes, there are doctors, lab techs, scientists, volunteers and many others who are making the same sacrifice. But in this short article let's honor the nurses.

The profession probably began before recorded history. It was during the Roman Empire in the 1st Century AD that the profession of both female and male nurses was incorporated into hospitals. Nursing in Europe during the Middle Ages was most often practiced by nuns of the Roman Catholic Church. Working in hospitals attached to churches or monasteries, they were instructed to care for the sick no matter the patient's religion or nationality or disease.

Wars and plagues are devastating. Yet out of the suffering can come monumental changes in medicine, triage, surgery and yes, nursing. Florence Nightingale appeared on the scene during the Crimean War (1853-1856). She brought about major changes of better hygiene and wound care lowering the death rate from battle injuries. In 1860 Nightingale opened the first nursing school in London.

Following the Civil War in the US, nurse Clarissa Barton founded the American Red Cross. During both WWI and WWII many volunteered to be in the nurse corps, and the experience gained led to improved medical/surgical care and to formal advancement for nurses in the officer ranks.

Today, for those who seek to pursue a career in nursing, the opportunities for specialization and academic advancement, as well as community service are quite amazing. One can build on the basic RN degree with a master's or doctorate degree. A graduate nurse can specialize as a nurse anesthetist (CRNA), a nurse midwife (CNM), or nurse practitioner (NP) to name a few.

Let us acknowledge the amazing dedication and sacrifice that so many in the nursing profession have made, being on the front lines from the battle field of national and international wars to the current front line battling the coronavirus. **We thank them all.**



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