

1946

Women in White

University of Nebraska

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***WOMEN
IN
WHITE***



Women in White

THIS is the story of Lois Mayhew, a woman in white. It is not a glamorous story; nor is it romantic. It is, rather, another small episode in the history of nursing. But her story is significant because the story of the profession she represents—the story of nursing—is a thrilling, heartwarming saga which has mirrored through the ages all women, and their place in society.

■ ■ Lois Mayhew personifies the modern woman who has achieved responsible professional skill. She is the refreshing counterpart of the timid young ladies, who, barely two centuries ago, were denied careers in portrait painting because the world of that day considered “staring in men’s faces very indelicate in a female.”

■ ■ Nursing is as old as mankind. But the professional nurse, who first appeared less than 100 years ago, is something relatively new in the panorama of human history. Today’s women in white have inherited a glorious tradition of truly great women who grace the pages of history . . . the Sisters of Charity of Vincent de Paul . . . Florence Nightingale . . . Clara Barton . . . Edith Cavell . . . Isabel Hampton Robb . . . Adelaide Nutting . . . Jane Delano. All of these women, and countless others, have contributed to the struggle of breaking the bonds of ignorance and prejudice.

■ ■ Lois is a member of a proud profession, characterized by a heightened perception of service to humanity, and which combines the highest sort of professional and academic training. But Lois knows, like the women in white who have preceded her, that in a very deep sense her rewards are spiritual as well as material.

■ ■ Perhaps that is why the real satisfactions of a career in nursing may be found in the story of another woman in white who lived nearly a century ago.

■ ■ This woman was born to wealth and high position in a world in which women were bound by many restrictions and conventions. But her energy, determination, common sense and devotion to service to humankind overcame seemingly hopeless difficulties.

■ ■ In 1854, during the Crimean War, English soldiers were dying at the rate of 48 in every hundred when this woman, founder of modern nursing, left London for Constantinople with her little band of thirty-eight nurses. Reaching the military hospitals at Scutari, she found the sick and injured being carried by the hundreds into a huge barracks with ancient floors, dirt-encrusted walls, little ventilation.

■ ■ The simplest of supplies were lacking—bandages, medicines, soap, towels, candlesticks, plates, knives, spoons. Under the guidance of this small, gentle but determined woman, who had the courage to rebel at the ignorance of proper nursing care in her day, kitchens and laundries were reorganized; supplies were gathered; there were clean clothes and bedding for the soldiers, regular nourishing meals. And the lives of thousands of suffering and diseased men were saved. By the end of that hard winter, the terrible mortality among the wounded and sick had been reduced considerably.

■ ■ The name of this woman, Florence Nightingale, has become a legend. It is fitting, surely, that nurses on completion of their education take the Nightingale Pledge at graduation—a pledge which closes with the words:

■ ■ “With loyalty will I . . . devote myself to the welfare of those committed to my care.”



Lois Mayhew, like one third of all students entering the University of Nebraska School of Nursing, possessed two years of college work. In 1941 she left her Superior, Neb., home to graduate, two years later, with an associate in arts degree from a western women's college.

During registration (top photo) she discusses her choice of courses with Miss Irma Kyle, School Director. She tries on her uniform (center photo) but will wear street clothes during the preclinical term when most of her time is spent in lecture halls (bottom photo).



"I will solemnly pledge myself before God and in the presence of this assembly to . . . practice my profession faithfully. . . . With loyalty will I endeavor to aid the physician in his work and to devote myself to the welfare of those committed to my care." In the soft glow of

candlelight, Lois repeats the stirring Nightingale pledge at the capping ceremony. Now a full-fledged trainee, bearing the proud symbol of nursing—the white cap—Lois has behind her 18 weeks of academic training in basic courses. Now begins her professional learning.



Penicillin . . . sulfathiazole . . . streptomycin . . . and many other "wonder drugs" are rapidly advancing medical science's attack upon the pains and diseases which plague mankind. Today's medical nurse must thoroughly understand the nature and use of these potent drugs.

In addition to basic studies in chemistry, bacteriology and physiology, Lois will spend 54 hours studying medical nursing in the classroom and laboratory, one hundred and forty days of medical nursing practice in the University Hospital, before graduating.



A nursing education has been described as an excellent preparation for successful living—be it as a wife, mother or practicing nurse. A specific example: In her junior year, Lois receives 120 days of classroom work in obstetrics and pediatrics, and during her entire training period

approximately 200 days of nursing practice in the University of Nebraska Hospital. This training ranges from bathing and feeding newborn babies (left photo) to observing the mental and physical development of both the sick and well child (right photo).



The School of Nursing carefully selects its students (only college or university women, or the upper one-fourth of high school graduates are admitted after having successfully passed physical and psychological tests) and the training aims to develop these qualities into fine professional competence. School authorities recognize the need of comfortable living, recreation, and (70 days) vacation. These take the form of picnics, teas, parties, choral clubs and athletics. In the photos: Students gather in the music room for a little improvised singing (lower left); taking it easy in the comfortable rooms of the residence hall (top left); ping pong and volley ball (lower right). In the top right photo Lois (center foreground) joins two friends in a between-class "coke" at the College of Medicine's canteen.

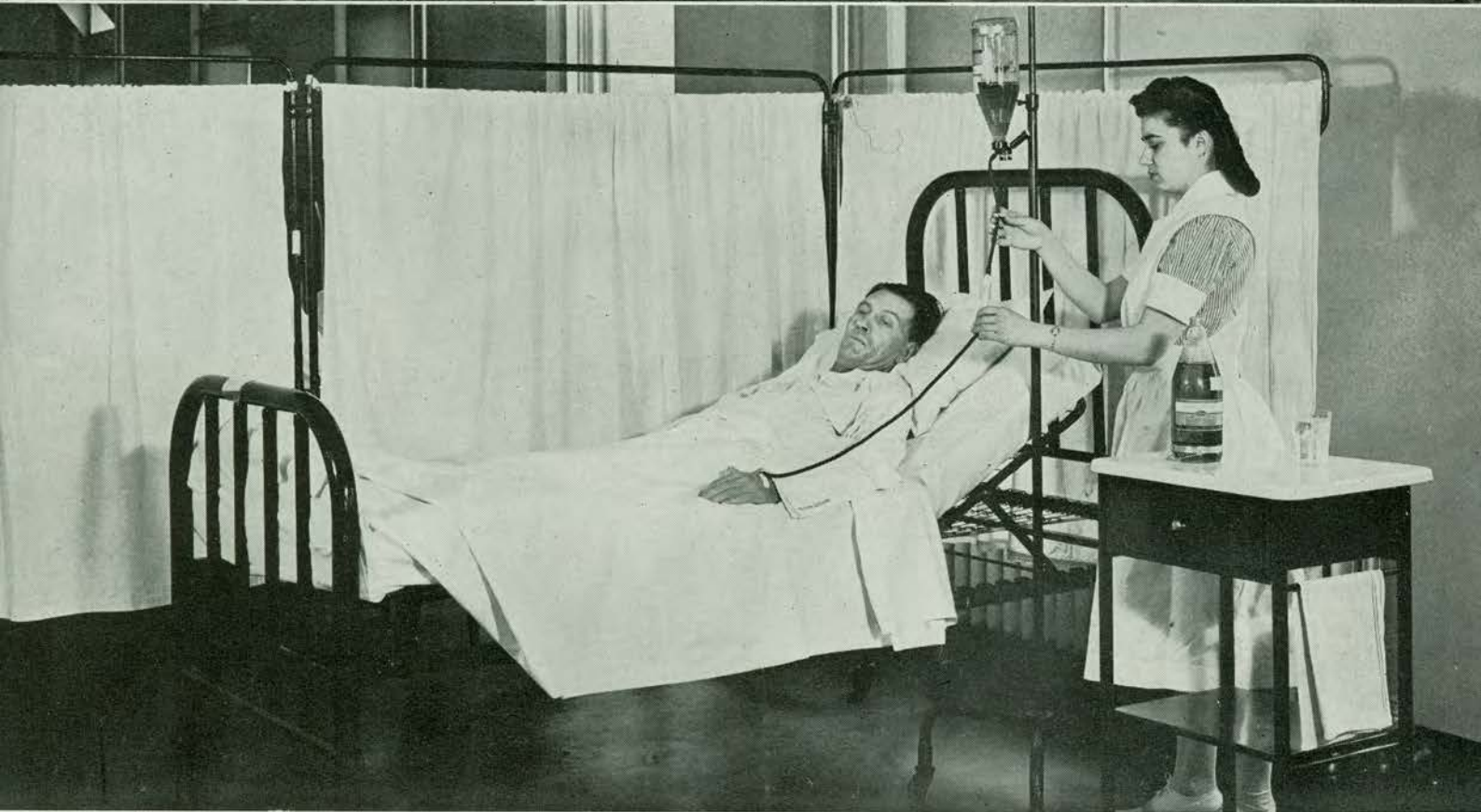






Bright lights flood the operating table . . . the steady hands of the skilled surgeon move surely and swiftly . . . and throughout the operation stands the nurse as an integral part of the surgical team. Student nurses, such as those in the operating amphitheater above, are given inten-

sive preliminary training in surgical techniques before spending approximately ten weeks of their practice training, under the supervision of trained teachers, actually assisting skilled surgeons of the staff of the University College of Medicine.



Many fields are open to today's graduate nurse. Two which are attracting increasing numbers: Industrial and public health nursing. In addition to receiving academic instruction in sociology, public sanitation and hygiene, Lois receives practice training by spending nine

weeks studying problems of community health in the out-patient department (top photo). General staff nurses carry on the large share of nursing in hospitals, and here again the student nurse is acquainted, both in theory and practice, with the nursing arts (lower photo).



The University's School of Nursing offers two programs of training—one for three years and one for five. About one-third of every graduating class completes the five-year program, most of whom enter the fields of nursing supervision, administrative work, or teaching (left

photo). Skilled dietitians are also the products of a nursing education. Lois (right photo) receives instruction in both individual and institutional dietary problems, ranging from the composition of food to formulation of diets adequate in many types of illness.



Nurses training is becoming one of the most highly specialized courses in professional education offered to today's young woman. For, in addition to academic training which prepares her for a proper perspective of the world in which she lives, she must also possess knowl-

edge of modern medical and nursing techniques. As Lois steps to the rostrum at commencement to receive her diploma from Dean Harold C. Lueth of the College of Medicine, she is abundantly prepared to successfully carry on the great tradition of the women in white!

Wanted: An R. N.

LOIS MAYHEW is now an R.N. Her intensive training for a career which requires specialized skill and knowledge has not been easy. But she knows that professional success in any field—the arts, business, teaching or nursing—is acquired only as the result of faithful diligence as a student.

■ ■ As Lois enters the growing ranks of practicing professional nurses, she becomes another of many who knows that her role, somewhat glamorized by the uniform of wartime, holds even greater significance today as medical science intensifies its peacetime battle against disease.

■ ■ She understands that first of all she is the product of the modern school-of-nursing training which combines the highest type of academic and professional training, and no longer bears the label of a vocational or trade school.

■ ■ Lois knows that she can look forward to a career which has shown a steady trend toward increasing standards of compensation. She knows, for example, that in nursing her salary will be comparable to most office workers, library employees, teachers or college instructors.

■ ■ She knows that she is entering a profession where the demand will far exceed the supply probably for many years to come as a result of increased public interest in medical care, and advances in medical science.

■ ■ And, on the purely personal side, Lois knows that the training she received for a nursing career is one of the best possible preparations for successful living, and that nurses make fine wives and good mothers, and competent leaders in community activities.

■ ■ Basic to all her thinking about this great profession, Lois Mayhew, R.N., probably has this to say: "The sick are helpless and illness is no respecter of persons. Someone is needed at the bedside who understands the subtle changes in condition which may have an important bearing on the treatment ordered by the doctor; who is skilled in bringing comfort to the patient and the family; and who is experienced in giving treatments and medicines and in dealing with emergencies.

■ ■ "Willing hearts and hands, while important, are not enough. Knowledge, skill, and judgment, the result of education and experience are essential. They are represented by the license of certificate of the Registered Nurse. They are embodied in the symbol of 'R.N.' They are the reason the Doctor says 'A Registered Nurse, a real nurse—is needed now!'"

Published by the University of Nebraska

For Further Information Write: The Director, University of Nebraska
School of Nursing, Omaha 5, Nebraska.

"One motive has made nurses carry on effectively through the years. That motive is the ideal of service. I am confident this ideal will challenge today's capable young women to help nursing play a truly significant role in mankind's future struggle for the better life."

—DEAN HAROLD C. LUETH,
*University of Nebraska,
College of Medicine*

Biomedical Communications

ca. 1946 or 1947