Stories of Residents at the Retired Nurses National Home, Bournemouth

A Brief Precis

Kathleen (known as Kay) was born in 1923 and did her initial Nurse Training at the London Homeopathic Hospital between 1943 and 1946, following this up by her Midwifery training at the Mothers Hospital in Clapham. She went back to the Homeopathic hospital as a Sister in Out-patients but within a few years had gone to Bible School in preparation for the rest of her working life. She went to Germany in 1955 which she used as a base to travel behind the Iron Curtain to both carry out nursing duties in people's homes and in hospital but also to spread the Gospel. Nursing was her gateway to the people. She stayed until after the Berlin Wall came down and was still living in Germany when she applied for entry to the Retired Nurses Home in 1997. She went with a friend who has since died. They did keep journals but these now seem to have vanished.

Pat is the youngest of this group being born in 1931. She trained at Queen Elizabeth's in Birmingham between. 1949 and 52 then going on to do Midwifery also in Birmingham. Between 1955 and 1966 she worked in Bournemouth as a Midwife at a Mother and Baby Home run by the Free Church Council. She has lots of stories from that time. However she then went into District Nursing and worked around the New Forest area as a District Nurse/ Midwife until 1974 She then went to the South bank Polytechnic and did her Health Visiting training working then in Verwood in Dorset until she retired in 1985. Although working in more recent times than the others she is able to articulate her experiences well and is also vocal in her comment about today's nurses.

Claudia was born in 1917 and trained at University College Hospital between 1936 and 39. She stayed on working in Theatres and was thus in London during the blitz and subsequently went to Stanmore in Essex where it sounds that UCH patients were transferred at this period. She spent some time caring for her family during the late forties. She then considered whether she would change her career to Medicine successfully completing her first MB in 1951. However she stayed in Nursing and went to the RCN in 1951 to do the Sister Tutors course. She is proud that they allowed her to do it in one year as she had already achieved her MB. She then taught at the Westminster School of Nursing until 1968 Moving on the to Bury St Edmonds until she retired.

Liesbeth was born in Germany in 1923 and trained at Berlin General Hospital where she did both Nursing and Midwifery between 1939 and 45. She was therefore there during the whole of WW2. It seems there were some horrific things the nurses had to do. She talks of bodies in black bags! As she was in effect in East Germany at the end of the War her employers told her she had better go back home to the Polish border. She had experience of the Russian invasion. She was determined to get to the UK but was forbidden entry. She went to Ireland and eventually into the UK in 1950 where she was employed at Pinner View Nursing Home There she looked after a number of well-known people of the day. She mentions Margaret Rutherford and Billy Cotton. She then developed an interest in Psychiatry of old age and worked at both

Brookwood Hospital and Frimley Park hospital until she retired in 1983. Her German qualification only allowed her to Register as an EN in the UK.

Joyce was born in 1916 and did her training both as a nurse and a midwife in the 1940's She also took the TB Certificate and subsequently became a Queens District Nurse. Since a child Joyce had always wanted to travel and used her Nursing qualifications as a passport to travel the world. Interestingly she says it was her Midwifery qualification which gave her entry to many hospitals She says that many nurses were also travelling but she was always chosen before them for any job because of the Midwifery. She began by going to Bermuda in 1956, staying 3 years and returning in 1967 for a further 2 years. She was in Kenya in the early 60's working for the Police service. She came back for a couple of years and worked as a DN in Hampshire between 1963-4 Then set off to South Africa for 3 years. From there she went to Fiji where she worked from 1969-70 Then on to New Zealand and Australia, finally coming home in 1976. However after she retired she then went out to Nazareth she says just to help out in Midwifery. Her experiences in each of these countries no doubt is a story of its own.

Edith also born in 1916 trained at the Chelmsford and Essex Hospital between 1939 and 1942. Then did her Midwifery at the Mothers Hospital in Clapham. Initially she worked in the UK but then felt called to the Mission field and went to Bible College Her first posting was to the north of India where she practised Midwifery in people's homes. The work developed and after she left a hospital was set up in the area in which she had worked. On furlough one year in the UK she met a Pastor who had influenced her early career and they married She went with him as his wife to the north of Brazil. There she had to be a 'pastor's wife' and started working with local children but Midwives were always needed so she worked again mostly in local people's homes as a Midwife. I believe there is much more to her story as she has said that someone has recently published a book which tells her story. She has also made a tape of her memories. Despite her age she is very astute.