

1926

I am the clock in the hallway. Just at the head of the stairs. My job is to watch the front door and tell the time. I seldom speak, but when I think of this 1926 graduating class, I cannot maintain my usual silence.

It doesn't sound very interesting to just be an old clock, but I'll tell you I saw and heard many interesting things while I stood guard of the front door at Mercy Hospital. I never paid much attention to the visitors or patients but every January, June and September I never took my eyes off those front steps it gave me a great thrill to see the new nurses come tripping in, some came as though they were entering the land of romance, but alas, in a few days, their eyes were opened to the realities of a nurses life, they soon learned there were no unmarried doctors, and the few good looking men patients always had special nurses. So some not quite liking the prospects would leave us to try some other avocation, but there were always the faithful ones, who made the best of each trying circumstance, and studied and toiled for three years and then they could be the special nurse.

It was along in January, 1923, that the urge came to two little twin girls out at Granger to leave home and fireside and study to be nurses. The minute I saw those Nixon girls, I knew they would make good nurses. Norma was always known as the older one and Leona the baby one. Whenever they were called at night for an emergency, they just made things hum. A few days later, little Miss Watts came to the hospital and as she stepped into the office, she says, "I am Gladys Watts. I came to take up training." In the way she said it, I knew she was going to stay. Well she found romance all right, but not in the hospital.

Looking out one day, I saw a very prim little lady coming in. She wanted to see Dr. Thomas. Wouldn't disclose her identity to another soul. It was Hermine Readding. One day she was caught giggling for the babies, and was almost expelled, but Mother said while it was against the rules, still the babies needed amusing.

Out at Redfield lived a most demure maid, they called her Mary Egan, but one day a change came over her. She got a letter asking her to come at once to Mercy Hospital. They just couldn't run things without her. So she packed her grip and came rushing in. She and the superior drove back and forth to the farm, and she assisted generally in running the place. I was very startled one day when a regular chatterbox came in. She must talk all the time and told everyone she met, "I am Gen McKeigh of Lacyville!" She really became a good nurse. How her patients could stand that constant talking is more than I can understand.

There are some people who smile once in awhile, but when you find someone who smiles all the time, it is quite remarkable.

Bernadine Lillie never stopped smiling for the three years, and I am sure she drove the blues away lots of times. There were five girls who had entered in another class, but for reasons such as appendix, warts, etc., they dropped out to re-enter with 1926 class. They were Miss Rhodes who lost her heart and still tended right to business. Miss Walsh had some similar affliction. She tried to make a hit with an old Doctor from Mt. Tyre, but somehow he turned her down. Miss Nevak had an operation and was so infatuated with her doctor, her recovery was slow. Bernice Penter, the girl with the pretty clothes and nice manners, was in this class, and Catherine Hubbers, who dropped out because they did not have as good things to eat here as they did in Pella, but a young man studying Theology told her to return, which she did.

When Francis Kinney came to us, her first day. I was so sorry for she was called on the carpet for chewing gum. But she told them she did it to get fat, so was permitted to continue for the three years, but I think it was the wrong kind of gum. But fat or thin, Francis you have a great admirer. September brings to us some twenty charming maids, but many were discouraged in a short while and went other places for their land of romance. (Some went other places for their) Some didn't like the front steps after 11:30, and tried the fire escape, but this is a very slippery entrance. Better come in and face the old clock, even though I do point my hands at you and say, "You're late, you're late." Of this number was bewitching Marien Fagan. She charmed everyone except the German painters, but they just kept on painting no matter what she said or did, until one day she said, "I'll show them, so she fainted right in to their arms." After that all was lovely.

Out in Adair lives a prominent M. D. He had a fair daughter, and one day he said to her, "Elizabeth Maynard, don't you ever think of being a nurse." She said "Daddy dear, that is just what I am going to be." Doing the Charleston while she said it, she did as she said, and was a credit to the place and her dear daddy. There was one in this class who was unlike most girls. She had a real brother for a sweetheart. Mary Hall was beloved by all, and especially by her brother, who showered her with all kinds of presents. What a lucky day for the hospital when the Fates brought Brigetta Agath Ryan, for she was fair to look upon.

I used to worry about her a lot, seeing her got out Saturday night and not return until morning, but I learned mother lived in Des Moines, so it was all right.

When Helen Bahl came smiling in, I knew a treasure had arrived one or twice I saw tears. I don't know whether she was lonesome or got scolded, just as soon as she graduates she wants to go home where they have loads of strawberries. There was one in the class who worked diligently and whom everyone loved but in her second year, she became ill and our dear Leah Aldera was sent to Broadlawns. She is improving and can soon continue her training.

Boone Hospital had a fire so their nurses had to find shelter elsewhere. Some came to us. Miss Duffy was in the class. She was tall, and willowy and hadn't much to say. Illinois sent us three young ladies all models of perfection. They came to us to put the finishing touches to a two years training. Dignified Gene Nagel, no relation to Conrad, but Des Moines patients called her Highland Park, he being a native of there. Nellie Douglas a lovely nurse, but so fond of the home folks. I don't see how she stayed away from them to continue her training. Miss Harvey took such care of Dr. Maple, when he had his accident, he was heard to remark. "Oh, if I were young again."

No, this ends my story. There are things I could have told, but my business is keeping time and not telling tales. And if some sneaked out without permission and stole in after time. Well, they meant no harm, they were young and full of life, and it seems to give youth a certain thrill to do things they shouldn't.

So here's to the class of 1926. May they sail forth on seas of gladness, and never strike the reefs of sadness, and may their harbor be a grand success.