Mary Pond
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# MY MEMORIES OF LILA PICKHARDT

Have you ever dreamed you were in the presence of an angel and then tried to explain that incident after many years? That is how I feel in telling you of my memories of our beloved Miss Pickhardt. So many, many lovely and admirable incidents occurred during my two years of training at Augustana when I had the opportunity to mingle with Miss Pickhardt and personally be in contact with her. I am afraid some of them have faded after these 52 years and that now only the afterglow remains.

Miss Pickhardt was one of the finest women I have ever known; tall, erect, slender with brown twinkling eyes and brown hair, quick of step. She was always there and always ready when needed.

One of my very first encounters with Miss Pickhardt, as I remember, was a day or two after entering. I was the last of 5 students assigned to a large room on the 1st floor of the nurse's home. It was all so strange to me. The other students who were already there were not very communicative it seemed to me. They were there and had already become acquainted. I could not sleep that night and in the morning I had a headache and felt sick and could not get up at the assigned hour - and I guess I was homesick. I wondered during the night if I had done the wise thing in leaving my good position at the West Side Hospital for this. I remember I started to cry and called for my mother, (which I had never done before I am sure during the 3 years since I left home and mother.

One of the roomates promptly called for help - had encountered Miss Pickhardt in the hall, ready to go to the hospital. She came over to my bed, inquired as to my condition and realized, I am sure, that it was more a case of homesickness than anything else. She said among other things, in her kind but firm voice "you are now a grown woman and not a child calling for mother. You know very well your mother could not come to you, nor hear your call. Take hold of yourself and make the best of it. I am sure you will be all right - come to work at one o'clock." My headache subsided in no time, and after a brief rest all by myself I was back at the hospital and on duty at noon. When I passed Miss Pickhardt in the hall she nodded her head at me and smiled. The incident was forgotten.

Our first year classwork was with the assistant superintendent, Miss Nelson. Our lectures had to be written and sent to her for grading. Besides her classes we had 2 - 3 lectures a week by different doctors or instructors, which also had to be graded by her. When these lectures were given, I could not with my limited spelling in English, follow in writing. So on "the beam" from the doctor's voice to my ear, I translated what he said into Swedish and wrote the notes in Swedish. After duty hours I was sitting in the library of the nurse's home re-translating the lectures via the Swedish - English dictionary onto a paper presentable for grading. I guess it was a sorry

mess, for that first year every lecture was returned with these words "Come and see me about this lecture". Some of the words were misspelled, I was told, or the composition was not correct. Not a word as to whether I understood the issue involved was ever mentioned.

During the second year our classwork was with Miss Pickhardt. It was so quiet at her classes one could hear a pin fall. All sixteen of us were eager to sit at her feet and hear the wisdom of her words. In the classes of nursing ethics I remember she said "We owe ethics and consideration to our comrades and room mates as well as others". I remember when she said "Do not help yourself to your room mate's stockings or petticoats hanging in the closet when your room mate happens to be on duty and you are off duty", (Those were the days of two or more petticoats) and "when you go out do not dress so elaborate nor so plain that you will look conspicuous".

I remember when she said "Some day nurses will wear white uniforms on duty and when you do nursing in hotels or other public places you will be allowed to enter the front door and not the rear door as is done today". I also remember when she said "One day you nurses will register and we are working on an insignia for all - probably 'R.N' ". We, the class could not figure out at the time what the "R.N." would indicate - why not "T.N." - trained nurse.

When my lectures were handed in to Miss Pickhardt for grading the second year, they were always returned with a "Very good". What a thrill that gave me to be appreciated for I am sure I was still misspelling words and juggling the composition.

The greatest admiration for Miss Pickhardt was in taking the report for night duty. After three or four months on the third floor (women's floor) as probationer and floor nurse I was assigned to night duty on the same floor with one or two assistants. All the night nurses for all the floors gathered in the foyer of the 1st floor at 20 minutes before 7 P.M. - all standing. Miss Pickhardt would start with the 2nd floor (Men's floor)- remain standing with us, and speak directly to the nurse in charge, naming each patient by name, their operation, their condition briefly - Mr. so and so operated today is serious, watch him closely, etc. Ward after ward, room after room. Then on to the 3rd floor (women's wards) mentioning name after name for special orders on care. Then the children's 3 wards - up to the 4th and 5th floors where there were private cases, but many on general care too, and continuing to name the patients and describe their condition - if they needed special care.

When we went off duty we again met for a brief report, especially if we had ~~been on~~ severe cases.

Miss Pickhardt's untiring efforts in keeping check on everything and everybody under her jurisdiction could compare only of a Florence Nightingale. I have seen Miss Pickhardt slip into one of the wards where a woman recently operated was very low and anxious and with the greatest compassion she stroked her forehead and would say, it will be all right, don't worry.

She would make rounds with the doctors two or three times a day and never seem to falter.

One time during my senior year I was in surgery having charge of the instruments. I accidentally broke 2 syringes. The supervisor became very angry and said she would report me. I felt badly but knew the only thing was to pay for the breakage. The new corner hospital addition was being built and only the surgical department finished and in use on the 6th floor. I was sent down to another floor for something and walked through the upper unfinished corridor when I saw MissPickhardt coming from the opposite direction and smiling at me. I was glad of the opportunity so I could tell her about the breakage and said "Please, take it out of my allowance". She didn't pay any attention to what I said, but squeezed my arm and said "Miss Nilson", you are doing fine".

After my 2 weeks vacations which I spent with a former 3rd floor patient's family at Baraboo, Wisconsin (the first real vacation I had ever had), I was put in charge of the 3 children's

wards. They were all new with pretty hanging fern baskets at the windows and new pretty white children's beds. I loved it there with the children and every so often Miss Pickhardt would slip in to inquire about the children - stop and smile with them - talk about Wisconsin and Baraboo, The Dells, etc. and slip out again. She was like a good spirit, soothing and encouraging everywhere.

When I was working in the dressing room we had a doctor in charge who showed me, among other things, how to change appendicial drain tubes. One time when I was changing a very profuse drainage tube on a patient (the doctor had stepped out and told me to go ahead) Miss Pickhardt slipped in and stood beside me. When I was through she said "Who told you to do that". I told her Dr. Yates. Then she spoke to the patient and asked if it had hurt. He said "No". Then she nodded at me and slipped out again and nothing more was every said about it.

MissPickhardt was quick to mirth and laughter when the occasion permitted. Her fondness for the graduate nurses who were called on for private duty was apparent. I especially remember when Miss Freeman was on duty at one time on the 3rd floor. There were such friendly and congenial occasions and so noticeable to a young student like myself. At another time, I remember Miss Ingrid Johnson was on a private case. She was

so full of fun and would pirouette at the end of the hall where we often went out for a breather, and several of us had congregated for a few minutes. Miss Pickhardt happened to come down the hall and stopped for a few minutes too, and she enjoyed the fun as much as anybody. She did not shoo us away, or call us down for lingering. She laughingly said a few pleasant words and slipped away again.

I remember a picnic supper our class had in the little garden of the nurse's home. There was lots of fun and laughter amongst us as we sat in the grass, munching sandwiches, joking and telling stories. Miss Pickhardt was one of us and she too told stories, one was about the disappearing piano and why - but that is another story.

This was Miss Pickhardt. In her spirit she was brave and fearless - for justice and fair play. She was above partiality and deceit and she would never for any reason call down a nurse in the presence of others, no matter for what reason. In our classes on nursing ethics one would recognize a reprimand or correction and then in all seriousness and never directly to one nurse. If it did happen, it would be as a lesson for all and would be accepted with admiration and never as a rebuke.

During my senior year my 18 year old brother came from a farm near Elgin, Illinois, where he had been working on a farm, to Augustana Hospital for help as he was very sick. He was

ready to collapse having travelled by railway and street car to reach the hospital. It was found he had a full fledged perotinitis, due to a ruptured appendix. Dr. A. J. Ochner did not give much hope for him as his abdomen was full of pus and it had to be subsided and localized before any surgery could be done. It would be several days or morebefore this could be done. Miss Pickhardt was most sympathetic and gave me extra time off occasionally to be with him. I shall never forget how understanding she was, knowing that my folks were in Sweden. I remember when I told her that as far as my brother was concerned I knew he was in the best of care in the hands of Dr. Ochner, - only if it should prove fatal I would not know how to break the news to my folks at home. That was one of my greatest worries. On the day of the operation Miss Pickhardt came into the kitchen on the 3rd floor where I was in charge and told me my brother was No. 1 at 7 A.M. She said that I would want to see the operation so I could write my mother.
She said "Come, I will go with you". She stood with her arm around my waist downstairs in the operating room, until after the incision, when it got too much for me. She gave me the day off to be with my brother and he recovered. Dr. Ochner told me later "he was one in 1000 cases to recover from that peritonitis infection; that it must have been his rebust constituion that came to his aid". I knew it was the Blessed Providence that directed him to Augustana and Dr. Ochner.

During my last year in training I met a doctor from Kansas who was doing extern work at the hospital. I told him I could not associate with him while I was in training - that the hospital rules forbade it. One Sunday morning (my 1/2 day off) he was brazen enough to call for me at the nurse's home and was waiting for me in the parlor. Miss Pickhardt encountered him there on her way to the hospital. She called him aside and asked him what his intentions were - about the rules, etc. and that I would be involved were they broken. He said "you ask Miss Johnson (the matron). She knows all about me. She is from there in my class -
my home town in Kansas and we belong to the same church, and as for me, I don't have to come to Augustana to break rules. There are plenty of other hospitals for study courses for me. Now may I call on Miss Nilsson"? She said "Of course Doctor" and smiled and shook his hands, - "but we want to keep our good nurses". I never knew of this incident until months after I graduated.

After my graduation I was on my own again so I decided to take the State civil service examination for graduste nurses. I took the examination for chief nurse and general nurse and passed both. There were 5 positions open for chief nurse, and the Instituion of Dunning, as we know it now, was one of them in the City. I went out to make inquiries and found the mental patients housed in 2-story wooden buildings, the upper story having cages

insane

where the patients evidently were confined; also the T.B. hospital was there as well as the poorhouse. All under the State and on the one plot. I remember going into the wards - row upon row of beds and misery all about. My heart was heavy - to take this position offered to me. Would I be able to do justice to all this? Would my shoulders be able to carry it all? I will ask Miss Pickhardt. I went back to the hospital and Miss Pickhardt. I told her my story and my intention. I had been asked to marry Dr. Graf, but hesitated between the two - my nursing career or marriage.

I asked MissPickhardt if she thought my few years experience in nursing sufficient and was I mature enough to carry this responsible position with the dignity and understanding it requires. I told her if I took it I didn't want to fail, and if I didn't take it I had decided to marry - that I had to choose between the two and asked her help in this decision. She held my hands and looked me in the eyes and after a thoughtful moment she said: "I think it will take an older woman than you - more mature and with broader shoulders than you to take that job" and "Thank you for asking my advice". I said "Thank you Miss

Pickhardt - then I shall marry Dr. Graf". She said She embraced me & said
"I think you have chosen wisely Miss Nilsson, - God bless you".

That was the last time I saw my beloved

Miss Pickhardt.

Jenny Nilsson - Graf '06.