

Gilberte Abu Jaudeh

A pioneer nurse in the field of public health

Founder and Director of the first Government School of Nursing in Lebanon

As a student at the St. Famille Secondary School in Beirut, Gilberte Abu Jaudeh won distinction in her science courses. During laboratory hours, she used to dream of studying medicine. Her teachers, who remarked on her scientific bent, told her that the Board of the French Hospital «Hotel Dieu» was badly in need of a Lebanese trained nurse who would specialize in teaching nursing at the French Nursing School.

Gilberte found the suggestion interesting. Studying and teaching nursing meant - like medicine - involvement in science for a long period of time. A scientific career was now accessible to her. She entered the French School of Nursing through a competition which was required of candidates at the time. After three years of study she obtained a nursing diploma with specialization in public health. Two years of study in France prepared her to teach nursing at the school where she had studied and, later on, to serve as assistant director. Another trip to France and two more years of study at Lyon University allowed her to be trained in school management. Upon her return to Lebanon, she was asked to found the first Government School of Nursing in Lebanon in 1971-72 and be its director.

I had the opportunity of meeting Nurse Gilberte Abu Jaudeh and posed the following questions:

Q - What skills are required of a candidate for management?

A - A full course in management, theory and practice, at college or university level is required. In addition, psychology courses that permit candidates to acquire a quick insight, an ability to understand people, to communicate easily with them and obtain their confidence and support. The candidate for management should be fluent and have the wisdom to say the right thing in the right place at the right time.

Q - What attitude does the public have toward the nursing profession?

A - The old-fashioned idea, that the nurse is a sort of maid who administers injections and dresses wounds, has been gradually vanishing. The social and financial status of the nurse has improved. The public has begun to realize that a **trained** nurse is the right-hand of the doctor; that her

advanced and specialized studies predispose her for reponsible positions.

Q - Does Lebanon have a sufficient number of Nursing Schools?

A - Lebanon has a large number of private nursing schools connected with private hospitals such as the American and the French Hospitals, as well as the Khalidy Hospital and the Red Cross, etc... The Government has one school of nursing which was founded by me. Recently another school, that of the Red Cross, has been placed under Government control. Candidates for the nursing profession are required to be holders of a high-school diploma: either a «brevet» or a «baccalaureate». In the latter case, they take more advanced studies and receive a higher degree, which allows them to become registered nurses at the Ministry of Health. All schools of nursing prepare their students for the colloquium exams which serve as a unifying link between the various school curricula. The Government school tries to keep a high standard and maintain a leadership position among the other schools.

Q - Do you receive men students at your school?

A - Yes, but in smaller numbers. Men students were relatively numerous during the seventies, now their number is greatly reduced, probably because the number of nursing schools has multiplied and men candidates have a larger choice.

Q - How do you compare men with women in the nursing profession?

A - In few cases which require physical strength, men may be more efficient than women, but it seems to me that women - because of their early home training - are more patient and dedicated, and willing to serve than men.

Q - Do you have a syndicate for the nurses in Lebanon?

A - We have a syndicate which we call federation or association. It works to ensure, claim and defend nurses' rights according to the Labor Code. The graduates of our school have the right to social security but not old age pension. The war has delayed all evolution or progress in the status of nurses and other professionals in Lebanon.

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Mrs. Abu Jaudeh has given more than thirty years of her life to her works as nurse, teacher and director of a nursing school. As I listened to the informal account of her career, I could feel the warmth, the enthusiasm and the strength that distinguish a dedicated woman who works for the pleasure of working and not only as a money-earner.

Rose Ghurayyib