

Grace Kim

Professor Elenice Lima

Worldview Perspectives: The Christian Nurse

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Betty Ann Olsen: The Christian Missionary Nurse

The “Christian Missionary Nurse” is the union between healthcare and Christian ministry. Health does not have any boundaries, it affects every individual no matter the ethnic, socioeconomic, religious, etc background one has. In addition, as one’s role as a nurse, the individual’s physical, mental, and spiritual health is tended to. There is such beauty in being able to glorify the Lord while serving one’s basic yet crucial health needs. One Christian Missionary Nurse took her legacy to a different level: Betty Ann Olsen. As an alumni from Alliance University, Betty Ann Olsen is the person who embodied such an excruciating yet loving legacy of the Christian Missionary Nurse.

Betty Ann Olsen was born to “Walter and Elizabeth Olsen, missionaries on October 22, 1934 in Bouake, Côte d’Ivoire, Africa” (Matthews, 2018). With an early calling, Olsen was determined to follow the legacy of her parents and dedicate her life to missionary service. She then proceeded to attend Nyack Missionary College, and finished her nursing training in 1962. (Matthews, 2018) Olsen began her nursing career in Chicago – but found herself in the midst of a dark season of heavy depression and doubt, contemplating if this was where she was supposed to be. (Stuart, 2019) It was in 1964, where Olsen decided to serve as a missionary nurse in Vietnam. Right in the midst of the brutal Vietnam War, Olsen created a Christian Missionary Nurse legacy that would never be forgotten.

Olsen served as a missionary nurse in Buôn Ma Thuột, a place already notorious for danger and loss, for nearly three years. In addition to the danger of the war, it was also a region with a high population of individuals with leprosy. Despite the extremely high risks, Olsen testified that “I am not concerned, and I am very much at peace. I know that I may never come back, but I know that I am in the center of the Lord’s will and Vietnam is the place for me.” (Matthews, 2018). However, it was during the Tet Offensive of 1968 where six Alliance missionaries lost their lives: “Ed and Ruth Thompson, Robert Ziemer, Carolyn Griswold, her father, Leon Griswold, and Ruth Wilting, R.N.” all of whom were alumni of Alliance University (Stuart, 2019). While Olsen was trying to resuscitate her coworkers, she and “Hank Blood of Wycliffe Bible Translators, and Mike Bengé, an American AID officer” were captured by the Vietnam soldiers (Stuart, 2019). Olsen, Hank, and Mike were held captive, and endured unthinkable torture, and abuse. The three individuals were chained to each other, and were forced to walk up to fourteen hours through the humid jungles in order to reach the prison camp. They also suffered from deadly infections, skin sores, ulcers, leech infestation, and severe malnutrition.

Unfortunately, Olsen and Hank passed away in captivity – but Olsen’s love that is beyond human understanding marked her legacy. In the time of unspeakable pain, Olsen chose to emulate Christ’s love by focusing and caring for others as a nurse. Even at the brink of starvation to death, she shared her rations to other captives. Olsen continuously prayed through the captivity, never ceasing to pray for others and the soldiers. (Fasolino, 2018) In the time where anyone would be beyond angry, and resentful – “She never showed any bitterness or resentment, to the end, she loved the ones who mistreated her” (Fasolino, 2018). Mike Bengé, the survivor of the three, remained a prisoner of war but came to know Christ through Olsen and Hank. Mike

continues to testify and share the incredibly heartbreaking, yet Christ-like legacy Olsen left behind.

While reading and researching Betty Ann Olsen's legacy as a Christian Missionary Nurse, my soul was moved by her true dedication to her calling. Her legacy is truly the epitome of what it means to be a living sacrifice for the Lord. Personally, I have been struggling with being scared with what a calling demands, and how different it may be from what I am expecting. However, I am genuinely in awe of the bravery and boldness that Olsen emulated with her calling to Vietnam. Not only of her commitment to Vietnam, but also the preserving love she expressed through the unimaginable pain and torture her physical body endured during the time. Olsen remained still and faithful, even when the situation gave her every reason not to be.

Work Cited

Fasolino, Anna. "Betty Olsen: Loving Those Who Mistreat You." *The Restful Home*, 22 Apr.

2018, <https://therestfulhome.com/betty-olsen/>.

Matthews, Diana Leigh. "Faithful Heroes: Betty Olsen, Unselfish Even in Persecution." *Diana*

Leagh Matthews, 19 June 2018,

<https://dianaleaghmatthews.com/betty-olsen/#.ZAaYSHbMK3B>.

Stuart, Ed. "School of Nursing Legacy." Alliance University,

<https://www.nyack.edu/site/nursing-legacy/>.

Nyack College School of Nursing Service-Learning Project Proposal

Student Name: Grace Kim

If this is a group project, write down the names of your group: N/A

Date of Proposed Service-Learning: TBD, Not sure

Service Learning Activity and Goal for the community:

I would like to possibly propose a service project in which we work with The Rock Ministries of Philadelphia to help out the homeless individuals in Kensington. In Kensington, there is a large homeless population, and opioid abuse. The Rock Ministries is a ministry that works very closely with the local town – and offers bible studies, boxing sessions, support groups, coffee houses, etc. The Rock Ministries hosts this annual event called “Rock the Block” in which the block clears out for one week of the summer. In that event, there are a multitude of activities happening, including health care. A potential service project could be where we brainstorm ideas to volunteer as nursing students.

The Name of Supervisor/ Leader Signature & Comments: (If you do not have one, discuss your idea with a SON faculty or staff member and obtain his or her signature).

TBD, <https://www.therockphilly.org/>

Preparation:

- Reach communication with the Rock ministries
- Inquire how nursing students/healthcare could volunteer at “Rock the Block”
- Officialize an event/volunteer group from Alliance University to attend “Rock the Block”
- Reach communication with Professors to supervise
 - If vaccination event, reach appropriate communication