

Infirmary Staff Administers Loving Care, Thermometers

By Marilyn Turner

It does not matter when the day begins. Day becomes as night and a night as day in the Salem infirmary.

... The door clicks to my right and an expanding beam of light finds its way to my bedside. I hear the shuffle of soft soled shoes on the slick linoleum floor, and see the silhouette of a woman framed by the door jamb grow larger as she approaches.

I glance at my bedside clock which says 4 a.m. Almost instinctively, like a baby accepting its bottle, I take the cool antiseptic thermometer between my lips and let it rest under my tongue. The three minutes pass quickly, and I hear an echo of the shuffling footsteps and feel the thermometer once again slide from my lips. And then, all becomes oblivious as I slip back into my dreams.

... I start from my sleep to find an unfamiliar face peering at me. "What's the password?"

"Thermometer," she says and slips the instrument into sight and into its resting place between my lips. The nurse has changed, but her instrument is the same, and I feel a routine beginning to evolve.

My eyes have yet to awaken, so I strain my sleepy ears to determine the time of day. The shuffle of footsteps pauses intermittently, and I deduce that there have been one or two additions to the sickly society.

Once again, the sly thermometer slides smoothly out of place as a rhythmic thump, like the jump at the end of a record as the needle creeps near the label and jumps quickly out again, and again, and again; a thump like that attracts my attention. The thumping comes to a halt, and I hear a quick slide, a scuffle of feet, and a plastic plop. After an interval of drowsy deliberation, I realize that breakfast has arrived.

The lack of smell frustrates my nostrils, and I open my eyes to face a bowl of Rice Krispies (Snap, Krackie, and Pop never had a brother named Sniff), a piece of buttered toast, and a glass of Florida sunshine. And so my taste buds have the privilege of waking at the same time as my eyes.

... A routine had begun to evolve. It begins with the thermometer, is followed by a meal, and then is usually succeeded by something medical. I noticed that it was starting again — thermometer, meal, and the surprise. The meal is lunch this time, and the ensuing ordeal is quite unlike any so far experienced within the confines of the infirmary.

As the clock strikes one, the members of the sickly society become members of the funny farm. They converge on the infirmary from all corners of the campus with aching ears, hockey-stick-shaped bruises, runny noses, and raging allergies. And since the next order in the routine is the arrival of the doctor, the patients (or inmates, as they appear to me) pull at their clothing, twist hair, and jabber almost incoherently.

With all the small talk and giggling, one would easily be led to believe that nothing was seriously wrong with these people after all. And so are they themselves momentarily deceived. For a small period of time, the infirmary takes on a carnival atmosphere.

But then the heavy outside door

swings ajar, and the smaller screen door clatters open and shut. Heavy footsteps ascend the three steps and plod across the hard linoleum floor. The funny farm fracas subsides abruptly as the doctor enters his office, pulling the door to behind him. And then it rises again, the joking, chewing, and talking, to a pitch and tempo higher than before.

Thus does the routine continue in the Salem infirmary, day after day, with patient after patient, or so it seems.

But I asked Mrs. Martha Castevens, one of the three alternating nurses in the infirmary, if her job were routine. Sitting behind the desk in the doctor's office, she replied in her calm, slightly rasping voice, "It's never routine. Something new happens every day." At this point, Mrs. Castevens recalled the controversial subjects of gynecologic care provided by the college, the distribution of birth control pills by the infirmary, and the questions concerning abortion that have come up in the past.

Mrs. Castevens came to Salem from the intensive care unit at Baptist Hospital and has been working here for five years. She says that she enjoys working at Salem because she likes young people so much.

Miss Annette Smith is Mrs. Castevens' young cohort. Mrs. Castevens said that Miss Smith has a good working relationship with the girls to be so near their age. Miss Smith has been with Salem for nearly two years, and she says that she enjoys the work because it is not as pressured as the emergency situations found in the hospital.

Terminating her career as the night nurse is Miss Anna Barbie. Miss Barbie is currently working on her B.S. in nursing, and she is finding the stress of a job and school too much for her to handle at the same time. Taking her place will be Mrs. Cynthia Bryant.

Dr. Tim Pennell is the doctor who makes the scene at Salem at 1 p.m. on Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays. Dr. Pennell is a surgeon at Baptist Hospital who takes his lunch hour to see patients at Salem. Like Mrs. Castevens, Pennell, who has a daughter in college enjoys working at Salem because he loves young people.

Currently, Dr. Pennell is not at Salem. As has been his custom for years, he is in Africa and India for a month to teach new surgical techniques to medical students there. Mrs. Castevens calls him a "frustrated missionary," since she believes that missionary work is what Dr. Pennell would really like to do permanently.

... the door slams and the little screen door clatters in its echo. An indiscernable number of feet climb the short stairway, and the clamor grows louder as they approach. As I prop myself up in bed to greet whatever may have drifted in from "the other world," I am relieved and pleased to see familiar faces peering in the door.

Yes, a definite routine has evolved in the infirmary; a routine markedly different from the usual college routine. But while being withdrawn from the hustle and bustle of dorm life, one comes to appreciate the friends who were a part of that life, and one also comes to know and value a staff composed of some of the most loving and caring people to be found on campus.

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Salem Christmas 1800

Dec. 17: 4-6 p.m. (Afternoon presentation). 7-9 p.m. (Evening presentation).

Advance ticket sale begins November 17 (limited sales). Adults \$2.00, Students (including college) 50¢.

These two presentations — taking place in the center of the restored area of Old Salem — recreate the sights, sounds and smells of the little Moravian congregation town of Salem in 1800. Five exhibit buildings are open: Single Brothers House, John Vogler House, Salem Tavern, Miksch Tobacco Shop and Winkler Bakery. Activities include cooking in the old fireplaces and bake ovens, craftsmen at work in their shops and the presentation of music known to have been performed in Salem in 1800. On the streets around Salem Square, there are Moravian bands, craft demonstrations, costumed men on horses and a night watchman blowing a conch shell and calling the hours. Traditional refreshments are served in the various buildings. All participants are in early Moravian dress. Lighting is by candles, lanterns and torches.

The event will take place on December 17 regardless of the weather.

NCSA Presents The "Nutcracker"

"The Nutcracker" will be presented by the School of Dance of the North Carolina School of the Arts and the Winston-Salem Symphony December 12 through 15 in Reynolds Auditorium. The production will be supervised and directed by Robert Lindgren, Dean of the School of Dance at North Carolina School of the Arts, and John Iuele will conduct the Winston-Salem Symphony Orchestra. This fairy tale ballet in two acts and three scenes with music by Tchaikovsky and choreography (after Ivanov) by Sonja Tyven and Robert Lindgren has become a favorite pre-holiday treat for local audiences.

Tickets for the five performances, the only ones to be given in the Triad, will be sold from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. beginning November 21, at the Symphony Office, 610 Coliseum Drive. Mail orders will be processed beginning November 18. The performance times are: Thursday, December 12, 7:30 p.m.; Friday, December 13, 8:00 p.m.; Saturday, December 14, 2:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m.; Sunday, December 15, 2:00 p.m.

Members of the Dance School faculty will assist Dean Lindgren. The production staff will again be comprised of members of the School of Design and Production at North Carolina School of the Arts, John Sneden, Dean. A. Christina Giannini, costume and scenery designer for "The Nutcracker" has created a new setting for the Act II Kingdom of Sweets.

