

# Willis Thomas Says Nursing Has Changed From Being "A Maid Service"

By Karen Parker  
Post Staff Writer

"Nursing has changed from being a maid service. Now, it's technical and professional," stated 25 year old Willis Thomas.

The senior nursing student at Presbyterian School of Nursing said the old definition of a nurse is one who changed bedpans and served as a comforter for patients. Neither of those qualities have been stripped from a nurse's responsibilities, however, Thomas assured a great deal has been added.

"A nurse now is expected to know technical details like recognizing the condition of a patient without the presence of a doctor," Thomas stated. "Nurses are expected to give accurate reports to doctors, many times over the telephone, when they're away from the hospital," he added.

Being a nurse isn't something Thomas has always dreamed of doing. In fact, nursing is a profession men only recently began to explore. Even as a maternity nurse, Willis stated he has been well accepted. He believes most male nurses receive few problems in terms of acceptance.

Thomas is a 1981 graduate of Johnson C. Smith University where he received a degree in biology. The chemistry minor commented he knew by high school graduation he wanted to enter the health field. "The problem," he recalled, "was deciding on a specific career."

His mother, an educator, had mentioned the opportunities in nursing, but Thomas still remained uncertain. After college graduation he remained in Charlotte and worked as a lab technician. I enjoyed the work, but it became monotonous," admitted Thomas.

All along, he had been talking with some male friends who were nurses, and most importantly, excited about their careers.

"I started looking into the programs at different colleges in the area," Thomas stated. What he discovered was a number of excellent nursing programs available in Charlotte. The final decision was Presbyterian School of Nursing which is within Presbyterian Hospital.

"I selected Presbyterian for the in-depth clinical experience which I can gain," said Thomas. Not long after entering nursing school, Thomas received a part-time job as a nursing assistant at Hawthorne Nursing Center. Working at the 150-bed center has assured him he has found a fulfilling career.

"I've learned so much about the human body and the functioning of its organs," Thomas beamed. His senior year at the school is divided into five sessions. They include maternity, pediatrics, critical care, psychiatric management and advanced nursing. It's the final session when Thomas will choose a specialty in the nursing program and give it full concentration.

"I'm almost certain I'll select critical care," he projected. "I've always been fascinated by medical procedure in the operating room," he added. Thomas explained his extreme curiosity in that area is the reason he volunteers to be the scrub nurse, whenever he can.

"The scrub nurse prepares the patient for operation, handles the instruments and is right there to assist the doctor," expressed the honor student who undoubtedly likes being where the action is.

When Thomas graduates, he plans to remain at Presbyterian Hospital as an anesthetist. "That's another good thing about the Presbyterian School of Nursing," Thomas was reminded. "A student loan can be paid off in more than one way. If the student remains at Presbyterian \$900 is deducted from the account for each year of service. Even if the student doesn't remain at Presbyterian, the charge



Willis Thomas (above) takes expectant mother's temperature. The senior nursing student received the Lydia Ghent Scholarship.

is only \$75 monthly. A loan can be obtained at two percent interest."

Paying for an education proved even easier for Thomas this year when to his surprise he received the Lydia Ghent Scholarship. It's given by the Hawthorne Nursing Center to a student who demonstrates excellence in the work of nursing.

According to Deana Nail of Presbyterian Hospital, Lydia Ghent was the sister of Mrs. Jane Moore, nursing director at Hawthorne Nursing Center. "Mrs. Moore was so impressed with Willis' work that she and her sisters established the scholarship specifically for him," Ms. Nail presented.

A chemistry tutor and member of SECAS (nursing honor society), Thomas informed he'll never regret becoming a nurse. "There are times when it seems more than 90 percent of my time is devoted toward becoming a nurse. Long classes, eight-hour work shifts, and exams sometimes make me wonder

if I'm going to make it."

"Then," he continued, "I'll do well and be assured that I'm doing the right thing." So it gets rough and tough for Thomas, but he's pleased that there are weekends when he can enjoy the hobby at the top of his list, swimming. When he's not doing that he gets a kick out of meeting and talking to people.

"Other students tease me and say I'm especially good at getting along with elderly women," Thomas laughed. "I guess that's because I see all of them as my grandmothers. 'You know,' he added, 'you can learn a lot by listening to older people. They're interesting and fun.'"

Even if nursing did remain mostly changing bedpans and comforting patients, Thomas could still make the job a challenge. That's because he has one genuine qualification that can't be taught in any school. That is caring from the heart.

## Ali's Wife Reveals Plans

By Tony Brown  
Special To The Post

As the wife of Muhammad Ali, Veronica Ali lives in an opulent world of wealth and notoriety. Although the public knows her through her husband's accomplishments, Mrs. Ali is a strong and independent woman in her own right. Yet, she remains a mystery to the public. What drives her? How does she maintain an identity apart from her husband's fame? In a probing and insightful interview on "Tony Brown's Journal," "Veronica Ali: The Woman Few People Know," she talks about her marriage, career plans, the undergirding philosophy that motivates her and the rumors surrounding her husband's failing health and financial condition.

"Tony Brown's Journal," the nation's longest-running, top-ranked Black-Affairs television series has been sponsored by Pepsi-Cola Company for nine consecutive years. Televised nationally on public

television stations (PBS), the program can be seen in this area on WTVI-42 at 5 p.m. on Sunday, September 23.

"I feel like I'm capable of anything that I aspire to do," the smart and beautiful Veronica Ali tells Tony Brown. She also talks frankly about her husband's reaction to her new career goals. "With him being a Muslim, I think he had to get used to the idea of his wife doing something other than just staying home and taking care of the kids because that was the thinking behind Islam for quite a while until Wallace D. Muhammad took over the leadership here in America," she says. "Now they do say that it's good for the woman to get out and do things on her own. But those old habits of thought are still there. So he really did have to get used to me doing something."

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