

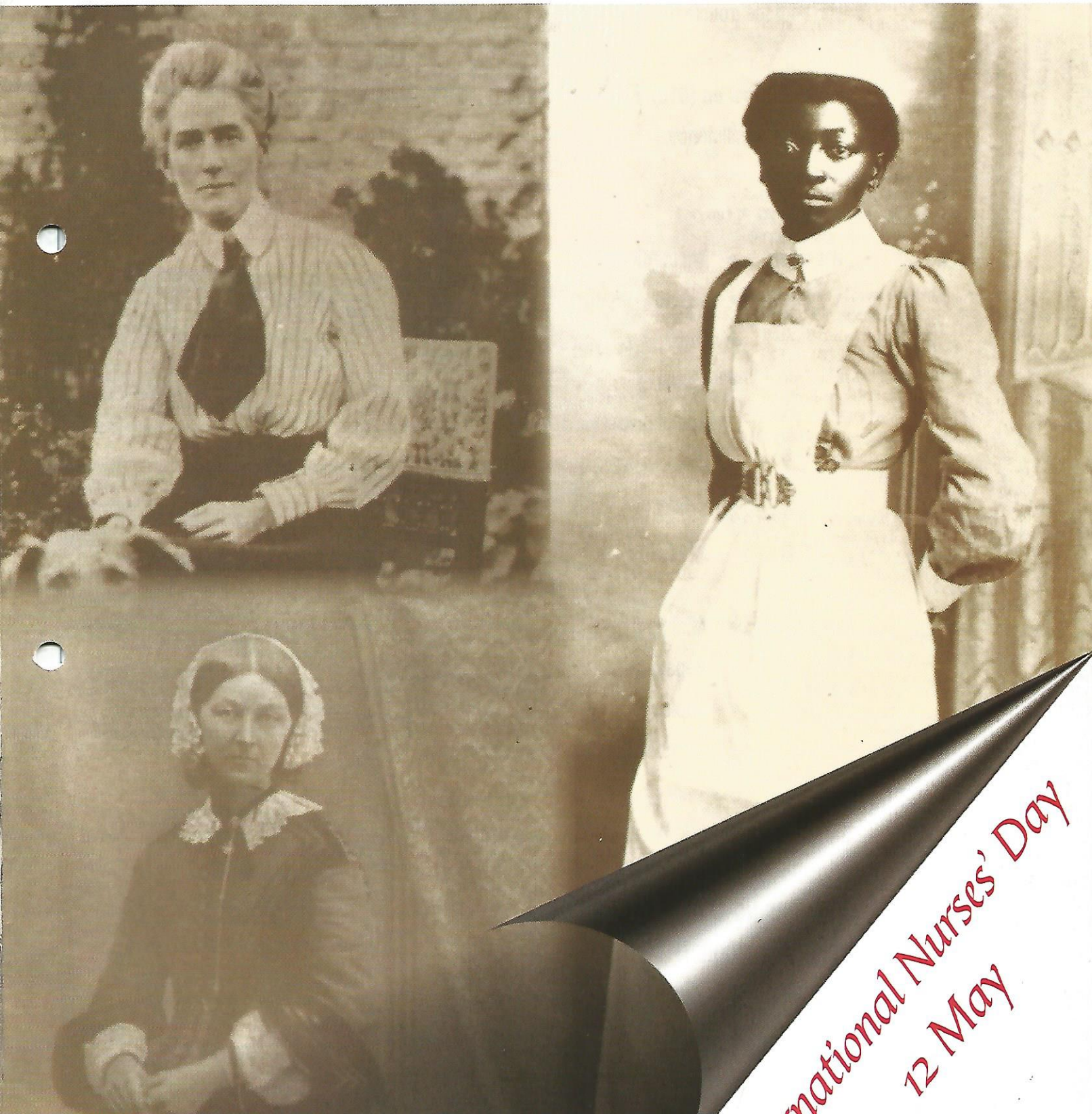


DENOSA Nursing Update

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*International Nurses' Day
12 May*

From the Editor's Pen ...



International Nurses' Day

On 12 May 1999 nurses all over the world will be celebrating *International Nurses' Day*. It is customary for nurses to arrange special events for this very special day of the international nursing calendar. The theme for this year's celebration is: *Celebrating Nursing's Past ... Claiming the Future*.

Nurses play a pivotal role in society

South African nurses are called upon to, once again, make use of this day to arrange special events in celebration of the achievements of nurses throughout the centuries. It is also a day when communities should be made aware of the important role played by nurses in providing health care as well as the important role played by nurses as citizens of South Africa. Nurses are found at all echelons of society: from ordinary citizens, local authority government, provincial government, national government, business and other walks of life where they continue to make valuable contributions. In her speech at the launch of DENOSA, Dr NC Dlamini Zuma, Minister of Health, said: "Nursing and nurses, being the backbone of the health services, must receive support, respect and protection from society and communities. Nurses, in turn, must be accountable to their communities ..."

Three nurses of distinction

In honour of nurses worldwide, three nurses of distinction were selected for special honour in this edition of *Nursing Update*. They are: Ms Florence Nightingale, Ms Edith Cavell, and Ms Cecilia Makiwane.

Florence Nightingale

Florence Nightingale was born on 12 May 1820 in Florence, where her well-to-do parents were living temporarily. She was educated mostly by her father, who taught her Greek, Latin, French, German, Italian, history, philosophy and mathematics. Throughout her life she read widely in many languages.

By prevailing custom she should have had only one aim in life: to find herself a rich husband. However, she told her family that she wanted to be a nurse! "It was as if", she said in later years, "I had wanted to be a kitchen maid." In fact, it was worse, since at the time nurses were regarded as nothing less than coarse, ignorant, dirty and even brutal women.

Florence persisted and became one of the most influential and well known nurses of the world. Modern nursing services across the world stand as a memorial to Florence Nightingale.

This remarkable lady died on 13 August 1910, and by her own wish was not given a national burial in Westminster. Her coffin was borne to the family grave in the country churchyard of East Wellow, Hampshire, by six sergeants of the British Army.

Edith Cavell

Ms Edith Cavell (1865-1915) was an English nurse who founded a School of Nursing in Brussels, Belgium, in 1909. She remained at the school when World War I started even though Belgium was occupied by the Germans. During the War, she helped to organise an underground escape route for Allied Soldiers (mainly English and French). She also assisted Belgian males to escape to nearby Holland who were old enough to be conscripted into the army by the Germans. During all this time Ms Cavell and her nurses faithfully cared for all the sick and injured persons including Germans. She was arrested by the Germans for her part in assisting prisoners

1915 at 07:00. The charge against her was harbouring British and French soldiers and assisting them with escape from Belgium. She did not deny any of these charges and faced her death with tremendous courage. She was detained for a period of approximately 10 weeks in solitary confinement prior to her execution.

It is reported that the following were her last words: "I have no fear or shrinking; I have seen death so often that it is not strange or fearful to me. I thank God for this ten weeks' quiet before the end. Life has always been hurried and full of difficulty. This time of rest has been a great mercy. They have all been very kind to me here. But this I would say, standing as I do in view of God and eternity: I realise that patriotism is not enough - I must have no hatred or bitterness towards anyone."

Ms Cavell's body was later exhumed and transported back to England where she was laid to rest in Westminster Abbey.

Ms Cecilia Makiwane

Cecilia Makiwane was born in 1880 at MacFarlane Mission in the district of Victoria East, near Alice, in what is known today as the Eastern Cape Province. Her father, originally a teacher, later became a minister of the Free Church at MacFarlane. Her mother was an assistant teacher at the Girls' School at Lovedale.

Cecilia was the second of three children. She was originally taught by her father prior to attending formal schooling. Ms Makiwane graduated as a teacher at Lovedale Girls' School before taking up nursing.

In 1903 she was admitted, together with Ms Mina Golani, as the first ever black women to be trained as nurses. On 19 December 1907 Cecilia sat for the final examination for General Nurses of the Colonial Medical Council and on 7 January 1908 she was admitted to the register as the first Black woman in Africa to qualify as a professional nurse.

After many years of nursing at Lovedale Victoria Hospital, she got ill. She never recovered and died in the then Transvaal at the home of relatives.

A statue of Cecilia Makiwane, sculptured and donated by Dr Jack Penn, was erected at the Lovedale Victoria Hospital on 7 May 1977. At the unveiling, Professor Charlotte Searle said the following of Ms Makiwane: "I speak to you of this daughter of the Xhosa speaking peoples - of this daughter of a Church of Scotland Minister and his humble Godfearing family - who were all devoted to the welfare of their own nation. I speak to you of this pioneer daughter of Africa. I speak of a woman who had the courage and vision to try and achieve great things and yet to remain humble with it all."

Ms Cecilia Makiwane never got married.

We pay homage to this *Great Daughter of South Africa!*