
Amy Fisher Nurse of the Month

Nurse-of-the-Month

AMY LOUISE FISHER

North Carolina

Miss Fisher was born in Mt. Pleasant, North Carolina. She received an A.B. degree from Carthage College, Carthage, Illinois, and her nursing education at the School of Nursing and Health, University of Cincinnati, General Hospital, Cincinnati, Ohio. She took postgraduate work in public health nursing at the School of Social Work and Public Health, Richmond, Virginia. She did public health nursing as the school and community nurse at Konnarock Training School, Konnarock, Virginia, for one and one-half years, and as the county nurse in Letcher County, Kentucky, for five months. Next she went to Boone, North Carolina, as parish nurse in Watauga Lutheran Mission, remaining here from September 1930 until June 1935 when she became a member of the tri-county District Health Department at the Watauga County Nurse.

Characters: Nurse, Summer Visitor

Time: Monday morning.

Place: District Health Office, Boone, North Carolina.

NURSE: Good Morning! What can we do for you this morning?

SUMMER VISITOR: I am interested to hear about your work in the mountains here. Have you time to tell me about it?

NURSE: Yes indeed. The health office is open this morning to give immunizations for typhoid fever and diphtheria. I can talk to you until people start to come in.

SUMMER VISITOR: Are you vaccinating many people for typhoid fever?

NURSE: Not nearly so many as last year, although we have had clinics at different places over the county and quite a few people come to the office. Last year was the first year the health department has been in existence here and we tried to cover practically the whole county. Over five thousand people took the typhoid fever vaccine and one thousand six hundred and twenty-five babies and children were given diphtheria toxoid. The need is much too large for the individual physicians to cope with in this county, and that is why the health department does immunizations on such a large scale.

SUMMER VISITOR: These Mountains are lovely in the summer time, but how do you ever get around in the winter when it gets cold?

NURSE: Oh, we manage except, of course, when all traffic is stopped on account of a blizzard. There are about fifty schools in the county, and we plan our schedule so that we may get to the most inaccessible ones before bad weather sets in. But even then we sometimes have to walk part of the way. We don't try to go to Lower Elk after a hard rain because you ford the creek twenty-two times and some of the fords are pretty deep.

SUMMER VISITOR: What do you do when you visit these schools?

NURSE: We weigh and measure the children and do vision tests; then the health officer gives each child a physical examination. He also gives Schick tests to the children in the first and second grades and to any of the old children whose parents want them to have the tests. We send word by the children to their mothers that they may bring any children or babies over six months of age to be given toxoid when we make our second visit to the school to read Schnick tests.

SUMMER VISITOR: Do many of them come?

NURSE: In some places quite a few come, but in other places most of the babies have already received toxoid from their family physician or at child health clinics or at the health office.

SUMMER VISITOR: How do you find the health of the school children?

NURSE: A great many children in the schools here have physical handicaps, especially defective teeth and diseased tonsils. There are many with poor vision too.

SUMMER VISITOR: What do you do about them?

NURSE: We send a slip home with each child, telling what the doctor found and advising the parent to see the family physician for advice about the correction. Most of the parents don't have the money to get the proper attention, and that's what makes it so hard. We help the local doctors' work up tonsil clinics where they perform the operations for half price, and, of course, do some free ones. This summer we had clinics at Boone, Blowing Rock, and Valle Crucis, with one hundred and fifty-eight patients in all. The doctors conduct their own clinics, but we help find the children, and then help with the actual clinics too.

SUMMER VISITOR: That surely helps, doesn't it? But how do the children get their teeth taken care of?

NURSE: We try to get those who can afford it to go to their own dentist twice a year. There are two dentist in Boone. Many cannot afford it or are too isolated from the town to get to the dentists there. This summer we have two dentists from the dental department of the State Board of Health doing work for the school children up to thirteen years of age. We have tried to plan their program to reach about half of the schools this summer and we hope to get to the other half next summer. That's far more care than most of them ever get.

SUMMER VISITOR: This all sounds interesting. Do you like your work?

NURSE: Oh, yes, I love it. There is so much worth-while work to be done. And every day brings new activities and new problems. On the days when the health officer is in Watauga County we try to plan for school examinations and clinics. During the two days he is in Avery County, I do home visiting, look up crippled children, visit antepartum patients, mothers, and new babies, or check up on midwives.

SUMMER VISITOR: What are midwives?

NURSE: They are women who "catch the babies," as they describe it. You see we don't have nearly enough doctors to take care of all the confinements, and lots of times the patients just can't get a doctor. All over these mountains there are "granny women" who serve in place of the doctor. Since there is a health department in this county we have taken over the work the State Board of Health has been trying to do. A State nurse used to come once a year and hold a class for midwives. Now in order to get a midwife permit, the woman has to attend three classes, bring her midwife bag for inspection, and have a Wasserman test, a tuberculin test, and a physical examination.

SUMMER VISITOR: What do you do at a midwife class?

NURSE: At these midwife classes we explain the use and care of the articles in the bag which each midwife is required to use. We teach them the things they must do to give proper care to the mother and the baby, and how to be clean about doing them. One of the biggest problems is to get them to understand why they are no longer allowed to carry on the old practices which are now against the law; in short, to get them to know what they are not allowed to do. We show them how to "scrub" their hands, and really have each one of them "scrub" too.