

## NURSING

So, what to do with Bee-Ann again. It was decided that nursing was my only hope, if I could get in. People always laugh when they ask what made me decide to go in for nursing, and I say it was a job! I can not remember being much involved in any of the decision making with regard to my future, but I suppose I was. I have always been inclined to live from day to day somewhat, and drift; never having goals or aspirations that I can remember. The telling point here with this nursing thing, of course, was, **if** I could get in, and this turned out to be even more complicated than we all imagined. When you are training as a nurse, you are working for the state. If you work for the state you have to have - "Papers"! My papers as you will remember, were not my strong point, the other thing you had to have was - Education! Another of my weak points. No matter, there was always Doc and his gift of the gab.

No amount of gabbling though, however gifted, would make up for not having the right - "Papers". This must have caused my folks some anxious moments, because I was now 18, and did not know that I was not Doc's daughter, and I suppose due to the war they had never got round to him sorting out adoption papers. The legalities of adopting a small child are very different from those of adopting an 18-year-old. This had to be done if I was to use the name Ridgway, otherwise goodness only knows what name I would have had, probably Bishop, not a bad name as names go.

It came as a bit of a shock learning the peculiarities of my birth at the age of 18. Not an age at which one is likely to take that sort of thing kindly and I certainly did not. I remember a poor unfortunate lady, I suppose a social worker, coming and insisting on speaking to me alone. It was a rough ride I gave her, as though it was her fault. Anyway that lot got through OK. Much more difficult was the actual act of getting me registered into the Prince of Wales Hospital as a student nurse. My abysmal lack of education being now a very serious matter. Well, I can only tell you that the amazing Doc bamboozled me in. How I will never know and if it were not me, I don't think I would even believe this awesome fact. I became registered as a student nurse and battled through it all, learning to learn, largely as I went, I think. I never passed any of my hospital exams all the time I was there, but miraculously I did pass both state exams. I can only suppose that the state saw itself as being mighty short of nurses.

Oddly though, I seem to have remembered most of what I learned, and I think got a good nursing training there. Although I describe myself as not being God's gift to the nursing profession I have never been found lacking exactly. I do not even remember the name of the matron of the time, who had been at the hospital all through the dreadful bombing in Plymouth. The children's ward 'Albertha' was damaged or hit and it was at that time that this lady got an award for bravery. I was, however, always at odds with her, and she must have wondered what had hit her. Not only was I impossible at the exams, but also what they called 'not amenable to discipline'. After a few uncomfortable sessions in her office it dawned on me that if a person worked very hard and scrubbed things very, very clean and was never found to be idle, life generally became more tranquil, so scrub I did. Those were back in the days when the nurses did all the work from sweeping floors and polishing pianos to the inevitable bedpan cleaning. Eventually the day came when I was not the junior nurse and then I learned a very important lesson. I learned that if you are good at it, you can charm your way out of things. The new junior on the ward was very pretty, and when sister asked her if she had scrubbed all the bedpans and she said 'yes', Sister who had obviously inspected them, said 'EVERY ONE nurse' and she smiled prettily and said 'well sister not EVERY one'. Can you believe, sister went off smiling, and she had got away with it. I could never do that, just not the type obviously. The sister tutors' name I do remember. She was called