

The Indianapolis Literary Club: 2023-2024: 148th Year

"Nautical Angels"

Stephen J. Jay. Tuesday, 8:00 P.M. Park Tudor School: January 22, 2024



"It has been said ... scores of times that every woman makes a good nurse. I believe, on the contrary, that the very elements of nursing are all but unknown."

Florence Nightingale, *Notes on Nursing: What it is and what it is not*. 1860.

"The hurt and wounded I pacify with a soothing hand."

Walt Whitman *The Wound Dresser*, 1865, In *Drum Taps*, 1865 October

"I desire you would Remember the Ladies and be more generous and favourable to them than your ancestors. Do not put such unlimited power into the hands of the Husbands...."

Abigail Adams to husband John Adams March 31 – April 5, 1776. *Mass. Historical Society, Harvard University Press, 1963.*

Portia. *"How far that little candle throws his beams! So shines a good deed in a naughty world."*

William Shakespeare, *Merchant of Venice*, Act 5, Scene 1. Lines 90-91.

"The beginning of wisdom is to call things by their proper names." "If names not be correct, language is not in accordance with the truth of things."

Confucius, Chap XIII. *The Analects*

"Disillusion can become itself an illusion, if we rest in it."

T.S. Eliot 1949, *The Cocktail Party*.

"The quality of mercy is not strained....it is twice blessed: "It blesseth him that gives and him that takes."

Shakespeare, in *The Merchant of Venice*. (A philanthropist acts out of love for humankind.)



Key Words: Public Health; Mass casualties; American Revolutionary and Civil Wars; Nursing Profession History; Indiana Ship Building; River Steamboats; Hospital ships; Vietnam War; Women's Rights; *USS Repose*.

yes I agree to allow the webmaster of the Literary Club to upload my essay to the Club's Internet website. I also agree that, after the Literary Club transfers a copy of my essay to the Indiana Historical Society, the Society may upload it to the Society's Internet website.

Stephen J. Jay M.D.

Introduction: From the title of my essay, *Nautical Angels*, you may be thinking ships and nurses, perhaps the “Lady of the Lamp,” Florence Nightingale, “Angel of Mercy” at the Scutari Crimean War Hospital, 1854.^{42,70} Henry Wadsworth Longfellow’s words, in *Santa Filomena*, captured the essence of our “Mother of Nursing.”^{50,78}

*“The wounded from the battle-plain
In dreary hospitals of pain,
 The cheerless corridors,`
 The cold and stony floors,
“Lo! In that house of misery,
A lady with a lamp I see,
 Pass through the glimmering gloom,
 And flit from room to room.”*

This essay is indeed about *Nautical Angels* and the confluence of the history of the nursing profession and of today’s hospital ships where nurses care for soldiers and civilian victims of disease and trauma.

Aims:

- Outline goals of managing war or natural disaster trauma - the underreported roles played by women from antiquity to the present.
- Highlight America’s Revolutionary and Civil War leaders who promoted gender equality empowering women and authorizing nurses to care for war victims.
- Review Indiana’s leading Civil War role in building river steamers to ferry casualties with nursing care from battles in the south to hospitals in the north.
- Consider the legacy of nursing pioneers who laid foundations for advanced nursing care in today’s land facilities and U.S. Navy hospital ships.

Mass Casualty Goals: Find, Triage, Transport, and Treat: Wars and natural disasters have plagued humankind for millennia.^{43,105} Traumatic injuries threaten life and challenge survivors to find, triage, transport and treat victims on battlefields or in earthquake rubble. These goals have ancient roots.^{90,93} Homer’s *Iliad* and *Odyssey* and the Egyptian *Edwin Smith Papyrus* reflect trauma care by ancient physicians that was often sophisticated and foretold modern care.^{10,12,45,72.}

After finding and triaging victims, soldiers, and family members, often women, transported the wounded from battlefields by donkey cart or litter. In ancient wars fought near bodies of water, hospital ships were used such as the Athenian Navy’s, *Therapia*, and the Roman ship, *Aesculapius*.^{57,74,76} The British hospital ship, *Goodwill*, 1608, was one of thirty such ships the British Navy operated in the 17th and 18th centuries.⁹⁸ The first such vessel in North America was the British warship, *Radeau Thunderer*, that transported wounded soldiers on Lake Champlain from Saratoga Battlefields where, in the “Turning Point of the Revolutionary War,” Americans defeated British General John Bergoyne.²⁵

The British also held prisoners on ships anchored in Wallabout Bay, New York Harbor where thousands of men died of starvation, violence, and smallpox and benevolent women from nearby cities allowed aboard these war ships provided rudimentary nursing care.^{2,6,27,80} The plight of these victims reflected on the Tomb of the Unknown Revolutionary War Soldier in Philadelphia: *“Freedom is a light for which many men have died in darkness.”*

The first U.S. Navy hospital ship was the Turkish ketch, *Mastico*, built for Napoleon’s Egyptian expedition, captured, in 1803, by Lt. Stephen Decatur of the USS *Enterprise* and later renamed, *Intrepid*, by Commodore Edward Preble who designated *Intrepid* as a ship with ‘hospital duties’ in the Tripoli piracy era.^{52,63,65,76,92} There were also advances in evacuation of soldiers on land - the best-known by Napoleon’s Surgeon, Baron Dominique Jean Larrey, (1766-1842) who created the light, horse drawn “flying ambulances” where victims were quickly removed to safety with improved survival.^{82,Larrey1814}

The fourth goal of trauma care, treatment, was carried out in Homer’s epic poems primarily by men.⁹⁶ Today’s historians note that women also provided care, their roles until recently neglected in historical accounts. From the time of first written history, the nuclear family was the core of society - the mother the principal caregiver, given her role of bearing, feeding, and nurturing children.⁹⁸ In ancient Old Kingdom Egypt, hieroglyphs show women as care givers in positive light – the wet nurses breastfeeding infants. The ancient historian, Thucydides (4th c BCE), noted that in the Peloponnesian War, women provided care for civilians and soldiers during the plague of Athens. And both Socrates and Plato would have been amused by the gender conflicts over care of soldiers; they noted that people’s intellect was independent of gender.

But history is unclear as to the extent to which women were engaged in caring for soldiers suffering battlefield trauma. It is known that wounded soldiers’ family members, including slaves intervened to remove arrows, stanch bleeding, bandage wounds, and stabilize fractures. In the Homeric Trojan War (1210-1180 BCE) the battlefield female nurse, Hecamede, treated bleeding wounds and administered oral fluid remedies.^{9,14} Ancient military commanders also dealt with the practical and ethical problems of leaving wounded warriors behind as armies advanced.³⁸ In the ‘hollow square formation,’ the wounded were put inside the square, helped along by family members including women, while the sides of the square with able-bodied soldiers, primarily men, continued to fight.

In the beginnings of Islam and Christianity, female nurses were care givers for men and women.¹ Women’s stature in caregiving was reflected in the Greek cult of, *Hygeia*, the first nurse and the personification of health and sanitation in the 6th century BCE. Prophet Muhammad’s companion in the 7th c CE was the first Muslim nurse and surgeon, Rufaida Al-Aslamiyah, from Medina, Saudi Arabia, and perhaps the first professional nurse in history, 1,200 years before Florence Nightingale.⁵⁵ Phoebe from the 1st century CE was sent to Rome by St. Paul as a deaconess to represent the Christian Church and likely served as a nurse or healer. Today’s scholars suggest that Hippocrates (460 BCE) is the “shared forefather” for health professionals, including

physicians and female nurses, but while he described the nursing profession, he did not use the term “nurses”— instead, ‘doctors assistants.’ While women played an important historical role in caregiving, men dominated the medical profession as reflected in the dates of founding the first medical and nursing schools in the world – the first medical school established at the University of Montpellier, in 1220 CE, - its 800th anniversary celebrated in 2020. But it was not until 1860, that the first nursing school was established by Florence Nightingale at St. Thomas Hospital, King’s College, London. ^{45,71,98}

American Revolutionary War: Wars have had traumatic societal impacts over millennia, but despite the carnage of the American Revolutionary and Civil Wars, both had benefits in reshaping women’s’ roles in society, especially in the field of nursing. Presidents Washington and Lincoln authorized female nurses to provide safe and humane care on battlefields and in hospitals. As the stature of nurses advanced so did the vision for advancing the stature of women in society. As an aside, the first use in English of the word, *nurse*, was in the early thirteenth century derived from the Latin *nutrice* or “wet nurse.” The early use of the word *nurse* in a medical sense, however, is attributed to Shakespeare, in the *Comedy of Errors*, 1616 (V.i.102-105): when Adriana says: “I will attend my husband, be his nurse, Diet his sickness, for it is my office and will have no attorney but myself; And therefore let me have him home with me.”

Dickinson2012

The major struggle for women’s rights began in the American Revolution as women supported the ideals of the Revolution even though they were denied the same political rights as men.³ Women’s suffrage, liberty, and equality shaped their struggles.⁴⁸ Abigail Adams, a leader in these efforts, sent a personal letter to her husband, John Adams, while he was debating independence, in March 1776; she urged him to not “put unlimited power into the hands of the husbands.”⁵⁴

Historians cite important yet underreported roles played by women in the American Revolution, in contrast to voluminous reports of men’s roles. Women’s contributions were summarized in three words: ‘washing, cooking, and nursing.’⁷⁹ General Washington began to change this narrative after he was advised by General Gates that the troops “suffered for want of good female Nurses”; Washington asked Congress for “a matron to supervise the nurses” and for nurses “to attend the sick and obey the matron's orders.” During the Valley Forge occupation of 1777-78, amid a raging smallpox epidemic, Washington created, with support of nurses, temporary headquarters in Yellow Springs, just days after the Battle of the Brandywine. The Continental Congress authorized Washington to build the first military hospital there in Chester County, Pennsylvania.^{34,59,60} Disease was rampant, and Abigail Hartman Rice, (1742-1789) a nurse at Yellow Springs Hospital, the mother of 21 children, died there of Typhoid Fever - a pioneer in military nursing, she was the “Florence Nightingale of the American Revolutionary War.”^{35,79,97} Her first gravestone read; “Some have children, some have none, here lies the mother of twenty-one.” She was an ordinary yet extraordinary woman, an immigrant, whose efforts helped women establish a political voice during the American Revolution. ^{McGready16}

Alongside the male physicians, the care of sick and wounded Continental soldiers relied on the tireless work of female army nurses, camp followers, housewives, cooks, and laundresses.⁷⁹ So-called “flying” or “mobile” hospitals” were staffed by women near battlefields.^{22,82} But, progress in nurse staffing was delayed because they were paid little since their labor was considered menial. Men and upper-class women wrote the history of this period in America, and their letters and diaries often reflected prejudice against female nurses - such work considered undignified and threatening to traditional men’s’ roles. But George Washington’s view was pragmatic and visionary; he authorized and received permission to pay women; his goal - to keep men on the battlefield while women kept the camps running.

The rudimentary medical and nursing care during the Revolutionary War had little impact on the outcomes of disease and trauma suffered by soldiers, 25,000 of whom died in this war. But the early gains in nurse staffing and their humane practices laid foundations for the significant improvement in outcomes of disease and trauma eighty years later, in the American Civil War where 750,000 combatants died. But the rates of death from infectious diseases and surgical management of war wounds were greatly improved in the Civil War.^{Manring2009, Reilly16; Vergun20}

American Civil War: Following the lead of General Washington in the Revolutionary War, many Civil War leaders promoted women to assume active roles in serving military needs outside the home, as nurses in hospitals and ships, as members of community and government commissions, thus paving the way for women to become educated, join the workforce, and vote.^{40,47,Towne2009} Prior to the Civil War, the first women’s rights convention was held at Seneca Falls, New York, in 1848, a declaration of ‘Rights and Sentiments’.⁶¹ The gains in women’s rights under General Washington were amplified by President Lincoln and the social, economic, and political life for women, especially nurses, improved.

A second stimulus for women and the nursing profession came from the work of Florence Nightingale. A scholar, author, and close friend of Queen Victoria, Nightingale was the first woman admitted to the Royal Statistical Society; she published 200 books, and her *Notes on Nursing and Hospitals* remain classics, read by those with interest in nursing care, infection control, and quality improvement which she described after showing that her new sanitation standards decreased mortality among soldiers wounded in the Crimean War.⁷⁰ The "constant sickness" and mortality among these soldiers was caused primarily by infections, not war wounds. Nightingale’s famous pie chart clearly showed her results, marking the dawn of sanitation and infection control practices.^{29,62}

Two months after the Civil War began, (June 10, 1861) the Secretary of War appointed Dorothea Dix, (1802-1887) Superintendent of the U.S. Army Nurses; a prominent advocate for the indigent and mentally ill, Dix became the first woman to serve at high level in federal government.^{7,22} A controversial, though effective leader, she had traveled to the Crimea to learn from Nightingale’s experiences and the role of the British Sanitary Commission (1855) that addressed public outrage over inhumane care in Crimea’s War. Nightingale’s leadership with implementation of sanitation standards resulted in decrease in mortality rate from 41% when she arrived to 2% by

the end of the War.^{21,26,84} With the public gaining knowledge of her research in Crimea and with Queen Victoria's support, opposition to female nurses and their sanitary practices dissolved.⁷

Nightingale famously said, "The first requirement in a hospital is that it should do the sick no harm."^{16,51} She accomplished her goals against fierce male physician resistance speaking truth to power; her results in Crimea changed the course of medical and nursing care, as well as research, education, and rates of improvement in trauma care in war, including America's Civil War. Good nursing meant that patients were well fed, hydrated, clean, warm, and comfortable; sanitation was prioritized. Nightingale's findings were consistent with those of Ignaz Semmelweis, the Hungarian obstetrician, who had just documented, in 1847, that fatal puerperal or childbed fever, was decreased with hand disinfection.^{Tyagi20}

In America, Dorothea Dix embraced the work of Nightingale and the British Sanitary Commission's use of female nurses and hygienic measures. Dix secured the equivalent of \$400 million dollars in today's currency to support this effort, and the U.S. Sanitary Commission had major positive impacts on outcomes of diseased and wounded soldiers.^{28,103} Dix trained 3000 nurses during her five-year tenure, including Louisa May Alcott, (1832-1888), author of *Little Women* who served as a nurse in Washington, DC.¹⁰² Florence Nightingale and Dorothea Dix's leadership in the mid-19th century had profound positive impacts and hastened the founding of the first professional nursing school in America, at New England Hospital for Women and Children - Boston, MA, 1872.^{61,106}

Indiana and its soldiers and families benefitted greatly from Nightingale and Dorothea Dix's leadership. Hoosiers contributed in major ways to the ultimate Union victory.^{Wiki2023} Indiana was the first western state to mobilize after the Confederate attack on Fort Sumter. (April 12, 1861) More than 200,000 Hoosiers or 15% of Indiana's total population participated, the second highest proportion among states on the Union side. One out of ten Hoosiers (12%) died and 50,000 were wounded.⁴⁰ Indiana soldiers fought in 308 battles in all major theaters of action: including Antietam, Gettysburg, Vicksburg, and Shiloh. In January 1862 President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation allowed formation of the 28th Regiment of the US Colored Troops (USCT) that served as part of the 28th African American Regiment in Indiana. On July 30, 1864, nearly half the men in this regiment were either killed or wounded in the Battle of the Crater, Petersburg, Virginia.^{INGov2024} The Indiana 28th Regiment played a critical role in the U.S. Juneteenth national holiday; descendants still live in Indianapolis Norwood and Barrington neighborhoods in south Indianapolis.^{PBSWFY12023}

Indiana's Civil War leaders empowered Hoosier women to engage in the war effort, a critical and successful strategy to help Indiana cope with the enormous needs of the Union Army and to support Indiana's fledgling industrial capacity. Women's engagement included new and expanded roles as caregivers, educators, wage earners, and leaders. The impacts of such change on the course and conduct of the Union Army were profound, and Governor Morton and his wife, Lucinda Burbank Morton, (1825-1907) were leaders in these efforts, including the abolition movement.^{39,85,88, McKown2018} And women's responses were remarkable, one of the first times in

history that women were viewed not only as mothers and wives, but as strong and competent leaders. ^{Schultz1992, 85}

Known as an aggressive and independent war governor, Oliver Morton directed the founding of the Indiana Sanitary Commission to minimize the bureaucracy of the U.S. Sanitary Commission and lessen major anti-female nurse sentiment among male military physicians. Only six months after outbreak of the war, he sought help of the sisters of the Holy Cross in South Bend to care for soldiers from the north and south.⁵⁸ Other Hoosier nurses distinguished themselves. Mrs. Eliza “Mother” George, called the “Angel of Mercy” of Fort Wayne, worked with General William Tecumseh Sherman during the March to the Sea where she cared for wounded soldiers. She died on duty of typhoid fever and was buried with full military honors in Fort Wayne, in Lindenwood Cemetery - a statue honors her service.⁸⁵

Indiana’s Civil War: Boats and Nurses: Indiana also played a major role in the Civil War through their decades of shipbuilding from the early 19th century, after James Howard from Oldham, England, established the Howard Shipyards at Jeffersonville, in 1834. Three generations of the Howard family built more than 3000 ships.^{36,75,103} The first US Navy Hospital ship, the *Red Rover*, was built in Louisville, in 1857, a side - wheel Mississippi River passenger steamer used by the Confederate Navy but captured in 1862 by the US Navy, converted to a hospital ship and staffed by US Army Surgeon, Dr. George Bixby, and nurses of the Sisters of Holy Cross of Notre Dame.^{17,18,64,92} Unlike the Confederate Navy the Union Navy including the *Red Rover* treated all wounded men, black and white. ^{Wynn2020}

Ann Bradford, served on the *Red Rover* as an escaped slave, and when President Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation, she became a “free woman”, but stayed on the ship and volunteered with the sisters of the Holy Cross.^{81,86} The U.S. and Indiana Sanitary Commissions created a system of river transport in the Civil War to carry soldiers in floating hospitals to and from battlefields in the south to hospitals in the north. Indiana’s Superintendent of female nurses, Miss C. Annett Buckel, played an important role in creating this system of marine conveyance of soldiers by river steamboats built in southern Indiana shipyards. The system brought Union successes in providing humane care for the sick and traumatized soldiers returning from battlefields in the south, including the killing fields of Shiloh.⁸

Hoosier nurse Eleanor Ransom (b. 1815-) from Moore’s Hill, IN, was among the first to join the Civil War on the Union side. Affectionately called, “Mother Ransom,” by wounded soldiers, she was on the *North America*, a government hospital ship with sick and wounded soldiers when it left New Orleans for New York in calm waters but began leaking in a storm, Dec. 22, 1864.⁴⁹ The ship, *Mary E. Libby*, responded to the *North America*’s distress signal but the ships collided, and within hours the *North America* was sinking as crew members jumped ship and wounded soldiers prayed while the captain sent soldiers and nurses off on rescue boats. New York Times headlines Dec 30, 1864, read: “Appalling Disaster.; The U.S. Transport *North America* Foundered at Sea. 194 Lives Lost. Arrival of 65 Survivors in New York City. The Lost All Sick and Furloughed Soldiers.”⁶⁹ John Donne’s poem, ‘A Burnt Ship,’ (1590-1601) reflects the bitter irony of this Civil

War hospital ship when men had to choose death by burning or drowning as they longed for free will.⁸³

*Out of a fired ship, which by no way
But drowning could be rescued from the flame,
Some men leap'd forth, and ever as they came
Near the foes' ships, did by their shot decay;
So all were lost, which in the ship were found,
They in the sea being burnt, they in the burnt ship drowned,*

Eleanor Ransom narrowly escaped but suffered survivors' guilt and mental and physical stress. She dedicated her life to aiding friendless women in Richmond, Indiana. In 1866, the U.S. Congress awarded her a pension of \$12 monthly payment for her services aboard the *North America*. She donated her personal belongings to women and girls in need.

Another prominent woman from Indiana, Lovina M. Streight, served with husband Abel, commander of 51st Indiana Voluntary Infantry.^{108,McKown2018} Lovina and their 5 yr. old son went with the regiment, and she nursed wounded men, earning the title: "Mother of the 51st." Captured three times and exchanged for Confederate Prisoners of War, in her last capture, she hid a gun in her petticoat and escaped and found the 51st and her husband and child. At her death, in 1910, she received full military honors, a service attended by 5000 at Crown Hill Cemetery, including 64 survivors of the 51st Infantry. Lovina Streight's portrait hangs in IN Statehouse.

Yet another prominent woman from a family of Quaker abolitionists, a physician and women's advocate, Dr. Mary Frame Thomas of Richmond, Indiana (1816-1888) played an important role in the Civil War.^{99,McKown2018} She worked on the Indiana Sanitary Commission and carried medical supplies to the front lines by steamer, and she nursed soldiers wounded at the battle of Vicksburg; she was also a physician for the Home for Friendless Women in Richmond, and after war was President of the American Woman Suffrage Association.³⁹ In 1859, she was the first woman to address the Indiana State Legislature with a petition calling for a married women's property law and suffrage amendment to the state Constitution. She became President of the Indiana and American Woman Suffrage Association, and at death she had four white suffragettes and 2 African American Women pallbearers.⁴⁸ Her work laid foundations for the late 1800s suffrage movement in Indiana with leaders May Wright Sewall and others.^{Boomhower2015}

History shows that dedicated nurses also served in the Confederate Army with distinction. Captain Sally Louisa Tomkins, (1833-1916) a nurse from a wealthy Richmond Va. family became a Captain in the Confederate Calvary, commissioned by President Jefferson Davis, and allowed to run the only private hospital in the Confederacy.^{73,100} The carnage at the First Battle of Bull Run July 21, 1861, prompted Tomkins to open this hospital that she ran until the last patients were discharged in June 1865; She was known as the 'Angel of the Confederacy,' a humanitarian and

philanthropist who continued charity work until her family fortune ran out; she died in the Confederate Women's Home in Richmond Va. and was buried with full military honors.

Modern Hospital Ships: As noted earlier, since ancient times, marine conveyance has been used to carry casualties from battlefield to safe harbor. In all wars after the American Civil War, U.S. Navy Hospital ships supported military operations. The USS *Solace* (AH-2) (1898-99) was the first ship to meet requirements of the Geneva Convention to fly the Red Cross flag.^{30,91} The USS *Relief*, (AH-1) commissioned in 1920, was the first Naval vessel built from the keel up as a floating hospital.⁸⁷ In early years, nurse staffing was problematic; despite advances in women's rights in the Revolutionary and Civil wars, there remained gender inequities regarding military rank and pay, inequities that were not resolved until after WWII when the *Army-Navy Nurse Act* (1947) established the Navy Nurse Corps and authorized permanent commissioned officer status. After more than a century and a half of dedicated service, nurses gained permanent officer status; they have distinguished themselves at bedside of trauma victims and in leadership roles ever since.^{5,67,68} In 1972, Alene Duerk, Director of the Navy Nurse Corps and veteran of WWII, Korean and Vietnam Wars, became the first female admiral in the U.S. Navy. On November 2, 2023, US Navy Admiral Lisa Franchetti, was named the first woman to become Chief of Navy Operations and serve on the Joint Chiefs of Staff.⁴¹

In Summary, advancements in science and technology have transformed trauma care systems and public health.¹⁰⁷ Progress has been measured over centuries by steadily increasing quality of medical and nursing professionals and by decreasing morbidity and mortality rates for wounded soldiers.⁴⁴ In the 1700s, monks living in St. Bernard Pass, between Italy and Switzerland used St. Bernard dogs to find and triage stranded hikers, skiers, and even Napoleon's soldiers.^{11,23} Today sniffer dogs, robots and drones search and assess victims. Portable microwave-radar devices can sense a beating heart through 20 feet of concrete.⁴⁶ Soldiers wear digital motion and vital sign sensors for commanders to monitor battlefields. The goal: provide definitive treatment of trauma victims by professional medical and nursing staff in state-of-the-art facilities whether on land or on ships.

The legacies of nursing pioneers from antiquity to America's Revolutionary and Civil Wars laid foundations for modern trauma care in today's exemplary nursing services in land hospitals and aboard US Navy hospital ships, USS *Comfort* and USS *Mercy*.^{24,32,89} The expansion of professional nursing during the great wars was both a symptom of successes in women's rights over centuries and a catalyst for 19th and 20th century successes in gender equity.

In the 1960s, the most advanced land hospital units and hospital ships in history were introduced in the Vietnam War and included the hospital ships: USS *Repose* (AH-16) and the USS *Sanctuary* (AH-17). The *Repose*, whose nickname was, "*Angel of the Orient*," was the 750-bed ship that arrived in Vietnam January 1966; professional staff: 24 doctors; 30 nurses and 256 hospital corpsmen.^{13,31} From 1966-1970, they treated 62,000 patients, 9,000 casualties and 8,000 surgical operations were performed.^{53,56} With trauma care equal to that of advanced shore hospitals, the ships had new treatment capabilities, a frozen blood bank, heart lung machine,

sonar echoencephalograph and recompression chambers.⁶⁶ Stationed in the South China Sea off the coast of Vietnam, they provided care for soldiers evacuated from combat zones by helicopter, often within minutes of injury.³³ By 1969 *Repose* had received 10,000 helicopter landings with wounded soldiers and civilians, including children caught in the crossfire of war. Ironically, nurses who served in Vietnam were among the least recognized of American military veterans⁹⁵ More than 5,000 nurses, served there; and 300 nurses served aboard the *Repose* and *Sanctuary*. In 1984, after a 9-year advocacy campaign led by Vietnam combat nurse, Diane Evans, the Vietnam Women's Memorial Project was created and features a 15 ft bronze statue on the mall in Washington DC near the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

In Conclusion: Gender inequality has been a feature of humankind since antiquity. Ancient philosophers wrote of gender inequities³⁷, and today, significant gaps in equality still exist; the World Economic Forum says it will take 131 years to reach parity at today's rate of improvement. Iceland leads the world with 91% gap closed; next, Scandinavia then Europe and North America with 75% of the gap closed.¹⁰⁵ Gender inequities continue to adversely impact the nursing profession at a time when the National Academy of Medicine's *Future of Nursing Report*, indicates that America's four million nurses' challenge this decade is to address our public health systems' unjust and unsustainable health equity disparities^{Future of Nursing 2020-2030}

The good news, remarkable advances have been made in trauma care, but the goals of our ancient predecessors remain challenges today: the finding, triaging, transporting, and humane treatment of trauma victims. We've seen that women's roles, long hidden and overlooked, have been more widely recognized and that Indiana's building of marine boats, including hospital ships, and a new system of professional nursing contributed significantly to the success of the Union in the Civil War.^{Schultz1992,Seigel1990} The lasting legacies of these nursing pioneers for advancing foundations of state-of-the-art care are reflected in nursing services on today's 21st century hospital ships.^{15,88}

I'll end with a personal note regarding the *USS Repose*. My father was a physician in Indianapolis and longtime friend of Navy Captain Paul R. Engle, who became commanding medical officer of the *USS Repose*, in 1965. He and my father were physicians at Indianapolis Methodist Hospital and in WWII served in the Aleutian Islands campaign. Captain Engle invited my dad to the commissioning ceremonies of *USS Repose* at Hunter's Point Naval Shipyard, San Francisco; soon after, the *Repose* arrived on duty in the South China Sea, from February 16, 1966, to 1970.^{19,20,77,104} My then soon to be wife, a Lt. in the U.S. Navy Nurse Corps, served aboard the *USS Repose*, in Vietnam for a year with 29 other nurses, who, in the best traditions of "Nautical Angels", provided humane care for trauma victims, military and civilian alike aboard the 'Angel of the Orient'.

Nautical Angels Essay: January 22, 2024
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End Essay: *Nautical Angels*- Stephen J. Jay; Indianapolis Literary Club.

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