

Nelson, Kathryn Luella (Jensen)

(1891–1970)

NATHALIE JOHANSSON

Nathalie Johansson, B.A. (English and History), M.A. (English) (University of Southern Denmark), currently (2019) serves as the management assistant to the Treasury Department the Trans-European Division of the Seventh-day Adventists in St. Albans, England. Johansson plans to complete a Ph.D. in Adventist History in the near future.

Kathryn Luella Jensen Nelson served the church as a nurse, health educator, and assistant departmental secretary. She worked as a nurse in Minnesota, was the director of nursing services at the Washington Sanitarium, associate secretary the General Conference medical department, supervisor of clinical instruction at Boulder Sanitarium and Hospital, and dean of the School of Nursing at the College of Medical Evangelists (now Loma Linda University).

Early Life

Kathryn Jensen was born on April 17, 1891, in New London, Wisconsin. Her parents were Danish immigrants Andrew (Anders) and Mary (Karen Marie Larson) Jensen (1844-1920; 1852-1938).¹ Andrew was a farmer. The Jensen's joined the Seventh-day Adventist Church in 1891, the same year Kathryn was born. Jensen's old sisters, Laura Marie (1875-1950) and Anna Sophie (1877-1962) were born in Denmark. Sisters Harriet C. (1881-1958), Hannah Elizabeth (1882-unknown), Wilhelmina Margaret (1884-1947), and Olive Clara (1894-1986) were born in the United States, as well as one brother named Louis James (1889-1970).² Kathryn was the next to the youngest child.

Education

Kathryn Jensen graduated from Loma Linda Medical Evangelists School of Nursing in 1917.³ She received a Master of Arts degree from the Catholic University of America in 1936. Her thesis examined anatomy and physiology curriculum taught to first-year nursing students.⁴

Early Career

Jensen began her career as a director of nursing services at the Washington Sanitarium and Hospital's school of nursing in Takoma Park, Washington, DC, from 1918 to 1920.⁵ In 1921 she became a school nurse at the Hutchinson Theological Seminary (which merged with Maplewood Academy in 1928) in Minnesota. She worked here until 1922 and specialized in teaching hydrotherapy.⁶

Working for the General Conference

Between 1923 and 1940 Kathryn Jensen worked for the General Conference Medical Missionary Department. She was assistant secretary for the nurse's division from 1923 to 1932. In 1932 she was promoted to associate secretary for the nurse's division, and she remained in this position until she left the General Conference in 1940.⁷

During her time at the General Conference, Jensen visited colleges and sanitariums that provided nursing classes in order to speak to the students and to teach during the summer sessions. In 1938 she was approved by the General Conference to visit colleges and sanitariums in North America that provided pre-nursing classes. She was asked to teach the summer session for graduate nurses at Pacific Union College and Washington Missionary College in 1938.⁸ Another request for teaching came from Washington Missionary College in 1939.⁹ Jensen also responded to requests from nursing schools, offering advice and assistance such as the request that came from Boulder Sanitarium in Colorado in 1934.¹⁰

While assistant and associate secretary, Jensen wrote numerous periodical articles and least two books: *The Mother and the Child: A Dozen Health Visits* in 1927¹¹ and *Fundamentals in Massage for Students of Nursing* in 1938.¹² The latter book went through a second edition in 1941 with the slightly revised title of *Massage in Nursing Care*.¹³

Throughout the 1930s, Jensen was a representative of the Medical Department on several ad hoc committees addressing Adventist noncombatant service in the military. This work culminated in her appointment to the Medical Cadet Corps Council in 1939, the only woman to serve on the council.¹⁴

Apart from her work in the nurse's division, she was also engaged in establishing and writing articles in *The Keynote*, a monthly newsletter for women employed in the General Conference office building. Jensen was the first president of the newsletter and contributed to it from its creation until 1937.¹⁵

Kathryn Jensen was appreciated at the General Conference office for her hard work, enthusiasm and her great inspiration in the field of nursing.¹⁶ "Kathryn L. Jensen, R. N., holds an important position as a leader in nursing activities. She has done much actual teaching work, and is the author of much material of authority in the field of home hygiene, care of the sick, school health, etc."¹⁷

Marriage and Work in Colorado

On October 16, 1940, Kathryn Jensen married Nels Rudolph Nelson (1886-1962),¹⁸ an Adventist minister in Minneapolis, Minnesota.¹⁹ He was a widower with five young adult and teen children: Ruth Charlene (1912-1995), Guy Oliver (1913-2008), Floy Elmer (1915-1999), Eunice Olive (1917-2007), and Arlene Evangeline (1927-1999).

After the wedding, Kathryn Nelson moved to Minneapolis, Minnesota, to join her husband where he was engaged in pastoral work at churches in St. Paul and Minneapolis.²⁰ She spent the next few years as a housewife.²¹ During World War II she recruited nurses for the United States Public Health Service and taught nurses' aid and home nursing classes for the American Red Cross. In 1946, Nels Nelson became a chaplain at the Boulder Sanitarium and Hospital at Boulder, Colorado.²² Kathryn Nelson agreed to be the supervisor of clinical instruction at the same institution.²³ She continued to work as a supervisor of clinical instructions at the Boulder Sanatorium and Hospital at Boulder in Colorado until 1949.²⁴

While in Colorado, Nelson helped to develop the collegiate nursing program in which three institutions—Boulder Sanitarium, Porter Sanitarium, and Union College—combined efforts to educate nurses. The program, which was sponsored by Nelson, was officially recognized by the Collegiate Board of Review of the National Nurses' Accrediting Service.²⁵ During this time she co-authored *Historical Sketches of the Medical Work of the Seventh-Day Adventists from 1866 to 1896* with Harold M. Walton²⁶ and also contributed to the fourth edition of *Physical Therapy in Nursing Care*.²⁷

College of Medical Evangelists

Kathryn Nelson became dean of the School of Nursing at the College of Medical Evangelists in California in 1949.²⁸ Her husband continued his work as hospital chaplain in Loma Linda. Nelson was the first dean of the Loma Linda School of Nursing.²⁹ During her time at Loma Linda, she welcomed the first group of students to the collegiate basic nursing program at the College of Medical Evangelists. The College of Medical Evangelists had replaced the two independent schools of nursing. Nelson wrote the following in *The Journal of True Education* in October 1953 "One class of twenty-five students admitted in 1949 has completed the program as outlined. Forty-nine more students are completing the program in 1953. We are at present giving the program leading to the Baccalaureate degree in thirty-five and one-half months".³⁰ During her time as dean, a curriculum was developed for registered nurse graduates and the school became fully accredited by the National Committee for the Improvement of Nursing Services.³¹

Retirement and Death

After her retirement in July 1956 Nelson was named the dean emeritus of the School of Nursing by Loma Linda University.³² She continued to teach in the graduate nursing program at Loma Linda University and served as a consultant to several schools of nursing. She also continued writing, publishing articles and a book, a biography

of Kate Lindsay.³³

Kathryn Nelson's husband Nels Nelson died on January 11, 1962, at the age of 77 in Loma Linda, California.³⁴ A few years later Kathryn Nelson died at the age of 79 on December 23, 1970, in Denver, Colorado. She was buried alongside her husband and sister, Anna Jensen, at Montecito Memorial Park in Colson, California.³⁵

Legacy

Kathryn Jensen Nelson was a nurse, health educator, and administrator who mentored a new generation of nurses and inspired them with her dedication, work ethic, and strong faith in God. During her time at the General Conference and at the College of Medical Evangelists, she became well known for her great work ethic and kind personality.

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