

# Eurick, Yvonne

## (1936–1984)

HEATHER JUNE BELL, AND SVEN HAGEN  
JENSEN

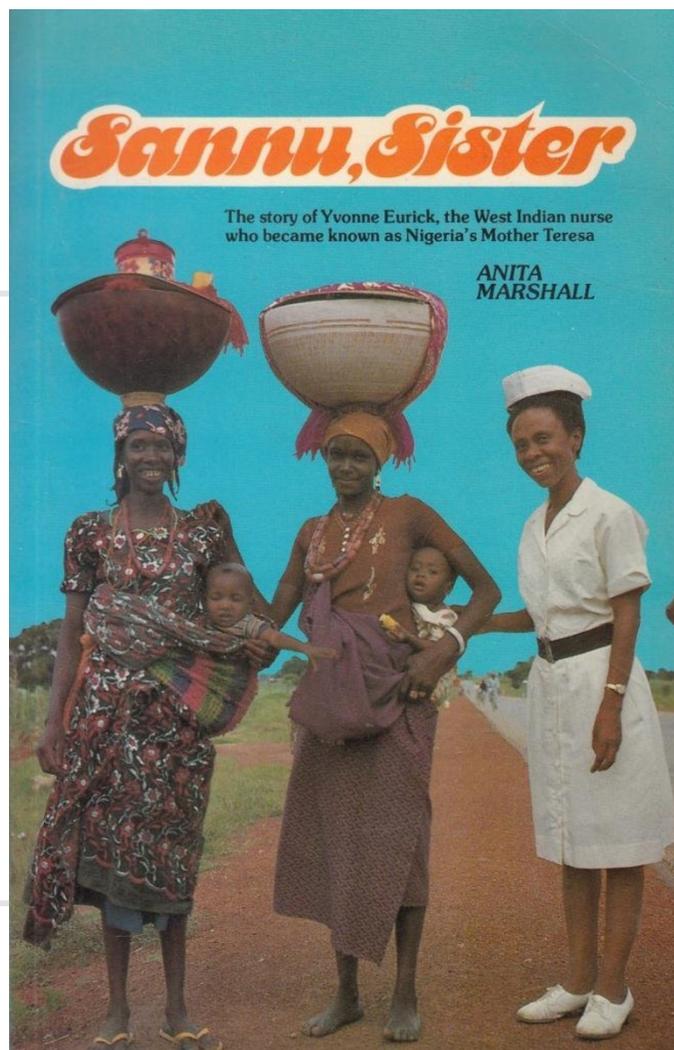
Heather June Bell (known as June), daughter of Pastor George and Alice Bell, qualified as a teacher and started teaching science in Secondary and Comprehensive schools in Hull and in the West Midlands. After completing an Open University degree in education she became a Deputy Head in a large comprehensive school. Since retirement she has travelled widely, and edited her mother's three books which are available on Amazon in printed and digital form: *Genesis and The Names of God*, *The Gospels and Paul*, and *Autobiography of Mrs Alice Bell*.

Sven Hagen Jensen, M.Div. (Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, USA) has worked for the church for over 50 years as a pastor, editor, departmental director, and church administrator in Denmark, Nigeria and the Middle East. Jensen enjoys reading, writing, nature and gardening. He is married to Ingelis and has two adult children and four grandchildren.

Caribbean nurse Yvonne Eurick gave many years to missionary service in West Africa and became affectionately known as "Nigeria's Mother Teresa."<sup>1</sup>

## Early Life<sup>2</sup>

Yvonne Eurick was born on October 3, 1936, at Two Friends, E.C. Demerara, British Guiana (Guyana).<sup>3</sup> At the age of seven, she became an orphan and was brought up by a schoolteacher, a Seventh-day Adventist, whom she called Aunt Ruby.<sup>4</sup> They lived in a wooden stilted house in Georgetown. Very little is known of Yvonne's early life, but when she came to England at the age of 17, she was already a baptized member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and had completed her secondary school education. She came to live with a cousin in London. To earn money, she scrubbed floors and washed dishes at London's Corner House (a large cafe) and then she found a "living in" job in a nursing home. At the age of 18 (1954), she was accepted into the nursing course at Wakefield Nursing School, and there she won a prize as "the nurse making the most progress." For six years (from 1956-62) she worked in general nursing at Bradford and Harrogate hospitals. Later she trained in midwifery in Bradford<sup>5</sup> and, by 1964, she was a "Sister" at the Hull Royal Infirmary Hospital in the maternity department, looking after premature babies. In Hull she was an active



Book cover of Yvonne Eurick

Photo courtesy of Stanborough Press archives.

member of her local Adventist Church. Her gentle nature and good mood made her many friends. It did not take long before she was chosen as the youth society's leader. Yvonne also served as Church clerk for the Hull congregation for a while.

## Life's Work

Yvonne's life up until 1967 had been a preparation for mission service. By the time she left the UK for West Africa, she was an experienced nurse and midwife.

She had close friends in the UK but no relatives, so before she left for mission service, she asked two families to be her parents (Pastor George and Alice Bell, and Margaret and Frances Robertson). When she came home on furlough, it was the Bell's that she stayed with, and over time, she called them "Ma" and "Pa." Yvonne had a calm temperament and a joyful attitude. She had a good sense of humor and could always see the funny side of things. She was a good companion, and people loved her. June Bell had a short holiday with her when she was last home, and everyone took to her and enjoyed her company.<sup>6</sup>

Her first job in West Africa was as a nurse at Kwahu Hospital in Ghana, set in beautiful, peaceful surroundings. The doctors were Ruth and John Lennox, together with nurses from England (Mrs. Spall, a retired nurse), the United States, Poland, and Ghana. The general hospital had 80 beds and a new 40 bed maternity unit. It was not long before Miss Eurick was giving one lecture a week to the midwifery students. In the first six months, she served as a nurse, a home sister (for the 60 students, and she moved into a flat in the hostel), and a relief matron.

When it was decided that the hospital needed a qualified sister tutor to teach midwifery, she went to Accra University for two years to take the course, and during her holidays, she taught at the Kwahu Hospital. Her six years at Kwahu ended in 1973 with the nationalization of the Adventist hospital.

Eurick faced an even greater challenge and more difficult situation at the Adventist hospital at Ile-Ife in Western Nigeria, but when it also was nationalized two years later, she went to Jengre SDA Hospital in Northern Nigeria, where she was asked to be the head nurse in charge of all the wards.

## At Jengre Seventh-day Adventist Hospital

The Jengre village is located on a 2,000-foot area in the state of Plateau State of Nigeria. In the dry season, the roads are dusty, and there is usually a water shortage. During the rainy season, the roads are filled with potholes that are both wet and muddy.

Her move to Jengre was to help staff a mission station that had been established by Pastor and Mrs. John J. Hyde in 1923. The Hyde's had travelled to Jos by train followed by 30 miles by ox cart to Jengre where they pitched their tent. The next morning, they started communicating with the locals by sign language. Mrs. Hyde was a

qualified nurse who was able to treat the sick. Pastor Hyde taught a small group of local men to read English by the "Look and Say" method (which he had developed) and used the Gospel of John as his textbook. As his students studied English, he learned Hausa and, within a few weeks, he was able to communicate with the local people, eventually establishing a church. Thirty years later, his son, Dr. John Hyde, returned and established the hospital.

When Yvonne arrived at Jengre in 1975, the hospital was in a dismal condition. There were not enough sheets or mattresses. The wards were dirty, and the toilets were unsanitary. The pharmacy was in chaos with outdated medicines. There was a staffing shortage that probably caused these problems. Her first reaction was to run, but she took it as a challenge and tackled the problems one at a time, starting with the pharmacy. She asked the staff to scrub the whole place, then clean and paint the walls and shelves. She destroyed all the outdated medicines and rearranged things methodically. Mrs. Alice Bell made an appeal to the church members of the West Midlands, and they provided money so Yvonne could buy medicines, materials for sheets and uniforms, and mattresses. She used her own sewing machine to make the sheets. Of course, all this raised their morale! Jengre SDA Hospital had 55 beds and an outpatient department that could serve as many as 200 patients a day. Yvonne was very organized, so she trained the staff in all the skills they needed, including keeping statistics, dispensing medicines, filling in stock cards, obtaining supplies, etc. They were short-staffed, so Yvonne took on the job of the matron as well as that of a ward sister, but to the people she was known as "Sister." At night, a watchman slept in her doorway and patrolled the compound.

In 1976, Dr. Inger Karlman, a newly qualified young woman physician, joined the staff from Sweden. Her husband came later since he needed to complete his studies. The day after she arrived, she was already performing an operation. There was no time to feel tired!

However, the two of them did not get to work together in the Jengre Hospital for very long. In May 1976, the governor of the state of Plateau came with other government officials on a visit to inspect the place. The impression was very positive, especially after Yvonne had cleaned up the site and put everything in order. The wards had received fresh coats of paint, there were linens on all the beds, the staff were wearing new, clean uniforms, and the season's lush mango trees and flowering bougainvillea's were the icing on the cake. Between the wards, the flame of the forest blossomed with its beautiful red colors, and pretty yellow flowers covered the hedges at the entrance. Six months later, the church's leadership found out that the government were going to nationalize Jengre Hospital together with other mission hospitals in the area. All the staff was offered work and retained employment except for Mr. Clement, the business manager, and his wife as well Dr. Inger Karlman and nurse Yvonne Eurick, who were employed as missionaries from abroad.

Instead of leaving Nigeria, Dr. Karlman and Yvonne decided to start a new health program in some remote villages. They taught preventive health care for families and oversaw a program for pregnant women, young mothers, and their children. They worked out a proposal for a health program and set out for Lagos to convince

church leadership in the Nigerian Union of their dreams, hoping they would support the program. It did not generate a great applause, but after having recognized their enthusiasm, the leaders finally agreed and said they could start. However, they had to raise the necessary funding themselves. Miss Eurick and Dr. Karlman were disappointed because they were uncertain just how they would be able to do that. In the end, the leaders agreed that Dr. Karlman would receive her salary from the church's organization and that they would also pay the first month's salary for Miss Eurick. Still, part of the gain that they hoped to generate from the outclinics would go back to repay the money advanced.

The next step was to negotiate with the health department in the state of Plateau and the local village leaders in the places where they had planned to establish the clinics. It turned out that the Ministry also was very hesitant, but the ideas were met with great enthusiasm in some of the villages, and eventually the necessary permits were granted, and they could start their new health program in January 1977.

## The Rural Health Clinics

There was no money for medicines or buildings, so church members made shelters to protect them from the sun during the dry season and the rain in the wet times. In other locations, they attended their patients in the local church building, in private homes, or under the mango tree in the village. Some members were trained as clinic volunteers to register, weigh, and take blood pressure, urine samples, and perform other necessary tests. As time went by, a few were chosen and trained to dispense vitamins, iron, painkillers, anti-malaria medication, and some antibiotic tablets. The patients were charged a small amount to cover the cost of medicines.

On the first day at the first village, they were welcomed by the local chief together along with a large number of people. They then proceeded with their worship, a health presentation, and treatment of mothers and babies. As they prepared to leave, the people became agitated and insisted that they see a sick lady in her hut. They found she was very weak and still bleeding from having given birth to a stillborn baby the previous day. After attending to this woman, they were taken to another lady who had just given birth, was bleeding, and who needed their attention. They put both the ladies in their VW van. It was the local custom for other members of the family to accompany patients to the hospital, but there wasn't room for all of them in the van. They were told that only those willing to give blood could go to the hospital. Very few were brave enough to donate blood, so that resolved the problem.

While Miss Eurick wanted to get the ladies to the hospital as soon as possible, a man came running up to them carrying a small baby. Dr. Karlman checked the baby and found that the child had malaria, so she advised the father what to do. They drove as quickly as the pot holes in the dirt road allowed to reach the main road, which was tarmacked but also full of holes. When they arrived at the hospital, the lab technician was just leaving, but he returned to perform the blood tests. Fortunately, matches to donate blood were found among the family members. By God's grace, the baby with malaria recovered and both ladies went home well. The village was

mostly a Muslim community, so this was a good start to their new work. The clinic proved very popular and successful.

At first, there was only one clinic, but as time went by, more were added until they were soon driving 2,000 miles a month. A wealthy Muslim who owned a garage was so impressed with their work that he donated a large tank full of petrol (gas) for their vehicle. Later on, some villages had their own health worker. Dr. Karlman's maid (Lois Kakwi) accompanied them to the clinics and translated their health presentations into Hausa, and after a short time, she knew what they said so well that she could do it by herself. She later became a nurse and midwife.

Dr. Karlman was doing all the driving. Miss Eurick decided she should start to drive as well since she had passed her test in England, but when she took to the wheel, she had difficulty keeping the car moving in a straight line, so she decided that she would take driving lessons on her next furlough to regain her skills. When home, she took 23 lessons and practiced driving in June Bell's car, so when she returned, she could help with the driving.

It was not long before Dr. Karlman and her husband had to leave, and before they left, they helped Eurick buy a Peugeot 504. She was disappointed that she could not afford a minibus, but she pleasantly surprised when she found that she could get all the equipment in the trunk. However, they desperately needed a replacement doctor. Between 1978 and 1981, there were relief doctors and sometimes no doctor at all, but Eurick always kept the clinics going. She only missed one day in five years, and that was because the car had broken down.

At the same time, applications were sent to donor organizations in England (British Overseas Development Agency) and Norway (Norwegian Development Aid) to initially get financing for three permanent clinics in Doka, Maigamo, and Warsa in the state of Kaduna, which were the places where the interest and the support of the local communities had been the greatest. The clinics were completed and dedicated in 1983 in a ceremony with representatives from the health ministries, the local chiefs, the North Nigeria Mission, local pastors, and church members as well as representatives from the donor organizations. The total cost had been about US\$ 70,000 at the time.<sup>7</sup>

Dr. Jean-Marc Michel joined the team in 1981, while his wife Carol (also a doctor) got a job at the Jengre Hospital, which just had been returned from the government to the church. For two busy years, Eurick worked and worshipped and relaxed with the Michel's. By this time, ADRA (Adventist Development and Relief Agency) had supplied them with a Toyota Land Cruiser, which was much better suited for reaching the clinics. Jean-Marc loved driving on the rough roads, but he was not sure whether he preferred the dust and potholes of the dry times or the mud up to the axles during the wet season. Officially the operation became known as the Mobile Clinic.

Sister Eurick had trained many local people about health care, and Dr. Jean-Marc was able to further their studies so that they became fully qualified. They were all top of their class because of the good start Eurick had given them. By 1982, as a result of the clinics, 150 people had given their hearts to Jesus and joined the Adventist Church. In a tribute to Miss Eurick, Luka Daniel, secretary of the Nigerian Union, said: "The health

clinics instituted by Miss Eurick have not only generated a large number of baptisms in the Muslim populated north, but also earned more goodwill in the community for the Church than anything we have done in Northern Nigeria for many years."<sup>8</sup>

Carol Michel and her son Jonathon had to leave because she was having a troubled pregnancy. Jean-Marc followed sometime later, but not before he had attended the opening of the new clinics. He then went to Liverpool University to study tropical medicine. After Jean-Marc left, Timothy Kakwi became Eurick's driver for the clinics.

## Church and Community Life

Yvonne Eurick was very popular in Jengre where she took an active part in the life of the Adventist Church. She had a particular interest in the young people. Members of the Church remember how she led out in the Pathfinder work and taught the young teenagers different skills. She trained new leaders who could take leading roles in the Church in the future. All in all, she was farsighted and wanted to see the Nigerian youth educate themselves and take responsibility for their own situations. In addition to her youth leadership, she served as the treasurer for the Dorcas Society, the choir, and the local church in Jengre.<sup>9</sup>

She became especially attached to the Kakwi family. She nursed older Pastor Simon Kakwi during his last days. When he needed expensive medicine, she would pay for it herself. As a younger brother in the family said: "Everything that Sister did for him is in the books of heaven." Because the Kakwi family meant so much to her, she one day told the old Kakwi that she would like to be part of their family. It won applause throughout the family. They organized an official adoption ceremony where the family gathered with guests. Fanta soda, cookies, and sweets were served. Many speeches were given, and she was officially welcomed into the family by shaking hands with the older members and receiving a diploma as an evidence of her family membership.<sup>10</sup>

In the summer of 1983, June Bell was privileged to spend two weeks with Yvonne Eurick at Jengre. She recalls how Yvonne was welcomed as if she was the queen when she visited the clinics. She also witnessed Yvonne's devotion to the local people in Jengre. They all loved her and felt free enough to go to her for advice or just for company. Her front door was open from 7 am in the morning. She had a little boy named Jacob who looked at her as his second mother.<sup>11</sup> She encouraged Manoah Yohanna<sup>12</sup> and Lois Kakwi to get married. She had sponsored Manoah's university education, and Lois, who had been the Karlman's maid, became a nurse and midwife.

Sadly, on Monday January 30, 1984, as Yvonne Eurick was returning from a bush village in the Land Cruiser, they were involved in a collision, and she was killed. Timothy Kakwi was driving and injured together with one of the assistants, Sheba Istifanus, who also was in the vehicle.

## Tribute by Timothy Kakwi

A daughter of God.

She gave health care to the isolated villages of Kaduna State and to the people of Jengre.

She fed the people spiritually and they felt, that when they met her, they were meeting God.

She was considered a mother to the people. She helped them save money and acted as their bank. She was the treasurer of the women's society, the church choir, and the church.

She went above and beyond her duties.

She helped many people with personal money and money for education.

She asked and was received into the Kakwi family.

## Last Resting Place

She was buried under a mango tree behind her house in Jengre. Representatives from the Church headquarters in Lagos, the pastors, the hospital and mobile clinic staff, church members in addition to many from the villages where she had treated the sick and taught the mothers attended to show their last respects. On her tombstone is written: "She touched others with love."<sup>13</sup>

## Legacy

Yvonne Eurick is remembered with love in the Jengre community and beyond. The clinics continued and expanded after her death. When she died, the Bell family set up a trust for her sponsorship of children's education to continue until their schooling was complete.

---

### SOURCES

Fly, James F. "AID progresses in the cities and pioneers in the bush." *ARH*, November 29, 1984.

Jensen, Sven Hagen. "Miss Eurick." *God's Gracious Hand*. Denmark: Toptryk Grafisk, Danish edition 2019, English edition 2020.

Marshall, Anita, *Sannu, Sister*. Grantham, Lincolnshire, England: The Stanborough Press, 1987.

---

### NOTES

1. Front cover of Anita Marshall's book, *Sannu, Sister* (Grantham, Lincolnshire, England: The Stanborough Press Limited, 1987).
2. The information for this article is primarily from Anita Marshall's book *Sannu, Sister*, and Sven Hagen Jensen's book *God's Gracious Hand* (Toptryk Grafisk, Denmark, 2020) as well as from personal knowledge by the authors who knew her.
3. "Eurick, Effrida Yvonne obituary," *ARH*, May 31, 1984, 21.
4. Aunt Ruby's proper name was Miss Boadecia Callendar. She was born in 1895 in Bierbice, New Amsterdam, British Guiana and died at the age of 82 in 1976 in Georgetown Guyana.
5. Nurses and Midwifery education: 1954-56 State Registered Nurse, Wakefield, UK, 1962-63 Midwifery, Bradford, UK, 1968-70 Midwifery Tutors course, Accra, Ghana, West Africa.
6. Personal experience by June Bell.
7. Personal information by Sven Hagen Jensen (North Nigeria Mission president 1980-84), who was managing the building projects together with local pastors.
8. James L. Fly, "AID progresses in the cities and pioneers in the bush," *ARH*, November 29, 1984, 14-15.
9. Personal information by Sven Hagen Jensen.
10. Ibid.
11. Personal experience by June Bell.
12. Manoah Yohanna appears in the *SDA Online Encyclopedia* as the author of four biographical articles about the Kakwi brothers, who became the first local ordained pastors in the Northern Nigeria Mission.
13. Personal notes from Sven Hagen Jensen.

---

encyclopedia.adventist.org is an official website of the [Seventh-day Adventist World Church](#)

© 2020 General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists 12501 Old Columbia Pike Silver Spring, MD 20904 USA 301-680-6000