LOUISE MASON INGERSOLL, M. D.

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This fascinating account of Louise Ingersoll's life was read by Dr. Louise Merrimon Perry on May Third, Nineteen Hundred Forty-Nine. The occasion was a party for "Weazie" given by the women doctors of Asheville. Weazie was not well enough to be present, but listened over the phone to this paper and other loving testimonials.

Weazie died on May Fourteenth, Nineteen Hundred Sixty-Two and her close friend, Dr. Perry, died three months later on August Eighth.

This little book is in memory of them both.
Dr. Shuford and Dr. Weizenblatt invited me to join you all in this pleasant meeting, giving me the real privilege of speaking for a few moments of the loved and respected "Dean" of our local professional group, Dr. Louise Mason Ingersoll.

I went to Dr. Ingersoll for some biographical data and a little sketch of her experiences and reminiscence. She did not feel like talking a great deal that afternoon, but offered to write something for me to use as I pleased. Her nine crowded pages are so interesting and so characteristic that all I have done is to quote a great deal and edit a little.

To scan the biographical data:

Born in Cleveland, Ohio, 1877, the youngest of ten children of the forty-four year old mother,

From six to eighteen years of age attended Miss Mittleberger's Private School, graduated there in 1895 and in the autumn entered Vassar College, to be knocked out in a few months by illness and nostalgia,

The year following matriculated at the Women's College of Western Reserve University for two years of advanced work,

In 1910 commenced the study of Medicine at the Women's Medical College of Pennsylvania, where she received her degree of Doctor of Medicine in 1914,

Served internships at Worcester Memorial Hospital, Worcester, Massachusetts and the Women's Hospital in Cleveland; followed immediately by three months' study at the Harvard Graduate School of Medicine, with emphasis on Pediatrics and Contagious Diseases, with a subsequent six months'
residency at the Cottage Hospital for Children at Baldwinsville, Massachusetts.

Practiced in Asheville from September of 1916 to the spring of 1917, when the long treasured hope of going to China as a Medical Missionary became reality. In this service she spent many years, and only because of illness, returned to Asheville in 1926 to resume and continue in the practice of Medicine until failing health necessitated retirement from active service in 1942.

And now from Dr. Ingersoll herself:

Playing hospital with my dolls was my childhood pre-occupation. I had, by surreptitious means, acquired an old fashioned medical book from which I instructed the favorite doll, always - in my imagination - a woman physician, very charming and attractive, probably a wishful anticipation of my own personality. Together we saved the Ingersoll dolls from immeasurable ills.

When I was ten years old I attended a party and heard a missionary just returned from China tell many interesting things of the life there. At once I fell in love with China and firmly decided that some day I would go there to do something splendid for the women and children.

At twelve years I knew definitely that I must study medicine and in this my determination never wavered, though little was said of it. When I finished school at eighteen years I told Father of my ambition to be a doctor. He was not sympathetic, having practiced medicine himself for a year or two in early life, and emphatically disliked the idea, on his own account in retrospect and for his daughter's future.

After his death in 1899 my family moved to Asheville and for a while I taught as substitute in the City Schools, at the
munificent salary of thirty dollars a month for being men-
tor to some thirty small children. From 1900 to 1910 my
time was occupied with family cares and responsibilities, but
at last the way was clear and the path open to the beginning
of my medical career, so with high hopes and ambition I
became a freshman student at the Women's Medical College
in Philadelphia. My medical degree brought me a long step
nearer to China and realization of my early and constant
hope.

In 1916 I opened my first office, in Asheville, and found
plenty of unremunerative work down on Chicken Hill and
along Blue Ruin. Clear in mind is remembrance of a hard
labor case in a poor neighborhood where I spent a long,
tiresome, hungry night with no help save what an ignorant
neighbor could give, and with what joy and relief I greeted
Jane Brown, Flower Mission Nurse, when she appeared
early in the morning.

That happy spring came the long-hoped-for opportunity, an
invitation from the Southern Methodist Board of Missions to
go for two years to Souchow, China to serve as relief —
alternately — for Dr. Ethel Polk and Dr. Hattie Love. The
plan met with opposition from most of my family, but I
settled the matter myself and WENT TO CHINA.

The Souchow to which I was sent is not the Souchow of which
the Communists have recently made successful conquest, but
the old walled city which has been called "the Venice of
China" because of its many lovely canals and beautiful bridges.
No wheeled vehicle could travel the narrow, slippery
streets, so we must walk or ride a donkey led by a small
Chinese boy who kept the road clear by his constant cries,
"The donkey is coming," and I never could be sure which he
had in mind, the donkey or me. Sometimes a sedan was
available and when we answered night calls we would ride
in a large chair borne by four stout coolies and carrying with us our medical and obstetrical equipment.

Street sights were very intriguing in their novelty and variety. One might see a Chinese nabob gorgeously attired in his embroidered silks, pompously lolling in a luxurious chair carried by eight porters, but the women rode in closed chairs with curtains dropped over the front.

We had in Souchow a small hospital for women and children, staffed by two American doctors and two Chinese women interns. The nursing staff consisted of a number of Chinese girls in training under two American Graduate Nurses. Some of the required lectures for the nurses were given in the adjacent Men's Hospital and there a curtain was hung through the middle of the lecture amphitheatre to separate our nurses on the one side from the male nurses on the other side. However, it proved not to be an iron curtain.

Beside the Hospital and Training School Staff, we had ten young Chinese women Medical students. We had not then a Grade A medical school, but the teaching was the beginning of the Shanghai Christian Medical School for Women, today accepted as a Grade A Medical College, graduating many excellent young doctors, some of them having served as doctors and surgeons along the Burma Road.

In the war summer of 1918 there came an urgent call for help from the American Red Cross in Siberia, whose head was Dr. Teusler, notable and distinguished for his great work at St. Luke's Hospital in Tokyo. Each Mission Hospital in China was urged to lend one doctor and one nurse from its staff for this service. Dr. Ethel Polk was at that time head of our Hospital and she at once conceived and effected the plan of having five of our senior medical students, five senior nurses, with two American nurses, herself and me,
offer ourselves as a unit for work in Siberia. We were accepted by the Shanghai Red Cross and presently embarked from the Shanghai Bund. Many Chinese were at the Bund, popping fire crackers and making "Walla-Wallo" to give the Chinese girls a grand sendaway, for never in China's history had Chinese women left their native country on such an errand. Much was made of it.

Five days later we reached Vladivostok and were met by Dr. Teusler, who raised his hands in despair over our Chinese girls, saying that he had no place to keep them. The situation was a little awkward, but Dr. Polk met the occasion and decided at once that she, herself, with our head nurse would sleep with the girls in some empty cars in the railroad yards. So it was and in a short while Dr. Polk and the rest of our unit had set in order and converted a sufficient number of box cars in the railroad yards to open a small hospital for refugees.

Very soon, I, with one of our American nurses and three others of our unit, was dispatched to the Russian Island Hospital in Vladivostok Harbor, just captured from the Bolsheviki by the Czech Army and already in use for their sick and wounded soldiers. This hospital was taken over by the American Red Cross. My first duty was as Officer in Charge of the Medical Wards, hard work, but most interesting. The severe epidemic of influenza of that year soon reached us and our limited resources were strained to the utmost to care for the many men and women of all social classes and of nineteen nationalities who came to us for help.

Through changes in the personnel of the Hospital Staff I was appointed Surgeon in Charge, with a clever and courteous Russian in my former place. Greater responsibility was entailed by this change. There was more work.
and less recreation, and little time for any leisure nor for visits with the Czech soldiers, many of whom I had grown to respect and like, though our conversations were only through one of their number who spoke French as well as Czech.

I like to recall a few of my experiences: of a committee of German prisoners of war which "waited on me" one day to protest the transfer of one of their number - a tailor - who was needed at the British Hospital. The Committee threatened that if their fellow were separated from them, they would go on strike and do no work the next day. I am glad my judgment was sufficiently good to remind them that, as prisoners of war, they would go where sent and do the work assigned them. Each man was at his post the following day, and as I passed them at their work there was a smart clicking of heels and formal salutes. And the beautiful Russian nurse who shot and killed her lover, by accident. She came to me for refuge from the Civil authorities, and their demand for her met with refusal since the Red Cross was subject to no Civil Authority and she was now one of our own company. But no more of this. Later she was declared innocent by a Russian Military Martial.

Early in 1919 the Czech government, working with the Red Cross, commenced to repatriate its subjects in foreign land. The promise had been made that I should go as Medical Officer with the second group to leave Vladivostok in two weeks, but it was mid-June before our goodbyes were said and the long journey begun. The personnel of our Red Cross detachment in charge of one thousand and fifty Czech soldiers was made up of two American Red Cross lay workers in charge of transportation and all business matters concerning the expedition, two Red Cross nurses, Dr. Ingram, a missionary from North China as medical officer, and I, as Surgeon to the caravan. By way of comment only; as
the Red Cross during this time was part of the Army, commissions were given to the men, but though I had the status and responsibilities of a captain, the commission was refused me, being a woman. For some obscure reason, Army nurses were given Commissions as Lieutenant, but Medical women were refused officer rating by the authorities at Washington.

Our homeward route was through the Inland Sea, via Honolulu to San Diego, where we disembarked and camped for seven days with a United States Army Division encamped there. In two groups we crossed the country by the southern route, with our progress somewhat slowed by stops at each station to be greeted and fed by kindly and hospitable people. We reached Washington in eight days and the Czech troops in uniform were reviewed by President Wilson, standing on the White House steps to make an appropriate speech. The President and Mrs. Wilson were most gracious when the official members of our party were presented to them.

Many Red Cross workers were clamoring for our places, but our Czech charges petitioned so earnestly for us that our entire personnel continued with them to Prague. After the two days in Washington we re-embarked at Newport News, duly reaching Brest, with loss of but two of our company, both accidental deaths.

From Brest to Prague the journey proved enjoyable only in retrospect. We were shipped in box cars clearly indicated for the accommodation of "quarant hommes - huit chevaux" and designated for men able to be up and walk about. The rest of our company were assigned a number of old fashioned European day coaches, having no aisles, no lavatories and no lights in the compartments. There were no means of procuring food other than the canned rations allotted us. For eight days we traveled thus and
were delayed for forty-eight hours at the Swiss frontier for clearance papers through Switzerland. At Zurich we were herded out of the train, taken to a restaurant and given most welcome rolls, sausage and beer.

About midnight we crossed the border into Bohemia, the train was stopped and every man able to do so left the train. With military precision, the group formed in line, removed their hats and in solemn and beautiful unison sang their National Hymn, "My Home." Many of these men had been away four years and now returned to an independent republic, free at last from the domination of Austro-Hungary. It was a moving and unforgettable sight.

These returning heroes were greeted all along the line by thousands of their countrymen and many were the joyous reunions between mothers, fathers and sons, husbands and wives, sisters and brothers. At Prague our welcome was of a more formal nature. We were paraded through the streets amidst cheers, flag-waving and bandplaying, not for us, but for joy of their returned countrymen. At length, with proper formalities, our charges were delivered to the proper authorities and our mission concluded.

Two months were required for our repatriation, a delay not wholly unwelcome after the fatigue of our long journey. A strike of longshoremen kept us waiting for three weeks on the Riviera and seventeen days were passed on the Atlantic because of England's refusal to sell us coal at the Azores, where we remained in harbor for two days, hoping for a change of mind. Then America, home.

After a short rest in Asheville, I joined a group of medical women chosen and employed by the Young Women's Christian Association to lecture on Social Hygiene in North Carolina. Following this tour, I gave three months to
graduate work in Otolaryngology at Women's Medical College in Philadelphia, memorable days, working under the leadership of splendid Margaret Butler in preparation for specializing in that work upon my return to China.

Late in that summer I returned to Shanghai and shortly our Missionary Unit took over the Margaret Williamson Hospital to organize and open a training school for nurses, and somewhat later the Medical College for Women. Very hard and exacting was the work, but challenging and stimulating, as was also the general surgery which it fell my lot to do in our hospital.

In the spring of 1923 there was opportunity for me to do some special study in Otolaryngology at the Peking Medical School, but by autumn I had become so crippled by sciatica that it was thought best for me to return to the States. I fully expected to go back to China within six months. However, it was three years before I became able to work again, and with sincere sorrow made the decision against a return to China and established myself in Asheville to do general practice in Internal Medicine. In 1937 I was certified by the A.M.A. Board in that specialty. The subject of Allergy interested me greatly and for some time I devoted much study and attention to it until I retired in 1942 because of ill health.

Just here Dr. Ingersoll has placed a modest period, but the great number of her patients and friends in our community will not allow it to be so. Dr. Ingersoll is too highly esteemed for her qualities of character, which are admirable, and of personality which is lovable, to allow anything beyond a comma or a dash.