

April 1943

The War Closed Her Pharmacy

Bernard Zerbe

Follow this and additional works at: <http://epublications.marquette.edu/lnq>

Recommended Citation

Zerbe, Bernard (1943) "The War Closed Her Pharmacy," *The Linacre Quarterly*: Vol. 11: No. 2, Article 4.
Available at: <http://epublications.marquette.edu/lnq/vol11/iss2/4>

THE WAR CLOSED HER PHARMACY

BY BERNARD ZERBE

ASSOCIATE EDITOR, *The American Druggist**

Fire, flood, famine and fatigue never closed her dispensary in Shingishu, Korea, despite the fact that all of these were constantly recurring. Sister Rose of Lima, a graduate of the Fordham College of Pharmacy and a Sister of the Maryknoll Order, worked for eleven years as a pharmacist in Korea. She, along with another Sister in the dispensary, continued on in their ceaseless fight against the disease that was so widespread throughout the country. It took the war with Japan to stop her work. Korea, Japanese conquered and Japanese controlled, had to be evacuated, and she, along with 95 other Maryknoll Sisters and Priests, was returned to America in the exchange of nationals. She hopes to return to her dispensary in Shingishu, Korea, as soon as the war is over.

Certainly the people of Shingishu need her. For generations half the children have died in infancy; nine out of ten of the people are infested with worms; dysentery is rampant; filth, vermin and diseases of the body are common; and social diseases are prevalent and generally untreated. To complicate the health situation native medical care is poor, and pharmacy is at its primitive nadir.

In this environment of low pub-

lic health, Sister Rose of Lima operated her pharmacy with the same sanitary standards as an American Pharmacist. As a result, The Mission dispensary came to be known to the poor and sick of Shingishu as "a clean place, good medicine and cheap prices." It was one of the few dispensaries in all the 85,246 square miles of Korea that boasted such a reputation.

Pharmacy in Korea to this Sister was not unlike pharmacy in America, except that there was more of it. Hundreds of gallons of cod liver oil went across her counters to combat the great deficiency in Vitamin A that existed in all of the people. Thousands upon thousands of Santonin tablets were dispensed as worm medicine. Aspirin compound was prepared and dispensed for a variety of ills, and hundreds of these tablets were prepared at a time. In addition, many more particular prescriptions were filled to treat particular diseases.

Up until three years ago, three Sisters, one a doctor, one a pharmacist, and one a laboratory technician, operated the dispensary with the assistance of two Korean girls. Then, in 1939, Sister Mercy, the doctor, was taken ill herself and had to return to America for treatment. This left only the pharmacist, Sister Rose of Lima, and the laboratory technician to operate the dispensary

* Reprinted from *American Druggist*, Vol. CVII, No. 2, with permission of the author.

with the doubtful assistance of native doctors.

Pharmacy work for Sister Rose of Lima was practically inevitable. The daughter of John Robinson, a pharmacist, who operates Robinson's Ethical Pharmacy in Jersey City, she was raised in an atmosphere of drug store work. When she reached college age, she entered Fordham College of Pharmacy almost mechanically. After graduation she worked for four years in her father's store, and then for 16 months in a large prescription pharmacy in Newark, where she filled 19,500 prescriptions. She knows that she compounded this many, because she received a bonus of 1¢ for each one filled, and at the end of her 16 months' work she received a check for \$195.00. It was good groundwork for the Korean Mission dispensary.

It was while working in Newark that she reached her decision to enter the Maryknoll order, so in 1928 she went to Ossining, New

York, where the Maryknoll Convent is located and began her life as a Sister. Three years later in 1931, she left America en route to Gishu, Korea. In 1933 she moved to the larger city, Shingishu, and began work on her dispensary.

The days were crowded with activity in the dispensary, and with her other work as a Maryknoll Sister. Some evenings she taught Korean to the other Missionaries, or else she taught music to the Korean Church Choir. On other evenings, and on Sundays, she worked with the Women's Sodality and with the young children. It was a constant round of activity, with no pauses, and very often her bell, just like the pharmacist's bell in America, would ring in the middle of the night, and she would rise to go down and fill some vitally needed prescription.

As she says, pharmacy in Korea is not much different than it is in America. There's just more of it.

It is well for Catholic physicians to consider the far-reaching consequences of the professional advice they give to their patients. We have in mind the case of mothers who are told after a difficult confinement that they must not have another baby; if they do, they will surely lose their life in the attempt. There are numerous cases of mothers who contrary to such professional advice have had normal deliveries.

After all, in most of these cases the doctors' advice is based on purely personal judgment, and experience has proven out that in many cases they are mistaken. This one thing is certain: The doctor's advice oftentimes causes a life of long years of sin in the marriage state. Would it not be better for the doctor and the patient to put their trust in God, Whose mighty arm is not shortened and Who blesses in a special manner the generosity shown by mothers in doing their sacred duty?—*Belleville Bulletin*.