

1/FIRST NURSE: Welcome to the 1861 Florence Nightingale School of Nursing graduation ceremony.

2/SECOND NURSE: Miss Nightingale regrets that she cannot be with us. She is an invalid, and although confined to her bed, she still works long hours researching and writing.

1/FIRST NURSE: To celebrate this day, we have asked family and friends of Florence Nightingale, the inventor of modern nursing, to share their memories of her unique life and career.

3/PARTHENOPE: I'm Florence's sister, Parthenope. Our unusual names come from the Italian cities where we were born. Even though our family was wealthy, Florence was always aware of the poor and was saddened by the conditions of their lives.

4/MOTHER: Florence knew from the time she was 16 that she had a special mission. She recorded in her diary that on February 7, 1837, God spoke to her and called her into His service.

3/PARTHENOPE: My sister did not know what that service was to be. Then, seven years later, she realized that her mission was nursing.

4/MOTHER: We were quite upset. Nurses were a dirty, low-class lot, and most were drunkards. Hospitals were for the dying, not for the living. We were a wealthy upper-class family. Young ladies did not work!

3/PARTHENOPE: Proper young ladies married. Florence had an opportunity to marry a wonderful man, but she refused him because of her mission in life. Our parents were not happy.

4/MOTHER: My husband refused to let Florence practice nursing, but he did agree to allow her to study mathematics. I thought she should be perfecting her singing or stitching.

2/SECOND NURSE: Miss Nightingale studied mathematics by day and hospitals by night. She wrote for information from hospitals all over Europe. She became an expert on hospitals and their administration.

3/PARTHENOPE: Florence was close to a nervous breakdown because of the conflict between loyalty to her parents and devotion to what she considered her mission from God.

4/MOTHER: We sent her to Europe to recover her health. Her father, seeing her melancholy and despair, finally agreed to give her an allowance and let her pursue nursing.

1/FIRST NURSE: Sidney Herbert recognized Miss Nightingale's abilities and knowledge in the field of hospital care. He was a high ranking government official and able to find places for her to use her special skills.

5/HERBERT: I met Florence on a social occasion and found she was not the typical young woman. She had a wealth of information about hospitals and I knew where it could be put to use.