CHERRY AMES NURSE STORIES

CHERRY AMES COMPANION NURSE

By

HELEN WELLS

SPRINGER PUBLISHING COMPANY
New York
TITLES BY HELEN WELLS

Cherry Ames, Student Nurse
Cherry Ames, Senior Nurse
Cherry Ames, Army Nurse
Cherry Ames, Chief Nurse
Cherry Ames, Flight Nurse
Cherry Ames, Veterans’ Nurse
Cherry Ames, Private Duty Nurse
Cherry Ames, Visiting Nurse
Cherry Ames, Cruise Nurse
Cherry Ames, Boarding School Nurse
Cherry Ames, Department Store Nurse
  Cherry Ames, Camp Nurse
Cherry Ames at Hilton Hospital
  Cherry Ames, Island Nurse
  Cherry Ames, Rural Nurse
  Cherry Ames, Staff Nurse
Cherry Ames, Companion Nurse
  Cherry Ames, Jungle Nurse
Cherry Ames, The Mystery in the Doctor’s Office
  Cherry Ames, Ski Nurse Mystery
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Helen Wells, the author of the Cherry Ames stories, said, “I’ve always thought of nursing, and perhaps you have, too, as just about the most exciting, important, and rewarding profession there is. Can you think of any other skill that is always needed by everybody, everywhere?”

I was and still am a fan of Cherry Ames. Her courageous dedication to her patients; her exciting escapades; her thirst for knowledge; her intelligent application of her nursing skills; and the respect she achieved as a registered nurse (RN) all made it clear to me that I was going to follow in her footsteps and become a nurse—nothing else would do.

Thousands of other young readers were motivated by Cherry Ames to become RNs as well. Through her thought-provoking stories, Cherry Ames led a steady stream of students into schools of nursing across the country well into the 1960s and 1970s when the series ended.
Readers who remember enjoying these books in the past will take pleasure in reading them again now—whether or not they chose nursing as their life’s work. Perhaps they will share them with others and even motivate a person or two to choose nursing as their career.

My nursing path has been rich and satisfying. I have delivered babies, cared for people in hospitals and in their homes, and saved lives. I have worked at the bedside and served as an administrator, I have published journals, written articles, taught students, consulted, and given expert testimony. Never once did I regret my decision to become a nurse.

During the time I was publishing a nursing journal, I became acquainted with Robert Wells, brother of Helen Wells. In the course of conversation I learned that Ms. Wells had passed on and left the Cherry Ames copyright to Mr. Wells. Because there is a shortage of nurses here in the US today, I thought, “Why not bring Cherry back to motivate a whole new generation of young people? Why not ask Mr. Wells for the copyright to Cherry Ames?” Mr. Wells agreed, and the republished series is dedicated both to Helen Wells, the original author, and to her brother, Robert Wells, who transferred the rights to me. I am proud to ensure the continuation of Cherry Ames into the twenty-first century.

The final dedication is to you, both new and former readers of Cherry Ames: It is my dream that you enjoy Cherry’s nursing skills as well as her escapades. I hope
that young readers will feel motivated to choose nursing as their life’s work. Remember, as Helen Wells herself said: there’s no other skill that’s “always needed by everybody, everywhere.”

Harriet Schulman Forman, RN, EdD
Series Editor
“COME IN, CHERRY!” BERTHA UNLOCKED AND SWUNG open the door to the Spencer Club’s apartment.

“Cherry must go in first,” Mai Lee insisted. “She’s the guest of honor!”

Josie, reaching out for Cherry’s suitcase, said, “I’ll take it. You go on in—and welcome back!”

Cherry relinquished the suitcase and bowed. “Fellow nurses, I thank you!” She walked into the small, attractive gold-and-white living room, and laughed when she saw the banner draped across the room. In large, amateurishly printed, red-crayon letters it read:

WELCOME, CHERRY! S.C.’S MOST FAMOUS MEMBER!

“Famous or infamous,” Cherry said. “That’s a really wonderful welcome! Shall I make a speech of thanks?”
“Just sit down and cool off,” said Josie, who put down Cherry’s suitcase and sat on it, puffing.

It was hot in the New York apartment at eight o’clock on a Wednesday evening in late August. But it was home in a special sense—this rather cramped Greenwich Village apartment that the Spencer Club nurses shared whenever any or all of them were in New York. Cherry dropped on the sofa and said cheerfully:

“It was even hotter at home in Hilton, Illinois, when I left this afternoon.” She mopped her rosy face. “You were dears to come all the way out to the airport to meet me. Oh, I’m so glad to see all of you! But where’s Gwen? I thought she’d be home by now.”

Mai Lee, a dainty Chinese-American girl, sat down beside Cherry. “Gwen phoned before we left. She’s still working, poor dear, on some sort of emergency. You know late hours can’t be helped, on private duty—” Mai Lee affectionately squeezed Cherry’s hand. “I’m so glad you’re here!”

Josie Franklin pushed her glasses up on her forehead and blinked. “Me, too. Only for a fellow Spencer Clubber would I go all the way out to Idlewild.”

Bertha Larsen, all smiles, came in from the kitchen carrying a tray with glasses and a pitcher of lemonade. She was a big, hearty farm girl from Minnesota. Bertha passed the cool drinks, saying, “I wish some of our Spencer Club members weren’t away just when you’re here, Cherry. They’d love to see you.”

“I’d like to see them, too,” Cherry said. “But then, we’re rarely all together at one time.” She beamed at her
friends and they smiled warmly at Cherry. She was the one who had started the Spencer Club, back in their nursing school days at Spencer Hospital. Her friends called her “our spark plug,” adding “Cherry makes things happen.” Cherry’s high spirits showed in her shining dark eyes, her vivid face, and in the way she tossed back her crisp, dark curls. “How’s Vivian?” she asked. “And Ann? And Marie Swift?” They, too, were Cherry’s former classmates from nursing school, and Spencer Club members. “How are your jobs?”

Before they could tell her, the telephone rang. Bertha, who answered, reported it was Gwen Jones, still at her job and asking to speak to Cherry.

Cherry went to the telephone. Gwen’s excited voice came on.

“Cherry? . . . Hello! There’s a special reason why I’m glad you’re in New York!”

“What reason? Come on home, Gwen, I’m longing to see you.”

“Coming in a minute, but I have to check something with you first. How long is your vacation? Didn’t you write us that you have a month? And that you have no definite plans?”

Cherry said, mystified, “That’s right. I have some ideas—”

“Well, how would you like to go to England?”

“Wha-a-at?”

Cherry repeated the conversation to Bertha, Josie, and Mai Lee. “I think Gwen’s out of her mind.”

“Well,” Mai Lee murmured, “when she phoned for us not to wait supper for her, she did say something about a pretty special sort of emergency.”

“What’s England got to do with it?” Josie asked.

Placidly, Bertha said they would find out soon. Cherry tried to control her own curiosity. While waiting for Gwen, the other three brought her up to date on Spencer Club news. Marie Swift was on vacation. Vivian Warren was working for a surgeon out West, and loving it. Ann Evans was in Canada with her husband. Bertha reported with enthusiasm on her job as clinic nurse in a settlement house here in New York, near the girls’ apartment. Gwen and Josie were on private-duty cases. Mai Lee, now a pediatrician’s nurse, said that working with children “is the happiest nursing I ever did. . . . Cherry, it’s your turn to report.”

“Yes, how did you like working with the new junior volunteers at Hilton Hospital this past summer?” Mai Lee asked.

“Our teenage Jayvees are a wonderful help at the hospital,” Cherry said, “especially in view of the nurse shortage.”

The other girls nodded. There simply were not enough nurses to go around. Every nurse had too many patients and worried about having insufficient time to give each patient the fullest attention and care.

“I must admit that helping train the junior volunteers was a load, on top of my job as staff nurse,” Cherry
said. “I’m really ready for my vacation. England would be a wonderful place to spend it.”

Mai Lee gave her tinkling laugh. “Look at her! She’s all ready to go, at the drop of a hat.”

The door flew open and Gwen Jones burst in. “What a day I’ve had!” she exclaimed. “Where’s Cherry?” Gwen’s short red hair stood on end and her freckled face was smudged. In other words, she was her usual exuberant self. “Cherry! Hello!” She and Cherry hugged each other. “Hi, kids,” Gwen said to the others, and all but bounced down onto the couch. “Have I ever some exciting news to tell you! Gosh, I’m starving—”

Bertha, who was the Spencer Club’s best and chief cook, brought in the heaping plateful of homemade potato salad and cold roast beef she had saved for Gwen. Josie solemnly poured her a glass of iced lemonade. Gwen dashed out to wash her hands, then dashed back, sat down, and offered the plate of food to Cherry.

“Have some?” Gwen asked.

“No, thanks. I had dinner on the plane,” Cherry said. “What’s this about wanting to ship me off to England when I’ve barely arrived here? A fine welcome! You can’t wait to get rid of me!”

Gwen gave her a fond look and said, “Just let me have some nourishment, and I’ll tell you all about Martha Logan’s broken arm.”

“Martha Logan?” Mai Lee repeated. She reached for a book on the coffee table and held it up. It was an historical novel. On the back of the book jacket was a
photograph of an attractive woman in sports clothes. “I’ve been reading this book by Martha Logan. Is the author your patient, Gwen?”

Gwen nodded, gulped down a big bite, and said, “She’s the one. By the way, I’m not being unethical in talking to you about my patient, because what happened to Martha Logan probably will be in the newspapers, anyway. She’s all set to go to England next week, to do research for her next book, and this afternoon she had a nasty fall. Fell down a whole flight of subway stairs. Broke her arm—her right arm, it’s a simple closed fracture—and gashed and bruised both legs, quite badly. She’s awfully shaken up, poor thing. But she insists on going ahead with her trip.”

“Your Dr. Merriam treated her?” Josie asked.

“Yes, he was called by Mrs. Clark, who’s one of his long-time private patients. Mrs. Logan and the Clarks are friends,” Gwen explained. “She came from the West Coast two or three weeks ago to stay with them before flying to London.” Gwen took a long sip of lemonade. “Fortunately, Mrs. Clark was with Martha Logan when she fell. The doctor sent an ambulance to bring her to the hospital. He set her arm there and put on a cast and had her lie down for a while. Mrs. Clark insisted that Martha Logan rest and recover at home rather than at the hospital—thinking of the expense, I guess, and a broken arm really isn’t enough reason to occupy a hospital bed.”

The other nurses agreed. Gwen paused for breath, then went on, “That’s when Dr. Merriam telephoned
me. It was five o’clock, and I was just going off duty at Mrs. Jackman’s apartment.” She turned to Cherry to say, “I’m on private duty, daytime, severe heart case—Well, Doctor asked me to go to the Clarks’ apartment and give Martha Logan some comfort measures. Of course I went and did what I could—got her out of her clothes and into a nightgown and into bed, washed her and combed her hair. She was very grateful just for the personal hygiene. I propped her arm on pillows to support it, but we had a hard time finding a comfortable position.

“I let Mrs. Logan rest a while,” Gwen went on between bites of her supper, “and then I explained to her that we mustn’t let the arm grow stiff. She was awfully game about moving her arm now and then into a different position on the pillows. I know it hurt her. She was good about moving her right shoulder, too.” Gwen said, “She and I checked whether the cast was too tight and interfering with her circulation. Fortunately her fingers didn’t change color, and she was able to move them easily when I asked her to, several times; when I asked if her fingers felt numb or tingling, she said No.” Gwen let out a sigh of relief. “Mrs. Clark will look in on her during the night.”

“What’s Martha Logan like?” Cherry and Mai Lee asked in the same breath.

“Well, she has a sense of humor, and managed to grin about the pain in her arm and shins,” Gwen said. “Her friend, Mrs. Clark, is more upset than she is because—for some urgent professional reason—the
trip to England must be made on schedule. Fractured arm or not.” Gwen looked straight at Cherry. “Dr. Merriam asked me whether I knew of a good nurse who’s free for a month to go abroad, and I—well, I—ever helpful…”

“We can guess,” Bertha broke in. “You recommended Cherry.”

“Well, at least I suggested Cherry as one candidate for the job,” Gwen said.

“Thank you for that,” Cherry said to Gwen. “But can Mrs. Logan go?”

“Dr. Merriam would rather she’d wait and have a good rest,” Gwen said, “but she has some very special appointment and says she can’t wait. I overheard her say ‘No telling when I’d get a second chance there.’”


Even if Dr. Merriam decided she was qualified, even if Martha Logan liked her well enough to engage her, would she—in view of the nurse shortage—have the right to go? It was one thing to be on vacation, yet easy to reach in case Hilton Hospital needed her. It was quite another matter to go off to England.

“Will Martha Logan really need a nurse?” Cherry asked Gwen. “If she simply needs a traveling companion, someone to help her dress and take notes and pack, I wouldn’t be justified in taking such a job. Not when nurses are so urgently needed on really serious cases.”

“Of course she’ll need a nurse,” Gwen replied. “I guess I didn’t make it clear how badly she’s hurt.
The dressings on her legs will have to be changed frequently, the arm in the cast observed for any swelling, her general health and diet watched, since she’s run down. That’s nursing. Actually, Cherry, it’s a serious private-duty case, trip or no trip.”

Mai Lee said gently, “I appreciate how Cherry feels. The hospital nursing she’s been doing is so urgent. On the other hand, Cherry, you need a vacation, so couldn’t you look at this assignment as half vacation, half work?”

Gwen said, “I—er—took the liberty of making an appointment for you with Dr. Merriam at his office, tomorrow morning at nine, and with Martha Logan at the Clarks’ apartment at ten.”

“Wow!” exclaimed Josie. “To think that Cherry might be going to England!”

“How soon?” Cherry said gratefully but weakly. She shook back her dark curls. “It takes time to get a passport and plane reservations and—and—”

“Martha Logan doesn’t leave until a week from tomorrow,” Gwen said. “You’re in luck.”

Then Cherry wailed, “Oh, I left my nursing kit home!”

“Lend you mine,” said four friendly voices.

“And what will my family say?”

Everyone smiled, knowing Cherry’s lively family. If Cherry announced she were going to the moon, her parents and her twin brother Charlie would give her a grand send-off and hide any misgivings. At least this was Gwen’s impression of the Ames family, she said.
“Cherry’s going to England!” Josie babbled. “Just like that! Oh, my goodness, it’s eleven o’clock! Good night!”

They all moved to adjourn. Cherry and Gwen shared one of the small bedrooms, as they used to when all eight—Marie, Ann, Vivian, Mai Lee, Bertha, Josie, Gwen, and Cherry—were visiting nurses in New York. For a long time Cherry lay awake, listening to a neighbor’s hi-fi set. She felt excited about the chance to travel abroad, yet half wanted to stay and visit here for a while, then maybe fly up to Quebec for a few days, and then to Washington, D. C., which she loved. She might persuade the Spencer Club to join her for weekends. England seemed far away, and Gwen’s recommendation more of a nice try than a real chance to go. Well, tomorrow would decide!