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Interview with Sr. Carmen Esqueta, nurse

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Sister Carmen Esqueta is a Sister of Charity of our Lady of Mercy. She

knows Dr. Nevado well because she assisted him in the operating theater for many years. "He taught me all I know," she says. She saw for herself how Dr. Nevado's ailment reached the point where it prevented him from working.

"I lived in Almendralejo from 1962 to about 1967," she says. "I returned in 1988 until, in 1992, I went to America, where I stayed for 16 months. From 1962 to 1967 I was working in the Nuestra Señora del Pilar Hospital."

Was it then that you met Dr. Nevado?

"Yes, at that time Dr. Manuel Nevado was working at that hospital. I remember that in 1962 he had just finished his medical speciality, was unmarried and lived in the hospital. It was then that I started helping him in the operating theater. I owe a lot to Dr. Nevado in my work, for I can

honestly say he taught me nearly everything I know, such as how to take X-rays, to anesthetize and everything else you need to be a theater nurse."

What memories do you have of Dr. Nevado?

"All that time Dr. Nevado was developing into an excellent doctor. He was an extraordinarily hard-working man, who prepared each operation he was going to perform very well, and was extremely kind to the nurses. We performed all types of operations: stomach, prostate, back ... We did a lot of orthopedic surgery, which was a specialization that required doing operations under X-rays. Dr. Nevado worked for long periods at a time with his hands under those X-rays, at high intensity, for he made a great effort to ensure everything was well done, and we

wanted to check down to the last detail."

Were you able to observe the injuries Dr. Nevado suffered?

"I was working with Dr. Nevado for many years. First, from 1962 to 1967, at the Nuestra Señora del Pilar Hospital in Almendralejo, as I said. Afterwards, when I returned to Almendralejo in 1988, I again had the opportunity of helping him at the hospital in Zafra. I could see that the X-rays had been affecting his hands – both his hands. I first noticed that he was losing sensation in his fingers. It is well known that surgeons work under a lot of nervous tension, and any mishap annoys them. I noticed this loss of sensation in his fingers, because he rejected some instruments, simply because he could not handle them properly."

What other details do you remember?

"Other symptoms began to appear later, rather like eczema, and in the final phase he had ugly ulcers which appeared mainly on the three central fingers of both hands. Even his nails became deformed, and looked like parrot's beaks."

Did you know what was the matter?

"I knew that the damage was unquestionably due to radiodermatitis and that there was no possible cure. He could only soothe the pain a bit with some ointment like Vaseline."

What happened afterwards?

"There came a time when it was too painful to scrub his hands properly with good detergents, as all surgeons do before performing operations. Surgeons also put talcum powder on the inside of the gloves. Dr. Nevado, in the final stage, could not tolerate

talcum powder either. He would put on sterilized linen gloves under the rubber ones."

How did this affect his work?

"Little by little he had to limit himself to doing only minor surgery. He stopped practicing traumatology and did not do any operations with X-rays. The only thing he did was to mend minor fractures and put limbs in plaster. In the end he had to abandon surgery altogether."

Have you seen him since those years?

"When I came back from America I spent some time in Almendralejo, just before my recent move to Andalucia, but I didn't have a chance to meet Dr. Nevado personally. I've only spoken to him on the telephone. It was difficult to meet him because he was making arrangements for his second son's wedding. I was really

sorry not to be able to see him, because I owe a lot to him in my work, and I sincerely admire him. I think he's one of the best surgeons I've ever met – extraordinarily intelligent, and very generous towards patients. During all those years I worked with him, he never complained of being tired, and we could call on him at any time of the day or night."

Were you surprised when you heard he had gone back to normal practice as a surgeon?

"Although I haven't seen him recently, I was very glad to hear he had gone back to surgery, though of course without exposing himself to radiation again. I'm obviously surprised that he's operating again, knowing that he had grave radiodermatitis on his hands, and that it's incurable. I've been told that he's been able to return to full

surgical practice because his hands are completely healthy now, although, as I say, I haven't seen them myself."

Do you know how he was cured?

"I've been told that the only explanation for this extraordinary cure is that Dr. Nevado himself prayed for a cure some months ago through the intercession of Blessed Josemaria Escriva."

Jaén, 5 October 1993

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