

Helen L. Morton
1913 - 1981
STAFF PHYSICIAN AND MEDICAL DIRECTOR, EMERITUS

B.A., University of Nevada, Reno; M.D., Medical College of Virginia,
Virginia Commonwealth University, June 6, 1950
California State University, Fullerton From (est.) September 1, 1963 To (est.)
August 31, 1973
Birth: July 28, 1913; Death: November 11, 1981

Helen Morton was an enigma: Strong and weak, firm and soft, healthy and ill, friendly and reserved, an advocate of change and one who safeguarded the status quo.

She always supported those that were not as strong of body and spirit as she, but her own diabetes was a constant threat and bother. The bother became a hindrance. So she began a rigid diet, exercised, discontinued insulin and eventually went to Thailand to become a missionary, who put a pack on her back and hiked the mountains to care for the ailing villagers.

During World War II, Helen was a Seventh-Day Adventist teacher on the pineapple island of Lanai when she felt called to the medical field. She completed nurse's training at White Memorial Hospital in Los Angeles. Still not quite satisfied, she applied to the Medical College of Virginia in the days when women in Medicine were rare. In 1963, Dr. Morton decided that private pediatric practice would not be compatible with her health and that institutional care would be more fitting. She was told of a small institution called Orange County State College being started in Fullerton. She arrived on campus as Dr. Ernest Becker was about to begin a full-time physician search. Her qualities were immediately evident to Ernie and President William Langsdorf. Dr. Morton designed the first formal Health Center on the fifth floor of what is now McCarthy Hall. A continual surprise to her was that so many students could find the clinic as the escalator only went to the 4th floor and the elevator only worked part time. She quipped that if patients could locate us they must be mentally alert and have no cardiac problems. But find it they did, and thousands were treated yearly.

In 1969, Dr. Morton's health problems caught up with her and she fell ill with encephalitis. Her physicians gave up hope but her powerful will did not. She recovered, but desired to work less and stepped aside from the position as Medical Director. She wanted to rest on the status quo that she had developed: the fine staff of nurses; a complete laboratory and x-ray service; and the physicians who included as well as generalists, a dermatologist, a gynecologist, a pathologist, and an orthopedist. She continued to emphasize the counseling side through the staff psychiatrist and organized a rotating residency program with UCI Medical Center. Still active,

she began, in conjunction with Loma Linda University, one of the first accredited Nurse Practitioner Programs in the state. She personally lectured and guided it.

As years went by, Dr. Morton continued to function as staff physician by another yearning grew stronger and stronger - to be a Medical Missionary in Thailand. The challenge was not to be turned aside. She prepared, trained physically and medically and went out to that country. Eventually, Dr. Morton realized that a hospital was a more efficient mechanism to utilize her knowledge. So she started a hospital.

One day, when she went to the city, she was accosted and robbed. Not being one who cringes, she testified against those who had stolen her purse. They were apprehended and jailed for three months. Upon their release, they sought out the only little mountain hospital in the vast area, found Dr. Morton and killed her.

We who loved her shall always remember this quiet, firm, brilliant maiden lady. She was creative, a strong counselor, and a person who demanded excellence of herself and of her staff. In sickness and in health Helen L. Morton, M. D. was a true physician and friend.

Submitted by
William H. Wickett, Jr., M. D.
Medical Director, Emeritus
October 17, 1984