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Elvira López Mourín, the First Nurse in the World to Participate in an Aid Mission with the Air Force: Returning an Identity to the History of Nursing

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Abstract

Elvira López Mourín was a professional and military nurse who was part of the first promotion of professional nurses of the Spanish Red Cross. She moved to the Melilla Hospital to meet the health demands of the Rif War. Her participation in the act of the first Spanish sanitary flight made her news in the media of the time and has allowed her figure to be recovered. Her professional career was lost after 1933 when she joined the Army's Junior Auxiliary Corps as a nurse at the Madrid Emergency Military Hospital.

The act that commemorates Elvira López Mourín is her successful participation in the first medical flight mission in Spain. During her professional career, she worked as a nurse in Melilla and as part of the Subordinate Auxiliary Corps of the Army at the Madrid Emergency Military Hospital.

Keywords: 20th Century; Aviation; Feminism; History; History of nursing; History; Hospitals; Military; Military nursing; Nursing research; Women's rights

Background

The War of the Rif, also known as the African War or the Second War of Morocco, consisted of numerous clashes between the colonial forces of mainly Spain and France, who despite different Treaties and Conferences, for example the 1860 Treaty of Tetuán; the conference of Algeciras in 1906; the Franco-Spanish Protectorate Treaty of 1912; and the Madrid Conference 1925; to exercise the colonial protectorate, establish administration and territory in the north of Morocco and look to maintain the peace between the natives, especially with the dictator Abd El-Krim [1-3].

The conflict began in 1909 when a group of Rifians (the indigenous Berbers from the Rif) attacked Spanish soldiers who are working in the iron mines. Among the colonial interest over the said territories and resources, there began a conflict that cost Spain a great deal of human and material resources. The Rifians declared their own republic led by Abd El-Krim. Operations began with a disembarking of troops at Larache (Yebala) in 1911, which led to a ceasefire of the conflict in the aforementioned territories. Peace lasted between 1914 until 1919. In 1920 and after the Treaty of Fez years before, a Spanish protectorate over the North Moroccan Rifians was established, signed over by the French, who were incapable of pacifying the territory and needed the external support [2].

France ceded to Spain, under the reign of Alfonso VIII and Victoria Eugenia de Battenberg [4] in the Treaty of Fez, the administrative power of 5% of Moroccan territory, the colonisation implied that the political, economic and military power were in the hands of a protectorate, whilst still maintaining parts of the old governmental practices, more specifically with the sultan who maintained a symbolic and maximum authority over Morocco and is represented in the Spanish territory by a vicar or Khalifa. One important characteristic of the Moroccan War from the end of this 19 century until 1927 is that it was discontinued over time and not all of the territory was encompassed. Its wartime zenith peaked between 1921 and 1927, a period which corresponded to the aforementioned War of the Rif [3,5,6].

1921 gave rise to the so-called “Desastre de Annual” or “Battle of Annual” [7] where a number of Spanish soldiers lost their lives, due to a sudden ambush from the mountains by a group of Rifians led by Abd El-Krim. After the battle of Uarga in 1925, France collaborated with Spanish military operations in seizing Abd El-Krim in 1926 and peace prevailed in 1927 [3,5].

In this disastrous Battle of Annual, led by the General Fernandez Sylvester, the Spanish Army advanced West towards Melilla with the objective of reaching Alhucemas but suffered a defeat where between 7000 and 10,000 soldiers are said to have fallen. The leader of the Rifians, Abd El-Krim tried to implement his political project and declared the Rif a Republic and would later try to be recognised as an international power of the age such as England or France, without success. After the disastrous consequences of the battle, the minister of war ordered the creation of an investigative committee be commissioned, led by the much decorated General Juan Picasso who carried out the investigation known as the Picasso Files [8], however before he could explain his findings before the court, the General Primo de Rivera staged a coup d'état on 13 September 1923, impeding the Picasso case from ever being heard and thus being forgotten [5,9].

The “Desastre de Annual” implied that the sanitary capacity of the territory was reinforced, mainly the Melilla’s Military Hospital.

Between 1923 and 1926, up to 6 attempts were made to establish peace, but all failed. In November 1924, with the retreat of Chauen, the Spanish armed forces recovered a large part of their lost terrain in the East but could not advance any further. In February 1925, after the retreat of Chauen, the Rifians attacked the French occupied zones, taking over front lines and even arriving near Fez, so in June and July 1925 the Hispanic-Franco Madrid Conference was held, where France applied for military and logistical collaboration with Spain. In September 1925 the Alhucemas landing took place, which had been scheduled for 1913 but was never executed. In this landing the Spanish army took Axidir and started advancing from the North Southwards, while the French Army advanced from the South to the North. In April and May 1926, the last attempts to achieve peace were made through talks in Uxda, where the Spanish, the French and the Rifians tried to come to an accord but in the end no agreement could be reached. In May 1926 the last battle took place in which the Spanish mobilised 40,000 soldiers and Abd El-Krim surrendered to the French before being exiled to the Island of Reunion. In territories such as Yebala and Gomara, some Harki continued a guerrilla war, and it wasn’t until July 1927 when the war finally came to an end and the last rebels finally gave up their weapons [5,10].

Purpose

To determine the beginning of the career life of Elvira López Mourín, to establish the first global aid mission in the Spanish Air force.

Methods

A preliminary search was carried out in the most frequent internet browsers to obtain the information available up to now. Next, a review of historical sources was made, which included a selection of books on the history of Spain, the Rif War or the Annual Disaster and articles on the same subject, as well as books that reflected the history of nursing and articles to talk about the same theme and about Elvira López Mourín. The results were again scarce, also finding different press releases and webography. There was a viewing of several documentaries on the history of Spain and contemporary global history.

On the other hand, the village of Viládiga, San Martiño de Río and Láncara were visited on numerous occasions, sometimes to obtain information, and other times to observe the nurse’s birthplace.

Interviews were conducted as a direct (Manuel Sobrado) or indirect (other informants) positional historical source. The interviews were carried out by Dr. Isidoro Rodríguez Pérez.

The Historical Memory Archive was contacted in person and was contacted by email to obtain documents.

The National Center of the Red Cross was contacted to obtain documentation related to the studies of the nurse at the Hospital of the Spanish Red Cross San José and Santa Adela.

In this way, non-serial quantitative historical sources were obtained, the archival documentation obtained being the same. Personal documents of the nurse and official documentation from the Official State Gazette or the Ministry of War were obtained.

Results and Discussion

Elvira López Mourín, called Elvira López Maurín in some texts, a professional nurse and also a military nurse, was born on September 3, 1893 (Image 1), as can be seen in her birth certificate [11], although some sources erroneously consider the year 1891 as her year of birth. However, the Book of baptisms of San Martiño de Río, a parish in Lánacara in the province of Lugo (Image 2) and the Civil Registry date her birth to September 3, 1893 [12].

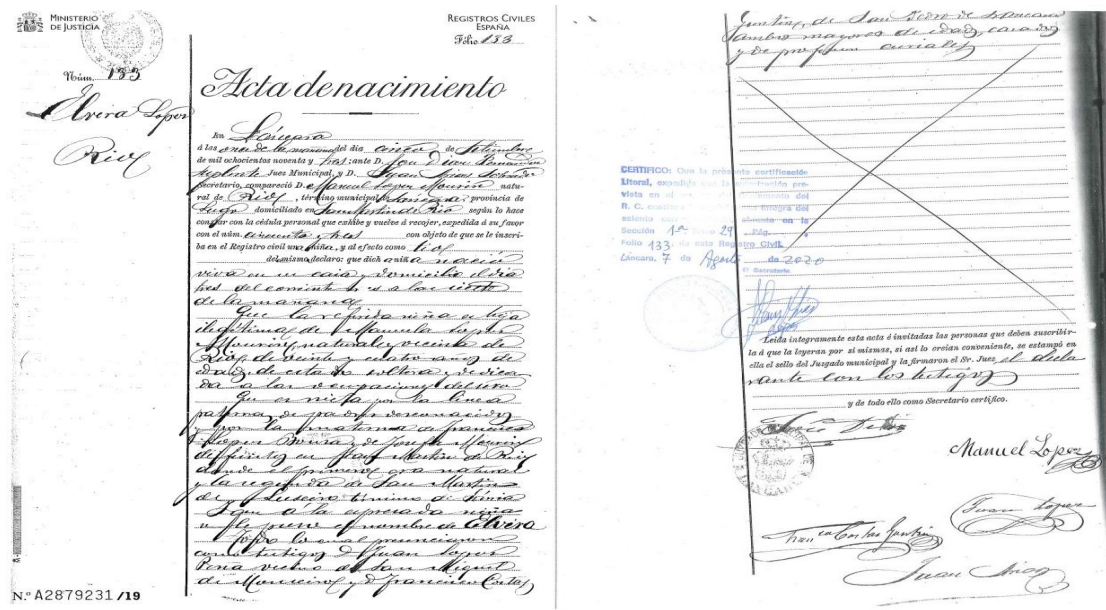


Image 1: Birth certificate of Elvira López Mourín.



Image 2: Elvira's birthplace.

According to one author, she is the daughter of a humble marriage, although she is the daughter of a single mother, hence she takes both surnames as her mother and those of her aunt who was her godmother, as can be seen in the aforementioned Book of baptisms. These two circumstances, added to the fact that she never completed basic education until adulthood, not knowing how to read or write until then, implied an even greater disadvantage for nurse López Mourín [13-19].

When she was 21 years old, in 1915, she had the idea of studying professional nursing, as it was that very same year when these studies were first organised [14]. In said course, a program for passing on knowledge was established together with a practical theoretical exam in the Faculty of Medicine. This fact brought an end to the time in the doctrine which, on the one hand, defended that caring for the sick was such a noble act that it should not be remunerated; and on the other hand, one that attributed the technical skills of the doctor and other tasks to Religious Communities [13-17], which created a contradiction (Image 3,4).



Oscar González Murado, Archivero diocesano del obispado de Lugo,

CERTIFICO:

Que en este Archivo Central Parroquial Diocesano de Lugo está depositado el **Libro III de Bautismos** de la **Parroquia de San Martín de Río**, Diócesis y Provincia de Lugo. Y en el folio ciento treinta y nueve, consta una inscripción que copiada literalmente dice:

"En el día tres de Setiembre del año del Señor de mil novecientos veintea y tres, yo D. Narciso Parado Vazquez, cura parroco de San Martín de Río, bauticé solemnemente con el nombre de EL TRIUNFO una niña que había nacido a las tres de la mañana del mismo día, hija natural de MANUELA LOPEZ MOURIN, natural y vecina del lugar de Río de esta parroquia del mismo nombre y de padre desconocida. Abuelas maternas Mercedes Lopez natural y vecina que es su abuela y de esta parroquia de San Martín de Río y Josefa Mourin, natural que fue de San Martín de Jacón y vecina de esta dicha Mía, fue en su abuela Carmen Lopez Mañón natural y vecina de esta referida parroquia de San Martín de Río, y tía carnal de la niña. Padre de la provincia y obispado de Lugo. A la madre le advoré el parentesco espiritual y otras obligaciones, y que así consta lo firmo con dicho día, mes y año en su propia y rubricada." [Firma y rubricada:] "Narciso Parado Vazquez"

Y para que conste, y surta a los efectos oportunos, lo firmo en Lugo, a 15 de Julio de 2020

Legalización, Lugo a 23 JUL. 2020



Edo.: José Mario Vázquez Carballe
Vicario General



Firma
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Tf.: 982 231 143 – E-mail: archivo@diocesidelugo.org

Image 3: Baptism Book.

Solu 55

2ª SECCION		4ª SUBSECCION		GRUPO A/		DESTINOS
Nº por clase	NOMBRES	Nacimiento	FECHAS Ingrº o roin greso servº		Antigüedad en el empleo	
PRACTICANTES DE MEDICINA						
<u>Asimilados a Capitán</u>						
1	D. Pedro Latorre Olivera.....	1- 8-1862	18- 7-1917	16- 7-1932		Parque artº Barcelona...
2	D. Ramón Sales Pena.....		1-10-1922	1-10-1937		Hosp. Mar. Valencia.....
3	D. Alberto Buchón Fornse.....		1- 2-1923	1- 2-1938		Hosp. Mar. Madrid.....
4	D. Juan González Sanjurjo.....		16- 5-1923	16- 5-1938		
<u>Asimilados a Teniente</u>						
1	D. Cecilio Tortosa Castilla.....	17- 6-1900	1- 8-1924	1- 8-1924		Hosp. Mar. Madrid.....
2	D. Antonio Sesé Quiles.....	8- 8-1901	1- 7-1926	1- 7-1926		Hosp. Mar. Valencia.....
3	D. Pedro García Soc.....	16-11-1901	24-11-1927	24-11-1927		Hosp. Mar. Madrid.....
4	D. Pedro Gomez-Leal Gómez.....		31- 3-1928	31- 3-1928		Hosp. Urgº 6º Grupo.....
5	D. Eusebio Mojic Melardo.....	30-11-1905	1- 7-1928	1- 7-1928		Hosp. Atia. Torrente.....
6	D. Afrodasio José Gómez García.....		5- 9-1928	5- 9-1928		Parque C. Automóvil.....
7	D. Laurentino Giralda de la Fuente.....		3-11-1930	3-11-1930		Hosp. Mar. Madrid.....
2ª SECCION		4ª SUBSECCION		GRUPO B.		
ENFERMERAS						
1	Dª Leonor Argir Cozón.....	15- 5-1884	12- 2-1921			Hosp. Mar. Urgº.....
2	Dª María Josefa García Martínez.....	20-12-1889	12- 2-1921			Hosp. Mar. Urgº.....
3	Dª Elvira López Maurin.....	3- 9-1893	12- 2-1921			Hosp. Mar. Urgº.....
4	Dª Rufina Cristobal Montes.....	29- 7-1896	11- 2-1921			Hosp. Mar. Urgº.....
5	Dª Dolores Pantoja Muñoz.....	15-12-1893	11- 2-1922			Hosp. Mar. Urgº.....
6	Dª Josefina Ranilla Corchón.....	15- 1-1898	22- 4-1929			Hosp. Mar. Urgº.....
7	Dª Pilar Zahonero Benavente.....	12-10-1896	25- 8-1931			Hosp. Mar. Urgº.....
8	Dª Idalia Dehesa Mena.....	3- 9-1887				

Image 4: List of those admitted to the Military Hospital of Melilla.

At the age of 24, she moved to Madrid, where she entered the Saint José y Saint Adela Red Cross Hospital in Madrid on August 2, 1918, on its second day of opening, to form part of the first class of professional nurses in the Red Cross together with four companions, namely; Miss Josefina Soria, Adoración González, Nila Zapatero and Aurora Fernández [13-17]. This investigation considers that it could be the triggering moment for the change of the nurse's second surname. Thus, when the protagonist moved to Madrid and registered herself with the local council, it is likely that this was when she changed her second surname to Maurín, and from this moment on all her official references bore this surname. The possibilities of this event could be infinite, among them the pronunciation of the second surname by Elvira (a non-Galician speaker does not perceive the subtle difference between a closed "o" in "Mourín" and an "a" in "Maurín") and that it might have been changed involuntarily by the administrative staff; There is also the possibility of a voluntary change to Castilianise the surname from the Galician Mourín (typical of the regions of Sarria and Láncara in the province of Lugo to a Maurín from other latitudes such as Asturias, Zamora, Huesca, Lleida or Jaén. Or even a third hypothesis may have led to the change in her second surname given the relationship that could exist between "mourín" and "moro" (referring to the North African Berbers) and due to a xenophobic cultural issue and given the moment generated by the Rif War. Be that as it may, it is demonstrated that she was born with the surname Mourín and at the time of registering for her identification papers, the change to Maurín took place, which would accompany her for the rest of her days.

Despite the difficulties described above, she managed to complete her studies and the practical internship in the stipulated three years, and so, on February 15, 1921, she finished her studies as recorded in the Professional Nurses Registry Book [15-17]. At this point it is necessary to remember that this certification was specifically to provide services in the Red Cross, however, due to lack of regulation and conflicts with other health bodies, midwives and practitioners, the title did not qualify her for to fulfil duties in any other institutions other than the Red Cross. It would not be until 1923, when the regulated official exam was held, before a court made up of aristocrats, among which was the Duchess of Victoria, when Elvira passed, with a score of eight points out of ten. From this moment on she finally had the necessary licence to practice as a professional nurse in any state health institution [20].

During her years of training at the Red Cross hospital in Madrid, she met Dr. Víctor Manuel Nogueras, a professor and scientific director of the hospital, as well as its clinician. She also knew María del Carmen Angoloti y Mesa, better known as the Duchess of Victoria, who would be appointed director of Red Cross hospitals as Lady (Aide) of Her Majesty Queen Victoria Eugenia.

On December 10, 1920, eight nursing positions were announced, two first-class and six second-class posts, arising from the need to create and supply the emergency military hospital in Melilla, plagued by the war with Morocco. Elvira passed the exam on February 12, 1921, in front of an evaluating tribunal including Medical Commander Dr. Victor Manuel Nogueras, as candidate number 638, along with 19 more nurses, the first 8 nurses were assigned second-class status, substitute nurses, and the remaining 11 nurses are appointed in expectation of vacancies as stand-by [15-17,21].

With this staff, Dr. Nogueras organised a surgical team in Melilla that, under his direction and orders of Carmen Angoloti (the Director of Hospitals in the Rif area), began to attend to medical demands in 1922 and strengthen the healthcare capacity of the North African city. In October of that same year, the attacks on Tizzi Azza intensified and in November there was a bloody attack on the Dar Drius fort, which left 23 dead and 366 wounded [13-17].

On November 1, 1922, they were called upon to assist 366 a continuous line of wounded soldiers being extracted from the slopes of Mount In-fermin; however, they did not have the necessary surgical equipment or medical material to maintain sterile conditions and perform optimal cu-ration techniques to prevent gangrene and other types of infections. At 8:00 p.m., the High Commissioner of Spain in Morocco, General Ricardo Burguete, ordered for an airplane parked in the Dar Drius camp should fly to the Nador aerodrome (Melilla) at 10:00 p.m. to pick up a surgical team and transfer it back to Dar Drius. The planes used were De Havilland N^os 52 and 45, commanded by Captain Pedro García Orcasitas and Lieutenant Abelardo Moreno Miró, respectively. Dar Drius' takeoff time was 22:04 and the flight duration was only 36 minutes [16,17].

So, Dr. Nogueras organised a small team of four people, including a nurse, and for the first time a military flight with health personnel was chartered to attend to the medical demands of the devastated camp. Until then, according to military regulations, women were not allowed to fly, so it was to be expected that nurses couldn't fly either, nor be forced to fly on this type of military mission (as they were not military per-sonnel either), since it exceeded the maximum danger levels required of a female professional nurse, not to mention that it was the first mission of this caliber that it would be flown not only at night flight, but also at low altitudes and could be easily attacked from the ground. These were also reasons for objections raised by military officers before their commanders; the preposterous idea that a nurse could even participate in this flight. This was the first time in the world, that a woman, and a nurse participated in a aid mission with the Air Force.

News spread and reached the ears of the nurses and without hesitation, Miss Elvira López Mourín volunteered to accompany Dr. Nogueras on his mission, exempting the military commanders from any responsibility during the mission, despite strict military regulations that prevented women from flying. In the face of this medical emergency, Elvira showed tremendous will and predisposition, and joined the first flight and aid mission of Spanish aeronautical history. Some texts reflects that the words of this professional military nurse, faced with the refusal of her bar-racks commander, were: "We have come to save lives. If we don't act now, when are we going to?" Her gesture spread throughout all the posts in Melilla, to such an extent that the phrase "the Lugo woman has volunteered" was spread in the Melilla barracks [13-17].

Three planes prepared at the Nador aerodrome picked up medical supplies and the four medical personnel; Commander Dr. Víctor Nogueras, Dr. Manuel Crespo, Medical Assistant; Mr. Quintanilla Navarro, and the nurse, Elvira López Mourín. The planes took off on a 34-minute flight, landing in Dar Drius at 11:34 p.m. Dr. Nogueras and Dr. Manuel Crespo were on the first plane, the health assistant Mr. Quintanilla Navarro with instruments on the second, and the nurse Sta. Elvira López Mourín on the third with more material. The pilots were Captain Pedro García Orcasitas, Lieutenant Abelardo Moreno Miró and Captain Rafael Llorente.

The aircraft used were De Havilland DH4 model bomber biplanes, made of wood and canvas with un-silenced engines, the passengers were placed in an open cabin, shared the space with multiple boxes of supplies and were exposed to wind, cold, smoke and oil.

It was written that:

"The pilot helped her out [of the plane]. She looked like she had come out of a bunk bed. The aviator bowed like a minuet, handing her a little doll that he carried in the plane as a mascot".

After landing, Dr. Nogueras and his team set to work, operating until five in the morning. Despite the numerous criticisms of the manoeuvre due to the lack of foresight and coordination between the forces deployed, it is a fact that the medical personnel from Dar Drius had been withdrawn to Melilla the previous day, Dr. Nogueras and his team worked tirelessly and steadily. On November 2, 1922, once the scope of the attack was known, the team was helped by the Duchess of Victoria, some Ladies of the Red Cross, among whom were notable nurses Mrs. Antoine and Miss do Viqueira, and two Sisters de Caridad of Saint Vicente Paul, Sister Isabel Moya, Sister Carmen Bastos who carried dressing material, ice and other supplies for seriously injured soldiers. They all travelled in cars and trucks with supplies from Melilla, evacuating the wounded to different hospitals in the days that followed.

On November 3rd, Dr. Nogueras and nurse Elvira López returned by airplane and were recommended for awards [16,17]. The Queen telegraphed Elvira directly, asking that she come to Madrid to receive the recognition that was awaiting her. The President of the Council of Ministers, José Sánchez Guerra, received her on November 7th before a special audience and offered her "A high honorary reward". On the 11th, Queen Victo-ria Eugenia recognised Elvira's trait of altruism and courage before an audience. Finally, King Alfonso XIII granted them an audience at the Royal Palace on November 20th [15-18].

An example of congratulations is found in the following text.

“[...] I beg Your Excellency to congratulate on my behalf the nurse, Miss Elvira López and Commander of His Majesty Dr. Víctor Manuel Nogueras for their commendable conduct with their participation in the Dar-Drius camp on the night of the first [of November] by airplane to proceed with the healing of the wounded, as well as other staff auxiliary to the army and who helped the wounded with their care” [22].

The historical relevance of this event and its success became news in the most important Spanish newspapers of the time, not only because of the technological achievement of the medical service and the beginning of Spanish Medical Aviation, but also because a professional nurse who was enrolled in the first class of such a degree, and then became a heroine and the first woman to fly in a medicalised plane in Spain. Even so, many of her promised rewards never arrived, leaving the protagonist in an abyss of silence until Dr. González Canomanuel recalled her in his doctoral thesis [15-18].

The Red Cross joined her tribute by publishing in its magazine “el rasgo de enfermera”, which referred to:

“A note of bravery, of self-sacrifice, of surplus in the fulfilment of duty, has been recorded due to the determined sustained fight against the harkas on the peaks of Iferrin(...) But the weaker sex constantly showed signs of strength, self-sacrifice, heroism, and the professional female nurse, Miss Elvira López, did not hesitate, got on another plane and minutes later, after disregarding the dangers, flew (...)” and “By transferring to our pages, with intimate satisfaction, this very article published by our esteemed colleague in *El Telegrama del Rif de Melilla*, corresponds to Sunday, November 5, we also congratulate, in the most effusive way, the heroic lady who not in vain and legitimate pride, wears the glorious armband of the Red Cross “.

Also, during the national holiday of the Red Cross in the chapel of Santa Isabel in Zaragoza on December 12, 1922, she was remembered:

“We must also remember the work and efforts of the Duchess of Victoria alongside our wounded and sick in Morocco and the recent accomplishment of nurse Elvira López, who on November 1 flew by plane to provide her services at the front of operations”.

In the *Military Medical Journal*, the donations collected by the Central Park of Military Health for Elvira’s tribute were published, placing the economic amount at 469 pesetas.

On February 21st, 1924, after an act of homage to Dr. Pagés at the Buen Suceso military hospital in Madrid, which was attended by H.M. Queen Cristina, the Head of the King’s Military Quarter on behalf of His Majesties, Generals Weyler, Moltó, Valdivia, Nieto, Pastor and Mínguez, a tribute was paid in the adjoining room to Elvira López Mourín and she was given a cheque from the *Caja Postal de Ahorros* with 1,070 pesetas from a subscription from the Health Corps destined to pay homage to Dr. Nogueras’ team, the latter giving the prize in full to the professional nurse [16-18].

Inhabitants from her hometown reported that Elvira came every year to spend the summer in August until the early 1960s, she was accompanied by her godson José María, who once Elvira died would keep returning to visit friends, she had made in the summer seasons in the Viládiga village, belonging to the parish of San Martiño do Rio in the Municipality of Lancarés. Her memory, in those who knew her, continues to endure, leaving an important reminder because she was a very helpful, intelligent woman and they emphasise that she was serious, that her military character was noticeable (from being with them in service, points out one of those who knew her) that she was always willing to help when necessary, one neighbour recalled an occasion when, as a child, she had to administer injectables; “The truth is that I remember that she pricked me well and did not hurt me” [23], another informant recalls that she took a child from the town to Madrid to be treated by expert traumatologists [24].

Another recalled that she would go to her house for the summer every year in August (Image 5) and that he had a very good relationship with her, referring that “She talked a lot about the war in Morocco, but he does not remember what she had told him”. This last person, who regularly visited her in Chamberí (Madrid), places her residing at number 11 *Calle Cuatro Caminos* in Madrid, where she lived with Pepita, a fellow nurse, and her godson José María, the son of a high-ranking charge of the army [25].



Image 5: House where Elvira spent the summer.

This information agrees with the records found in this research, since Elvira is described in the C.A.S.E. (Image 6) to have carried out her role as a professional nurse at the Military Hospital number 2 in Madrid, where she worked at the X-Ray Cabinet in 1933 [26].

FICHA núm. _____

Hospital militar nº 2

APELLIDOS		NATURALEZA	DOMICILIO	SUELDO
López Mañán		J. Media del Rio (León)	S.º 1ª Guzmán 44	500 p.º mensuales
Nombre		Fecha del nacimiento	Fecha de ingreso	Jornal
Elvira		3-10-94	18-2-31	
Profesión	Cargo	Filiación política	Número del carnet	
Enfermera Militar C.A.S.E.	Gabinete Rayos X.	Alfama		
DESTINOS			CAUSAS QUE LOS MOTIVAN	
Día	Mes	Año		
30	Enero	1933	O.C. de 30-1-33- (D.O. nº 26)	
			<i>J. 226</i>	

Image 6: Duty Token as a Military Nurse (C.A.S.E.).

We lose track of her from this moment on, it is believed that with the outbreak of the Spanish civil war on July 18, 1936, Elvira joined the Hospital de Maudes converted into Hospital de Sangre and called Hospital Obrero de Maudes or Hospital Obrero de Cuatro Caminos. In 1939 when the Spanish Civil War was about to end, the Hospital was transformed into a Military Emergency Hospital, although there is no documentation to determine whether Elvira continued working here. Inhabitants from her village recall that they visited her whilst she was living in Cuatro Caminos Street [in Madrid] and that she was working as nurse in a centre nearby [25].

The professional military nurse Elvira López Mourín died on July 21, 1961 in Madrid at the age of 67. It is believed that she died whilst still working as a nurse at the Maudes Military Hospital (Image 7), because at that time, the professional nurse retired when she was seventy years old, the cause of death recorded on the death certificate says she had a myocardial insufficiency and she was buried in the Almudena Cemetery [27,28]

MINISTERIO DE JUSTICIA REGISTROS CIVILES ESPAÑA

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Número 854

REGISTRO CIVIL DE *Accusado*

DATOS DE IDENTIDAD DEL DIFUNTO:

Nombre *ELVIRA*

Primer apellido *LOPEZ*

Segundo apellido *MOURIN*

Hijo de *Acustario* y de *Acustario*

Estado *soltero* nacionalidad *española*

Nacido el día *10* de *Septiembre*

de *este cuarenta y cuatro mil novecientos ochenta y tres* en *San Nicolás del Río de Segura*

Incurrido al tomo *de Hospital Militar de*

Donde falleció *de*

DEFUNCIÓN: Hora *once* día *veinte*

de *Julio* de *este mil novecientos veinty uno*

Lugar *de*

Causa *accidental*

El enterramiento será en *el cementerio de*

DECLARACION DE D. *Acustario*

En su calidad de *accusado*

Domicilio *de*

Comprobación: Médico Decretado *de*

Colegiado núm. *430324*

OTROS TITULOS O DATOS

ENCARGADO *de*

SECRETARIO D. *de*

A las *veinte y cuatro* horas de *este* día *de*

de *este*

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Image 7: Death certificate.

The year 2020 was the International Year of Nurses and Midwives, declared by the World Health Organisation, in gratitude for the invaluable professionalism of nurses in the face of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic, the same year in which Correos or the Spanish Postal Service, launched an issue of stamps with nurse Elvira López Mourín as the protagonist (Image 8), providing: “A unique opportunity for countries to show how much they appreciate their nurses and midwives, react and give them the necessary support so that they can fully develop their enormous professional value.”



Image 8: Stamp of Elvira López Mourín.

A special issue stamp was launched, with a circulation of 1.2 million stamps as a tribute to the profession in Spain, on sale from June 5, 2020 [13-19,29].

Conclusion

Elvira López Mourín was studied in 1918 as a professional nurse, she was worked as military nurse at the Hospital of Melilla during the Rif War and she was the first woman and nurse to fly in a aid mission with the air forces at the world.

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Conflict of Interest

No conflicts of interest.

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