

NIGHTINGALE SONGS

October 1990

Volume 1, Number 2

MAN/NURSE

To be a man
and a nurse;
A contradiction
and compliment
Opposite almost,
the hard and the soft;
The ying and the yang;
intouch with the deep.
Called to a new place
to live;
In gentleness and quiet,
in fear;
Anticipation and excitement,
an adventure;
And yet a sound inside
calls from the dark.
To be a nurse
and a man;
In giving, openness
and receiving;
All that it means
to be whole:
I listen to the sound within,
and hear the winds of my healing.

Tim Porter-O'Grady

FINAL JOURNEY

Your eyes are watching God—
focused on a place I have not
been, and cannot go.
But still, my job is to take you
there.
If I do it well, I lose you—
and yet, what else is left?
Hand in hand, we start on the road to
eternity.
I stop, you go on—
my job is done.
The caring never ends.

Mary Gulbrandsen

HEALING-HIV+

Your wounds weeped
Purulent with the discharge of our
Pain and fear.
They tried to hide, only to reappear.
The treatment gentle, slow
A warm, loving balm to your soul.
Your stomach was fed the comfort
Food of your youth
And your lips drank in deeply all
You knew and understood.
The memories sweetened each moment
You stood, face to face with terror of
What might be mistook.
All inside shifted as slowly it came,
A gradual awakening; embracing of pain
As you conquered your demons
A lightness appeared
To stay forever and
Abolish all fears.

Lorraine M. Wheeler

WE WILL ALWAYS BE TOGETHER

Our time together in one dimension
is over
But, in another, we will always
be together
For you will always be with me
What you shared and what we
experienced is ever-present:
the pushing-resisting of
struggling, the moving in
decision, and the negentropy
of critical life situations

All of this, is now a treasured
dimension of who and what
I am - and I love and
thank you for it, with my
heart and soul
For we will always be together!

Charles J. Beauchamp

THE SENSE OF NURSING

My eyes see two people held within the boundaries of our
humanness, yet connected in dimensions unseen...

flesh
 blood
 energy
 nurse
 patient
 humanity.

My ears hear the cries of man's needs and despair from the past,
present, and future...

sustenance
 security
 hope
 comfort
 fear
 resonancy.

My hands feel the expanse, yet unity, of the universe in the
microcosm of one touch...

warmth
 coolness
 pressure
 pulsation
 wholeness
 Integrality.

My taste detects the bitter and the sweet of the lives I share
for an instant in space-time...

happiness
 sadness
 loneliness
 togetherness
 multidimensionality.

My mind envisions a place and time where mind, body and spirit
are symphonic in purpose and destination...

touching
 healing
 helping
 helicy
 health.

Marla Ruth

A PRIVATE PLACE

I've weighed the child
And measured him from head to toe
Encrypted terse details of his
 fragility
In jet black ink upon a bureaucratic
 form.

With trailing tubes we more across
To quietly sit together as I finish
 up.
I cannot reach her, cannot see the
 shapes
She sees through vacant, staring
 eyes...
Can't know what hopes she had or has.

If I could split this thing
 apart
Then rip it into minute bits and
 fling
Them banished to the howling
 wind
I would begin again...
Create it all afresh, entire.
Would grab her in my arms
Across the thrashings of her
 lusty child.

I finish with my work
She stands encumbered by entangled
 cords
And cannot grasp the plastic bag
To which her dying child is tied.
It is too much for her to bear.

I - helpless - ask naively, "Can I
 help?"
But now somehow she has it gathered
 in.
Without response she moves away,
Unseeing eyes transfixed by inward
 prescience
Of surcease in a far-off, private
 place.

Sanford M. Russell

In silence we find ourselves.
Then perhaps a path that leads to
serving others.
From the center point we move quietly
full circle in lunar resonance.
Beautiful trees appear grown tall
where there was barren soil.
Caring emerges not from an open wound
that is raw and painful, but
from an open heart, from a died
and resurrected depth, a center
point from which all the pain
and suffering Humanity knows
rests.
Trying to care for some other reason -
examining one's own truth and
intention - Fear of not knowing what
to do to the other...
In Healing, our pain is released and
transformed - No longer frantic
to do the "right thing" - we
comfort the other by just being
who we are. You may rest with
open heartedness - Christ has no
other way to work through you.
So relax - find love in who you are;
you will see and others will
know how comforting you can be.
In time you will accept that not
knowing the answer is both part of
knowing and having an answer.

Julia A. Howell

THE EIGHT BEATTITUDES FOR FLOOR NURSES

Blessed are the floor nurses for they
have mountains to climb.

Blessed are the floor nurses for they
must be brother, sister, wife,
mother, father, friend to all
patients who hunger to be heard
and cared for.

Blessed are the floor nurses who laugh
at themselves for their patients
will laugh with them, and their
hearts will be lightened.

Blessed are the floor nurses who can
see that their hard work has a
purpose for they'll be on duty
tomorrow.

Blessed are the floor nurses who teach
their patients to do what they
are capable of doing for they'll
be rewarded with success.

Blessed are the floor nurses who
listen to their patients for one
day they shall also be heard.

Blessed are the floor nurses who allow
others to be imperfect for they
too shall be given that
courtesy.

Blessed are the floor nurses for all
their incredible work and
continued perseverance for they
are truly appreciated by their
fellow nurses.

We couldn't do it without you.
Thank you.

Bernice Basara

FROM THE EDITORS:

The purpose of this publication is to create a forum for nurses
to share their silent moments of reflection on their nursing.
We intend that nurses who write for these pages will both
offer and receive encouragement and support for the love of
nursing.

NIGHTINGALE SONGS is free to be used by nurses and for
nursing. We encourage the copying and sharing of its
contents; there is no protection by copyright. We will print
only stories which have been signed and submitted by the
authors. We plan to publish one issue each season.

Responses to the first issue have been gratifying and we thank
all who have been in touch with us. Some examples of
nurses' sharing are the reflections on nursing included in this
second issue, and there are others we must save for another
time. We have been told of copies being circulated, posted on
bulletin boards, discussed in classes and read as parts of
papers presented at professional meetings. We have been in
groups to hear nurses tell stories never before told, stories for
which value seemed unknown before NIGHTINGALE SONGS
encouraged the telling and the retelling.

Some nurses responded with financial support for future
issues. We appreciate this assistance and ask that checks be
made to one of us since we are avoiding the expense of a
special account. We invite your continuing responses to this
forum and encourage your contributions to these pages.

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UNDERSTANDING

A couple of months ago, I met an 85 year old lady in a retirement center where I was working as a nursing assistant. That lady was not the oldest of all the residents but she was the most inactive. Her daily activities consisted of walking about 100 feet from her room to the dining-room, then move to come sit in front of the nursing station until the next meal. After dinner at 6:30, she walked back to her room to sleep. She didn't talk to anyone and didn't want to be part of any activity even on invitation.

After I had observed her, I felt sorry for her. I looked at her kardex, she wasn't taking any medication but sleeping pills every night. In order to be able to help her and get acquainted with her, I asked to have her in my ADL list.

The first morning I entered her room, I called her by her last name respectfully. I presented myself as the one who will help her from now on. She was still in bed, soaking wet and smelling. Embarrassed, she started crying. I comforted her. I told her that there is beautiful sunshine outside, that I am going to help her have a shower and get ready to go and enjoy it. After she got dressed up, she was very happy and she went out while I fixed her room. During the day I kept an eye on her. I took her for a walk. I suggested that she use the bathroom so that she can stay dry.

After a week of relationship based on trust, respect and understanding, I discovered from her that she has a sister in that same facility who doesn't put up with her because she is incontinent. The other members of the nursing team treated her badly also, they say she is lazy.

Again, for her sake, I changed shifts from day to night shift. The first night I went to help her get ready for bed, I gave her a good warm bath, dried her well and put talc all over her especially between her big legs. She used to wear diapers; I asked her, "are you comfortable with the diaper?" "I am a child now, I have no choice; they just put it on me", she replied. I said, "I will not put it on you if you don't want it. Will it bother you if I wake you up during the night to use the bathroom?" "Please do that, I will be more than happy to get up." I wanted to try helping her get control over her body. So for two weeks I woke her up every hour, the next week I modified the schedule to an hour and a half, then every two hours. After a month or so, I went in the room at 2 o'clock a.m. I was surprised to find her coming from the bathroom by herself. I congratulated her and gave her a big hug. She was so happy to be able to get up by herself and find herself clean and dry every morning.

Since then I observed that she started to say "hi" to other residents, to speak to some of them, even to get a seat in the TV room. She became less reluctant. She was ready to participate in activities. Her sister came to me to express her appreciation. The lady, my patient, said, "Now I am somebody. I am willing to do anything you tell me to do. You are a nurse, I love you very much."

I was very happy and thankful to God for the opportunity He gave me to be of some help to that lady. I was happy with myself too for that constructive work. It gives me confidence in pursuing my education in order to reach my goal, which is: being more qualified to help others grow, maintain or regain their integrity.

Marie Porcena

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