

NIGHTINGALE SONGS

A forum for nurses to share their silent moments of reflection on their nursing.

September 1994

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BATTLEGROUND

"What is it with you and your cigarettes, anyway?" I angrily thought to myself after yet another heated debate with my father about smoking. As usual, he had been defending cigarettes as a source of pleasure saying he always enjoyed smoking. He was against federal attempts to regulate levels of nicotine or restrict access. After smoking for sixty years, he quit last year when the severity of his lung disease nearly took his life. Why couldn't I make him understand that cigarettes were killing people?

He must have sensed my frustration or read my mind, because as his O₂ concentrator clicked on and off, he looked at me softly and said "You know, Snicklefritz, it was cigarettes that saved my life many times during the war." My father rarely talks about THE WAR. He was a combat infantryman, a machinegunner, part of the 5th Division known as "Roosevelt's Red Devils." He started slowly...

"At night we were the point. Machinegunners never got relieved. The cold was the worst. You can't imagine the cold. Raining - below freezing. We would take turns sleeping. You couldn't sleep for more than an hour. You had to rely on your buddies to wake you up. You had to keep moving to keep from freezing. Many only lasted one night and had to be sent back because their feet were frozen. I think we lost more men to the cold that winter than from enemy fire.

I remember standing up one night with tracers going by my head, yelling 'Go ahead and shoot me - put me out of my misery!' My buddy had to pull me down. He said 'Have a cigarette - calm yourself!' We had to cover our heads with raingear to keep anyone from seeing

us light up and giving away our position. You can't imagine the warmth and comfort in one cigarette. We were worried about living through the night.

There were many times the warmth of a cigarette was the only thing that kept us alive. We were short of supplies that winter, but they always kept us in cigarettes. Even our K-rations came with a pack. They always kept us in cigarettes - I'll give them that."

As he talked, I tried to imagine, to understand, the inhuman conditions he was describing and the meaning cigarettes held for him. As I listened to my father's story and watched him pull his arms to his chest and cup his hands to his face as if he were holding something as precious as life itself, I finally heard what he had been saying for years. I began to feel my anger slip away. Anger with my father for smoking all those years and for nearly dying before my 3 year old son had a chance to grow to know him.

I felt my eyes fill with tears, not for the suffering my father experienced during the war, but for the suffering he experienced because his daughter, the nurse, never understood.

Shirley Countryman Gordon

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is free to be used
by nurses and for nursing

The copying and sharing
of its contents is
encouraged.

TRIBUTE TO A NURSING PROFESSOR

Professional nursing education
requires the smooth transition
of knowledge, ethics, and caring.
From one seasoned professional to another
yet to become.

Be gentle, you who guide
the future generations of caring beings.
Expose our senses, gradually, to the
inequities in this life
of those struggling to be.

With the passage of time, and
the assimilation of competence,
compassion and courage,
We who are now unknowing will join with you
in the ranks of the knowing.

Joanne Thompson

HEALTH ASSESSMENT

Instruments, scales, assessment skills.
What do they measure anyway?

Do you see the spirit of a man?
Do you hear his pain?
Do you feel his burdens?
How do you know his history?

Can you assess a man's strengths or,
do you simply judge him by his weaknesses?

Inspection, the art of seeing beyond the obvious.
Palpation, the art of feeling without touching.
Percussion, the art of tapping to the rhythms of life.
Auscultation, the art of hearing the silence.

The art and science of health assessment is
a lifelong skill.
Learn your craft well.

Martha A. From

STEPHANIE

Fragile as a china doll.
Who are you?
So innocent, so small.
You are not as well as before;
your blue eyes used to twinkle.
You used to smile, asking for more.
Who could blame you?
For have you ever known someone who is
there just for your own benefit?
You are precious, and I have been told,
"Don't get so emotionally involved."
But I am new at this.
Tears have been shed.
Does it ever get easier?
I wish I could give you
a home, sweet bliss.
But a nurse can't become a "rescuer,"
because it only hinders your progress.
What I want for you is a home,
true care, love and happiness.
A place to rest.

Kimberly G. Taylor

CONSENT TO CARE

I was so enraptured by the beauty of this life
that I had forgotten the pain.
I was in such awe of this exquisiteness of
special tender moments
that I had forgotten the suffering.

The darkest sky made herself known to me
as I submitted myself to the inevitable.
How easily can these sterile spaces
and sullen soul intrude on my being?
Too EASILY.

For they have not come to know me for who I am
but for who they desire me to be.
They probe and manipulate my body due to
consent from my self
but not from my soul.
I am to share with them what I know -
what I hold in my heart.
But they are impermeable
They smother me with care,
Yet leave me uncared for.
Perhaps tomorrow we will meet anew.

C.J.

ARCHIE'S JOY

I would have missed this
Joy today
Had you not noticed, my friend.

Big deal, so what, my toe
Can move, what difference
Could it make?

Guillain-Barre has stolen my body. Yet
I noted, excitement in your voice
As you remind me it has spared my
Left toe. So what, big deal--
What a joke!

Use it to talk, to share myself,
Are you even sicker than I?

It would take forever to spell
Out my thoughts that are
Cramped up inside.

Or would it? Do you have
Forever to stay and wait by
My side.

How long will it take to
Spell out "Thanks" -- for helping me
to see the Joy of today.

Bonnie Wesorick

HEALING MOMENTS

A wish denied
ignited rage
shouts in anger
then withdrawal

Trembling hands
Nails painted with perfection
an attempt to hide
the anguish within

Trembling shoulders
flowing tears
sobs, sorrow
How to reconcile
self-expectations
reality?

Gentle presence,
acceptance, reflection
affirmation

A moment
the clouds clear
options unfold
reconciliation
GROWTH!

Linda G. Willits

JOURNAL:Being, in the moment:

D-day is approaching. Remembrance. Solemnity. Courage. Tears. Brokenness. And I am there. Pristine cliffs. Bloodied white sand. Stiff, outstretched arms. A torn, wave-washed letter home. And I am there. Who am I that I should mourn so deeply? Who am I to grieve with heavy heart and welling eyes? For whom do I weep? I weep for myself, for I am there. The uniforms are all the same - bloody red, torn, scarred - the color matters not, nor the army when the uniform lies still, when the uniform allows its life to seep into the dirt.

I am there, and I see, and I ache, for I am nurse. I am essence. I am, not only now; I am then. Caring for you now, I cared for you, then. *I am the product of your caring. I live because of you.* You are not gone; you are here. In me. And I am nurse, and I am caring person; I am your continuance, and I rejoice!

⊠

Many, many unspoken heroes died in World War II and in all of the wars before and in all of the wars since. During the "Great War," my parents fought in opposing armies; both families were decimated, but the German swastika and the English bulls-eye were eventually united in death. So I am there on both shores. And I am there as nurse, as caring person, actively, in the moment and in the continuum of unbroken caring.

M. Purnell

MOMMA

Momma.
 Mon mere.
 Momma mia.
 Madre.
 Have you ever heard those pleading words
 In a dying man's refrain?
 Does he see her?
 Is she waiting in the heavens?
 Perhaps, assuring a joyful reunion.
 Or does he simply cry her name?
 Seeking solace.
 Wanting peace.
 Smooth transition.
 Relief from worldly suffering and pain.

Is he recalling his days of childhood?
 She was there as he fell.
 She smoothed his path.
 Unwinding twisting roads.
 She protected, guided, and nurtured.
 Tepid brows aptly cooled.
 Lacerations nimbly mended, as easily as hearts.
 Dreams acknowledged and encouraged.
 Courageous, patient, comforting.
 He never thought her an artist.
 Yet these were her precious arts.
 Is this he, again, seeking?
 Oh, Momma.

Joanne G. Thompson

**FROM THE EDITORS:**

Several have inquired about what seems an extended silence and we can only reply that even Nightingale Songs is effected by changes and seasons. Changes included Savina's move to University of Mississippi School of Nursing in Jackson as Professor of Nursing. It's the fall season now, we have assistance from fresh volunteers and hope to publish more regularly this year. We are grateful for a contribution from the College of Nursing at Florida Atlantic University that supports production and distribution of the issue you hold.

As always, we thank you for being in touch with us and invite you to send your reflections on your nursing for these pages.

Editors:

Marilyn E. Parker, Ph.D., R.N.
 Savina O. Schoenhofer, Ph.D., R.N.

Technical Assistant:

Marguerite Kachouroff

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P.O. Box 811535

Boca Raton, FL 33481-1535

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