

One nurse's story

Assuming... wow, did I just start with that word? That is the one word that I never use, as an emergency room nurse but, for this next question, I feel it's safe. I assume that, as a nurse, in general, the single most asked question you get is, why did you want to become a nurse? Am I wrong in this assumption? I think not. My thought on this is that most nurses don't have one concrete answer, but have more of a time of arrival. You see, nursing is not a job or career, but a true calling. I seldom ask people why they chose their profession when they say they are teachers, lawyers or doctors and seldom hear others ask why of these other types of professions or occupations. This is because most people can see themselves doing some other person's work, but I have heard no one tell me they would love to do my work. They do tell me often that, "I could never do your job, it takes a special kind of person". Nurses do not see it, because it is who we are. I did not choose to become a nurse, I was born a nurse.

My arrival took a little time, as I practised my craft of caring long before formal training. I was the shy, cautious boy who always seemed more sensitive to the needs of those around him. I picked the kid on the playground who no one wanted on their team. Although a "jock", somewhat popular, I always had a group of friends who were not so popular and "nerdy". Little did I know that would equate to "Rulers of the Universe" 30 years later. But I am proud to say that I put it in writing in my grad bio in high school that my biggest "pet peeve" was "people who put down others". Looking back, it made sense.

At 14, I first became engaged by my calling, with a feeling of bewilderment and pure adrenalin. Walking to soccer practice one vibrant summer day, I had the misfortune of witnessing a pedestrian-automobile collision. An elderly gentleman (at least to me at 14) was walking across the street and was struck by an oncoming truck causing the gentleman to fall to the street and strike his head off the curb. I was walking right by this scene and without pause ran to the man's side, pulled my jersey from my bag, and applied pressure to his freshly bleeding and opened scalp. The police and ambulance services arrived within minutes (two hours to me) and whisked the man away, and the police went on to speak to the driver of the truck. I stood alone for a brief moment and vividly remember the feelings and thoughts that went through my body. "Wow! That felt amazing, hope he is okay, wow! I saved someone, I feel warm all over, wow. I love this feeling!"

From there, it was on to high school, where I became more of a "jock" attaining the honour of being appointed the male athlete of the year. Of what significance is this? Well, you trying telling your guidance counsellor in 1985 that you are thinking about becoming a nurse after high school. I remember being told something like, "You wouldn't be good at that, you are

a great athlete, you should be a gym teacher." Must have had something to do with the stigma of homosexuality and it being a pre-requisite, I suppose. Well, I enrolled in university not knowing what I was going to do. Struggled and had fun, because deep down inside I knew what it was for me to do. So, I dropped out of school for a few years and worked a little on my self-confidence, and then, at 25 years of age, I thought, "Well, who the heck has the right to hold me back from the thing in life I am meant to do?" I enrolled in the Salvation Army Grace School of Nursing in 1992 with the goal of honing my "jagged wings" of caring and polishing them up for the next chapter of this journey.

Now, I am proud to say that "I am a registered nurse" working for more than 18 years on the front lines, mostly in the emergency room. I still get asked often why I became a nurse. The truth is, at the risk of sounding quirky, in the words of Lady Gaga, "I was born this way!"



Thank You
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 NENA Inc., NL Director

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