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#### **Author**

Monplaisir, Regina, RN

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# Drafting My Path To Nursing

Author: Régina Monplaisir, RN, CNII

The principal of my Haitian elementary school shared with my grand aunt that being a nurse would be in my future. My principal retold the story of the time at recess when I was on the playground and a little boy fell and scraped his knee. As the blood oozed from his knee and his shrill cries echoed across the playground, most of the kindergarten class gasped and ran away. I ran toward him. Apparently, my grand aunt shares that I had always been that child, The Caregiver, though I did not realize it then.

Years later my same grand aunt got ill and a home health nurse would visit her. I would watch in awe as she administered medications and helped to bathe her. She seemed to anticipate my grand aunt's needs and she had a calm presence and caring demeanor. I remember the brilliant white crisp linens that clothed her from head-to-toe: nursing dress, stockings, a pair of classic wedge slip-ons and the traditional nursing cap. She was attentive, competent, and professional, and as a 10-year-old, I wanted to be just like her.

My freshman year of high school I moved to the U.S. I had taken a drafting class as an elective, and I fell in love with the meticulousness and precision of the drawings. Drafting classes were about understanding general engineering and architectural procedures. I was certain that I was going to be an engineer. I loved math and science, and I had taken four years of drafting courses. Nothing in my extracurricular activities screamed Nurse. Two years into my college career and after multiple pre-requisite engineering classes, I realized that I

lacked passion for these topics. I enjoyed the creative aspect of engineering, but when it came to the formidable mathematical formulas my brain would shut off. Mainly though, I was more social than I thought. I was shy growing up, I therefore tended to take classes that minimized interaction with other students. However, the more involved I got with engineering the more detached I felt from the rest of the world.

I wanted to work with people. I expressed my concerns to my father, who was obviously bothered. During our heartfelt conversation he suggested that I try nursing. I had not thought about it since my first drafting class. However the image of that nurse who took care of my grand aunt returned and I thought: "why not? I did want to be a nurse at one point in my life." I liked helping people and providing them comfort. I also thought that I could apply some of what I learned in my engineering classes to nursing.

Nursing school was a challenge. The Registered Nursing program was severely impacted during the late 1990s. While awaiting a spot, I started a nine-month Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) program. Six months into my studies I was called in to the Nursing Director's office and was told that I would not be completing the LPN program. I was confused and panicked. I saw my life flash before me; *if I did not become a nurse, and engineering was out, what was I going to do?* My mind was going a mile a minute. Meanwhile, the Nursing Director tried to snap me back into the present:

"Regina! Are you ok? You are in the RN (Registered Nurse) program. Regina?"



**Régina Monplaisir, RN, CNII** has 23 years of nursing experience, primarily in the Cardiac ICU. Her continued dedication to providing exceptional care to patients has not faltered as her values are deeply rooted in ensuring the well-being and comfort of those under her care. Furthermore, her purpose is to share her knowledge by precepting new student nurses, aiming to be a guiding influence and role model in their professional development. She is committed to ongoing personal and professional growth, reflecting a steadfast dedication to both nursing and personal advancement.

I asked in disbelief, "I'm in the program?"

"Yes! A spot became available. You're in," she stated.

It is amazing how you can feel so low one minute and utterly exhilarated the next - a feeling that would repeat itself several more times during my career. I was going to be a Registered Nurse (RN).

One of those low points occurred during nursing school. I questioned if I



Figure 1. “The ARcturian”

was even cut out to be a nurse. I was unsure if I would pass my nursing classes. My grades did not reflect my efforts and I was barely making it. Infuriated and unnerved, my clinical days further enhanced my apprehension at being a competent nurse. I remember a moment vividly when I was assigned a patient who had undergone orthopedic surgery.

From the moment I entered this patient’s room I could not meet her needs. I could not find the emesis basin she desperately needed. As she was vomiting, I inadvertently removed her intravenous (IV), and failed multiple times at replacing it. To make matters worse, I hung an antibiotic that was supposed to infuse for over half an hour, only to realize that I had hung Bumex, a diuretic, instead and it infused all the way through. I almost cried right in front of the patient. She eventually “fired me” because according to her, she did not like my perfume. Ironically, I was not wearing perfume, and it felt like the only good thing I had done that day. I felt defeated.

As I trudged along during the next few years of nursing school, I found that the courses did not get easier, but somehow clinicals did; I was able to establish a routine and managed my time better. The rotations that stood out to me most were Labor & Delivery and the Intensive Care Unit (ICU). I aced all

my mother baby exams but struggled with my exams for cardiac hemodynamics and critical care. This might have been a sign of where I would end up in my nursing career. During my last year of the program, I worked as a Nursing Assistant on the Telemetry floor. I wanted to gain some work experience in healthcare, and some financial independence. There, I met many nurses who became my mentors and searched for opportunities for me to do procedures such as insert IVs, foley catheters or nasogastric tubes (NGTs), or to do dressing changes. They also took time to go over electrocardiogram (ECG) strips and cardiac meds with me which helped me tremendously during my cardiac rotation. Eventually, I completed the RN program and passed my boards. I was finally a nurse.

I worked on the same Telemetry floor as a new graduate for a few months and then relocated to San Diego to begin work as a nurse on the Telemetry floor at UC San Diego Health (UCSDH). After a year, I transferred to ICU. Two years after working in the ICU, I transferred to Labor and Delivery (L&D). I was an L&D nurse for six months before deciding that critical care was home to me. I enjoyed Labor & Delivery, but I felt that with critical care there was always something new to learn, and

working at a teaching hospital meant that I would get to see first-hand all the medical advances that were unfolding.

Fast forward to today, I am a critical care nurse, a resource nurse and a mentor to new nurses. I enjoy precepting new graduates because it is a way to pay tribute to the mentors I had along the way. Besides providing me with a living, nursing also helped shape me into the woman I am today.

Whenever someone asked how long I have been a nurse, my response was always; “Oh I’m new.” I think that was my answer because I was still shocked that I worked as a nurse. There was a moment during my nursing career that something seemed to click though. I was precepting a nursing student. He had such a nursing curiosity and asked appropriate and relevant questions. In the past, I would have struggled to provide the correct answers, but that day the answers seemed to flow out of me, and he understood the information I provided. “Your explanation was so much clearer than when I learned it in school,” he shared. From that point forward, my confidence as a nurse skyrocketed. I felt like a Nurse. I noticed that confidence spilled over into my everyday life as well. I was much calmer under pressure and not reactionary. I was no longer the shy little girl who dreamed of becoming a nurse, and I owed this to my Haitian principal who saw that spark in me and to the home health nurse who inspired me as she cared for my grand aunt. I had drafted my own path.

The accuracy and detail I learned in drafting courses translated into the detail and critical thinking that I need as I care for patients in the Intensive Care Unit. I have been a nurse now for 23 years, most of it in cardiovascular critical care. My drafting classes has also inspired me to be more creative artistically. I dabble every now and then by drawing and painting — one I am most proud of is a mural of my son designed with bright colors and lines (Figure 1). As a nurse, I have realized the importance of merging the skills along my journey — the colors, the lines, the zigzag path you might take to get there. I do not know what the future holds, but I hope to continue to be inspiring, innovative and a positive influence on other nurses.