

“Stand Tall Stephe”

A Personal Reflection

I had the privilege of attending my first perioperative nursing conference in Regina, Saskatchewan this past May. In fact, it was the 22nd National Conference hosted by the Operating Room Nurses’ Association of Canada (ORNAC).

Wow! I sure didn’t know what to expect, but I was delighted to experience such a bright and captivating world of perioperative nursing excellence. The theme of the conference: Elevating the Field of Perioperative Nursing.

The highlight of my experience: The Olympic ‘Ring’ the conference seemed to have to it (pun intended). Being a competitive women’s curler, curling on the World Curling Tour and having the opportunity in 2009 to compete at the ‘Roar of the Rings’ Canadian Curling Trials, the Olympic dream is one that is held deep in my own heart. The conference sure reminded me of that.

One of the educational sessions showcased the ‘Olympic Medacalists’ who shared their *moving* experiences working in the Mobile Medical Unit (MMU) in Vancouver during the games. What a team of admirable, brave and courageous individuals!

Another evening spot-lighted the proud singing of the Olympic theme song ‘I Believe’ by Glass Tiger’s own Alan Frew; made famous by Nikki Yanofsky. When he belted out “Stand tall and make the world proud...” that is when I felt truly honoured to be a nurse working in such a noble profession. I felt proud to be an athlete chasing her Olympic dream. I felt thankful for my mom (my Operating Room [OR] nurse hero) , my dad, my sister, all my family, friends and for my dear husband who have all encouraged me to stand up for myself and for what is right. Most of all, I praise God for guiding me and looking after me. I hope to make Him proud. I pray that He will help me to be who he wants me to be and take me where He wants me to go.

On the last day were the key-note speakers. They were marvellous. The Honourable Pamela Wallin who is a renowned Canadian journalist, diplomat, entrepreneur and now Senator shared valuable life lessons. She is simply splendid. Pamela said, “...Standing tall is speaking your mind, but making sure it is *informed* first.” She also shared that life is not just the beginning and the end, but it is the middle that matters too. During this time, we must not let ‘serendipity’ pass us by Pamela explained. This may

mean that we must take risks and say 'yes' at times when we would rather say 'no'. From her father, who was a man of few words, Pamela told us that "...If you are angry (which occurs in both work and life), be 'ice-cold'. 'Red-hot' anger is about 'getting even' and is about the other person. Being 'ice-cold' shifts the focus back on you. It is about staying calm, cool and collected. Being 'steely calm' is a commendable character trait for any OR nurse.

Dr. Wayne Halliwell gave the last key-note address of the conference. Wayne joined the Universite de Montreal Department of Kinesiology in 1976 after playing and coaching professional hockey in Switzerland. He later pursued his PhD from the Florida State University. Dr. Halliwell has worked with numerous amateur and professional athletes. These athletes include individuals that competed at the 2000 Summer Olympics in Sydney, Australia, athletes at the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver and various National Hockey League (NHL) teams.

Halliwell's presentation portrayed a link between Joannie Rochette's, Alexandre Bilodeau's and Jennifer Heil's Olympic performances and the need for OR nurses to also 'Stand Tall'. At the top of the hill right before his Olympic Gold performance in Vancouver, Alexandre Bilodeau said to himself with conviction, "No regrets...just go..." Alexandre was physically, mentally and emotionally ready. He had nothing left to do but *enjoy the ride*. We as OR nurses must also keep ourselves healthy, balanced and competent mind, body and soul. This will help us to face the *mountains* that lie before us.

Jennifer Heil revealed to Wayne that because of all her preparation and by fully embracing her Olympic moment, that she "...was completely *ready* and her belly was *smiling*..." As OR nurses we can all relate to times when we too feel the pressure to perform. If we allow ourselves to acknowledge this pressure, appreciate it and apply the pressure in a constructive and positive way, then we will truly set ourselves up for success. Our bellies will be thankful for it too!

And finally, there was the lovely Joannie. She portrayed one of Canada's greatest achievements during her own darkest hours. In the midst of the sudden death of her mother at the Olympic games, Joannie Rochette skated a fluid and flawless performance with dignity, grace and courage on the world stage. The composed and *steely calm* Joannie brought home the Olympic bronze medal that night. She later said to Wayne, "Thank you for helping me to *stand tall* when it counted the most..."

In conclusion, we, as OR nurses, need to 'Stand Tall'. We must be mentally, physically, emotionally and spiritually prepared to be able to perform at our highest level just like the magnificent athletes previously mentioned. This will help us to 'be our best' and in-turn provide the *best* for our

patients. Here are some final words from Wayne: "...In French, 'OR' means 'GOLD'...Is it an 'Operating Room' or an 'Opportunity Room'?" Working in the OR is our 'Golden Opportunity' to 'Stand Tall'. Show *courage* when the going gets tough, have *composure* when you may not feel it and be a *class-act* towards your colleagues, and patients. So just go...and be a *classy, world-leading you*.