



# ASPAN

American Society of PeriAnesthesia Nurses

## Message from the President

### Courage

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**ASPAN President 1996-1997**

I was once sitting on a ledge with nowhere to go but down. By choice, mind you. I was leading a pitch and had reached a point at which I could no longer ascend. No problem; my climbing partners held me secure through the rope attached to my sling. I descended down to join them and we returned to camp. We would try a new route in the morning.

When I began this endeavor two years ago, I looked at the challenges of leading ASPAN much the same as those found in climbing. There was a summit we had not yet reached. Our companions worked closely as a team, each bringing unique talents and enthusiasm. Although we had made steady, rapid progress and were well along in our ascent, we still had not seen the top. ASPAN had faced its biggest challenge and, though threatened with economic disaster, had survived. We reacted as true climbers would. We showed courage in carrying on, determination in finding a new route, and the resources to quickly regain our lost ground. Today the climb towards that summit continues. It's a climb that no one can predict completion of, if ever. But so like climbers, when asked why we do it, we answer simply "because it is there." As nurses, we show courage every day as we arrive at the workplace. It is a place that has presented challenges we are pressed to meet. A place we hardly recognize. It takes courage and determination to find ways in which to continue to practice and maintain the level of our standards. Often times our rewards are only the thanks and confidence shown to us by our patients. We feel threatened by the changes going on around us. Changes that we know will affect the way in which we give care. When threatened with uncertainty it is often natural for us to turn within. We lose sight of the big picture and focus down into a tunneled vision. Anyone who has been alone in the woods will tell you that looking at your feet as you walk along is a very good way to get lost. The important thing to remember though, is that we are not alone. We have the company of one another and there is strength in numbers. That is why ASPAN is so important to you and why you, as a perianesthesia nurse, are so important to ASPAN. We have strength with our numbers and along with that comes the power to affect the way we do our jobs.

Organizations often exhibit behaviors that mimic those of individuals. If threatened, they often circle the wagons and become defensive and withdrawn. In today's business world, few organizations will survive in this mode. By the time they realize that they have been shooting inward, the world passes them by. On the other hand, organizations that work together to identify common issues and then collaborate in addressing those issues thrive. This type of relationship often produces a more universal solution. The organizations present an united front with numbers that, if you'll pardon the expression, "have clout." In addition, sharing resources allows us to accomplish more. Again, there is strength in numbers. Only by gaining this strength, will we have the power to obtain our goals.

Last November, I was privileged to hear Beverly Malone, President of the American Nurses Association, speak about our turbulent times and the courage it takes to be a nurse in today's world. Her audience was made up of nurses representing over forty different nursing specialty organizations. A lot of what she said that day has passed from my memory. I do remember one theme that she carried throughout her message; that of courage. She spoke of how cycles of change sometimes cause us to lose sight of who we are. As she so succinctly put it, we are caregivers whose primary task is to deliver quality care. In today's economy and emphasis on cost containment it is often difficult to achieve that level of quality we have identified through our standards. She urged nurses in specialty organizations to look outside of their

specialties and to form collaborative working relationships, the purpose being to strengthen nursing's voice to those making policy and to those who are affected by those decisions; the public.

ASPAN has undertaken efforts to expand our collaboration with other nursing specialties for several years. We have had significant interaction with the Association of Operating Room Nurses (AORN) and the American Association of Nurse Anesthetists (AANA). We enjoy a relationship of mutual interests and are developing a forum in which all nursing specialty organizations involved in surgical services can participate. At the same time we have defined our boundaries, recognizing the uniqueness of our practice and that of other specialties. It is my hope that ASPAN will continue to be a leader in these collaborative efforts. The opportunities ahead are great.

When you read this, ASPAN will be welcoming a new leader choosing the route ahead. She is prepared and knows her business. For the last year she has protected me from falls and allowed me to take risks as I proceeded in a somewhat upward direction. For me, it was not too difficult. I was on a route that from its inception was well thought out and provided for. I learned to climb from masters in the art. They taught me that climbing, nursing, or anything that you have a passion for will hold you secure and give you purpose and direction in your movement. It's a pleasure to be along on this climb. The friends we have become and the trust that we have developed cannot be equaled. Someday, someone will look back down and wonder about those who brought them to the heights from which they will begin their climb. They will be awed by view.