



# ASPAN

American Society of PeriAnesthesia Nurses

## Message from the President

### The Height's Beyond

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**ASPAN President 1996-1997**

Mountains and heights have always held me in fascination. Growing up in a country of tall trees and tangled underbrush, it was natural to climb. For the higher my friends and I went, the more we were able to see. The land stretched out below, waiting to be explored. The horizon held the unknown, the promise of new experience, the lure of challenges yet to be met. I liked to climb. Climbing gave me freedom and equality. I was good at it and it was good for me. At some point in time climbing was no longer a hobby but an obsession. I lived to climb. I wanted to live among the peaks. Then I fell. I lost my best friend Kim. We weren't using a rope.

During my time in the hospital my life changed. I was suddenly thrown into the world of the patient. Totally dependent. The nurses that cared for me were special and I came to learn of the compassion and dedication they brought with them every day. Each day they taught me a little bit more. They helped me slowly begin to regain my independence. It was also during this time that I had a realization (my parents called it delayed maturation) that I needed to plan my life a little closer to home if I wanted to achieve my goals. Forty-nine days after my fall I left the hospital, struggling on crutches.

One year later, I became an orderly at that hospital and then an EMT. Climbing returned to my life, but it was different. The things that were important to me had changed. The nurses I worked with infused me with a spirit of what it was to care. They encouraged me to join them and in 1979 I became an RN.

My first position was in a Recovery Room where I had worked as a student. The RR became the PAR, then the PARU and finally the PACU. I first became involved with ASPAN in 1984 when I attended the national conference in San Diego. There I met people from my own component and began to get involved in the local scene. Each year at the national conference I seemed to become a little more involved in organized PACU nursing. The friends I have made and the knowledge I've gained have created a nirvana for me that only one who finds comfort on a small ledge in a rainstorm would understand. ASPAN replaced climbing and became my source of challenge.

Climbing involves teamwork, trust, leadership and liberal doses of faith. You climb with your eyes, planning your route from a distance, perfecting your grand strategy. You begin to formulate your step-by-step tactics. Once on the rock and upon closer examination, alteration of the preliminary plan occurs when it is found that things are not what they had appeared to be from a distance (kind of like the nursing process).

Balance is a very important component to climbing. The rule of thumb is weight over feet and always maintain three points of support. Don't overextend. If one hold fails during movement there are still two points of contact, normally enough to allow recovery of balance.

This brings up the issue of the rope. Don't leave home without it. The rope has to be strong enough to hold a falling body, yet light enough to be carried. It has to be tough enough to resist abrasion and flexible enough to handle easily, even when wet or frozen. The rope connects the team into one.

The first person on the rope is the leader. The leader is charged with the route-finding decisions. The leader takes the greatest risks and has the farthest to fall. The second person on the rope can help to

select the route, but that person's major task is to provide the leader with a sound belay. A belay, by definition, stops motion in a fall. It gives the leader a sense of security and allows relaxation in movement. The third person carries the load and provides the nourishment and shelter the team requires. The best teams are those in which all the members are able to rotate in adaptation to their circumstances.

What does all this talk of climbing have to do with ASPAN? ASPAN's success in this time of transformation is dependent on teamwork, trust, leadership and faith. Our long-range plans point the direction we will travel and the strategies we will employ. ASPAN balance is maintained by the membership, the components and the board of directors. The rope is communication. It's our lifeline; our security. It has to be strong and flexible. We can't begin without it.

It is my turn to lead the next pitch. The route has been well planned. The executive committee and the board of directors have provided the security we need to continue. The membership continues to carry the load and provide the encouragement we need to attain the goals we seek. As ASPAN stretches and grows this year, it is not too unlike a climb. There is camaraderie and teamwork; a common goal. The summit awaits, with the inevitable hidden summit beyond. There are the surprises along the way that no one can foresee, like mountain weather, subject to change without notice. We are a team bound together. Nothing will stop our desire to succeed.