

# SPOTLIGHT ON ORNAC MEMBERS

## AN INTERVIEW WITH ELIZABETH BECK RN, CPN(C), ORNAC TREASURER.

**Submitted by:** Andras Switzer, ORNAC Executive Assitant.

Elizabeth Beck RN, CPN(C) began practicing clinical nursing in acute care settings in 1978 and began to specialize in perioperative nursing in 1997. She qualified for perioperative certification in 2008 and has performed the role of shared team leader and served as preceptor for perioperative nursing students and new staff. She also served 8 years as a Reserve Perioperative Nursing Officer (PNO) with the Canadian Forces. She is currently working as an Agency Travel Nurse as well as a casual Perioperative Nurse for Valley Regional. Her volunteer roles have included terms as the secretary and treasurer for ORNANS and her current role as the Treasurer of ORNAC (since 2014). She has 3 grown children and lives in the Annapolis Valley region of Nova Scotia with her husband.



Elizabeth Beck RN, CPN(C)

### Please tell us a little about yourself

A year following my graduation from the General Hospital School of Nursing, in St. John's, NL, in 1978 I headed off to see the world. My first stop was Halifax/Dartmouth where I met my 'other half' during a scuba course... and 36 years later I am still in Nova Scotia. My husband and I now reside in the Annapolis Valley region of Nova Scotia and our three children, now adults, are pursuing their own careers. The oldest remains in the Halifax area with our 3 grandchildren, our middle is in Calgary with her beau, and the youngest is studying in St. John's.

For the first half of my career my focus was on Critical Care and Emergency nursing with a brief OR experience (1981-82) before starting my family. The second, and current half, is Perioperative Nursing.

A significant part of my recent career was 8 years when I served as a Reserve Perioperative Nursing Officer (PNO) with the Canadian Forces (CF), concurrent with my full time position at Valley Regional. My home unit, 33 Field Ambulance, is based in Halifax. Completion of the courses required to meet the qualification of PNO were both

challenging and rewarding and the following year I was privileged to have opportunity to serve a four-month rotation at the Multi-National Role 3 Hospital in Kandahar Airfield (2010/11). In November of 2015 I retired from the CF. The people I met and worked with during my time served were exceptional and dedicated proud Canadians willing to put their lives on the line for all Canadians. I am very proud to have been a part of this group.

### What is it that drove you to become an OR nurse?

My first experience in the OR was quite rewarding, however, the 12 hour rotations available in the acute care areas made child care more manageable for my situation at the time. I enjoyed critical care nursing and quite a few years later my thoughts moved back to the Operating Room and I enrolled in the distance perioperative program offered through the Victoria General Hospital, in Halifax, to prepare for a change in direction.

Completing the clinical portion of my course in the allotted time was a challenge as I was working full-time and was not sponsored by my facility. Many

consecutive shifts were required before having days off. I have, however, always enjoyed a challenge and the Operating Room continues to provide this on a daily basis with the endless technical advancements, budgetary constraints, and the many medical disciplines work together.

### You are currently working as a travel nurse - what is it that you like most about this job? Any advice for others?

I started Agency Nursing after retiring from my full-time position at Valley Regional. This was something I had thought about for many years and, with my children now grown and self-sufficient and a very supportive husband, I was able to give it a try. I remain employed as a casual perioperative nurse for Valley Regional from where I had retired.

Facilities requiring agency nurses are experiencing staffing shortages for various reasons and agency nurses allow them to continue providing care to those in their communities. Contracts can be anywhere from 4 weeks to one year, although I prefer nothing longer than 3 months. The agency position allows me

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## ORNAC Network

### SPOTLIGHT ON ORNAC MEMBERS (cont.)

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the experience of living and nursing in another town or city without the expense of housing or full re-location. As with everything there are advantages and disadvantages to this type of nursing.

I would certainly recommend a nurse having a couple of years' experience first and evaluating what they wish to gain from the experience. Speak with another travel nurse if at all possible. Canadian Travel Nurses has a Facebook group which is a good starting resource.

Why did you become involved in ORNAC?

Continuing education is very important to me and being part of a national organization provided the opportunity

to attend conferences and network with other like-minded individuals from across Canada. I had the experience of membership in the other national nursing organizations, representing the specialty areas where I practiced, and I had always found it to be beneficial. So after qualifying as a perioperative nurse I joined ORNANS and began to attend the meetings and education sessions offered. In 2008 I obtained my CNA Certification and became more involved with the provincial group. Following a term as Secretary for ORNANS I completed a term as Treasurer for my local chapter and, a couple of years later, a term as Treasurer for ORNANS. As my involvement increased I met those working on the national level and was encouraged, by those nurses, to get involved at that level. In 2014 I was offered, and accepted, the Treasurer position.

The Treasurer is responsible for the care and custody of the membership's funds and ensures due diligence for all financial decision making. This is certainly the same as the provincial level but on a larger scale. It also helps to be married to an accountant!

Any tips for other members looking to get involved?

I would suggest that members become more involved with their local chapter, attend a Provincial meeting, and go from there. Taking part in your organization provides a great opportunity for education and networking. You will work with other Perioperative Nurses who share your desire and dedication to promote and advance the excellence of perioperative care.