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From The Editors

THOUGHTS FROM A FORMER TRAVEL NURSE

BY MELISSA S. JAMES

I worked with a nurse the other day I'm going to call "Sally". Sally must have asked me twenty questions in the first hour we worked together. What really impressed me about Sally was the way she responded to a code on one of her patients. While I ran for the crash cart, Sally ran for the bathroom. We didn't see her again until the paramedics had carried the guy to the hospital.

Late in the shift, Sally came up to me.

"One the aides told me you used to be a travel nurse."

"Yep," I nodded and continued my end of the shift charting.

"I'm thinking about doing that."

Now folks, I am a very tactful, kindhearted person. So, I did what any former travel nurse would have done. I laughed hysterically. I laughed until the tears were falling down my cheeks. I laughed until I peed my pants.

Not everyone is cut out to be a nurse. Even among nurses there are distinctions. I'm a fine geriatric nurse now. I was a fine ER nurse when I was younger. I passed out

when I walked through a neonatal intensive care nursery. Sorry. Those little tiny babies with tubes and monitors running amuck scare the beduddle out of

me, and I can't take care of them through my tears. So, I shy away.

What does it take to be a travel nurse? Epstein LaRue is working on a book and I believe she is outlining 10 characteristics of a good travel nurse. Be sure watch this webpage and newsletter for information on that book.

First of all, a travel nurse cannot be a person who is afraid of her own shadow. If you are more of a follower than a leader, you had better stay home. Travel nurses will frequently find themselves in places where they are thrown into the role of leader.

Remember, you are being invited into a place simply because there is a nursing shortage. In my 10 years as a travel nurse, I can think of very few assignments I took where I wasn't the charge nurse. One time, I went into a hospital, worked the first four hours of a twelve-hour shift with the head nurse. After four hours, she put her coat on.

"Who's in charge when you leave?" I asked thinking I might need some direction, as I had never worked in a renal transplant unit before.

"You are," the head nurse told me as she hit the button for the elevator door to close.

I had ten seconds of pure panic, swallowed my fear and returned to the unit.

What would Sally have done? Probably grabbed her coat and headed for the next exit!

Secondly, a travel nurse has to have a good sense of humor. Humor will carry you where you need to go more easily than just about anything else.

A travel nurse must be adaptable. I went to Louisiana. The first day we were in Louisiana, we went to New Orleans to pick up my temporary nursing license before we headed off to where we were going. The first inclination I had that we might run into some trouble, was when we rounded the corner from the nursing commission and went to a little restaurant on Pearl Street for lunch. I will never forget that waiter. He had charm, and a delightful accent. As he brought our check, I asked him where he was from, thinking he would be from the Caribbean or Jamaica or some other exotic place?

"Me? You be kiddin', you?" he threw back his head and laughed. "I be from Na Awlins, you!"

The next day I went to work. Shortly into my shift, I called the hospital operator.

"I need to make a long distance call. I need to call Jean Hebert in Thib-a-daux to come pick up her mother."

"You need to call Zhann A-Bear in Tib-a-doe?" the operator asked

me. “No, Jean HE-BERT in Thib-a-daux.”

I pronounced my words slowly wondering why the operator couldn't understand me.

Behind me I heard snickers and giggles. I turned around to see a doctor and a nurse barely containing their mirth. The other nurse took the phone from me. “She needs to call Zhann A-Bear in Tib-a-doe.”

The doctor laughed and shook my hand. “You not from here, you?” he asked me.

Afraid to speak, afraid I would give away the fact that I was “foreign”, I just shook my head.

“You teach the foreigner the language, you,” the doctor instructed the other nurse as he walked away. She laughingly agreed. Talk about adaptability! In my own country, I had to learn a new language. What would Sally have done? Spent the days in the bathroom, crying, most likely.

Tact, and common sense go a long way in helping your career. Want to make the staff you're working with hostile toward you?

Start every sentence with “In such and such a hospital, we did this procedure this way.” Remember the adage: When in Rome, do as the Romans do. If you truly know of a better way to do something, introduce the idea slowly maybe, “Have you ever tried....” or “What do you think about....”

A travel nurse must have a sense of adventure. When you go to Maryland, seek out the house where John Wilkes Booth grew up. When you go to Louisiana, play hard during Mardi Gras. When you go to Kentucky walk through the battlefields of the Civil War. Try the exotic foods of Louisiana, go to the re-enactments of the Civil War in Kentucky, take a few hours to traipse the islands that make up Maryland. Talk to the people.

I've known travel nurses who met their soul mate because they traveled. I got to be the Maid of Honor at the wedding of a fellow travel nurse to a doctor in California. I've also worked with travel nurses who spent every hour they weren't at work in their agency provided apartment wishing they'd never left home. They are miserable at home (and miserable at work, and nobody

misses them when they are gone! Truth may be that nobody “at home” is missing them either.

What would be my first word of advice to someone who is thinking about being a travel nurse? Look into your heart and ask *WHY DO I WANT TO TRAVEL?*

If it is because there is a spirit of adventure calling you, go for it. Go and enjoy every minute of every day! There is so much to see, and so much to do! Even now that I am retired, I see places on TV that I have been, and there's a special glow that fills my heart. “I've been there,” I'll tell my family. The memory will warm my heart or tickle my funny bone. Generally, there's a story to tell. A story I wouldn't have if I hadn't traveled.

What did I tell Sally when she talked to me about traveling? I told her not to go until she had more confidence as a nurse, and as a person. I told her the job could be the most intimidating job she's ever known. I encouraged her to grow first, and go later.

I hope she grows. I hope she goes. There is no field of nursing that is more exciting!

It's hard to live with a nurse because...

- 1) When you forget to flush the toilet, you get a complete analysis with a plan on how to correct any noted problems.
- 2) Thanksgiving dinner comes in pre-cut small pieces because she doesn't want to have to perform the Heimlich maneuver and be reminded of work on the only holiday she's had off in years.
- 3) You've been awakened from a dead sleep in the middle of the night to find her shaking you because your breathing patterns were a little too close to a Cheyne-Stokes rhythm.

Destination Spotlight

PHOENIX, ARIZONA

BY EPSTEIN LARUE

I am choosing Phoenix, Arizona as my first destination because this was the destination of my first travel assignment. This was the first time for me to ever live in a "big city." I lived for six months in the northern region of Phoenix, and I loved having a lot of things to do.

Phoenix, Arizona is not only the largest metro area in Arizona, but is home to the state capitol. It resides in Maricopa County, which has a population of over three million people. According to the year 2000 census report, the Phoenix-Mesa metro area has increased its population by 45% in the last ten years.

Its weather is very mild and pleasant in the winter, and scorching hot in the summer, but remember... it's dry heat! The only good thing about Phoenix in the middle of the summer is that if you play golf, and can stand the heat, take a ride and play golf for half-price the winter rates.

The thing that our family loved the most about Phoenix in the spring and summer was the Arizona Diamondbacks; in which, we visited Bank One Ballpark several times that summer. Was nice to only have to drive 30 minutes to the ballpark instead of four hours, like we had to from our hometown of Lake Havasu City, Arizona.

Need adventure on the water? About thirty minutes from the city is Lake Pleasant. It has about fifty miles of shoreline, and many boats, skiers, and fishermen can be found there. From December until

June, Eagles make Lake Pleasant their home and breeding spot. Other lakes worth checking out are Apache Lake, Bartlett Lake, and Canyon Lake.

Like to go White Water rafting? Three hours from Phoenix in the White Mountains near Globe, Arizona you will find the Salt River. This river coming out of the mountains sport class III and class IV rapids, the only trip more exhilarating in Arizona is white water rafting down the Colorado River and Grand Canyon. The great thing about the Salt River, is that the waiting list is NOT years long.

Feel the need to shop until you drop? Then you might find yourself at the Chandler Mall located at 3111 West Chandler Blvd in Chandler, Arizona (Southeast Phoenix), or if you are in Northeast Phoenix, you might try to Scottsdale Fashion Square located at 7014-590 East Camelback Road or the Paradise Valley Mall at 4568 East Cactus Road. In Northwest Phoenix, you might try the Arrowhead Towne Center, located at 7700 West Arrowhead Towne Center in Glendale, Arizona. My favorite mall was the Metro Center right on I-17 in Northern Phoenix, only a mile from my apartment it was quick, convenient, and had everything that I was looking for; well, except for electronics. For electronics I found myself frequently at Fry's Electronics located on Thunderbird and 32nd street.

Looking for that special antique to add to your collection? Then check out the Antique Centre. Located at

2012 N. Scottsdale Road, in Scottsdale, this store has over twenty-seven thousand square footage of quality antiques and collectibles at the best prices that you will find in Arizona.

If you enjoy the arts and museums, then you will have to make a trip to the Phoenix Art Museum, which is located, downtown on the corner of McDowell and central. This museum offers something for everyone. It has a gathering of in excess of seventeen thousand works, which extend over the centuries and accentuate the arts of America, Asia, Europe, Western America, Spanish, and Latin folklore.

Enjoy the theatre? Then there are several to choose from! From the The Orpheum Theater to the Dodge Theatre, to the Herberger Theatre. You might want to also visit the Phoenix Symphony Hall, which has captivated Phoenix audiences for more than fifty-five years.

Phoenix... the fastest growing city in the desert... don't miss out on all the fun!

Interesting Phoenix Links:

<http://www.azlivingonline.com/>
<http://www.azfamily.com/>
<http://www.inaraft.com/salt.htm>
<http://www.mild2wildrafting.com/>
<http://azdiamondbacks.com/>
<http://www.arizonaguide.com/>
<http://www.lifeinphoenix.com/>
<http://www.phoenixcvb.com/>

Company Spotlight

ALL HEALTH STAFFING

[HTTP://WWW.ALLHEALTHSTAFFING.COM/](http://www.allhealthstaffing.com/)

About professional insurance, do you believe that the insurance that a company provides is good enough, or does the nurse also need to obtain her own professional insurance?

By law, all agencies have to carry a certain amount of insurance to protect them and the nurse if needed. However, the cost for protection for the nurse to self-insure is relatively minor; therefore, it would be prudent for the clinician to have their own as well.

Are you a small company or large company? Can I expect to be treated as a number or a name?

All Health Staffing is a small Christian based staffing agency. We love to say that we don't walk on water, meaning we're not perfect. But, we do have a foundation set firmly on principles of honesty, ethics and high moral standings. You are treated with dignity and respect at all times and are not forgotten once the placement is made. We call the clinician often to make sure all is well.



I work night shift, what if I have problems at night? Do you have someone I can talk to even in the middle of the night?

We provide you with our emergency number for any type of emergencies, albeit for problems at work or with your apartment. We also provide a Physician's Assistant to intervene with any clinical issues that may arise.

Do you receive any assignments with completion bonuses?

As a rule, bonuses are taxed at a higher tax rate than normal salary. While some of our assignments do include a completion bonus, most of these are generated by the facility. We believe in paying you the highest possible salary that we can, no matter the shift, no matter the day.

Tell me what makes All Health Staffing different than other travel nurse companies?

We believe our attention to minute details and individual attention to each nurse is an advantage that larger companies simply can't compete with. You are assigned one Staffing Coordinator who will work with you for situations; housing, payroll, etc., therefore you don't have to re-explain your problem to 5 different people.

Epstein would like to give a special thanks to Reginald Helms for answering all of our questions! If you would like more information about All Health Staffing contact...

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301 South 9th Street, Suite 116
Richmond, Texas 77469
Phone (toll-free): (877) 577-8233
Fax (toll-free): (877) 436-1693
Email: infor@allhealthstaffing.com

Top 10 Reasons Why We Love Travel Nursing

1. Our friends list gets longer and longer and so does your Christmas card list.
2. Weekend getaways are different adventures. You have new places to explore on your days off.
3. You are in control of your destination. You can be a *snowbird* and get paid for it.
4. Freedom, to be the nurse that you want to be!
5. The educational opportunities are endless, whether you are at a large teaching hospital or a small rural hospital.
6. Bring a whole new meaning to American food! Whether you go to San Francisco for sourdough bread, Maine for lobster, or New England for the clam chowder.
7. By the time you are comfortable enough to get involved in the conversation about politics, your time is up.
8. The only person that you are responsible for is yourself.
9. The housing is usually excellent, you have room service, and it is all paid for! Well, if you get to "live" in a motel or have a house hobby that you drag around.
10. You get a going away party every 13 weeks.

Hospital Happenings

JOHN C. LINCOLN HEALTH NETWORK

BY EPSTEIN LARUE

For over seventy-five years now, John C. Lincoln Health Network has been providing quality care to the North Phoenix area. What started out as a tuberculosis camp is now a network on two hospitals, an extended care facility, physician's offices, a "sick child" day care, and food bank.

This was my first introduction to a hospital in a big city, and I was quite impressed with everything that they offered, and that they still carried on that community spirit. At John C. Lincoln (also known as "JCL"), you are more than just a number; you are a name.

This was my first travel assignment. I went from a level three emergency room, to a level one emergency room and trauma center. Although not the largest trauma center in Phoenix, by far, the care people received there was second to none. As a travel nurse, they are very friendly, and I was greeted with open arms as a valued member of their staff. This is one hospital that is very traveler friendly.

In orientation, I found a few other travelers, and visited with many of them upon transporting patients to the other floors, and in the cafeteria. I never once heard of

a traveler feeling as if they were unwelcome there. I even met quite a few employees whom I found John C. Lincoln as a traveler, and ended up staying on as full time staff.

As a travel nurse, I was impressed with all the community services that they provide. This last year, John C. Lincoln also received the Foster G. McGraw award for excellence in community service. Community service shines with a day care that is especially for children who are too sick to attend other day cares or school, but do not require a hospital stay. Parents don't have to take time out of their work schedules to take care of a sick child, JCL provides this service for them.

Community service also shines at the Lincoln Learning Center for children and the Children's dental clinic. Both provide quality care for children while the JCL Senior Apartments and Adult day care provide quality care for the elderly. The Desert Mission Food Bank, provides food and clothing for those people in a crisis.

Education at JCL is priority. They offer not only "mainstream" nursing education classes, but provided other opportunities. While there, I attended a seminar on "Writing Articles For Publication." Although not directly associated

with patient care, this was a valuable educational tool. As a nurse and an author, it taught me more about how to improve my writing skills and how to apply them to mainstream publications.

As an employee of JCL, you also have access to the medical library located in the Cowden center. Although somewhat small, this area was packed with more information that I could read in my six-month assignment there.

In the same building as the medical library, is the massage therapy center. Here they offer Swedish massage, therapeutic massage, deep tissue massage, sports massage, and reflexology. Massage is a proven way to reduce the stress in your life, and with the employee discount, there is nothing more valuable on a day off.

These things are just a few benefits of a travel assignment at John C. Lincoln. Although, I was at the North Mountain facility, I have heard great reports on the Deer Valley facility. To find out more information about these facilities or the Bryan's Center (extended care facility), check out their website at... <http://www.jcl.com/>. This is a travel assignment that you won't be disappointed in.

Thank you for subscribing to the Highway Hypodermic newsletter!

Epstein LaRue, Owner and Chief Executive of Highway Hypodermics
Melissa S. James, Special Consultant and Columnist

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