

From the memoirs of Jean Cooke

## Becoming an O.R. Nurse in 3 Easy Lessons

### Lesson 1.

When we were living in London, England, Derek, then a medical student at St. Bartholomew's Hospital (Barts) took me to see an operation. *A wonderful, uncommon date and a chance to see real live surgery.* We stood in in the Gallery of the operating theater, I was wearing a lab coat. The 'Theater' was a big round room, with a high ceiling, open windows and a gallery all around looking down on the surgery in the middle. Fortunately the high railing and the lab coat hid my very pregnant tummy! We were watching a famous surgeon, Mr. Martin Birnstingle (all surgeons are called Mr. not Dr.), do a vein graft to a leg with blocked arteries. It was great! Mr. Birnstingle kept explaining what he was doing as he went along. Then I noticed that Derek and the other students had all left and I was all alone. I was really frightened and concerned that this famous surgeon, now lecturing to me alone, would ask me a question. I wouldn't know the answer to anything. At long last, Derek came back and we went home.

### Lesson 2.

About 5 years later while in Vancouver, Derek, now a resident in orthopaedics at UBC, came home and announced he had a babysitter and did I want to go out? Excited that we were going out on a rare date, I grabbed a coat and said 'let's go'. He took me to the 'morgue' where we commenced to cut open knees, examine how they worked and took lots of photos. He needed these for a presentation he was working on. When finished he said close the knee up. I couldn't do it but he found a broom stick and together we used that to put the leg back together.

### Lesson 3.

Another nine years on we were living in Kingston and Derek was now an orthopaedic consultant at Queen's. He covered orthopaedics up north in Moose Factory. I loved going north with him. On this one trip the nurses were on strike at the hospital. He had surgery to do so what to do? He asked the head of the hospital if I could stand in. No problem. Derek took me to the OR, I got changed into 'scrubs'. He helped me get the surgical trays out of the OR cupboards and showed me how to unwrap them, put them on stands, keeping the contents sterile. Then he showed me how to scrub the leg from the ankle to the upper thigh. It was so heavy; I finally put the gentleman's leg onto my shoulder to scrub it. When that was done, he 'prepped and draped' the leg while I held it up by the foot. During the surgery, he told me to get some sort of instrument from the cabinet; but, when I brought it back I walked between the trays and the patient. He said it was no longer sterile and to start again. We took a screw and plate out of this leg and he handed them off to me. Then I had to wash them off

to give to the patient after he woke up. The next operation was a below knee amputation. I got all the moves right this time and I passed with flying colours. I loved the OR.

See how easy it is to become an OR Nurse!!!

I was married to Derek for many years and he kept doing these baloney amputations. I finally asked him what a 'baloney' amputation was. He said it was not 'baloney' but 'Below the Knee'.

*O.K. so I am not perfect.*