

Jeannette Durocher, OR Nurse

Lovingly nicknamed “Frenchie” by her colleagues and team members, Jeannette Durocher is enjoying a bittersweet moment reflecting over 40 years of service as an operating room nurse at Hotel Dieu Grace Hospital.

A 1972 graduate of the Hotel Dieu Jeanne Mance School of Nursing, Durocher remembers the first day she entered the operating room as an RN.

“It was directly after graduation, on September 5, 1972,” Durocher recalls. “I was so excited, I could barely contain myself.”

It was required of the students in Durocher’s program that a specialty be chosen after graduation; each student was provided 12 weeks of intense study in that particular specialty. Durocher was equally interested in obstetrics and the operating room, but as she learned more about the latter, the more she was intrigued.

“When we were in nursing school, they would show us films on surgery,” says Durocher. “I was just fascinated by it. The first time I came into an operating room, I fell in love with it. It caught my fancy – the technology, the instruments, the whole ambiance of the space.

“I told my mother, ‘When I graduate, that’s where I’m going to work.’”

Durocher says that although there was limited technology available in her first few years as an OR nurse, the process of “working with the instruments, caring for a sick person and taking the disease out and putting that person back together, and the accomplishment of that and hoping for that person to have a good recovery... that was all exciting to me.

“After all these years, it still is.”

Having been witness to much advancement in the operating room over the last four decades, there are two events that hold particular significance in Durocher’s memory.

“The very first time we did an organ retrieval – that was incredible,” says Durocher. “It was a major procedure, one that had never been done. I felt so fortunate have been a part of that.

“And when we started laparoscopic surgery, that was also an exciting time. Every day, ever procedure was a challenge.”

After a successful and joyful career, Durocher is delighted to pass the torch on to younger nurses, eager to learn and care. “In this business, it’s not always successful,” Durocher admits. “There’s some sadness, of course. And in the operating room, specifically, you’re a different breed of nurse. Your rapport with the patient has to be established in less than fifteen minutes – in that fifteen minutes, you have to earn their trust, you have to make them comfortable, and you never compromise what’s best for them.

“But no matter where you are as a nurse, your number one priority is always your patient. It’s not about the paycheque. You have to have the heart, the desire to take care of people.”

