



From the Hospital to the Legal Field: Bless Gunzer

[By Robin Salisian]

“I had a life experience that convinced me that nursing was the right profession for me,” says Bless Gunzer. “During my first year of college, I was unfortunately hospitalized.”

But fortunately that hospital trip helped shape Gunzer’s career path. Today, as a legal nurse consultant, she has discovered her passion for nursing, helping others, and caring for the sick.

She comments, “I was...impressed and amazed by the care I received from the nurses who took good care of me. The compassionate care I received from these nurses left a lasting impression and inspired me even more to pursue this field.”

She took her newfound passion and applied it to her schoolwork. In 1979 she completed her prerequisites for the nursing program, and four years later, she graduated from California State University — Los Angeles with a B.S. in Nursing. During her time there Gunzer was involved in three school organizations, two of which she presided over as president and another as vice president.

Then, in February 2004, she passed the California Board of Registered Nursing Examination. From there she went on to work as a registered nurse for Daniel Freeman Hospital on the medical-surgical floor, where she worked with “very ill adults.”

But her work experience extends beyond sick patients.

“Throughout my almost 24 years of nursing... I’ve had the opportunity to have worked in a dialysis center with patients with kidney failure; for home health agencies caring for patients in their homes; in the capacity of a supervisor for various agencies; [and] in an outpatient

setting working for a very large medical group providing care to all patients — pediatrics and adults — with all sorts of medical conditions,” Gunzer says.

“My interest in the legal system led me to become certified as a legal nurse consultant,” she continues. “I worked for a medical group as the risk manager in charge of all legal cases and potential risk cases. I worked closely with an attorney in defending the group’s physicians against malpractice lawsuits.”

In other words, Gunzer’s done it all. Or *doing* it all.

As a legal nurse consultant, Gunzer enjoys melding her love of law with her vast nursing knowledge — so much so that since 2005 she has been working as a legal nurse consultant for law firm Shernoff, Bidart & Darras in Ontario, California. There, she reviews multiple disability cases and

analyzes “copious medical records to assist the attorney in building up cases against disability insurances who have wrongfully denied disability benefits to multiple disabled clients.”

Shernoff, Bidart & Darras was founded in 1975 by William Shernoff, who was later joined by Michael Bidart and Frank Darras. According to their site, they’re “considered the leading authorities on insurance bad faith law for good reason: we invented it.”

Over her 24 years of nursing, Gunzer has had many memorable career accomplishments. But specifically she notes her humble times of helping save patients’ lives, health, and outlook on life. Gunzer also shares the following about her current position:

“As a reviewing medical/legal nurse consultant, I worked on a very complicated and difficult preexisting case. I was able to find medical support to prove that the insurance company was wrong in denying the client’s disability benefits based on preexisting medical condition(s). With knowledge and intensive research, I was able to prove that the cause of the client’s disability was...not preexisting; therefore, the denial of disability benefits was reversed by the insurance companion.”

But along with her achievements in helping others, Gunzer credits those around her for helping *her*. While she has had many mentors and influential colleagues throughout her 24 years as a nurse, there is one in particular who stands out.

“My administrator for one of the home health agencies that I worked for. She was

Q. What do you do for fun?

A. Reading, gardening.

Q. What CD is in your CD player right now, or what music is on your iPod?

A. Josh Groban, mellow, pop music.

Q. What is the last magazine you read?

A. *RN Magazine*.

Q. What is your favorite TV show?

A. Many, but one is *Grey’s Anatomy*.

Q. Who is your role model?

A. My dad — he worked very hard and instilled in me (and all his seven children) the value of education and knowledge and that these will lead to success.



very intelligent, knowledgeable, fair, and consistent in her decision making and had a very good sense of judgment and direction. I learned a lot from her, and I applied what I learned when I managed nurses and other healthcare professionals including physical therapists, occupational therapists, social workers, and nurses' aides."

Gunzer also acknowledges her current boss, Frank Darras, as being a "constant inspiration in that he continues to help and fight for justice for those whose insurance benefits have been wrongfully denied by their insurance companies."

"These benefits, which were paid by the clients and had been promised by the insurance companies, rightfully deserved to

be paid to these disabled clients," explains Gunzer. "Mr. Darras is the hope for these emotionally beaten and physically exhausted and physically impaired individuals. It has been a pleasure learning from Mr. Darras, and it has been an honor to be a part of this crusade to help those wrongfully and unfairly treated."

Her passion and dedication to helping others shines through in everything Gunzer says and does. It may have taken a trip to the hospital to convince her that nursing was her career path, but it was Gunzer who persevered. And that's exactly what she advises young professionals to do: "Work hard, persevere, and do not give up."

Fortunately for us, Gunzer didn't. Instead, she took a tough situation and turned it into a lifelong career.

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