East Vs. West Essay, Research Paper

East Versus West

Early in my nursing career, I had the opportunity to work under two extremely different charge nurses. Dolly “West” and Betty “East” as they were jokingly called, ruled the third floor for over twenty-five years. Both ladies are retired now and, I understand, immensely happy to be relieved of their duties and responsibilities. I would venture a guess that this is the first time they have ever agreed on anything.

Betty was a strict, no-nonsense commander, who ruled her department with an iron hand. She went strictly by the book and heaven help you if you deviated. Temperatures and blood pressures were done at 8 a.m. and 2 p.m.; baths were given between 9 a.m. and 11 a.m. “What do you mean you’re not done with your baths?” she’d glower. “It happens to be 11:30 a.m.!”. It didn’t matter that the patient in room 300 began to hemorrhage, or that the one in 306 tipped the chair in which he was tied over. Laughter in Betty’s department was infrequent; the mood, somber; and the work, done with an assembly-line precision. Orders were initiated as fast as they were written, and the desk was always clear and devoid of any unnecessary clutter or papers. Betty “East’s” department was referred to as the “Eastern Militarized Zone”.

And then there was Dolly, dear Dolly “West”. I always perceived a “Dolly” to be someone who was air-headed, scatter brained and disorganized; and Dolly “West” was the personification of my perceptions. Her department was chaotic, confused and undisciplined. It was a beehive of activity with nothing getting accomplished. Her desk always looked like it had a miniature “Leaning Tower of Pisa” on it, so high were charts stacked. Her favorite reasons for leaving work undone were: one, “I only have two hands;” and, two, “That’s why there are two other shifts”. During a crisis, we could always count on her to leave and go to the ladies’ room. The biggest part of her day was spent in the break room, pouring coffee for anyone she could collar. When she did –and this was rare — make it into a patient’s room, it was usually to check out a newspaper item that “Sissy” (her sister) had just told her about during their daily half- hour telephone conversation. Her staff was anxious, harried, over-worked, exasperated and disgruntled. Her department was referred to as “Dingbat Dolly’s”.

Ironically, the physical appearance of these women was diametrically opposed to their attitudes and work habits. Betty was always disheveled. Her uniforms were rumpled and grayish white or yellowed. Her glasses were always smudged and falling down on her nose, and her nurse’s cap was plopped precariously on a head of hair that was stringy and unkept. Dolly was neat as a pin. Her uniforms were always crisp and white; her hair, cut short and neatly combed. And her cap never moved an inch on her head. She was forever polishing her glasses with those little paper wipes, and they always sparkled crystal clean.

I worked for Betty for three months and Dolly for ten years. Betty polished my organizational skills and increased my efficiency and accuracy in completing assignments. She taught me how to recognize and set priorities and stick to them. Dolly was responsible for the birth of my ulcer, my first gray hairs, and the death of my love affair with the nursing profession. She burned me up, and she burned me out. She aggravated me, and she frustrated me. She taught me to exercise self control and self discipline that I never dreamed I possessed. Betty taught me nursing; and Dolly, about myself. Between them, Betty “East” and Dolly “West” contributed to my growth as a professional and as a person. I don’t regret my experience with either lady.