

The Day That Was...: Lyn Overton

It was my day on the wards, my favourite day, no classes, working with students in the wards. My buzzer went. 'Please come up to outpatients, ASAP'.

ICU charge was there, fellow nurse educator, ambulance waiting. We climbed into the back, told there had been a train accident in Granville. I grew up in Granville, but nothing could prepare us for what we saw. The road bridge had collapsed on the train which was out, on its side, the station side. A small part of the train was visible on the south side. Most of the bridge had collapsed.

We were all very shocked. We separated. ICU RN and I went to the south side, directed under the bridge, the RN went to the station side. The next time I saw them was late at the hospital. There was very little room under the bridge. It was dark, dusty, and took a few minutes to become adjusted. A strong smell of gas. All I could see was a carriage full of people, bent over by the train roof, their newspapers, briefcases, knitting beside them. No one was moving. The ambos and another nurse were further down. ICU RN tall, thin was sent into the carriage. I (short & tubby) was asked to try and get some IV fluid etc. As soon as I got into daylight there was an IV fluid rep there. I returned with supplies. There was constant concern the bridge was collapsing. Soon after one of the passengers was released, I accompanied him in the ambulance to Auburn hospital. The casualty was chaotic. I did not leave him until I had phoned his mother at work. Many years later we spoke. That simple act was much appreciated by both. On return there was a young lass being rescued. It was obvious that most were dead. The collapsed bridge unstable, we stayed whilst we could help. Early afternoon, returned to work, had a short debrief, then sent home. I had lost my cap! My mother was lovely. She was not a drinker. I asked her to go and buy a bottle of whisky, not something I usually drank but just what I needed. Mum caught the bus, went into a bottle shop for the first time! She did not join me but she was a great comfort.

It was many years later I realised I had PTSD, another story.

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