



The True Present Is Your Presence: Marie Howle

December 2024

As the Christmas season wraps us in its warmth, it's easy to get caught up in the hustle of finding the perfect gifts, decorating our homes, and planning festive gatherings. While these moments bring joy, this season is also a time for reflection—a chance to pause and remember the gifts that truly matter.

In our lives, few gifts are as precious as the care and compassion we receive from nurses. Whether in a time of sickness, recovery, or uncertainty, nurses are there, giving selflessly when we need it most. They work tirelessly, often behind the scenes, with a steady hand and a kind heart, ensuring that we and our loved ones are cared for and comforted.

As we all search for the perfect presents for our loved ones, this month I ask you to consider, as you read Marie Howle's story, how you can bring light and joy in simple ways to those around you through your *presence*.

Over the past few weeks, I have become acutely aware of the presence of those around me who perform daily acts of kindness, having observed nurses in action while a family member and a special friend are currently hospitalized. The level of care and concern, kindness and empathy that nurses exhibit is powerful. I am humbled and awed by the tenderness and genuine compassion that nurses have shown over the past few weeks.

Marie Howle grew up in Greer, South Carolina, and she always wanted to be a nurse. “I was always a tenderhearted soul; even as a child, I wanted to take care of everyone,” she said. “Back in my day, most women going into the workforce either became nurses or teachers. I was close to an uncle who was a doctor and his wife was a nurse and they were excellent role models for me. Their influence led me to feel that the medical field was my calling,” Marie said. “I like helping people, to put it simply, and nursing is the perfect place to have a tremendous impact,” she relayed.

As Marie grew up, she began to align her life around a verse from the Book of Luke: “To whom much is given, much is expected.” Marie says that she considered it a true privilege to be a nurse and to serve others.

After high school graduation, Marie attended Anderson Junior College, as it was known at the time, to begin her nursing coursework and then transferred to the University of South Carolina to continue her studies. While at Anderson College, through mutual friends Marie met her husband, Tycho Howle '71, a Clemson student at the time, and they married in 1971. “Our running family



joke is that we met on a blind date, but I quickly opened his eyes,” Marie said with a laugh.

Marie added that while she did not graduate from Clemson, she took eight courses at Clemson which helped her complete her associate’s degree in nursing before she went on to secure a bachelor’s degree in nursing.

After they were married, the couple moved to Spartanburg, South Carolina where Marie worked at Spartanburg General Hospital in a program where she experienced all the areas of nursing specializations. A year later, she and Tycho moved back to Clemson so that he could complete graduate school.

Marie and Tycho called themselves professional migrant workers because of all the moving around they did. The couple moved to Washington, D.C. for Tycho’s job with Booz Allen before moving to Mississippi. From there, they moved to Boston for Tycho to pursue a master’s degree at Harvard Business School before they ended up in Oregon.

“Along the way, our daughters were born, Meredith in Mississippi and Dana in Oregon,” Marie said. “And throughout all our moves, I was very fortunate to work as a nurse in all locations. Nurses were then – and continue to be – in great demand.”

During her career, Marie focused on serving as a nurse in the operating room and later became a service educator for nurses who were new to the operating room. She remains grateful for a career path that allowed her to be mobile as she traveled with her family

and she was enthusiastically welcomed in all locations as she honed her nursing skills.

“Something that might be overlooked when thinking about the field of nursing is the level of coordination and communication that is necessary to be successful in a patient’s care,” Marie shared.

“Hospital nurses work with many different people to ensure the well-being of their patients, including technicians, surgeons, supply room managers, and the patient’s family members and care givers. Team mentality is so very important in the hospital environment.”

Marie has made plans through her estate for a significant gift to create the Marie Wood Howle Nursing Presidential Scholarship Endowment and states that her belief in the power of education led her to make this decision. “I believe that education has made a huge difference in my life, and it gave me tremendous opportunities. I have seen firsthand how a scholarship can help someone fulfill a dream,” she said. “A person only needs so much during our lives, and we have more than we need, which compels me to share with those who need a helping hand.”

Marie hopes that her legacy gift will allow future nursing students to have a rewarding career serving others, as she did. When asked for any advice she may offer to current and future nurses, she responded “to always ask for help when needed and always be upfront, honest and kind.” Marie believes these traits are vitally important in any field, and especially when working with patients and their families.

The nurses who have cared for my mother have opened my eyes and heart to be aware of all the people I encounter who offer

encouragement and understanding. It's simple acts of kindness, such as a smile, holding a door for others, or a positive word in a difficult moment that can mean the most. I urge you, during this very busy season, to consider that the greatest gift you can give is your very presence. I am reminded of lines from a beautiful tune: "Let there be peace on Earth and let it begin with me."

It costs nothing to make a conscious effort to bring cheer and joy to those in our lives, and I can assure you that your kind words and deeds will have a lasting impact, and they can be contagious. May we all put imaginary bows on simple acts of kindness every day and be a proverbial Santa all year long – not just during the holidays.

Nurses play a profound role not only in the lives of patients but also in the experience of their families. For patients, nurses are healers, advocates, and sources of strength. They are often the first to notice subtle changes in a patient's condition, the first to hold a hand when fear or pain takes hold, and the first to offer encouragement when hope seems distant. Nurses bring not just medical expertise but also compassion and humanity, creating an environment where healing can begin in body, mind, and spirit.

For families, nurses are a lifeline. In moments of uncertainty or crisis, they provide reassurance, clear communication, and emotional support. They take the time to answer questions, explain complex treatments, and offer a shoulder to lean on when loved ones feel overwhelmed. Nurses understand that they are not just treating a patient; they are caring for a family—a family that may be struggling with fear, sadness, or worry. Their ability to bring calm and clarity during these times is a gift beyond measure.

Nurses also remind us of a larger truth: the greatest gifts we can give to one another are not found in boxes or wrapped with ribbons. They are gifts of the heart—our time, kindness, patience, and compassion. These are the gifts that nurses share freely every day, and they are the gifts we can offer each other not just at Christmas, but throughout the year.

The gift of **time** reminds us to be present—to sit with a loved one, to share a meal, or to simply listen without distraction. The gift of **kindness** can brighten someone's darkest day with a smile, a word of encouragement, or an act of generosity. The gift of **patience** allows us to show grace, understanding, and forgiveness to those around us, even when it is not easy. And the gift of **compassion** reminds us to care deeply, to put ourselves in another's shoes, and to serve others selflessly.

Nurses embody the spirit of these gifts every day, and they inspire us to carry this spirit into our own lives. This Christmas, as we search for ways to show love and appreciation, let us remember that the most meaningful gifts come from within. A simple 'thank you,' a call, written heartfelt notes, or precious time spent with someone who needs it will mean more than any material possession.

Let us honor the nurses in our lives and all who serve others with compassion and let us all strive to give these gifts not just during the holidays, but every day of the year.

If we can assist you as you evaluate your estate plan or imagine how you can make a difference or create a magical opportunity for others, we would enjoy hearing from you. We have valuable resources available to share as you consider what matters most to you and

your family. Please reach out to us at giving@clermson.edu or visit our [website](#) for information about general estate planning, including our free [Estate Planning Guide](#) to help you navigate various issues and decisions ahead of meeting with an attorney or financial advisor. I also enjoy hearing from you at 864.656.0663 or email me at jovanna@clermson.edu).

May your Holidays be filled with love, peace, and gratitude—the gifts that truly last.

Wishing you a joyous and meaningful Christmas, I am

Gratefully yours and Ever Loyal,

JoVanna King

PS: GO Tigers! We are “ALL IN” and behind you ALL the way!