Still alive and kicking after 40 years’ service!

A nurse who is so dedicated that she finished her shift after breaking her ankle at work has just celebrated 40 years of full-time service in Colchester.

Paula Kick, 58, can remember the days when nurses had to stand if a consultant entered the room and recovering patients helped with patient beverage rounds.

Made a sister at the age of 26 – almost unheard of in 1979 and still very unusual today – for the past 12 years Paula has run the day clinics in Gainsborough Wing at Colchester General Hospital.

Born in Lexden Road Maternity Home, Colchester, on 3 April 1953 – two months before the coronation of Elizabeth II – she began her nursing career at Essex County Hospital on 6 January 1972, aged 18, after completing a pre-nursing course at the old Endsleigh College, Lexden. She qualified three years later.

The longest she has been away from work in the past four decades was 17 weeks for the birth of her son, Adam, 28 years ago. She has always worked full-time and has no plans to retire.

“I still enjoying getting up and coming to work, and my only regret is that I won’t be able to do another 40 years,” she said.

“I love my patients today as much as I did when I started out and I’m still committed and enthusiastic about providing a quality and caring service. I’m not so fond of paperwork but put me in a clinic with patients and a doctor and I couldn’t be happier.

“I’ve got a brilliant and dedicated team here, ranging from the domestics to the doctors, and I’ve worked with some phenomenal people, some of who have been with me for 20 years.

“I’ve had a lot of laughs but there have also been some sad times because, inevitably at my age, many dear colleagues who I’ve worked have passed on.

“But if you are a people person and want to work in a caring area, there is no better vocation than nursing.”

When she began her career, Paula lived in a house with other nursing students in Wellesley Road and was allowed out after 10pm only if she had a pass from Matron. The school of nursing when she started training was a classroom at Essex County Hospital.

During her 40 years, she has worked at Essex County Hospital, Lexden Road Maternity Home, Black Notley Hospital, Myland Hospital, St Mary’s Hospital, Severalls Hospital and Colchester General Hospital.

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She has worked in surgery, gynaecology, A&E, care of the elderly and at a day hospital. Her first sister’s post was in 1979 when she became a night sister at Essex County Hospital.

Brought up in Frinton, Paula had considered training to be a vet but opportunities were few and far between. Her mother had worked for a few years as a healthcare assistant at Essex County Hospital and in nursing homes in Clacton, which Paula believes influenced her choice of career.

Her husband Roger is a self-employed plasterer and to support him during difficult times she took on a second job in a nursing home in addition to working full-time for the Health Service.

Last winter, she broke her left ankle after falling over at Colchester General Hospital but did not go to the hospital’s accident and emergency department until she had finished her shift.

When she began nursing, there were no hoists for moving patients, no electric beds, no pre-packed syringes or dressings and it was not until she started at Colchester General Hospital in 2000 that she first used a computer.

Mel Crouch, now a service manager at Colchester General Hospital, was a new ward sister when she first met Paula in 1987, who at that time was a night sister at St Mary’s Hospital.

“She is a credit to the nursing profession, has always been patient-focused but also very caring to her staff. She is never worried about challenging if something causes her concern.

“I feel very fortunate to have worked with Paula and have learnt so much from her. Obviously, I have told her that there is no need to retire yet – I know a jewel in the crown when I see one!”

Captions:
1. Sister Paula Kick (left) is pictured on Ward 2 at Essex County Hospital on Christmas Day 1982 with student nurses and Mr Douglas Miller, consultant surgeon. It was a tradition for a surgeon to go into hospital on Christmas Day to carve the turkey.


21 February 2012