

## Selected Reflections from a Career in Medicine

I come from a business family and as the only son was expected to be the fourth generation in the family hardware appliance company. Since I was somewhat of a nerd who loved math and science, going into the family business was not a good fit, but I was compliant. For the first two years of college I majored in economics. Then in the summer following sophomore year my father liberated me by telling me that the retail hardware appliance business was a tough business and I might want to consider something else. Medicine had science, prestige, and a good recession-proof income.

At that point the only science I had taken was astronomy – not a premed course, but I had taken calculus. I decided to switch my major to either mathematics or zoology. I vividly remember my parents and I meeting with the chair of mathematics at Cornell about becoming a math major. I had very high math scores and thought he would be impressed, but as soon as I said I was going to be premed he completely lost interest in me. The clear message was why should the math department spend time and effort on me if I wasn't going to be a mathematician. So I did a zoology major plus the other premed science courses in two years by going to summer school between my junior and senior years, but I loved the courses.

In medical school I had interesting roommates, actually 'bathmates'. My first year my bathmate was a 4th year medical student from Utah who was going into neurosurgery. Every evening he took a study break, came over to my room, and delighted in regaling me with stories about the peculiarities of Mormonism. (He was a jack Mormon, i.e., non observant, but he knew all the secrets.)

My second year I didn't arrange to room with anyone and my bathmate turned out to be a first year student from Brooklyn who was 19 years old. He had started school a year early, skipped a grade, and went through Columbia in three years. We didn't have much in common, but he did answer a question I had puzzled over – why do New Yorkers talk so fast? His matter-of-fact answer was that when subway trains go around curves they make such a loud screeching noise it's impossible to hear anyone. So, you have to say everything you want to say while the train is banking from one curve to the next.

My third year I arranged to room with Scott McDougal. We were very compatible, but Scott decided to get married and I had to find someone else for my fourth year. Fortunately, Lee Johnson was in the same position; his roommate of three years, Dave McCormick, had also decided to get married. So, during my last year I got to enjoy Lee's sophisticated sense of humor and, in addition, Lee introduced me to skiing Utah powder.

I enjoyed all of our medical school courses (though some more than others). I think medical school provides an education that goes beyond the science; it gives a deep insight into the human condition. I thought that the faculty, facilities, and classmates were all first rate. And, I recall that we had lectures from four current or future Nobel Laureates: Vincent du Vigneaud (Cornell), and Peyton Rous, George Palade and Christian de Duve (all Rockefeller).

Other special and unusual aspects of the Cornell experience were: Olin Hall with a basketball court, music rooms, front desk, etc.; New York Hospital with two squash courts and a tennis court on top; and Rockefeller University with interesting outside speakers. Notices of the outside speakers were posted in the medical school and I went to a number of them. At Rockefeller I saw two mid-talk audience-speaker interactions that I have never seen repeated. One involved a visiting physicist who was lecturing in dome-shaped Casbary Auditorium. He stated that the cost of particle accelerators had become so expensive that the public would never support building another one. A Rockefeller physicist sitting in the back yelled out, "Heresy, heresy!" Although understandably flustered, the speaker managed to continue. (Time has proven the Rockefeller physicist correct.) Another time a junior faculty from Columbia P&S was giving a small-room seminar on his research findings in hematology. He had barely gotten past stating his hypothesis when a Rockefeller graduate student, standing in the back, interrupted with a pointed question. There was a pause and then the speaker said, "I retract my hypothesis," and sat down.

As fourth year began I was trying to decide between endocrinology and radiology. Then I was asked to fill in overnight at New York Hospital for a medical intern who had gotten sick. It was a 60-bed ward and all night the nurses would take me from one room to another – new admission; start blood transfusion; chest pain; etc. As the sun came up over the East River I was in the ward lab doing stool guaiacs, hematocrits, and urinalyses. Then and there I decided to be a radiologist, the hours were much better. To my surprise, over the next 10-20 years things completely reversed. Internists off-loaded after-hours and hospital work to emergency departments and hospitalists, and insurance companies started insisting that emergency department patients couldn't be admitted without a diagnosis so radiologists began working all night.

Radiology required a preliminary clinical year so I did a medical internship at University of Oregon in Portland. Lee Johnson and John Barnes ended up there as well and I again roomed with Lee. Then I went to University of Colorado for my radiology residency and was on the Vail Ski Patrol at the same time. Vail had a National Ski Patrol chapter in addition to full-time patrolmen. I only had to "work" at least one of every three weekends. Then in my last year of residency I met a pediatric intern and after dating for six weeks we got engaged, and married later that year. Lee and Scott were in our wedding.

I was in the Berry Plan in the Air Force. I remember calling Colonel Green (that was his name), who was the Air Force career radiologist in charge of assigning radiologists, to tell him that I was marrying a pediatric intern and hoped to be assigned to an Air Force base near a medical school. I wasn't sure what his response would be. But, he said they had openings at four bases near medical schools and I could have my pick! We went where we thought the best medical school was, Washington University in St. Louis.

After two years in the Air Force – having successfully defended southern Illinois from the Viet Cong – we went to Johns Hopkins to do fellowships. Not incidentally, Georgeanna grew up in Baltimore and both her parents, Howard and Georgeanna Jones, were gynecologists on the Hopkins faculty. My fellowship was in nuclear medicine and Georgeanna's was in pediatric endocrinology. Since Georgeanna (my wife

was a junior) wanted to go into academics, I decided to go into academics, too. At the end of our fellowships we had to decide whether to stay at a high powered academic institution or go back to the University of Colorado School of Medicine with the geography and weather we loved. Also, we both had sibs who had moved to Colorado. We opted for Colorado and have never regretted it.

I spent seven years in academics, then 25 years in a large academically oriented private practice group, and finished with another five years in academics. During this time we raised two sons: William IV, a pathologist in Texas, and Theodore, an architect in New York City.

Interestingly, Lee and his wife Marg have two boys the same ages as our two boys. As all of us love the National Parks the two families spent a week each summer, while the boys were growing up, exploring different National Parks. In addition, Georgeanna and I, and Lee and Marg have gotten together every winter in Vail to ski. So we and the Johnsons have taken over 50 vacations together and still counting!

Georgeanna and I are both officially retired, but keep quite busy. Since retirement I have written two books, one is a fairly serious book on the mathematics of nuclear medicine and the other is my first and last novel entitled, "The Second Creation: Genetic Engineering of Man." I am now working on another book entitled, "English: A Logical Look at an Illogical Language." I never would have predicted that I would spend retirement writing books. Georgeanna continues to spend time at the medical school pro bono and consults for national medical trials by phone pro pecunia.

We very much look forward to seeing everyone at the reunion!

*Bill Klingensmith*