

I Shall Ever Be Grateful

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John Peachey was born in Rochester, NY, and received a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Michigan in 1950. Following graduation from medical school he interned at The Genesee Hospital in Rochester and received training in Dermatology at the University of Buffalo Hospitals, interrupted by two years in the US Air Force. He entered into private practice in Dermatology and continues to this day as a senior partner in the Barrington Park Dermatology Associates in Rochester.

As I reflect upon my Medical School experience, I doubt that even a single day passes that is not influenced by those years. And, as I try to put my thoughts to paper, I think back to this quote: "The golden years of medicine are passing, and the practice of medicine will never be the same." The folks I am quoting were physicians in private practice in Rochester, N.Y., one of whom was my father. The time was post WWII, and I was heading off to the University of Michigan to do pre-med and try to fulfill a life-long wish to be a physician, undiscouraged by such sentiments. The first part of that quote sounded wrong to me then, and still sounds wrong when I hear it with increasing frequency today. Especially in light of the early part of the 21st century, amid the closing of The Genesee Hospital, the HMO turmoil, more complex ethical questions about cloning, assisted suicide, and all the rest. The same sentiment, same city, same profession 50 years later.

The second part of the quote is more profoundly true than they, or anyone, could have possibly imagined. Penicillin had just arrived, electronics didn't exist, much less the internet. The list is endless and growing. The changes in the scientific and technological aspects of medicine are staggering, and the best/worst is yet to come, when we will be able to cure diabetes *in utero*, select our children's eye color, or, miracle of miracles, treat psoriasis properly!

But, that is not what I believe our medical school experience was all about. It seems to me that what we were offered during those four years was exposure to, and the opportunity to absorb, the best parts of clinical and academic medicine and the chance to pursue our careers in either direction, or in combination, as many of us did. From a clinical standpoint, the ability to listen, to be able to understand and establish the doctor-patient relationship, to detect and understand depression, anxiety, and the like were gifts of that faculty. Surely, the influence of those folks didn't cease at graduation, for here I am, fifty years later, writing about them. What would my life have been otherwise? OK, probably. But likely not the fulfilling life I am still having in the practice of medicine. I shall forever be grateful for the good fortune to be included in the UR Medical School Class of 1954, to be exposed to the ambience, the patience, the discipline, and the example of the faculty, and to be part of a most remarkable group of classmates who just can't stop "re-un'ing".