

Reflections

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In September of 1972, I turned 8 years old. I fondly recall hearing tales of my Dad's work. He was a doctor. His dinner table stories might have been perceived as overly graphic in some homes, but not in ours. He entertained us with images of "sewing up the butcher's thumb" (we ate a lot of pasta without meat that week). He told of caring for Mrs. X, whose amazing fishing ponds I was allowed to explore only because of the care Dad provided. He shared so many things he did in that place called "the emergency room."

I remember going to his office after challenging Park Street's very large hill on my friend Johnny's bike (which only had hand brakes, a fact I had neglected to include in the pre-mission planning). While my repairs weren't terribly complex, I did require repair and he provided it. Basically, I remember that my dad took care of people who needed help. In my 8-year-old mind, that's what it meant to be a doctor.

In truth, in September of 1972 my dad was a primary care provider in Battle Creek, Michigan. He had an office practice where he performed true primary care. He did it all, including delivering all of his patients' babies and providing coverage to the emergency department (ED). The "emergency room" was indeed a single room in the hospital where one could go if acutely ill or injured. Dad took calls from home and responded when required, usually leading to another dinnertime story. Apparently Dad thought enough of this aspect of his practice that he read avidly on relevant topics and subsequently sent in his fee and joined the American College of Emergency Physicians. He loved the work, and the way he told those stories made that clear.

Forever affected by his tales, I chose emergency medicine for my career and completed a 4-year residency in 1995. I now work in a 65-bed ED, along with my 40 board-certified colleagues and our 48 wonderful residents. We provide care never dreamed of in 1972 to volumes of patients neither my dad nor I could have imagined in Battle Creek, Michigan.

While the field has evolved enormously since my dad told those dinnertime stories, in truth, 36 years later my children hear the same stories at our dinner table. Although the training and knowledge base have expanded considerably, the love of caring for the acutely ill and injured remains the same.

The images are the 2 ACEP certificates of this father-and-son team with their images reflected.

Photograph by Dave Sawyer. Grateful acknowledgment for the photo concept is given to Rita Girard, MD.

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