

*Lois Greene Stone, writer and poet, has been syndicated worldwide. Poetry and personal essays have been included in hard and softcover book anthologies. Collections of her personal items/ photos/ memorabilia are in major museums including twelve different divisions of The Smithsonian. The Smithsonian selected her photo to represent all teens from the 1940's-'50's.*

From *Mister* to Doctor

Our wedding invitations said "Mr." in June 1956. Between his third and fourth year of Vanderbilt Medical School, after framing his bachelor's degree also from Vanderbilt, we married. I taught high school on West End Avenue, typed his papers, listened as he rehearsed talks, washed, starched, ironed, cleaned, cooked, helped him research data. Every 17th night, I was alone, and he went without sleep.

Graduation, 1957, was to be an outdoor event. I bought daylight film for the 16mm magazine camera my mother sent. It rained. In the gym, I ran the no-flash-attachment movie camera putting precious money into footage with only hope some frames would produce an image capturing the transition from MR. to DR. Gerald E. Stone. He had earned both Phi Beta Kappa and AOA keys.

Medical internship at Vanderbilt. With a grant from the Muscular Dystrophy Foundation, he researched, interviewed, and assembled data. I worked for the summer in doctor offices until teaching commenced. We collected our urine and 'sold' it for research, and I think he earned 50¢ an hour putting blood test results in patients' charts. He slept home every other night.

Iron lungs were still being used for polio patients, and segregation showed itself in the four public bathrooms and separate drinking fountains in hospital hallways. Downtown Nashville had a four-way traffic light that allowed people to actually cross a specific street in any direction as it turned red in four places. Newspapers rolled out from printing presses after being typeset.

In those years, residency was not a four-year commitment. We moved to NY while he trained for a year at Montefiore Hospital, and then we moved again to Rochester, NY while he completed two more years at University of Rochester's Strong Memorial Hospital. The mandatory armed service took two more years from us, and five months into my third pregnancy we found ourselves back in Rochester. It seemed that the government mandated annual increases in medical school class size, and the university needed teachers at area hospitals; it was looking for people who had trained with them. It was July 1963.

Dr. Stone was sent to The Cleveland Clinic, studied under Dr. Kolff, learned to use the artificial kidney machine, and initiated the procedure for those with chronic kidney disease who lived in western New York State. Dr. Belding Scribner, in Seattle, had developed a reusable arterial venous shunt, which made repeated dialysis possible. My husband hand-created each shunt one-by-one, as peoples' blood vessels are different

distances apart, by warming, bending, adding cold water pumped with a foot-pump through tubing. Every shunt had to be totally smooth; a tiny imperfection could allow blood clot formation. Only one out of four was acceptable.

The Travenol Twin Coil dialysis machine that reminded me of an old wringer clothes-washer required a six-hour run for a patient. Three times during the process, seven different chemicals had to be added to the water to form a correct solution, and prior to the procedure, the machine was primed with blood. Nothing was disposable. Only one patient at a time could be 'hooked-up' to this life-saving treatment; kidney transplants were in infancy.

FACP was earned, and I buttoned the doctoral hood on his garb for the event. But what about the person under the array? What had he become as a solo-practicing physician, father, just human being?

Here is just one example: January 19, 1984, but it could have been any date. Twelve hours after he left the house, he got home. A frightened cancer patient, also a friend, lay in a hospital bed. Emotionally, that made the ordeal more difficult; the treatment was always the same for all his patients. The telephone interrupted dinner several times. He called the floor, the oncologist, and so forth, but at 10:15pm with an outside temperature of about two degrees, he told the duty nurse: "Tell him I'll be over." I changed into regular clothes and got into the car beside my mate. In all his years in solo practice, with eventually a night-weekend coverage group, he practiced the art and science of medicine. Locum Tenens, for many years, followed retirement.

Let me backtrack again: the evening of February 5th, 2000, the Strong Memorial Hospital cardiothoracic team was assembled and honored at a dinner dance gala. I sat at the circular table and asked the man seated closest to me what his specialty was; he replied nephrology. I moved my head right and gazed at my husband's green eyes and for a moment, he didn't have the grey hair of age but rather the vigor of youth. I knew that he helped pave the way for the young nephrologist to be in the transplant team. My enthusiastic words blurted out about my husband starting the hemodialysis/artificial kidney program in the early 1960's, for residents in western New York state who suffered from chronic kidney disease, how renal biopsies were done back when a grid was handmade and then, after x-ray, used to pinpoint where the needle was to penetrate. The young man firmly said, "I really don't care!"

Transplants were science-fiction in the '60's, and the very concept of a machine to cleanse waste from the body, allowing a person to live, was just in the dreams of a gentle man named Dr. Kolff. And no one at the table cared! That heart transplant team was on the cutting edge of then-current technology. I guess I was describing a horse-and-buggy. I didn't feel the medical age before ultrasounds, disposable supplies, magnetic resonance imaging, organ transplantation, polio vaccines, test-tube babies, for starters, was so removed from the present. I wasn't talking about mustard plasters, which existed in my girlhood.

With fifteen grandchildren, nine great-grandchildren and counting, we've so far celebrated 64 years of marriage and watched technological advances with pleasure. Some family are in the health professions: older son an internist, oldest grandson an OB-GYN, daughter a nurse, granddaughter in medical school, nephew an infectious diseases specialist. My husband's hands placed a Doctor of Medicine hood over our grandson's shoulders at The Ohio State University Medical School; his undergrad degree was from Vanderbilt. The ceremony had three generations of ours attending: our daughter and husband from Ohio, their son still at Vandy, and us. While death had claimed many classmates, those left knew it was a celebration of life.

Few new physicians could consider solo practice anymore, and hospitalists are common. The hand-typed patient charts (done on manual typewriters) are now done by dictation directly to a computerized format. Patients have computer portals to input information and even find out when a next appointment is scheduled. Flu vaccines are mostly given in pharmacies. Pills are not compounded. OSHA regulated no coffee pots in office labs.

The Pandemic of 2020 arrived claiming lives and confusing humans as we'd assumed our modern 'everything' was stronger than a virus. Among the 'what is strong' is medical dedication, no matter what the physician's age. My husband telephoned the local medical society offering his services should those be needed.