

JOSEPH FREEDMAN

The days after the Dean's tea party are a blur but in time I surfaced in Tampa with Rees Morgan. We suffered our Rotating "O" at the General Hospital there and our careers were off and running. But there was a hitch - It didn't take long to find out I didn't like close patient care.

Radiology seemed more appealing though in those days there were only endless plain films to read in the dark, barium to be slung top and bottom (pun) and some utterly toxic contrast (dye) to be injected in veins and arteries. Nuclear imaging was in its infancy. Despite these negatives, I signed up. And I'm so glad I did.

I did my residency in diagnostic radiology at the U of A hospital in Edmonton including one year in pathology in Los Angeles. The Fellowship exams were barely over before my wife and I hopped a plane for Amsterdam, bought a VW camper and spent 6 months "doing" Europe. We found out that I had passed the exams in Paris. Returning quite satisfied, I became a Teaching Fellow at VGH for half a year and then went east instead of west. We settled in Red Deer where I practiced for most of my career. The wanderlust wasn't quite over though.

I was able to trade my position with a Kiwi radiologist so we spent 3 months in Nelson, NZ doing radiology in short pants and white knee socks. Our second daughter was born there.

Shortly after that we all went to Saudi Arabia for three years with Aramco (very solid hospital and talented staff so there was no medical coasting).

My first daughter went to kindergarten there - she actually kindered in three countries in that same year, Canada, NZ and SA. Now, lest the reader fret, the wanderlust was finally spent and the rest of my career was spent in Red Deer in a partnership that grew from three to a dozen colleagues over the years.

What a lucky career choice I made! Starting out with only barium and a bit of intravenous poison, radiology just blossomed. New modalities came at us one after the other - ultrasound, CT, nuclear imaging with gamma cameras, NMR, PET scanning, mammography, bone densitometry and interventional radiology. It was a struggle to keep up and, of course, over the years we all had to winnow our own list down and sub specialize. Toward the end, I was doing more interventional procedures and less of the others. I never graduated to MR imaging.

Women are such funny creatures. I once dated the woman I would later marry while in med school. She thought I was as square as a post and I was scratched off her list after just 2 dates. But for some reason her mother liked me and after med school, Tampa and my return to Edmonton, she told her daughter she should "take a second look at Joe." And she did and it cost her 35 years.

We were very happily married and I count myself so lucky to have had such a lovely wife and the two daughters we raised. And then out of nowhere Patty developed metastatic renal carcinoma. Besides surgery there was little to be done in Canada so we sought care in the US with new targeted drugs in clinical trials. It worked and it didn't. She gained an extra year and a half of quite good life but in the end..... And for much of the time in the US the care was on our dime. I had retired to care for her but had to go back to work part time. Still, I would do it again - the extra time was very sweet.

We had two daughters and now I have two grandchildren, both in Coquitlam. The other daughter and her husband are digital nomads, currently working online in Thailand.

They take me hiking, something I now love since I can't keep a golf ball on the course any more. Last summer they dragged me around Mont Blanc and later we spent 3 weeks on a trek around Manaslu in

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in Nepal. And before that we did Kilimanjaro and before that I did Annapurna in Nepal and the SW Coast National Path in England. You get the idea.

It was suggested that we note any significant triumph or defeat during our medical career. There were ups and downs of course but nothing major like many of my classmates. I think that other physicians I worked with would have regarded me as very capable, steady and dependable. But I did have some triumphant moments - they just weren't in medicine.

For about ten years I became an educational critic and reformer in my spare time. I don't know why but I was good at it. In the end, Alberta had passed a law enabling Canada's first charter schools, teachers were more aware of the science behind reading acquisition, and some international comparisons showed that Canada's record was less than stellar. And, Calgary had a new school, Webber Academy.

Finally, I have been lucky yet again. After two years alone and rather lost, I met a lady named Eva online. Of course I think she's clever, pretty and charming. What I do know is that a room comes alive when she enters and my heart still skips a beat. She had lost her husband some years earlier and took a chance on this Canadian guy named Joe. We were married going on 5 years ago