



James S. Furnary, MD

City: Johnstown, PA

Date of Graduation from Medical School: 1957

Medical School Graduated From: Hahnemann Medical College (now Drexel)

Residency Location: Case Western Reserve

Specialty: General Surgery

What factors influenced your decision to become a physician?

I had an appendectomy at age 6 (1938-39). This was my foundation of becoming a physician, so I could help people get well.

Did you have any mentors or influential people in the course of your medical training or careered who made an impact on you? The entire surgical teaching staff at Case Western Reserve had great surgical knowledge and taught me how to develop my surgical skills.

Did you experience a defining moment that made you feel you had become a physician?

I did not have a defining moment, but the excellent resident training and final results on all my patients as a resident made me feel that I had made the proper choice and my patients were getting well after their surgery.

As you were training to be a physician, what one piece of advice could you not have done without?

You must know the anatomy of the body – and the physiology of what happens in the body.

What advice would you give to medical students graduating in the class of 2007?

Continue to read and study - - keep up with all new procedures and medicines. Do not ever stagnate or you will be left behind in treating your patients.

What is the most significant medical innovation you experienced in your years of practice?

Laparoscopic surgery – I saw the first TV on laparoscopic cholecystectomy at the ACS convention in San Francisco, 1989. I knew then I had to learn this procedure to give my patients the best care available.

Is there one patient, situation or incident that stands out above all others in your career?

Yes – my patient presented in the office, age 28, with a fungating left upper quad. Stage IV. carcinoma of the breast with lymph node involvement. I did an extensive 'toilet' type procedure mastectomy and closed the deficit with flaps. She underwent extensive radiation and chemotherapy. It is now 16-17 year post-op and she is doing well – working full time.