

A classmate's story: Marilyn Roderick, MD

Aloha Classmates Who Are Not Done Yet!

I want to take some of you on a journey you have never taken before, even the most well-traveled of you!

Elsie says I'm to tell my story, which is way too long. So I'll tell my "Current Story" after a quick introduction.

After graduating with a BS in Nursing, I worked on one of the last Contagious Diseases Floor in Boston. Eventually became one of the first Nurse Epidemiologists, then a Hospital Epidemiologist (though not an MD); after 10 years, I missed Patient Care so attended Stanford Medical School for 5 years until I achieved my MD in 1983. I published a book, *Infection Control in Critical Care* during my first year of Medical School. I then took a hybrid residency Internal Medicine and OB-GYN, then did a bit of everything when practicing in remote areas in Hawaii.

At first, I stayed near Stanford in my own private office. Delivered many babies of different nationalities, as my office was like the UN! 16 years. Treated very wealthy, including NFL '49er wives, nearby Silicon Valley young men executives, overwrought with performance anxiety, who appeared annually, were told about the importance of stress reduction, and to lose weight by eating more healthfully and getting at least a modicum of regular exercise. They patted their own backs for showing up once a year, but never appeared any less stressed and always weighed the same or even more. And also, a very poor black man from East Palo Alto, after whom my new office was partially designed, and not at all lavish (couldn't afford it, but still...) as he had hard-to-treat hypertension and had been a regular patient during my two years at a shared Family Practice Office, with Dr. "Marcus Welby" practicing on the other side! (so I had excellent training in real life medicine! One day I asked this elder statesman - whose longtime partner had moved to Yosemite and I had taken over his patients - what was the meaning of what I figured was an unknown, to me, medical acronym "DRD" that I often saw in these (paper, then) charts. "Oh", he laughed, "DRD means 'Don't Remember Details' !!!) Anyway, I decorated the new office with him in mind, as I wanted him, and other people like him, to feel equally comfortable with the affluent ones, in my new office. Well, he never came to my new office, I found out later, even though it was closer to his home, because he was in the habit of going to the same place. So, sadly, he went with a new doctor in the old office, as "Marcus Welby" had retired.

In my new office, in the small town, neighboring Stanford, I cared for many pregnant women of different nationalities- kind of like a U.N. office! I learned many cultural norms for pregnancy, but especially traditions in Labor and Delivery from the various nations. Really interesting, but that story will need to wait...

After 16 years, we moved permanently to the island of Kauai, the northernmost and oldest of the 4 main Hawaiian islands. Also called "The Garden Island" and "The Healing Island", it's the least "touristy" and, I believe, the most natural of them all, especially on the North Shore.

I first visited the North Shore of Kauai during Spring Break while in Medical School. It rained daily for the entire ten days we were there. We never saw the sun. The mud was up to my knees when I tried running on the "road" for exercise. I read the entire trilogy of "The Mutiny on the Bounty," which the house we

were renting had on-hand. But I still fell in love with it, *Paradise on Earth*, and vowed I would come back one day and live there when I had a family.

My husband, 4-year-old daughter and I did come back to Kauai, for vacation, about ten years later. We ended up stranded in a Class V Hurricane, "Iniki." We evacuated to an elementary school and, in a classroom, watched on TV as the circling storm came towards us. When it was upon us, the TV broke. We found out later that the wind gauges had broken at 240 mph. I was the only doctor at the elementary school and have many harrowing stories to tell- but those too will need to wait...

Nevertheless, we wanted to live there while our daughter was still young, in a place where Caucasians were the minority, and where her privileged lifestyle, until then, would not be the only memory she would have from her childhood. So back we went.

I had my own, small, magical office located on the North Shore, past the first of seven one-lane bridges, in Hanalei, Kauai. It was 45 miles from the nearest hospital, where patients thought they would die if they were to go there. Remote, to say the least!

Day 1. Took a fish hook out of a burly commercial fisherman's hand. Refused to go to the hospital for a "fancy" closure. I did have tetanus vaccine, and experience sewing up episiotomies after childbirth, so I proceeded. Next, saw on an elderly woman, who lived in a house made to look like the ship, "Bounty," as her deceased husband had been the cinematographer for the "Mutiny on the Bounty." She had fallen and sustained a dislocated fracture of her right arm- refused an X-ray at the distant hospital and, even after my listing all the things she could never do again, chose to go home with a sling and Tylenol! Amazing, I thought!

Taro, a native Polynesian staple, brought to Hawaii on outrigger canoes, ostensibly from Tahiti, remains a staple food. Taro fields were next door to my little tropical colored and themed office, where local artists hung their works for sale. Just beautiful! Out the window in the room where my desk was, I could look out the window after it rained and see up to 7 gorgeous tropical waterfalls cascading vertically down the mountainside, accompanied by double rainbows!

Well, on *Day 2*, I was in one exam room seeing a well-known movie star (of whom there were many), and in my other exam room was a pretty "Haole" (pronounced 'howly'- a local not-so-nice term for Caucasians) living on the beach, accompanied by an also pretty friend, who needed the Morning After Pill. Suddenly, in came the Security Guard, calling me out, saying "Hey Doc, the bridge is flooding (raining) and if you don't leave now, you'll be here all night!" My husband and our then 12-year-old daughter were in our rental home on the other side of that bridge.

Only the 'rich folks', including the grandson of original Missionaries, who had loaned me money to build out my office (converted from a frame shop), as he really wanted a physician in the community, and people like Graham Nash, of "Crosby, Stills, and Nash", who was living year-round on an old "Pipeline Road", and movie stars and tourists, lived in the small town of Hanalei.

(By the way, David Crosby, may he *Rest In Peace* in 2023, was also one of my patients when he came to town- that's another great story...)

Oh, Hanalei was immortalized by the trio of Peter, Paul, and Mary when they sang "Puff, the Magic Dragon," lived by the sea, and frolicked in the autumn mist in a town called "Hanalei"- they purportedly

composed the song, while high on weed, looking out across Hanalei Bay towards the nearby mountains, whose silhouette looked like a “dragon”- and it does! though the pronunciation of the towns name, “Hanalei” with the last syllable sounding like a long “a” sound, not long “ee”, the sound in the song. That Hanalei Beach, was often voted the #2 most beautiful in the world, and #1 was always in Florida, where the “beach-rater” was from!

At any rate, the bridge flooding from tons of tropical rain, that locals called “dumping”, turned out not to be at all unusual! I splinted hikers coming from the famous Kalalau Trail head, nearby.

Treated Portuguese Man’O War jellyfish stings, where people coming out of the water in exquisite pain, would be given urgent advice from local beach goers and paid children to pee on their stinging skin! Turns out, there was actually some medical correctness with that type of sting and the contents of urine!

Cared for large centipede bites, including on one of my first patients. He was a taro picker with an arm swollen to four times (4 X) the normal size. He had been treating himself with everything in the book, including snake oil, before finally coming to see an actual doctor. His outcome was fine, luckily.

Fast forward:

Licensed in CA, Hawaii, and now only licensed in NC.

Continued to practice in a variety of settings.

Cared for a myriad of patients: very rich and very poor, Native Hawaiians, American Indians (as they wished to be called), male prisoners including those in ‘Maximum Security’ and all the “regular” types of folks.

It has been a great honor and some angst (especially prisons), but mostly fun and rewarding.

I have also suffered and overcome very many diseases, including stroke and invasive cancer. Have re-learned how to walk 3 times in the past two years.

Developed an interest in Coaching. While recuperating at various times, and I took Virtual Classes in USA (Certified Health Coach 2019), and a coaching mastery course in the UK, and a 3rd overall advanced Coaching class in the US, completed in 2023.

Recently, past couple years, calling myself a “Medical Coach”!

Recently, treating patients recently diagnosed with serious illnesses make their way forward, I’ve been using the tools I teach to regain their self-confidence to make their best decisions, while I act as their advocate, together with their Doctors and teams caring for them, in ways I know would have helped me. Even just to know I was not by myself.

So My/Our Journey Into Mindfulness -

I’ll ask you a question:

When was the last time you thanked your heart for beating 24/7, 12 months a year, at an average 74 beats per minute, or 38,894,400 per year, multiplied by 77 years— my handy calculator doesn’t go that high!

Well, do you think maybe it’s time you should thank your heart?

I think of mindfulness as living with intention every day. Its practice in the morning makes you feel calmer, makes you feel like you are in charge of each situation. Easier to focus on the task at hand. To accomplish enough to give a sense that you have done enough. Overall, a gentler day!

When you're Mindful, you're also "on the lookout" for your own, what I call "minor miracles". We all have them. (I'll share mine while we're individually working together.)

If you're more observant, you will begin to detect these "coincidences", and the more you see them, the more confidence you'll gain in, simply, facing the day!

I would like to share a true story (but I did not keep the citation/ so now I'm looking to find it): from what I remember- Students in a 8th grade classroom were conducting an experiment using two 4 ft high



leafy green plants. They were watered and fed exactly the same and kept in the same environment. The students were divided into two groups. Each morning when they entered their classroom, half stopped at Plant A- and praised it, said how well it was growing, complementing new leaves, and saying they loved it. The second group went to Plant B and scolded it- telling it how ugly it was, how much they disliked it, how they wouldn't even mind if it died.

The Results? (I can't recall the exact time frame, but not long- maybe 4-6 wks)

Plant A was thriving, many new leaves, central stalk held high for new branches to grow- this plant was loving life! Plant B leaves wrinkled and withered, central stalk drooping, watered well but clearly in decline!

These were plants! No central nervous system- in fact, no neurons at all! No mechanism to record feelings!

Well, after I put this on Social Media last week, both a member of or class, Tom Pollard, whom I've never met, but who I've learned is doing some amazing work while living in the Yucatán, and a virtual Doctor friend, a woman Urologist from UCLA who started a coaching group for doctors by doctors, each wrote to me with the same reference. It's about how water responds to emotions, even when frozen, makes different types of crystals depending on what is said to it. They encouraged me, asking if I, as a life-long Scientist, always aware of "exactness" and data, should state these unproven by the types of research studies I'm accustomed to. They both encouraged me to keep going on this Journey with you!

The book is on Amazon: short and easy to read, my friend says:

"The Hidden Messages in Water", by Masaru Emoto

3000 people give it 4.25 out of 5 stars.

Imagine what could happen if you talked to your own body out of respect & with loving kindness- —and with the help of an expert in "parts of the body" and who has also overcome illnesses in so many body parts you cannot imagine!

So, this is only Step 1 out of 3.

Step 2- Clear your Mind- using my own version of meditation, somewhat like Transcendental Meditation (TM) that I've practiced, but not always regularly, like my best friend from Medical School who visited me last month. She has spent 50 years practicing TM for at least 20 minutes twice daily.

On our first-class day at Stanford Medical School she sat down right next to me, introduced herself, and told me we were going to be best friends. (How did she know we both practiced TM?) That was in September 1978. At the time I, coming from Boston, thought she was one of those crazy "woo, woo" Californians that I had been warned about.

In my version, you choose your own 1 or 2 syllable mantra. We start slowly. More on this later, for those who wish to continue.

There is another choice for mental clarity:

EFT- Emotional Freedom Techniques, also known as "Tapping". For those who have issues with Meditation.

Step 3- Nourish your Spirit- that deep part inside each of us that is good, and kind, and knows love- it's often called our Soul- that puts the welfare of others before ourselves, that generates loving kindness. Learn to pray to your Higher Power: God, Jesus, Buddha, and so on. They are the final mission to Mindfulness.

The whole process is completed in 3 months. By Spring, if you start now. What a fantastic accomplishment that would be for the first quarter of 2024- for us!

To proceed, send me a message at drmarilyncoach@gmail.com with the following:

Name:

Email:

Contact by Zoom or Phone:

Time Zone:

Best time of day: AM / PM. Early Evening

Weekday: Monday Thursday Friday

The call will last no longer than 30 minutes. It will allow us to see how we can work together. This call is gratis, of course. The format of the program is two calls a week, one longer for explanation/teaching. The other, shorter, to check in, see how things are going, and answer any questions you might have. There is a fee. (I hate this part, as I've always had someone else in my office, to take care of all of this with my patients.) But we'll discuss this too.

The entire program will take 3 months. Just in time for Spring!
A new awareness and a gentler easier way of living.

Hoping I've informed you all carefully enough to pique your curiosity, and I hope to hear more from you soon. I'll see you all on our next Class of '68 Zoom Call!

Aloha Again and Happy New Year!
Marilyn Roderick, MD