

"Like a surgeon, cutting for the very first time."

-Weird Al Yankovic: "Like a Surgeon"

Growing up, I was constantly involved in many humorous experiences that, although I did not know it at the time, altered my outlook on the world. The main source of these humorous experiences was my dad. My father, an Internist at a local hospital, was an excellent example of how all physicians should act. He epitomized the caring doctor society expects, but in addition, he possessed a certain quality that doctors often lack: humor. Although he took his work seriously, my dad approached it from a different perspective. Every day my father would like to inject humor, instead of painful medications, into his patients. His practical jokes always cracked-up the patients, allowing them to forget about the pain that brought them to the hospital in the first place. It was from one of these practical jokes that my most memorable humorous experience originates.

I was only eight years old at the time, but even at this early age, it was my desire to become a doctor like my dad. Well, on this particular day I was on "rounds" with my dad at the hospital, receiving the same customary greetings from nurses and patients alike. I was always fascinated with my dad's job, and I tried to accompany him whenever possible. After our rounds we had lunch at the hospital cafeteria. All of a sudden the expression on my dad's face changed. It was as if he had devised the ultimate caper. My dad leaned over towards me and said, "How would you like to do a consultation for me?"

Consultation? What was a consultation? These were the first thoughts to race through my head. My father explained that all I had to do was ask a patient a few questions and write down the answers, if and when the patient replied. Wow! My first chance to act out my dreams, to follow in my father's footsteps. The next question I asked was sort of obvious. "Why?!!!" My dad stated that his schedule had two patients needing attention at the same time, or so he said. Till this day I never did find out if the second mysterious patient ever existed. But, as I said, I was eight and, therefore, quite gullible.

I jumped at the opportunity of becoming a doctor for a day and, with an emphatic "YES!!!," we were off. I followed my father down a series of long white corridors. I had been down these corridors hundreds of times before, but this time, somehow, things seemed different; I was on a mission, lives hung in the balance. Well, here I was following my dad, three or four of my steps matching one of his long strides. He stopped at a brown, towering door, looked at me, smiled, and went in. Doubtfully I followed. "Here's your patient," my dad said. Wow! My patient! I liked the sound of that. The patient was a man in his mid-eighties who, laughing at the idea of my attempt to do a consultation with him, agreed to the proposition almost instantaneously.

My dad left the room. Hey! I'm on my own! What do I ask?
"Uh...uh...uh...so...uh...What was the flavor of your Jello today?" After that awkward first question, things proceeded a bit more smoothly. In the middle of one question, sensing some presence behind me, I turned around. A vast number of people had assembled, all amused by my question and answer session. Undaunted I proceeded on with my "first consultation." Upon finishing my consultation, and after receiving applause from my "colleagues," I received yet another honor. The doctors took the smudgy piece of paper I was holding, which contained the valuable information, and pinned it on the central bulletin board where it was displayed for all to see. At this time my father had returned and, after seeing the results of my consultation, said how proud he was of me. The first thing that popped out of my mouth sent many laughing. "How much money do I get?"

It was over, my debut as a doctor, but the memories will last forever. Besides just having fun, I also learned a great deal from the episode. Through this humorous experience I found out what it is really like to function as a doctor, not through some cold impersonal view as seen by people from the outside. More importantly, I learned from the experience that humor belongs everywhere, brightening up any situation.