



## The Doctor is In

CLASSIC FISHER PRICE TOYS WERE STAPLES OF my childhood, and - aside from the Woodsies, the squirrel finger puppet family that resided in a soft fabric log, with a rubber handle and a fold-out wall that Velcroed shut - none held such a special spot in my heart as the Fisher Price Doctor Kit.

The little beige briefcase was filled with all of the essentials: a blood pressure cuff, a stethoscope, a thermometer, a needle, and a knee hammer. I would pack that case around, whipping out the blood pressure cuff to check the pressure of anyone who was nearby. If you were sitting, you were fair game to have your knee bopped and your temperature taken. The stethoscope was the best, though because not only could you listen to someone's heartbeat, but you could also slip the rubber tipped ear pieces into your ears and hold the round part up to your mouth and talk into it, making everything echo.

With the Fisher Price Doctor Kit long-since forgotten in a corner of the basement, I enthusiastically launched into my college career full-throttle, opting for 8 a.m. classes, five days a week my freshman year, leaving afternoons free for work. Each day I would drive to the local hospital, take the elevator to the seventh floor, and transform from college student to worker bee at a doctor's office.

I escorted patients back to the exam rooms, took their temperature and their blood pressure, updated their medical information, and took them to the scale for their universally dreaded weigh-in. The office gave me my own stethoscope and blood pressure kit to practice with at home. It was much nicer than the Fisher Price cuff.

The slightest dipping of my toes into the medical realm, paired

with the encouraging mantra of, "We'll make a doctor out of you yet," that was regularly offered up to me by one of the doctors whose exam rooms I passed by multiple times a day, gave me pause to entertain the idea of going into medicine for the briefest of moments. But just as fast as he was with his, "We'll make a doctor out of you yet," declarations, I would quickly counter with, "There's too much math involved!" Even back then, it was clearly evident to me that my gifts from God had fallen squarely in the History-English-Language side of the talent pool, on the far opposite end from the Math and Science skillset. I could just imagine myself bedecked in a white lab coat, starring at a drugged up patient, draped across the floor, and asking a nurse, "Ooooh, did I add that dosage wrong?"

Another drawback is the needles. I don't mind needles. I can look at needles, I can handle needles and I can talk about needles. The thought of them doesn't make me cringe, but the minute a needle goes into my arm and blood is drawn out, I'm down for the count.

So long before any, "I'm going to be a doctor dreams" ever launched, they were grounded. And while I may not have really ever wanted to go into medicine, it didn't keep me from being fascinated by the entire medical field. Perhaps because it is so different from my daily world, perhaps because it is amazing what can be done to the human body, or perhaps, simply because the nature of the job I did go into is to ask questions and tell stories, I have continued to find the medical field fascinating.

I recently had the opportunity to sit with a family member in the emergency room and watch while they got stitches in their head. It was absolutely fascinating! With the finesse of a seamstress, the doctor worked the needle and thread back and forth, in a beautiful dance. With rhythm and precise moves, he pulled the thread through the skin and gently tugged it together. It is bizzare to think that while we are reading books or going for a walk, doing something so normal, someone in this city could be stitching the flesh of a fellow human being back together.

Every time I visit an emergency room, I am fascinated by the work that goes on there, and the numerous ways life can hang in the balance. I can consider it fascinating because each time, the life that hung in the balance was gently, lovingly and knowledgeably nudged back onto the side of good health. While an emergency room visit is fascinating for some, it is heartbreaking for others whose outcome is not as good. There are always two sides of a story.

The highs, the lows, the excitement, the unexpected...the needles, the math. Add it all up, carry the one, and I can confidently say medicine would not have been the career field for me. I am so glad there are those who knew it was the right career for them, though. Those who were willing to put in the time, the effort, the cost - both personal and financial - and the dedication to become doctors. Those who are willing to recognize the beauty, purpose and importance of every life.

We should all be thankful for those doctors, and in this issue we are especially thankful for our area's Best Doctors, ranked according to a survey by Best Doctors in America. These are the best of the best, and we are grateful for the chance to shine a light on them.

As for me? I'll stick to writing their stories - and maybe, occasionally, taking their blood pressure with a Fisher Price cuff. Doing anything else would just make me sick.

*Blythe*