In his very readable memoirs, Dr Ted Merrill takes us on a wonderful journey through his career in medicine—from his 1948 graduation from medical school at Columbia University in New York City to his eventual retirement in Oregon after 50 remarkable years of practice. During this period in medicine, we witness first-hand the birth of family medicine as an academic discipline and the evolution of emergency medicine practice, as it changed from bedside housecalls to the modern emergency medical services of today.

Dr Merrill shares a series of stories that capture various themes of medical practice, such as the complexities of consent and the importance of kindness and respect toward patients and their families. He emphasizes that a sound knowledge of anatomy and physiology, as well as excellent communication skills, is fundamental to the practice of medicine. He uses insight and humour to describe the effects of the development of interprofessional teams and risk management on medical practice.

With all the complexities of modern care and health systems, Dr Merrill reminds us about humility, mindfulness, and the importance of the generalist physician. Although he has retired from practice, Dr Merrill states there is still fun in practising medicine, “even if you have to poke around to find it.” Good advice for us all.

—Doug Sinclair MD CCFP(EM)

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