

Patient-Centered Care Letters to Mrs. S, June 2006

Dear Mrs. S. and family,

I am so thankful that my family was privileged to have Dr. S. in our lives. It was truly a blessing from God. Dr. S. has been my family's surgeon for 40 years. When my Mom was diagnosed with cancer in 1997, it was Dr. S. with his superior intellect, kindness, and honesty who helped us to cope as a family until she passed in 1999 just 3 months after Dad died. I will never forget how Dr. S. encouraged her to continue working and living each day to the fullest. In the last month of her life he was like a Dad to me. His care did not stop when she died. He made himself available to me to talk and cope with my loss. How well I remember when Dr. and Mrs. S. were invited to the Oscars by composer John Barry. Dr. S. along with two other doctors saved his life. John won the Oscar for the music he composed for the movie, "Dances with Wolves." When he accepted his award he thanked the 3 doctors by name and the Academy. What a thrill it was that such a humble man as Dr. S. was now known to the world.

Please know that Dr. S. will live on in the hearts of so many of us who were his patients. We are lost but I take comfort in knowing that he did not suffer and that for sure he is with the Lord. I know we will meet again.

With love,

Dear Mrs. S.,

I just felt that I should write and let you know how important Dr. S. was to me and my mother. It was approximately twenty-six years ago when I met Dr. S. and became his patient. At that time I needed medical attention because of a nasty cut on my chin. It was a nurse in the Emergency Room who referred him. The result of twelve stitches he administered was so successful that I returned to Dr. S. for other minor surgery on my face. Sixteen years ago when my mother needed breast surgery, it was only natural that we chose your husband to perform the operation. In time it proved to be a success because the cancer never returned. As the years passed, my mother came to trust her doctor's decisions regarding her health. She looked forward to her visits to the doctor's office more and more in recent years. She especially found comfort and reassurance when she unburdened her anxieties to Dr. S. He had a wonderful way of making her feel much better as he chuckled when he empathized with her. My mother is now ninety-two years old. I do believe that the medical care she received from Dr. S. has contributed to her long life. I must tell you, she took the news of his death very badly when she called to make her customary appointment. For sure we will miss him very much. I do feel comforted by the fact that he was our doctor for so many years.

We send our sincere sympathy to the family.

Dear Mrs. S.

I am happy to have this opportunity to express my utmost gratitude to you and your family for having had Dr. S. as our family physician. The most wonderful humanitarian doctor that we will ever encounter. I probably could write a book myself about Dr. S. as we have shared many memories. I will only touch a few. I was introduced to Dr. S. in September 1987, by my brother N.L. as a doctor with golden hands. My mother at the time was diagnosed with ovarian cancer, I was ready to have her cared by a gynecologist in Manhattan. My brother insisted that our mother would merely be a number but with Dr. S., she would not only have the best care, but would be treated like a family member. N. was so right and we became a part of his family. He always gave my mother comfort and hope. I recall one day at Best Care Hospital a patient asked me if Dr. S. was my mother's son. When I questioned her curiosity, she said: "I have never seen such a devoted doctor, he checks on her three times a day, I figured they had to be related." Such devotion to patients is indeed rare. In 1999, I remember Dr. S. with so much respect, his compassion as a doctor was remarkable. I had asked for his help with my niece that was born here, but moved to Italy after her father (my brother) died, she had no medical insurance in the U.S. She was diagnosed as having cancer of the spleen. After he examined her he was 100% sure that she did not have cancer. He helped me get Medicaid for her. After several weeks of testing by several other doctors, my sister-in-law informed me that my niece was going to be taken care of by a doctor at Good Care Hospital. Dr. S. did not agree with her decision. He called me on a Sunday night on his way home from visiting his daughter in Massachusetts. He told me that he was sad that my niece at such a young age would have to go through unnecessary procedures and informed me that he would take care of her gratis. I was so touched by his kindness and generosity, where do you find a doctor or anyone that would do anything for free? I thanked him with all my heart, but unfortunately it was not my decision to make. Dr. S. was so right, at Good Care Hospital not only did they remove my niece's spleen, but they did exploratory surgery when they found no cancer. At 25 she is full of scars. He always asked me about her.

I have so many other stories, but the last one is the most recent. On June 3, 2006, my father G.L., a patient of Dr. S., was celebrating his 100th birthday and my youngest son J. was graduating from high school. On June 2nd J. developed a rash on his body. Four years ago, he had the same kind of rash and was diagnosed with Steven Johnson disease. Doctors at S. Hospital concluded that he was allergic to Zythromax. This time the doctor had given him Amoxicillin. Upon calling his doctor, I was informed that he could not help as he was going to a party and to take my son to the emergency room at a hospital. It was 10:30pm when we were on our way to Best Care Hospital., my first instinct was to call Dr. S. My oldest son said to me, "Let's be reasonable, it's 10:30pm no doctor is going to call you back at this time." I told my son, "you don't know Dr. S., he will call me back within 15 minutes." Both my sons were shocked when Dr. S. called me on my cell and told me exactly what to expect in the emergency

room, and if I was not satisfied, to call him back and he would be at the hospital within minutes. I felt reassured by his kind words and guidance, as my son's life was in danger. All went well. My son J. attended his graduation and was at my Dad's 100th celebration. On Monday June 5th Dr. S. called me to find out how my son was doing. J's doctor never even called. Dr. S. was a great man.

The last time I saw him was on June 9th. I always joked selfishly with J. (his administrative assistant) and Dr. S. about retiring, how we would all be in a state of turmoil if he did, and sure enough this is the way we feel, even after 2 months of hearing the devastating news. I need to thank Dr. S. for helping my niece S. as without Dr. S. our beautiful N. would never have been born. Thank you for your patience with my 100 year old father and for taking great care of us and many other members of my family.

You are truly missed Dr. S. Wishing you strength, peace, happiness and health so that you may enjoy your family.

Respectfully,