

DEPARTMENT RETIREMENT CELEBRATION REMARKS

Thank you so much for this opportunity – once again! This is my third go at saying goodbye, so probably you are all thinking, let's hope this time she gets the job done. Honestly, it has been so therapeutic for me to reflect on my time in the department, first at the 50th anniversary, then at our last faculty meeting, so thanks for indulging me one final time.

In January 1978, I packed up my two little daughters (to be joined by our son 4 years later), my incredibly supportive and flexible husband, and accepted a job as a behavioral scientist (what is now called a behavioral health specialist) in the Department of Family Medicine at UCI. I was ready for an adventure. I just didn't know it would last 42 years.

So that describes the what, how it all began. But it doesn't explain the how – how did this all happen?

I must say I'm the kind of person who believes it takes a village, someone who recognizes I didn't build anything all by myself. How I got here started with my parents (literally, right?), Benedict and Nancy Freedman, who in an era when women were just beginning to step out of the kitchen, believed girls could do anything boys could do, and women could become anything men could be. They taught me always to try harder and aspire to do better. They thought I should be a doctor (got close), a judge, or a writer – and somehow in a way I think my career did embody all those things.

My brilliant brother and gifted sister, Mike Freedman and Deborah Jackson, who quickly surpassed me mathematically and musically, were kind enough to allow me to think that somehow I was still the wise older sister. The same is true for my brothers-and-sisters-in-law, who I regard as simply additional brothers and sisters, and who have always loved and supported me.

Then there were the teachers who nurtured me and inspired me to become a teacher myself. I come from a family of teachers, and I remember when our kids started thinking about what they wanted to be, I replied, well you could be a teacher. When they asked me what else they could be, I was stumped. My teachers in school were important to me – from my 4th grade teacher who let me seek refuge in her lap whenever this secular Jewish girl felt out of place at her private Christian school; my 8th grade teacher who believed I could write; and especially my college professors who encouraged me to chart my own course so that I developed interdisciplinary courses of studies both as an undergraduate and a doctoral student.

My children, Shauna, Jena, and Josh, had to put up with a mom who was part of the feminist wave that thought women could have it all – and I kind of did, thanks to their flexibility and love. Just as a small example of their wonderfulness, when as little kids I told them they could only be sick on the weekends, they knew I wasn't joking. All working parents of small children will understand this. My 6 grandkids have always given me their love and affection and have allowed me to be an active part of their lives. We've shared many pancake breakfasts, card games, word games, and days at the beach, and always singing, which I hope we will resurrect sooner rather than later. My eldest grandson James has chosen to enroll at UCI as a freshman this year, so Anteaters will still have a vigorous family presence.

Most of all, I have deep gratitude for my life partner and soulmate, who has consistently believed in me, even when I wasn't sure I did; who inspired me to fulfill my potential; and who has helped me

become the best person I could be. In fact, he was the one who found the ad for the job at UCI, and encouraged me to apply. So everything that's happened since then can be laid at his doorstep.

Now I'd like to say something specifically about this department. I've pondered how I managed to not only survive but thrive in the department for so many decades. I've concluded that it has something to do with the nature of family medicine and the character of the people who choose this specialty. As I've said before, when I joined family medicine, it was a revolutionary movement, eager to implement a radical vision of medicine. As a child, I experienced the trauma of having a chronically ill mother, as well as a family legacy of recurrent serious illness, and I knew that medicine had to be about more than simply treating one individual patient with specific drugs or surgery, with no concern for the emotional and familial ramifications of disease. Family medicine understood this, as they understood so much else I cared about, such as compassionate respectful and equitable care for marginalized and neglected communities.

Fortuitously, I had found a home that, like my family of origin, would allow me to think outside the box, would allow me to grow, as the saying goes, both roots and wings. The department gave me the security to feel that, despite not being a physician, there was room for me here; and it gave me the freedom to evolve beyond my beginnings, to continue to challenge myself, just as my parents – and my husband – had encouraged me to do. Over the years, I had the opportunity to serve as clerkship director and acting chair; to co-direct a large course similar to Clinical Foundations; and perhaps most radical of all to start a program in Medical Humanities in the School of Medicine. In all these endeavors, the department always stood with me.

I owe a special debt of gratitude to the following people: Dr. Ray Anderson my first chair, who despite falling asleep during my first job interview, still saw fit to hire me; Dennis Mull, my next chair, who encouraged my scholarship; Mike Prislín, who helped me move beyond my original role as behavioral scientist by appointing me predoc director; Joe Scherger, another former chair who embraced the concept of medical humanities and helped me write the HRSA grant that first funded the program; Kathy Larsen, who was indefatigable in holding the department together clinically during my 22 interesting months as acting chair – and later for her steady service as chair; Emily Dow, who did so much to clarify the vision of service to underresourced populations that lies at the heart of our department; Dave Morohashi (and now Brian Kim) for their support of my somewhat unusual ideas for teaching in the clerkship;

Dave Kilgore whose philosophy of ethical medicine so aligns with my own and who has always been there to acknowledge my efforts and cheer me on; Tan Nguyen, who over the years became first my teaching partner and now is a leader in so many areas of medical humanities at UCI; and of course Cindy Haq, who ever since she arrived as chair, has steadfastly endorsed my efforts to build and ultimately transition the program in medical humanities, and has been a role model for me of compassion, centeredness, and steely resolve to uphold the wellbeing of the department. Truly, each of my colleagues past and present has always taught me something, has helped me better understand the realities of medicine, and has shown me how to integrate my often half-baked ideas into actual useful teaching and clinical practice.

So this has been a very long-winded way of saying I couldn't have done this without you. Thank you for your caring, your support, your appreciation of who I've tried to be and what I've tried to do. I am so grateful for this experience.