

Elmer F. Wahl, MD - Memories

When I graduated from the University of Cincinnati College of Medicine in 1971:

- The Vietnam war was just winding down
- When I wore my army uniform in downtown San Francisco, I was shunned and cursed at
- I observed my first gay wedding in Golden Gate Park in San Francisco on July 4, 1971.
- The American Academy of Family Physicians had just changed its name from the American Academy of General Practice
- Family Practice residencies were in their infancy
- Florence Landis was executive vice president of the Ohio Academy of Family Physicians (OAFP).
- A regular office visit cost \$7 and patients paid when they left
- The cost to mail a first class letter was 7 cents
- History taking and physical exam were the most important part of the office visit
- I made house calls
- The only insurance was “hospitalization” and paid only for hospital charges
- Penicillin, Tetracycline, and Sulfa were the only antibiotics
- Cephalosporins were just being developed
- Furosemide had just been released
- Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs were just being developed
- CT scans and MRIs didn’t exist
- White blood cell differentials were done by hand with microscope and hand counter
- SMA-12 and SMAC 20 chemistry tests had just been developed
- Cincinnati General Hospital (now University Hospital) had just been built
- Medical records were kept on 4-by-6 cards which held notes for 3-5 visits on a side.
- CPT or ICD-9 codes had not been invented
- Medicare had just started
- I visited all my hospitalized patients in the hospital daily
- I saw drug representatives in the office and they gave out pens and other knick-knacks
- OAFP Annual Meetings had 300 physicians attending and had 10-16 hours of continuing medical education
- Only three of 105 graduates went into family practice
- Physicians did not advertise
- Only way to advertise was in print edition of Yellow Pages which was distributed to everyone
- Most family practices were solo or small groups with two to four physicians.