

Don Lindberg's Diverse Influence: An Interview with Roy Musick Jr. M.D. and Linda Musick

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‘Don Lindberg convinced me that I should go to medical school,’ Roy Musick M.D. said at the outset of an interview in fall 2020.

Dr. Musick described an all-night chat that occurred more than a half-century ago. As Donald A.B. Lindberg M.D. and Musick discussed his professional future, he mentioned he wanted to pursue a Ph.D. in psychology. Dr. Lindberg cheerfully responded; ‘*Oh no... you must go into medicine.*’ (Dr. Lindberg was Musick’s brother-in-law).

Recalling the conversation vividly, Musick noted at the time he self-questioned his academic ability to handle medical school.

Dr. Lindberg quickly responded, ‘You do not have to be smart to go to medical school... You just have to keep your head down (persevere)... they hand you a degree and ... then, you can do what you want.’

Although the task took several years, Musick said he eventually learned that: ‘Don was right... When I looked up, I was an M.D. and gained so many professional pathways and opportunities.’

Dr. Musick laughed about how a conversation that seemed so casual at the time turned out to be transformative. He became an internist with a specialty in gastroenterology and enjoyed a 46-year career practicing medicine, mostly in the northern suburbs of San Francisco.

Dr. Musick also recalled a memorable visit to a New York City hospital during Dr. Lindberg’s early years as a pathologist. Dr. Lindberg invited Musick to watch an autopsy in progress, which Don believed to be exceptionally instructive.

‘The autopsy was gruesome, and the room was without air conditioning during one of the hottest, humid days during a New York summer,’ Dr. Musick said. However, Musick recalled Dr. Lindberg did not seem to notice. Instead, he enjoyed explaining to Musick, then a medical novice, what they were seeing and learning.

‘Although Don perceived I was getting weak in the knees, he kept encouraging me to keep standing, which somehow I managed to do,’ Dr. Musick said. Musick added Dr. Lindberg was a ‘born mentor’ and his willingness to assist never abated.

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Although he worked with many distinguished health care providers during his career, Dr. Musick said Dr. Lindberg was: 'the only great man I have ever known.'

Linda Musick (Roy's wife) experienced a different side of Dr. Lindberg's personality and character during their 50+-year friendship. Ms. Musick, a former English teacher, liked to go on photoshoots with Dr. Lindberg during family trips.

Ms. Musick explained she partially learned how to be a photographer because of friendly competition with Don. She recalled they would visit a site, take a different approach to producing photos, and later, compare and critique their harvest of images.

'Don taught me how to load black and white film and how to develop it,' Musick said. The first time she developed film was in the darkroom at the Lindberg's house in Columbia, MO.

'Don liked to photograph nature, which sometimes brought out his spiritual side,' Ms. Musick said. She keenly recalled Don's photographs of the Gettysburg PA wheat field where Gen. Robert E. Lee's Confederate army fired its first shot on July 1, 1863.

Musick explained she and Don challenged each other to visually depict different aspects of the wheat field more than 120 years after the penultimate U.S. Civil War battle. An estimated 7,058 soldiers died, 33,264 troops were wounded, and 10,790 were missing after three days of combat that began on the Gettysburg wheat field. The post-clash triage in the town and battlefields of Gettysburg lasted for several months and partially inspired Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg address. Human remains are still found on site from time to time.

A few minutes after Dr. Lindberg began to take photos of the Gettysburg wheat field, Ms. Musick explained, he suddenly turned to her and said: '*can you feel them*' (referring to the soldiers who fought, died, and were wounded there). 'To both of us, the soldiers seemed to have a real presence as we walked in their footsteps more than a century later.'

Dr. Lindberg's emotive reaction to walking through the battlefield was repeated at other Civil War locations they visited later, including Antietam.

Besides his professional demeanor, 'Don had a spiritual side that surfaced especially when he was photographing nature in historic locations,' Ms. Musick said. 'I was privileged to be there sometimes...'

Ms. Musick suggested Dr. Lindberg's spiritual dimension also was evidenced by his commitment to and involvement in the Native Voices exhibition towards the end of his NLM career. Ms. Musick, who attended Native Voices' opening @ NLM, said the exhibition conveyed Dr. Lindberg's interest in Native medicine, how and why it works, and its interface with modern medicine.

Ms. Musick explained that Dr. Lindberg appreciated the contributions of providers who coupled Western medicine with traditional healing practices. She noted he sought to create a platform (with NIH's authority) to educate others about the diverse individual, familial, and socio-cultural elements that underlay health and illness.

Ms. Musick added Dr. Lindberg understood that healing occasionally requires more than clinical adherence to evidence-based protocols. 'Sometimes, healing requires inspiring the human spirit,' she said.