

Final Thoughts

There are many books that contain compilations of letters. A quick search on Amazon yields dozens. Ellyn Spragins' book of letters from very accomplished women writing to their younger selves sparked the idea for this book. We all have tough decisions to make in our careers. Wouldn't it be nice, we thought, if young pharmacists could learn from the experiences—both good and bad—of leading pharmacists in our profession? For the three of us, reading the Spragins' book served as a call to action.

After getting the nod from ASHP on the book proposal, we set out to identify pharmacists with unique stories to tell. We sought stories from which a lesson would emerge that might help enhance the career or personal life of a pharmacist along his or her career journey. As a starting point, we brainstormed the messages we would have wanted to hear along our own career journeys: Handling disappointments, blazing a trail in clinical practice, juggling and balancing the needs of family and a demanding career, facing a serious illness, and the many other things that have prompted us to say, "if I had only known then what I know now." We reflected on the memorable and touching stories we were privileged to hear from those who have lived them. In her presidential address in 2010, Diane Ginsburg told the story of her mother's "every patient" advice that had such an impact on her career. She agreed to share that story again in the pages of this book. Ernie Anderson wrote with a great degree of candor and humility about the loss of a job he had loved and to which he had given his all for 17 years. Joyce Generali provides advice on sticking with your priorities and saying no when it is the right thing to do. We all remembered the cancer battle fought by one of the leaders of our profession, Bob Weber, and were moved to tears when we read his heart-wrenching letter about this dark time in his life.

It became clear early in the development of the book that our profession is rife with great stories and great story tellers. Narrowing the list of potential contributors to a number that could feasibly be included in the book was a significant challenge, but the best kind of problem to have when you are writing a book. We struggled with the challenge and finally used a list of priority topics to guide our invitations to the contributors. This group of extraordinary individuals did not disappoint.

It is our hope that you not only enjoyed reading each letter but also found useful pearls of wisdom to apply in your life and career. We are certain, though, that you did not enjoy reading it as much as we have enjoyed working on it. Our work required us to connect with all the contributors by phone as well as by e-mail. Although we all knew the contributors, we did not know some of them well before starting the book, and there were others we had not spoken with in a long time. (Don't lose touch with those who matter . . . Sage advice we should have included in the book!) We enjoyed reconnecting and hearing their remarkable stories. Friendships have been made and rekindled through the writing of this book, and our lives have been enriched.

The contributors' stories also caused us to reflect on how far our profession has come over the last five decades. We have seen a seismic shift in the education and training of pharmacists and in the roles that pharmacists play in the delivery of health care. Pharmacy has evolved into a critical element of patient care; pharmacists are now part of the essential health care team. Everyone with whom we worked on this book expressed optimism about the current state and the future of our profession. It is our hope that in some small way these contributors' advice will help "grease the skids" to advance the careers of our future pharmacy leaders.

We thank you in advance for the many contributions that you will no doubt make to the patients you serve and to our profession. We wish you all the best on your career journey.