Suzanne Wright Fletcher: bio

Since Swarthmore
After Swarthmore, I spent four years at Harvard Medical School – along with Steve Schoenbaum, David Wegman, and Arthur Siegel. One of eight women in a class of 155, I was surrounded by men, one of whom was Robert Fletcher. He told me he had applied to Swarthmore but having grown up with two Quaker school teachers and attending Quaker schools through high school, he decided on Wesleyan instead. We were married at the end of the first year of medical school.

After medical school, we spent two years at Stanford in internal medicine training. The group of 14 interns had four women, all of whom gave birth to children during the next two years. So many women doctors and babies was highly unusual in medical training programs back then, but so was Stanford. Our first son, John, was born a few weeks before we left for Germany where Bob worked for the US Army and I did research in a near-by German medical school and gave birth to our second son, Grant. The family lived off base in a small German town; within weeks, John was totally bilingual. After the Army, we went to Hopkins, joining a new program that combined advanced residency training in internal medicine with a masters program in public health.

We were finally ready to be medical school faculty instead of mainly learners, and Bob and I have been so ever since – at McGill (while our sons attended school in French), the University of North Carolina, the University of Pennsylvania (while we were co-editors of a medical journal in Philadelphia), and Harvard.

In 2017, we moved to Carol Woods, a CCRC (continuing care residential community) in Chapel Hill, NC. Both sons and a daughter-in-law live in Seattle. Grant is a hospitalist at the University of Washington. When he was 10 years old, Bob and I co-authored a textbook about clinical epidemiology; Grant has just authored the 6th edition.

10-minute Discussion
Carol Woods was begun about 40 years ago after several faculty members at the University of North Carolina decided that they wanted to retire in Chapel Hill. To this day, many of the approximately 500 residents of Carol Woods had careers at UNC, Duke, and other academic institutions.

Early in 2020, within several weeks of the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic in North Carolina, the Carol Woods CEO asked a few residents to form an “ad hoc resident committee” that would advise her on campus-wide policies related to Covid-19. I was asked to be a member of this new committee.

I will briefly describe some of the methods the Carol Woods community used to combat the Covid-19 pandemic and will share some results, both in terms of Covid infections and emotional well-being.