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1930-1935
Voyages Lay Foundation For Medical Career

As a student at Harvard College, Lamar Soutter developed an interest in science and history. In the early 1930s he and a friend took a 1300-mile canoe trip in the wilds of the Yukon, much of it through un mapped territory. Lamar's friend was injured and both young men barely made it out of the wilderness alive.

In July 1931 Lamar sailed on to be crew member on the maiden voyage of the Achille, the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution's first research vessel. Beginning in Copenhagen, Denmark, the ship saw cannistered rough weather and experienced several mechanical problems. The crew was immobilized from seaweed; there was no doctor on board to deal with injuries and several serious accidents that occurred. It was this experience that made Soutter, then a young college graduate, decide to continue on to medical school, even though he was still not 100% committed to the cause of medicine at the time.

Upon his 1935 graduation from Harvard Medical School, Dr. Soutter signed on with the armed forces serving as a medical officer and chief scientist for an expedition to northwest Greenland, sponsored by the Smithsonian Institution, the Field Museum, and the National Geographic Society. Soutter gathered fish samples and conducted almost 100 plankton experiments, which provided a wealth of knowledge of the sea and its inhabitants in cold climates. As the ship headed for home, the crew was saved from a near-fatal storm when, in the middle of the night, a fire started on the ship, causing it to capsize. It took them three hours of hard labor to keep her from sinking, until the lifeboats were finally thrown into the sea.

1933
Noted Surgeon Dies At 63 Son Lamar Perseveres at Harvard Medical

Boston—Dr. Robert Soutter, noted orthopedic surgeon, died on February 21 of blood poisoning. He had contracted the infection from a small scratch, which he sustained while performing surgery on a pediatric patient. Despite the sudden death of his father, Lamar Soutter continued on with his studies at Harvard Medical School, graduating in 1935.

1937
Soutter Treats Hindenburg Victims

New York—Soutter's medical residency was spent in the Surgical Department at the Presbyterian Hospital in New York City in the late 1930s. The routine life of residency was shattered when, in May 1937, the German airship Hindenburg exploded at Lakehurst, New Jersey. Soutter assisted in many surgeries on victims of the tragedy.

1942
Blood Bank At Mass General Stored Plasma Saves Nightclub Fire Victims

Boston—Dr. Soutter was instrumental in establishing the blood bank at Massachusetts General Hospital and was its first director. To fund the blood bank, Soutter solicited money from outside sources to pay for the refrigerator and other equipment. He also actively sought out donors. Soutter and his staff worked new techniques for blood filtration and purification. When the Cocoanut Grove night club fire occurred in November, stored plasma from the blood bank saved many lives.

1944
Soutter Glides Into Action

Field Surgery Saves Lives of Many Wounded

Bastogne, France—When World War II ended, Dr. Soutter enlisted and joined the Army's Fourth Auxiliary Surgical Unit. He later volunteered to assist the wounded at the Battle of the Bulge in Bastogne, Belgium in December 1944. In order to reach the surrouding Allied forces, Soutter and his medical team had to be hauled by a C-47 cargo plane in an empty glider loaded with medical supplies. Once on the ground, the occupants had to walk for a half in the fighting to leave the glider, and then they had to run for the medical tent where the wounded awaited treatment. Dr. Soutter and the other medical personnel performed 60 operations in the next 24 hours. For their valiant efforts, Dr. Soutter and each member of his team were awarded the Silver Star, the second highest military medal presented, for "sensational courage in action."

1963-1975
Ground Broken For Worcester Med School

Major Triumph Over Adversity for Dr. Lamar Soutter

Worcester—Lamar Soutter’s innovative ideas in the training of new physicians were the catalyst for him being named Dean of the first state medical school in Massachusetts in 1963. Dr. Soutter took on the monumental task of planning and creating the new school. Many obstacles had to be overcome: the Massachusetts government initially considered buying land in Wellesley, instead of giving funds for the Johnson administration were rescinded during the Nixon administration, building costs soared from $35 million to $125 million, faculty had to be hired and students welcomed. In 1969, Acting Governor Francis Sargent welcomed with the prospect of canceling the project. Finally, in 1976, the University of Massachusetts Medical School opened its doors in Worcester, Massachusetts. In 1973 the new School building opened at its permanent location at 63 Lake Avenue, and in 1976 it its adjacent facility, the University of Massachusetts Hospital, began to admit its first patients.