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The Lamar Souter Library, University of Massachusetts Medical School

1930-1935 Voyages Lay Foundation For Medical Career

As a student at Harvard College, Lamar Souter developed an interest in science and surgery. In the early 1930s he and a friend took a 530-mile canoe trip in the wilds of the Yukon, much of it through uncharted territory. Lamar's friend sustained an injury and both young men barely made it out of the wilderness alive.

In July 1931 Lamar signed on to be a crew member on the maiden voyage of the Atlantic, the World's First Oceanographic Institution's first research vessel. Beginning in Copenhagen, Denmark, the ship soon encountered rough weather and experienced several mechanical problems. The crew was immobilized fromunnanwise, there was no doctor on board to deal with injuries and several serious accidents that occurred. It was this experience that made Souter, then a young college graduate, decide to continue on to medical school, even though he was still not 100% committed to that course of action at the time.

Upon his 1935 graduation from Harvard Medical School, Dr. Souter signed on with the abdomen/storage as a medical officer and chief scientist for an expedition to northwest Greenland, sponsored by the Smithsonian Institution, the Field Museum, and the National Academy of Sciences. Souter 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 into a fierce gale just off the coast of Labrador, losing its forecast and some of its rigging. It took three hours of arduous seamanship to keep her from smashed, into the bow of the cliffs.

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

Boston—Dr. Robert Souter, 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 polio patient. Despite the untimely death of his father, Lamar Souter continued on his studies at Harvard Medical School, graduating in 1939.

1937 Souter Treats Hindenburg Victims

New York—Souter'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 zeppelin Hindenburg exploded at Lakehurst, New Jersey. Souter assisted in many surgeries on victims of the tragedy.

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

Boston—Dr. Souter was instrumental in establishing the blood bank at Massachusetts General Hospital and was its first Director. To fill the blood bank, Souter solicited money from outside sources to pay for the refrigerator and other equipment. He also actively sought out donors. Souter and his staff unveiled new techniques for blood filtration and purification.

1944 Souter Glides Into Action Field Surgery Saves Lives of Many Wounded

Bastogne, France—When World War II started, Dr. Souter 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, Souter and his medical teams had to be lowered by a C-47 cargo plane in an engineer's glider loaded with medical supplies. Once on the ground, the occupied 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. Souter and the other medical personnel performed 63 operations in the next 24 hours. For their valiant efforts, Dr. Souter and each member of his team were awarded the Silver Star, the second highest military medal presented, for "superior and conspicuous gallantry in action."

1963-1975 Ground Broken For Worcester Med School Major Triumph Over Adversity for Dr. Lamar Souter

Worcester—Lamar Souter'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. Souter took on the monumental task of planning and creating the new school. Many obstacles had to be overcome: the Massachusetts governmental positions changed four times, federal funds given during the Johnson administration were rescinded during the Nixon administration, building costs soared from $75 million to $252 million, faculty had to be hired and modern school created. By 1969, Acting Governor Francis Sargent witnessed with the prospect of cancelling the project. Finally, in 1970, the University of Massachusetts Medical School opened its doors in Worcester, Massachusetts. In 1973 the new medical school opened at its permanent location at 35 Lake Avenue, and in 1976 its affiliate facility, the University of Massachusetts Hospital, began to admit its first patients.

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