



Harry K. Moon, M.D., FACS, FRCSEd, President and Chief Executive Officer  
Nova Southeastern University (NSU)

## My Path Along The Way

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Address to the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh

Good afternoon, President, Dean, Vice-President, Members of Council, Diplomats, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

Being elected to The Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh ad hominin is, today, the honor of a lifetime. I am further humbled and honored to have been asked to give the concluding remarks at today's ceremony.

I was asked to share my thoughts about my career and my journey as a physician and surgeon.

At many ceremonies over the years, I have asked new and graduating medical students to reflect on when they first aspired to become a physician and their journey to become one. I now ask you to do the same.

My journey began when I was young. I grew up in a small town in Alabama, 5,000 people, and my next-door neighbor was the general surgeon at our 25-bed hospital. I knew early on I wanted to be like him.

Our families were close and in my teenage years I talked to him about becoming a surgeon. He could not have been more helpful or supportive. This man was a true general surgeon. He trained at the University of Pennsylvania but chose to come to a small town to practice. He did it all, gastric and colorectal, thyroids and GYN, long bone fractures and the occasional Burr hole.

To my good fortune he gave me a job in the hospital doing lab work over the summer, taking basic x-rays at night and the weekends.

My first mentor's name was Howard Irwin. His purpose to care for his patients, his self-reliance, his pursuit of excellence formed a powerful and fundamental role model for me – one for which I am forever grateful.

This experience was the first of my valuable relationships with surgical mentors and heroes along my path to be here speaking with you today.

In my General Surgery training I was graced to learn from Thomas Whelan who developed his innovative skills in the Korean War where he pioneered the early use of saphenous veins grafts in arterial injuries for lower limb salvage. He gained the rank of Brigadier General and later become Chairman of Surgery at the University Hawaii.

He brought discipline to my approach to the planning and execution of procedures coupled with an absolute attention to detail. His organizational skills in his teaching program were exemplary and provided lessons I still use today. My admiration for Dr. Whelan was profound.

His guidance in the next stage of my career was clairvoyant, for my next steps along the way took me into training in Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery Residency at the Cleveland Clinic Foundation where I was

guided, challenged, and supported by a world-class attending staff interacting with every surgical discipline.

At the conclusion of my training, the faculty invited me to join them and supported my desire to pursue a fellowship with Ian Taylor at the Royal Melbourne Hospital. There, our research on the Vascular Anatomy of Rectus Abdominus Musculocutaneous Flaps based on the Deep Superior Epigastric System opened the path to autogenous tissue breast reconstruction.

Ian Taylor became more than a mentor and more than a friend. He was paramount as my next-door neighbor in deepening my sense of meaning and fulfilling my own vision of what a surgeon-researcher-teacher-mentor should be.

Today, I am the incoming President of the largest private university in Florida. We are heavily weighted in graduate and professional healthcare education

The point in this reflection of where I started and how I got here is important.

My path was made possible by all those unforgettable individuals, who, freely and without hesitation, gave of their time and talent to help and guide me. They provided me with the mentorship and role models that are essential to how we become what and who we are.

You are the future of surgery, of healthcare. Outside of our care for the patient, our commitment to those who come next is and always has been critical to the progression and future of our profession.

For me the greatest joy of medicine is taking care of the patient.

Second is the joy of expanding the perspective and horizons of young surgeons still forging paths forward. Advances in technology will lead us

to places we cannot see today. Technology will never replace the substance of our interpersonal skills and the development of our humanism, a side of medicine that is of cardinal importance.

We only achieve this with the gift of interactive mentorship.

Be aware of the duality of your responsibility.

I have been asked at times would you do it again.

My answer yes, again and again and again.

I thank the College for inviting me to share my thoughts on my journey with you.

My very best to you all on the continuation of your journey.