

The Pioneer and the Innkeeper: Adventures in Uncertainty and Faith Around the World

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The full breadth and powerful impact of family medicine as a global specialty is on full display in *The Pioneer and the Innkeeper: Adventures in Uncertainty and Faith Around the World*. In this compelling memoir, readers follow the life and career of Dr Cal Wilson, a family physician and global health expert, as he and his family pursue medical missions across the world. Not to be outdone by her husband, Mimi Wilson's life story is cofeatured in the book, and her own heart for service (in forms slightly different from those of her husband), create a dynamic that made the Wilsons' journeys in global health and missionary work extremely effective.

The Wilsons' journeys have taken them across the world: Colorado, New Mexico (on a Native American reservation), Africa, South America, and the Middle East, over decades of service. Cal has served multiple roles during his career in global health—clinician, advocate, and educator—fulfilling his personal goal of being a “pioneer” physician in service to the international underserved community. Mimi, the daughter of missionaries who spent the majority of her adolescent years in the Congo, approached the task of raising a family within missionary work with cautious optimism, mindful of her own experiences as a child.

The book features compelling insights into the challenges Dr Wilson faced in his efforts to bring medical advancements to underserved, and sometimes skeptical, indigenous peoples of the world; for example, introducing the people of the Yora tribe—historically resistant and at times violent to outsiders— to the benefits of penicillin (including injections) to address their illnesses. Adapting to the situations-at-hand was crucial to the successes Cal was able to achieve, and the book highlights them in an enjoyable-to-read format. The book also showcases differing medical customs across the world, many of which would serve the American health care landscape well (eg, how Ecuadorians approach shared medical decision-making as a family unit was particularly fascinating, from my American perspective).

While *The Pioneer and the Innkeeper* provides readers with positive takeaway themes of service, community, and faith by sharing the Wilsons' prioritization of these values in all aspects of their lives, the book itself is not without examples of shortcomings. For instance, the writing style could be described as rudimentary and “folksy”; at times it reads more like a family's personal collection of stories and reflections, rather than a polished memoir. Additionally, the Wilsons' aforementioned Christian faith is a core tenet of their lives and missions and is thus interwoven significantly into the book; this may not be the case of every reader, and the extent to which their faith is cited throughout the book could potentially be a barrier for some readers seeking to engage fully in their story. In fact, on the book's barcode, it lists the theme of “Spirituality” before “Medicine,” and indeed the text delivers on this hierarchy.

While these observations are fair to point out, neither rises to a level that should deter potential readers from experiencing the journey of this remarkable couple, their family, and the impact they have had on the world.