**JAMES B. WYNGAARDEN. AN UNIMAGINED LIFE: AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY.**

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James B. Wyngaarden. An Unimagined Life: An Autobiography.

Durham, North Carolina: BW&A Books, Inc., 2009.

James B. Wyngaarden, born in 1924, attended Calvin College and received his medical degree from the University of Michigan. After training in internal medicine at the Massachusetts General Hospital, Wyngaarden had a distinguished career as an academic internist and biochemist. He is well known for his elucidation of the pathways of purine biosynthesis and their role in the pathophysiology of gout. He edited many editions of the well known textbook The Inherited Basis of Metabolic Disease and served as Chairman of Internal Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania and at Duke University. At the latter institution he played a major role in the development of Duke’s unique medical school curriculum which has, over time, evolved into one year of basic science, one year of clinical core rotations, another year of basic science, and a last year of clinical work.

After leaving the position of Professor and Chairman of Internal Medicine at Duke, Wyngaarden became Director of the National Institutes of Health, Assistant White House Advisor on the Life Sciences to President George H. W. Bush, and Foreign Secretary of the National Academy of Sciences.

Wyngaarden’s book describes his academic career, his insights on the management of an academic department, and his role in health policy during the Regan and Bush administrations. He also devotes a considerable amount of space to detailed descriptions of his international travels and his family. There are telling and somewhat painful recountings of his difficult relationship with his father and his divorce.

The book will appeal to readers interested in important events in academic adult internal medicine in the United States in the latter half of the 20th century and to those interested in chronicles of the politics of science at the National Institutes of Health.

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