James Carlock (“Jim” when he is not in trouble with Mom) has been working with sterilizers since he was a college freshman in the mid 1980’s, when he made the media to grow bacteria in a genetics laboratory. Along the road, there have been a lot of twists and turns and detours, so that you could say his career could best be summed up in that line by the Grateful Dead, “What a long, strange trip it’s been.”

Jim worked as a pizza delivery driver, nursing assistant, Army medic, waiter, and dental assistant before he came to hospital sterile processing in 1997. He started as a technician in decontamination and worked his way up to supervisor, manager, and director. His experience includes time at a 4-OR specialty hospital where he built the department from the ground up, and large Level 1 Trauma Centers. During his 20 years in the US Army Reserve, he even sterilized instruments in tents and a makeshift field dental clinic in the mountains of El Salvador.

Jim’s academic career is no less varied than his work. Over the course of 18 years, he attended six colleges and universities, finally earning his BS in Psychology from Northwestern University in 2002. Later, he earned his MBA from Penn State University in two years, while working full time. He first earned his certification in sterile processing in 2001, adding his certification in healthcare quality in 2014. His Lean Six Sigma Black Belt came in 2018.

Jim will be the first to say that the only way he has been able to do all this is through the loving support of his wife Beth and his children, Patrick and Susan.

Jim is passionate about patient safety, often saying that the only reason a sterile processing department exists is to keep patients safe. To that end, he encourages everyone in the field to examine everything they do through that lens: “If it helps keep patients safe, do it. If it doesn’t , then stop it or don’t begin it.”