



Letter from Dr. R. Bruce Heppenstall



I first came to Penn as an orthopaedic resident in 1969. Dr. Edgar J. Ralston was the chairman and a fine gentleman who cared deeply for each resident. On rounds one Sunday, he related to me that I would probably not be performing the same operations that he was performing, due to rapid changes in the field of orthopaedic surgery. Boy, was he correct! (Just as one example: cup arthroplasty versus total joints!).

My next step at Penn was the completion of a research year under Dr. Carl T. Brighton. The year was incredibly productive. I spent much of my time documenting oxygen tension and studying the electrical effects of the growth plate. Following completion of the program, I traveled to the University of California, San Francisco for a trauma and wound healing fellowship. While in California, Dr. Richard Rothman flew out to persuade me to join him in practice at Pennsylvania Hospital as a part of the Penn faculty. Three years later, under some pressure from Dr. Brighton and Dr. William Fitts, chairman of general surgery, I was asked to return to HUP and the VA and start a trauma and joint program. The caveat for them was that they would give up treating fractures to honor my new position. In order to secure my post, Dr. Brighton and Dean Stemmler appointed me as the chief of orthopaedic surgery at HUP for the next ten-plus years. Following Dr. Fitzgerald, Dr.

Richard Lackman became the chairman of our department. Dick, like Dr. Ralston, was very concerned about the welfare of the residents and continued to improve the program. Finally, Dr. L. Scott Levin was named chairman, bringing with him extensive plastic and orthopaedic surgical experience. Dr. Levin was obviously the correct choice, as evidenced by what is happening to the program: 1) an orthopaedic institute under construction; 2) numerous residents returning to the faculty; 3) nine new faculty appointments; 4) the Human Tissue Laboratory in Stemmler Hall available for dissections and scientific programs; 5) extensive publication of manuscripts to the AAOS, ORS, OTA, etc.; and 6) a powerful research department led by Dr. Louis Soslowky. Need I say more? A great place to be!

Residency is a tough grind. You are required to give of yourself for the benefit of patients and the accumulation of knowledge. It is not easy to give up time with your family and children. However, there are fun-filled and exciting times as well. My wife and I enjoyed having the residents for a baseball game and a wild party in the Heppenstall house years ago. I also enjoyed attending 25 years of the Snowmass Colorado Trauma and Sports Medicine course. It was fun to support all chief residents for the week and ski with them. Many, many stories. All in all, it has been a blast that I will never forget. You are now a part of the Penn Orthopaedics family and have a chairman who loves to teach and loves to throw parties. Therefore, the beat goes on and the years flash by. Enjoy!