



2019-2020 Dedication & In Memoriam: William George DeLong, Jr., MD (1948-2020)



Christopher T. Born, MD, FACS, FAAOS



William George DeLong, Jr., MD

Dr. William G. DeLong Jr. died unexpectedly from a heart attack at his home in Haddonfield, New Jersey on Friday March 13, 2020. He was 71 years old.

Bill was born in Philadelphia and maintained local and regional roots throughout his personal and professional life. Following graduation from Cardinal Dougherty High School in 1966, he obtained back-to-back undergraduate degrees with honors from Temple University and

St. Joseph's College (now University) in Chemical Engineering and Chemistry. He received his MD degree from Temple University in 1978. **Dr. Carl Brighton** recruited him to fulfill his residency training at the University of Pennsylvania which included a year of dedicated orthopaedic research in the department's newly established McKay Orthopaedic Research Laboratory.

As the Chief resident at Penn, he was known to be fearless taking on complex cases during an era when PGY5 residents could run a clinic and an operating room with little or no supervision. This was not false bravado because following his graduation in 1983, he went across the Benjamin Franklin bridge to Cooper Hospital in Camden, New Jersey as the Division Head of orthopaedic surgery. Cooper was the newly formed Level I Trauma Center with a catchment of nine counties in South Jersey. As a freshly minted Associate Professor at the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey, DeLong started an enviable training program built around a schedule heavily weighted with blunt, high energy trauma cases. The case load was so robust that for many years both Dr. Brighton and **Dr. Richard Rothman** at Thomas Jefferson sent all PGY4s to "The Coop" for their trauma rotations, our own **Dr. Dean Lorich** among them. These residents were fortunate because they also had the opportunity to learn from his other protean skill sets doing sports medicine, total joints, spine, pediatric and hand surgery all the while absorbing many life lessons from this remarkable and consummate practitioner. After 14 years, Bill was recruited to return to Penn and was its Director of Orthopaedic Trauma for six years where he had the opportunity to influence many future Penn residency graduates including **Dr. Samir Mehta**. He ultimately moved back to Temple University in 2003 where he held dual appointments as Professor of Orthopaedic Surgery

and Professor of Anatomy and Cell Biology at the time of his death.

Bill was a remarkable visionary with seemingly endless energy. While at Penn, he was asked by Penn's Chief of Trauma and Critical Care, **Dr. Bill Schwab**, to assist in starting a trauma program 70 miles north of Philadelphia at St. Luke's Hospital in Bethlehem, PA. Penn was planning on providing Penn Star life-flight services for St. Luke's new Level I program, and it needed a legitimate orthopaedic traumatologist. Bill would drive from Philadelphia at the end of a long day to do complex cases at St. Luke's Hospital. He instinctively saw a wonderful opportunity and in 2009 partnered with St. Luke's to start an orthopaedic residency program. In part through his leadership and management skills, this small community hospital system has burgeoned to 11 hospitals with a staff of 24 orthopaedic attendings and over 20 physicians' assistants. It offers a teaching platform and research opportunities for MS 2/3/4 Temple University medical students at what has become an adjunct Temple teaching campus. Bill retained his faculty appointment at Temple University, but his primary position for 11 years was that of Network Chairman, Department of Orthopaedic Surgery for St. Luke's University Health Network and the Program Director of its Orthopaedic Surgery Residency. At the time of this death, he was still actively taking trauma call spending 3-4 nights in Bethlehem, returning to his home in Haddonfield at the end of the week.

Bill always gave generously of his time. He sat on numerous hospital and organization committees proving to be a wise and valuable counselor on such disparate topics as education, finance, healthcare reform and science. He was a member of Temple University Hospital's Executive Committee and the Educational Technology Committee of the medical school. DeLong was a very early adopter of computer technology in the 1980's and was prescient about the changes it would bring. He considered the Orthopaedic Trauma Association (OTA) to be the primary organizational platform for his professional life. Although a six-year member of both the American College of Surgeons Committee on Trauma (ACS/COT) and its Board of Governors, Bill dedicated himself extensively to the work of the OTA having become a member in 1990. He served on eight different committees over his 30 year affiliation, and chaired both the committees on Orthobiologics and International Relations. He routinely participated as faculty in the Resident Skills lab at the OTA annual meeting and was twice awarded the Winquist Cup for teaching excellence. Bill understood the importance of surgeon education for response to disasters and served for two terms on the ASC/COT *ad hoc* Disaster

and Mass Casualty Committee. For nearly twenty years he volunteered as a member of the US Department of Homeland Security's Trauma Critical Care Team and participated in deployments following both hurricane Katrina and the Haiti earthquake. The American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons awarded him with its Achievement Award for Volunteer Efforts.

Bill DeLong had a long roster of academic and research achievements and held several journal reviewer positions. He was the trauma section editor for **Dr. Robert Fitzgerald's** 2002 textbook, *Orthopaedics*. In 2004, he was the guest editor of a special edition on "Care of the Polytrauma Patient" for *Clinical Orthopaedics and Related Research* that spotlighted early on the role of cytokines and other factors that promoted the "second hit" in the badly injured patient. He authored over 70 peer reviewed publications and book chapters while giving hundreds of lectures and presentations nationally and internationally.

He loved to teach and to expose young students and physicians to the marvels of surgery and orthopaedics. **Dr. David Halsey**, the immediate past-president of the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons, related to me several months ago how he became captivated with orthopaedics as a career in medicine. During his first week as an MS3 while on an emergency room rotation at Cooper Hospital, DeLong asked him if he wanted to assist fixing a femur fracture in the OR. Bill let him pass the guide wire, carry out the reaming and then insert the nail. Halsey noted, "I was hooked ... we worked closely together on local ortho projects, case reports and he mentored me over the next years including residency selection, first job and life." This was classic Bill DeLong.

Bill radiated energy and always led by example. This was coupled with a wonderful sense of humor especially when

telling unbelievable stories about **Dr. Jim Nixon** and **John Gregg** at the Graduate Hospital.

These aspects of his persona are mirrored in comments by his '83 residency classmates. **Russ Windsor, MD**: "...a dynamic individual who was always up." **Paul Lyet, MD**: "...rock steady. His administrative skills and political savvy were evident early in his career and he was always willing to tap resources to accomplish his clinical goals for exemplary patient care." **Steve Sampson, MD**: "Despite the invincible exterior of Bill's persona, he truly had a soft side that was vulnerable to the world around him. He treated everybody as family and always placed himself in harm's way...going the extra mile for those he barely knew." **Co-Chief Resident, Ron Wisneski, MD**: "Bill's enthusiasm was contagious, it impacted favorably on the quality of life for countless patients, innumerable students, his family and all of us who were fortunate to have known him."

Bill was a loving husband and father. He is survived by Ginny, his wonderful wife of 48 years and by his daughter Lauren and son Christian. I know they were the paramount devotion in his life.

Personally, I have lost a dear and loyal friend with whom I practiced for nearly 25 years, surviving together the vicissitudes of orthopaedic surgery and trauma. The orthopaedic community has lost a champion. He will be missed.

Christopher T. Born, MD, FACS, FAAOS
Intrepid Heroes Professor of Orthopedic Surgery
The Alpert Medical School of Brown University
Emeritus Chief of Orthopedic Trauma and
Director, Weiss Center for Orthopedic Trauma Research
Rhode Island Hospital
Providence, RI



The Residency class of '83 with Dr. Carl Brighton photo courtesy of Dr. Russ Windsor. Left to Right: Mark Kirkland, Steve Sampson, Ron Wisneski, Paul Lyet, Dan Zimet, Dr. Brighton, Manny Soares, Ellen Maiten, Bill DeLong, Ron Gerson, Russ Windsor.



Chris Born and Bill DeLong at the October, 2019 OTA meeting. Photo courtesy of Chris Born.