

Tribute to Dr James Nunley

As we, the Duke Orthopaedic Residency Class of 2013, round the corner into the last few months of our training, many emotions arise. We cannot believe we have been here this long, and we cannot believe it went by so fast. We reflect back on why we decided on Duke in the first place and hope that we have made those who chose us 5 years ago proud. We have had many meetings as a class this year regarding how we wanted to lead, what our policies would be, what we would try to teach and engrain into the minds and hearts of our fellow residents. At each of these meetings and in countless e-mail exchanges, the overriding theme was that we all wanted those who come after us to have as much pride in the program as those who came before us. Our program has been built on the shoulders of exceptional leaders, each of whom has sacrificed for the good of our department as well as contributed much to education and the advancement of the field during their careers. It is the pride in Duke Orthopaedics, carried on through the years, which has motivated each of them to make the program the best it can be both on a personal and academic level. To each of these leaders, we owe a great debt of gratitude, but one in particular has made a tremendous impact during our time at Duke is Dr James A Nunley II. Before we ever set foot on the Duke University Medical Center campus, he had a vision for Duke Orthopaedics, which he has worked tirelessly to achieve. We are lucky to have been a part of the transition from a division to a department, into a new clinic building, the expansion of our world renowned faculty and research efforts, and the continued national and international recognition of Duke Orthopaedics.

Dr Nunley's story began in Charleston, West Virginia, where he attended Stonewall Jackson High School. He then attended Duke University, where he received an undergraduate degree in chemistry in 1969. Following graduation, he completed a Master of Science degree in Biochemistry and then attended medical school at Tulane University in New Orleans, Louisiana. He began his research career while at Tulane, publishing in several biochemical journals. Following this, he would head west for a surgical internship and general surgery Junior Assistant Resident position at UCLA. He was then recruited back to Duke to complete his orthopaedic surgery residency from 1975 to 1979. While in residency at Duke, he was able to participate in several specialized training programs which contributed to his interest in hand, microvascular, and foot and ankle surgery. He was heavily involved in work with the orthopaedic manifestations of cerebral palsy, polio and congenital deformities as a United Cerebral Palsy Fellow at Lenox Baker Children's Hospital and an upper level resident at the Shriner's Hospital in Erie, Pennsylvania. Also while in residency, Dr Nunley was involved in research endeavors across several subspecialties within orthopaedics, leading him to be the all-knowing orthopaedic surgeon we have come to know during 'Nunley rounds,' which he conducts every Monday morning. He would continue his training as a hand and microvascular fellow at Duke, and then would stay on as faculty to begin his illustrious career as a Duke Orthopaedic Surgery attending.

Looking through his resume for the purpose of summing up his academic career in one article was a daunting task. The 25,576 words, 60-page manuscript is a testament to his dedication to orthopaedics, research and development, residents, fellows and Duke. Perusing his list of publications is similar to scrolling down a chronological list of every former trainee that has come through the program, as it seems that nearly every resident and fellow has completed a publication with him; 206 citations later, you reach 2013, with his most recent publication in Foot and Ankle International. Over one million dollars in funding has been awarded through educational grants to fund these projects, including \$234,000 from NIAMS and \$600,000 from the NIH. A seasoned veteran on the stage, he has been invited 69 times as a lecturer or Visiting Professor, has given 63 local, 100 regional, 268 national and 113 international presentations along with 45 poster presentations showcasing his research endeavors in scientific forums, surgical techniques in instructional course lectures and clinical acumen as a visiting professor. The list of publications does not stop there, as he has also authored or coauthored 40 book chapters on subjects throughout orthopaedics.

In addition to contributing to the orthopaedic literature with his own works, he has been on the editorial board for eight different peer-reviewed journals and two textbooks. His work has not only been about quantity, however, and the list of honors and awards which his research has accumulated is equally as impressive as the sheer number of manuscripts that bear his name. He and his colleagues have been awarded local, national, and international awards. His affiliations and memberships in medical societies are a veritable alphabet soup, and he has held positions of leadership in nearly all of them, including AAOS as well as AOFAS, for which he served as President from 1997 to 1998.

Nearest to his heart, however, is the Piedmont Orthopaedic Society, at which he and Dr Urbaniak are known for donning matching white cummerbunds as their tuxedo accessory of choice and dancing the night away. His dedication to our program and the alumni association and all he has given back to the program was again acknowledged with the receipt of the Chairman's Audio Visual Award at the 2012 Piedmont Orthopaedic Society meeting in Key Largo, Florida, for the outstanding presentation of the scientific meeting. His acceptance speech once again proved his loyalty to Duke as he left all in attendance with the heartfelt message, 'I love Duke Orthopaedics and I love all of you.' It was met with a standing ovation as generations of former residents and fellows who he has impacted showed their appreciation for all he has done.

As the Chairman of Duke Orthopaedics he has been the driving force behind the transition from a division of surgery to a department, only the second such transition for a division at Duke since 1991. Since that time, Duke Orthopaedics has flourished, enjoying a comfortable fiscal environment, expansion of the clinical and research faculty, and a brand new clinical facility of our own at Page Road. This was the task he was charged with at the start of his tenure as Chairman, and likely the task that he will be most remembered for on paper.

We as residents, though, will remember much more than that. We will remember Dr Nunley for always holding us accountable for learning anatomy first and foremost. We will remember him for understanding what we were capable of doing in the operating room and allowing us to take the case to that point. We will remember 'Nunley rounds,' in which he spent nearly every Monday morning discussing interesting surgical cases from the prior week with a team of interns, junior residents, and chief residents alike; a time consuming event which most Department Chairs would not take the time to do. We will remember him for his all or nothing, black and white viewpoints on subjects of both orthopaedic surgery and life in general, including his most famous comment 'ooh, I would not have done that...' We will remember his biannual outings at the lake welcoming the new orthopaedic residents and chiefs and saying farewell to the outgoing chiefs. We will remember his dedication to our education and his pride in Duke Orthopaedics which we all try to emulate.

Thank you so very much for 5 great years Dr Nunley. Good luck in the next stage of your career. We appreciate all you have done for us and for Duke Orthopaedics.

The graduating class of 2013

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