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THE ORTHOPAEDIC FORUM



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Report from the 2009 AOA North American Traveling Fellowship

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The John J. Fahey, MD, Memorial North American Traveling Fellowship (NATF) was first conceptualized at an American Orthopaedic Association (AOA) Executive Committee meeting in 1968. One year later, the committee's proposal to create a fellowship program for orthopaedic surgeons to travel to orthopaedic centers around the United States and Canada was accepted. The tour's purpose is to promote clinical and scientific exchange and fellowship at each orthopaedic program visited. Orthopaedic surgeons who have completed orthopaedic training, including residency or fellowship, within four years before the tour year (five years, if the applicant entered military service directly after completion of training) are eligible to apply for the NATF.

Forty years later, the 2009 tour was organized by Jeffrey C. Wang, MD (UCLA David Geffen School of Medicine), and was coordinated by Lisa O'Brien of the AOA office and Trinity Wittman of the Canadian Orthopaedic Association office. This

trip had the flavor of a homecoming tour for all five of us because it included visits to our alma maters, including the residency or fellowship training programs of four of us, the medical schools of three of us, the undergraduate institutions of two of us, and the current departments of two of us. The 2009 fellows, who all hail coincidentally from sites within the Midwest region, were Ryan Bicknell, a shoulder and elbow surgeon from Kingston, Ontario, Canada (Queen's University); Robert Brophy, a sports-medicine surgeon from St. Louis, Missouri (Washington University); Gregory Della Rocca, a trauma surgeon from Columbia, Missouri (University of Missouri-Columbia); Wellington Hsu, a spine surgeon from Chicago, Illinois (Northwestern University); and Amanda Marshall, a joint-replacement surgeon from San Antonio, Texas (University of Texas Health Science Center).

Our odyssey began on September 29 at the University of Alabama-Birmingham, where we were greeted by Thomas R.

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Hunt III, MD, John S. Gould, MD, and Rena L. Stewart, MD, with whom we shared an enjoyable dinner. The next day was a full one, including tours of the impressive research facilities and time spent in the operating room and clinics with our respective colleagues in our subspecialties and culminating in a full academic program in which each fellow was given the opportunity to share his or her research interests.

Our journey continued on October 1, to Vanderbilt University Medical Center in Nashville, Tennessee, where Wellington Hsu graduated from medical school. On our first day in Nashville, we were given a grand tour of the Vanderbilt Orthopaedic Institute. After an academic session with the residents on Friday, we enjoyed a number of social activities, including a visit to the Grand Ole Opry with our gracious host Ginger Holt, MD, and attendance at the Vandy-Ole Miss (i.e., Vanderbilt University versus University of Mississippi) football game.

On October 4, in St. Louis, we were greeted at the airport by our host Ken Yamaguchi, MD. Later that evening at dinner, we were welcomed formally by Richard H. Gelberman, MD, and a number of faculty surgeons at Washington University, where Robert Brophy attended medical school and is currently on faculty and Gregory Della Rocca completed residency training. The next day was a full one, with time spent in the operating room and in the clinic with prominent faculty in our subspecialties, followed by a tour of Washington University Medical Center and its expansive research facilities with our co-host, Martin I. Boyer, MD. Tuesday included individual question-and-answer sessions scheduled with Dr. Gelberman, Dr. Yamaguchi, Charles A. Goldfarb, MD, Rick W. Wright, MD, and Leesa M. Galatz, MD, during which we received insight on a variety of timely topics, from running a department to pursuing R01 funding from the National Institutes of Health. We also had a wonderful tour of the city with our hosts before enjoying an elegant dinner at the St. Louis Club. On Wednesday morning, the NATF fellows presented at grand rounds before taking a tour of the University's undergraduate campus with John Berg, Associate Vice Chancellor at Washington University. The visit concluded with a lunch attended by both the orthopaedic research faculty and the traveling fellows.

On Thursday, October 8, we continued to Cleveland and were met at the airport by Richard Parker, MD, chairman of the Department of Orthopaedic Surgery at The Cleveland Clinic and team physician for the National Basketball Association's Cleveland Cavaliers. Our visit began with an academic session, including a tour of the departmental research facilities, guided by the director, George Muschler, MD, followed by basic science talks shared by the NATF fellows and Cleveland Clinic staff. We were treated that evening to an exceptional dinner on the shore of Lake Erie at the Shoreby Club, a twenty-three-room mansion built in 1890 by Samuel Mather. The next day included another (clinical) academic session, followed by time with faculty in our respective subspecialties. That evening proved to be the highlight of the visit when Dr. Parker hosted all of us at the Cleveland Clinic Courts, the new practice facility of the Cavaliers. Saturday was an enjoyable day on the golf course with Anthony Miniaci, MD, culminating in an evening at Dr. Miniaci's beautiful home.

After a day of rest on Sunday, which included a visit to the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame (with a dedicated Bruce Springsteen exhibit), we headed across town to Case Western Reserve University, where we were greeted by the chairman of the Department of Orthopaedic Surgery, Randall E. Marcus, MD. The morning academic session included a number of memorable talks and a review of the rich orthopaedic tradition at Case Western Reserve. The day ended with a formal dinner at Michaelangelo's restaurant in Little Italy. Tuesday morning included a tour of the famous Hamann-Todd osteological collection at the Cleveland Museum of Natural History.

Arrival at our next stop at the University of Iowa in Iowa City was bittersweet after discovering that the iconic Dr. Ignacio Ponseti had suffered a stroke earlier that afternoon. Despite the grief the department felt from this tragedy, they were wonderful hosts, arranging a lovely dinner with Nicolas Noiseux, MD (our host), John Callaghan, MD, Joseph Buckwalter, MD, and Mr. Paul Etre. We listened to Dr. Callaghan's visions and plans as the incoming president of the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons. The next day included time with faculty as well as an excellent academic program and a department-wide dinner with faculty. As we concluded our visit, our thoughts and prayers were with Dr. Ponseti's immediate and professional family, and we were deeply saddened to hear of his passing several days later.

The University of Michigan was our next stop. On the night of our arrival in Ann Arbor, we enjoyed a delicious dinner with Department of Orthopaedic Surgery Chairman James Carpenter, MD, and other faculty. The academic program on Monday included excellent talks by Asheesh Bedi, MD, Richard A. Hughes, PhD, J. David Blaha, MD, and Steven A. Goldstein, PhD. That afternoon was spent in clinical settings with a number of the faculty from our respective subspecialties. The social highlight of the Michigan trip occurred on Saturday, when Bruce S. Miller, MD, treated us to a tailgate party and then to the football game (including all-access field passes) that was being played between the University of Michigan and Delaware State in front of over 100,000 fans at "the Big House."

In Chicago, we visited three different programs. At Northwestern University, we participated in an academic exchange with residents, faculty, and fellows in Wellington Hsu's current department and enjoyed a departmental dinner hosted by Michael F. Schafer, MD. The next morning, the fellows enjoyed an enthusiastic tour of the downtown medical campus with Andrew D. Bunta, MD, and time with faculty in the operating room and clinic. Midweek, we traveled south to the University of Chicago for a stimulating academic session with talks by the fellows and faculty, including Department Chair Terrance D. Peabody, MD, and our host, Rex Haydon, MD, PhD. We visited the first Heisman trophy, awarded in 1935 to University of Chicago football player Jay Berwanger (Fig. 1). The evening concluded with another memorable dinner at Ditka's steakhouse followed by cocktails on the 96th floor of the John Hancock Tower. Our final Chicago stop was at Rush University, where Amanda Marshall had completed her joint reconstruction fellowship. After the opportunity to spend time with faculty in our subspecialties, we toured the facilities with



Fig. 1

The fellows flanking the first Heisman trophy at the University of Chicago: (left to right) Wellington Hsu, Ryan Bicknell, Rob Brophy, Greg Della Rocca, and Amanda Marshall.

our host, Steven Gitelis, MD, and concluded with combined presentations. The evening ended with a delightful dinner at the fabulous Rosebud Steakhouse with Dr. Gitelis, Howard An, MD, and Kern Singh, MD.

Friday morning took us to Indianapolis for our visit to Indiana University, where we were met by the department chairman, Jeffrey Anglen, MD. The fellows gave presentations, followed by a discussion with Dr. Anglen. A reception and dinner, with Dr. Anglen, Randall Loder, MD, and Brian Mullis, MD, followed later that evening. The weekend provided some much needed downtime before heading to Wisconsin.

The University of Wisconsin-Madison marked Wellington Hsu's return to his undergraduate alma mater and the site of his spine fellowship. On top of the usual collection of exquisite meals, Department Chairman Thomas A. Zdeblick, MD, planned an entire day for presentations by fellows and host faculty and discussion and tours. After a lovely dinner at the Madison Club with fellow faculty such as Matthew Squire, MD, Clifford Tribus, MD, Jonathan Tueting, MD, and Ben Graf, MD, we departed the next morning for Minnesota.

On arrival in the Twin Cities, we were met by our host, Peter Cole, MD. We enjoyed lunch with Marc Swiontkowski,

MD, before one of the most unique highlights of our trip—a Segway tour of Minneapolis with Peter. After the tour, we headed back to the hotel for a reception and dinner with the University of Minnesota faculty. Department Chairman Denis Clohisy, MD, gave us a nice overview of the department as part of the dinner program. The next morning most of us headed to Regions Hospital for x-ray rounds prior to talks with the residents and faculty. We met Dr. Clohisy for an enlightening discussion over lunch and concluded with a fun evening in St. Paul that included dinner and attendance at the Minnesota Wild hockey game with Dr. Cole and Andrew Schmidt, MD.

From Minneapolis, we flew (?) to Rochester, Minnesota, and visited the Mayo Clinic. The one and only travel casualty occurred at this juncture. Somehow, Greg Della Rocca's reservation for the flight from Minneapolis to Rochester was canceled. In a reality-television moment, Greg walked away from the group, bags in tow, leaving the other four of us behind. However, unlike in "Survivor," he reunited with us in Rochester, having rented a car in Minneapolis and parked in the Rochester airport parking lot at approximately the same time that our plane touched down. After a reunion of sorts, we met Shawn O'Driscoll, PhD, MD, FRCSC, Richard Berger,



Fig. 2

The fellows and our hosts from the University of Western Ontario after a delightful dinner.

MD, Allen Bishop, MD, and our host, Alexander Shin, MD, for lunch. After a tour of the orthopaedic facilities and an informal review of the Mayo Clinic's Total Joint Registry, we met up with faculty in our subspecialty for an afternoon of time with faculty in the clinic and the operating room. After an evening academic presentation, we enjoyed an excellent dinner with a number of faculty. Friday morning, we met with Department Chairman Daniel J. Berry, MD, for an informative discussion over breakfast. The rest of the morning was spent with individual faculty prior to heading back to the airport for our flight to Toronto.

Hosted by McMaster University, where Ryan Bicknell attended medical school, we spent the first night in Toronto so we could attend the Ontario Orthopaedic Association meeting on Saturday, October 31. Sunday included a tour of Niagara wineries and Niagara Falls, although a couple of the National Football League fans of the group watched the game between the Minnesota Vikings and the Green Bay Packers instead. On Monday morning, the fellows were given a break from speaking, as Mohit Bhandari, MD, had arranged a superb academic session showcasing the tenets of good epidemiological study design with multiple speakers from McMaster University.

Our next stop was the University of Western Ontario in London, Ontario, which was Ryan Bicknell's undergraduate alma mater and residency program. Our host, George Athwal, MD, FRCSC, and Department Chairman James H. Roth, MD, arranged for an excellent academic program as well as valuable time with faculty in our subspecialties. A dinner with University of Western Ontario faculty and senior residents followed at Michael's on the Thames, a classic Italian restaurant (Fig. 2).

The final stop on our tour was the University of Toronto. We arrived in the afternoon of November 4, and were treated to dinner with several faculty, including our hosts, James P. Waddell, MD, FRCSC, Allan Gross, MD, FRCSC, and Albert J. Yee, MD, FRCS(C), at Acqua restaurant. The following morning, we presented our final research talks to the department at St. Michael's Hospital, after which we split off to shadow faculty in our respective subspecialties. A number of us had the opportunity to visit the extensive University of Toronto Surgical Skills Centre at Mount Sinai Hospital. Dinner followed that evening at Adegas restaurant, a Portuguese establishment in downtown Toronto, with current residents and fellows from Toronto. Stark disbelief ensued the following morning as we departed for

**TABLE I Summary of the 2009 North American
Traveling Fellowship**

Days on tour	39
Programs visited	17
Fellows' previous training programs visited	4
Fellows' previous medical schools visited	3
Fellows' undergraduate schools visited	2
Fellows' home programs visited	2
Previous NATF fellows visited	23
Talks given by fellows	79
Complications	1 (missing flight reservation)

the airport and all went our separate ways, with many happy memories (and many extra pounds) between us all.

The North American Traveling Fellowship of 2009 was a tremendous journey for all of us. We thoroughly enjoyed our time together, forging a bond of true friendship through our common experiences on the tour. As we visited sites that were important to each of us (Table I), the pride and appreciation that we all hold for our teachers and mentors who helped open the door to this opportunity became abundantly clear. Our hosts were universally outstanding, and the faculty, fellows, residents, and staff who met with us, listened to our talks, and shared their expertise and insights made this a truly unique and rewarding experience. It was an honor not only to travel six weeks with such accomplished and impressive co-fellows, but to be included in the outstanding company of past AOA-NATF scholars, many of whom we met on our travels.

We are grateful to the American Orthopaedic Association, the Canadian Orthopaedic Association, our host insti-

tutions, and our current departments for this amazing opportunity. The planning and effort exerted by all involved made this an experience we will not forget. A more detailed description of the Fellowship, with pictures from each site, can be found at <http://www.aoassn.org/Fellowships/Traveling/Default.asp?FK=NATF2009>.

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