

March 26, 2014

A few thoughts and reminiscences....

I first met and knew of Skoot Dimon in 1960 when I was a child and my mother was a patient of Dr. Funk's. Many years later our paths crossed again when I was in nursing school and doing a rotation on 4 South. At that time I saw the nurses who worked with the surgeons and thought what a wonderful job that would be. Little did I know.....

During that same time, Millie Callahan hired me as a student nurse to work in the OR and I learned to scrub orthopaedic cases and loved them. I knew then I would somehow work in the OR. Immediately on graduating, Millie hired me fulltime as a graduate nurse and on passing my Boards, I became a staff nurse in the Piedmont OR. After Skoot's return from the Medical College of Georgia, the opportunity to work for him at POC opened. And what a life changer it was!!

Skoot's passion, after Annie, his family and hip surgery, was nursing education – whether one-on-one, in small groups or from the podium. He just loved to teach and was not just good, but great at it! He co-authored *Orthopaedic Nursing* along with Clara Donahoo and delighted in giving the book to new nurses in the office or on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor (Ortho) at Piedmont. He gave me my first copy as a student nurse taking care of his patients. When I went to work for him a few years later as his “private scrub” (as we were called) he gave me another copy. He encouraged me to share my knowledge with others as well and always supported my teaching opportunities – whether locally or on the national level. Even after retirement, he was keenly interested in my involvement in nursing education.

So many hundreds of patients benefitted from his skilled hands as well as his treatment plan of “masterful neglect” – meaning he knew they would get better with “tincture of time”. When he felt it was needed, we were known to make house calls – a practice that had pretty much fallen by the wayside in the late 60's.

Required reading by all who worked with Skoot was Dr. Otto Aufranc's book, *Constructive Surgery of the Hip*. As he told me, “this book outlines the way we want to take care of our patients”. He believed in and worked each day according to his mantra of treating patients the way you would treat your mother – with kindness, respect and always doing your best. That was the basis of our Doctor-Nurse relationship – but he never treated me as a subordinate. From day one, we were “partners” in the care of our patients. That attitude permeated everything we did – whether in the office seeing patients, at Piedmont operating and making rounds, or at the Hospital Albert Schweitzer in Haiti. We rounded every morning and after a day of operating, would go back to the floor to “tuck the patients in” for the night and look at their x-rays before going home ourselves.

He enjoyed taking care of all patients – regardless of their ability to pay. He'd barter services (fixing the truck in exchange for bilateral total hips) or if money was an object for a patient, he would take a cherry pie, some BBQ or a peck of tomatoes in payment and indicate just that on their bill. It drove the bookkeeper crazy!

Together with Jim Roberson at Emory and Rick Oser at POC, Skoot started a fellowship program in reconstructive hip surgery. After a year with us, each Fellow left Atlanta with not only a terrific knowledge of joint replacement surgery but also a keen awareness of the “art” of medicine. Skoot's legacy lives on through them and the many residents and medical students he mentored over the decades. He was a brilliant man but never looked down his nose at others less knowledgeable than he. It was his desire to share all that he learned. He gave of his time and talents to those less fortunate and would truly

give someone the shirt off his back if needed. He appreciated and demanded “the truth” – and he gave that truth in return to patients. They were never in the dark about their care. He loved to talk to patients and felt that lack of or inadequate communication was “the biggest problem in life”. As folks would say today, we were transparent.

He was a “hand-holder” in the truest sense of the word. He used the art of touch with his patients – he held their hands. He laughed with them and cried with them in the office or in the hospital and I suspect, even in the back pew “clinic” on Sunday mornings at St Anne’s.

Skoot loved life and to that end enjoyed making POC a fun place to work – whether dressing up for Halloween with that horrible monster mask and making rounds, clapping his hands and calling out to make Henry, the mounted fish, sing, or playing practical jokes with toy bugs or the spring-loaded ferret tail. It was never a dull moment!

He adored his 1972 Chevy “luv truck” – and it was quite the vehicle...rusty, sort of faded burnt orange, with a steadily decomposing dashboard. Much to Dr. Funk’s dismay, Skoot had magnetic signs made for the doors “Official POC Fireball 500 Pace Truck” and enjoyed displaying them as he parked next to the more luxurious vehicles in the doctor’s parking lot. Along with the signs, the truck was outfitted with a large air horn. Skoot delighted in entering the parking lot each morning, giving the horn a big squeeze and hearing the resounding “oooo-gah” echoing through the parking deck! He loved “the truck” and spent countless hundreds of dollars having it towed and repaired.

One particular day, he had to pick up an item at Lenox. It was actually 2 very large but lightweight boxes. Since they didn’t fit inside the truck, he had me ride in the truck bed (looking through the rusted out portions to the pavement below) and hold them as we drove along Habersham and Tuxedo – while he blew the oogah horn!!!!

When we moved to the 2001 building and had to use the tunnel under Peachtree to get to the hospital, he purchased an *OLD* bicycle and affixed a sign – “POC Tunnel Transportation System”. The bike resided in the tunnel for anyone to use to get from one end to the other. One day it just disappeared – he always suspected Dr. Funk was behind that.

My years working side-by-side with Skoot were the most professionally and personally rewarding of my career. I learned from him each day – not only about orthopaedics but also about taking care of people. Our hours and work were long and hard but he never lost sight of the fact that I was a wife and mother too. He saw to it that I could be a room mother and participate in Courtney’s activities. He welcomed having her come to the office to visit and taught her how to wiggle her ears at an early age – something I still cannot do. He cared about our family life – and that meant so very much to us all. Another of his favorite expressions was “parenthood is forever!”

Skoot was genuinely a good and decent man and I am privileged to have been his “partner” for so long. In our last conversation just a couple of weeks ago, we talked about hip surgery and shared stories – some of them recounted here.

Lastly, tomorrow (Thursday) is bittersweet. I am in Ohio teaching a group of OR nurses and cannot be there in person to celebrate his life. But I know that he’s watching and is delighted that today of all days, nursing education continues.

Love to you all ----  
Paula