

UVM Anesthesia News

A Newsletter From The University of Vermont Department of Anesthesiology

Volume 5 Issue 1

Spring 2010

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The Match, 15th annual Stowe Conference, and Dr. Don Mathews.

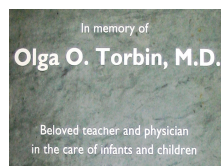
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David Johnson On Life In Packer Country

Greetings from the gateway to the land of 10,000 lakes, here in the quaint but thriving metropolis of Chippewa Falls, WI (pop. 12,925), home to an inordinate number of Vikings fans (ugh!). The transition has been pretty much seamless, think Fanny Allen with 3 ORs + OB. Fortunately the practice of anesthesia varies little from place to place, and since I work in the anesthesia care team model with very competent CRNAs, I am in a comfortable environment. My colleagues are talented, bright, and committed to high quality anesthesia care. The case mix is low acuity with an abundance of dental, phacos, lap choles, and gyn, and what seems like a C/S rate of 80% (at least 40%).

Quite satisfactory for this old guy. Although call is more frequent, it is far less demanding than at UVM.



In fact, if it weren't for OB (epidurals and sections), I'd rarely have to return to the hospital. I am supposed to be a stabilizing force in the OR, and everyone genuinely seems grateful for a familiar face on a daily basis. I stay in Chippewa Sunday through Thursday nights, visiting the cottage (90 miles away) on weekends. LeeAnn is traveling a lot this spring, so we talk by phone more than face to face. We are planning on renovating the cottage (more kitchen, more closets and a garage, at least). We have taken advantage of the opportunity to see our son Alex at his music school, and have enjoyed the concerts. Aside from missing my many friends in Vermont, the change has met my expectations and I feel once again I've gotten lucky. Please feel free to email me at: djohnvt@gmail.com.

David Johnson MD, Hatley WI

UVM Associate Professor of Anesthesiology 1980 to 2009

CHAIRMAN'S LETTER



As I welcome you back to another edition of UVM Anesthesia News, I'm happy to report that spring has come early to Vermont. For those

interested, even the ice on Joe's Pond was declared out at 2:46pm on April 5th. This was the earliest ice out in the history of the Joe's Pond contest. By the way, this year's winner of the "Ice Out Contest" won \$5000. Much more importantly, the editor of this newsletter and I were able to go fishing on Lake Champlain April 4th, Easter Sunday! Although the fishing Gods were not with us that day, it was the earliest spring try for either of us.

It has been a busy winter here. Again, we were lucky to have attracted a large pool of applicants to our residency. Of the 370 applications, we invited 102 applicants to interview and were able to interview almost 80. We matched two medical students, Lyle Gerety (UVM '10) and Amand Braaten (University of Washington SOM) into our two categorical positions. Four medical students matched in preliminary positions and will do their internships elsewhere. These folks hail from UMass (2), Creighton, and Touro University. We are very excited about the results of the Match and we thank our current residents who did an awesome job, taking all the candidates to dinner the night prior to their interviews. Our chief residents, Jens Bjerregaard and Ryan Adams, were two of our busiest interviewers and fully participated in the process. Resident feedback was greatly appreciated.

March not only brought us the results of the residency match, but also another successful Stowe conference. Rob Williams and Matt Fisher organized a wonderful conference highlighted by the Johns' Fund lecture delivered by Dr. Jim Rathmell. Jim's fascinating talk was well received by both the lay members of the audience and those involved in clinical care. We were fortunate to have both John and Carol Mazuzan attend the lecture.

Next month we look forward to welcoming Don Mathews as a new attending to our department. New to us, but not new to the world of anesthesiology, Don has recently left St. Vincent's Hospital in NYC where he was a researcher, clinician, and Residency Director.

Finally, it was my true honor to unveil a plaque in honor of Olga Torbin's memory (more details in this newsletter) this month. Many members of the department, as well as nursing staff, gathered in the Comfort Zone for a small ceremony and the telling of stories. Although we miss her terribly, the plaque is a reminder that we truly did lose a great physician, teacher and friend.

In closing, Dr. Kreutz and I sincerely welcome your emails, letters, and phone calls with

comments about this newsletter. Any suggestions for articles, news, or history topics are appreciated.

Howard Schapiro MD

Wishing Graduating Residents & Fellows Well...

Finishing their UVM training this summer are eight anesthesia residents and pain fellows:

Residents

Ryan Adams MD

Northern Colorado Anesthesia Professional Consultants, Fort Collins, CO

Jens Bjerregaard MD

Fletcher Allen Health Care
Burlington & Randolph, VT

Makara Cayer MD

Pediatric Anesthesia Fellowship, University of Michigan Hospitals, Ann Arbor, MI

Eric Kent MD

Naval Medical Center Portsmouth
Portsmouth, VA

Daniel Parsons MD

Valley Anesthesia Consultants/Shea Division
Phoenix, AZ

Christopher Yen MD

Critical Care Fellowship, Johns Hopkins Hospital, Baltimore, MD

Pain Fellows

Jason Holt MD

Advanced Interventional Pain & Diagnostics of Western Arkansas, Fayetteville, AR

Jagjeet Singh MD

Morris Anesthesia Group
Denville, NJ

We are fortunate to have had the opportunity to work with these wonderful men and women, and wish them well.

And Welcoming The New...

CA-1's for July 2010 start

Alison Fitzgerald MD

Bates College - Psychology
Boston College School of Education - M.Ed.
UVM College of Medicine

Weili Gray MD

Williams College - Astrophysics
University of Connecticut School of Medicine

Jessica Heath MD

University of Pittsburgh - English Literature
Tufts University School of Medicine

Katherine Holley MD

Indiana University - Biology
Kansas City Univ. of Medicine & Biosciences

Scott McQuilkin DO

Univ. of New Hampshire - Molecular Biology
Midwestern University - M.H.Ed
Arizona College of Osteopathic Medicine

Brian Monroe MD

Mary Washington College - Biology
University of Illinois College of Medicine

Categoricals for July 2011 CA-1 start

Amanda Braaten MD

Montana State University - Chemistry
University of Washington School of Medicine

Lyle Gerety MD

Bates College - Neuroscience
UVM College of Medicine

Pain Fellows

Daniel Gianoli MD

Trinity College - Biomedical Engineering
Worcester Polytechnical Institute - M.S.

Ross University School of Medicine
Anesthesia Residency - Univ. of Connecticut

Terel Newton MD

East Carolina University - Biology
Univ. of North Carolina School of Medicine
Anesthesia Residency - U. of North Carolina

Nurse Anesthetist

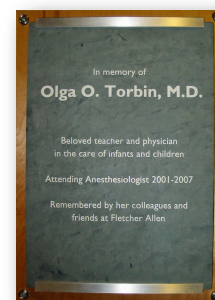
Julie Kelbert CRNA

University of Florida College of Nursing - RN
University of New England - CRNA

Tidbits...

Dr. Mitchell Tsai completed his Master's of Medical Management at the University of Southern California Marshall School of Business in March. After racking up a pile of frequent flyer miles and consuming many meals (aka federal tax deductions) away from home, he is looking forward to helping his son hone his golf swing, working on his marriage, and searching for another way to stay in school.

A plaque honoring the memory of **Dr. Olga Torbin** was unveiled in FAHC's Comfort Zone (our preoperative pediatric sedation area) on April 1st. It serves as a daily reminder of the dedication and compassion that Olga showed in her care of infants and children, and the joy that she brought into all our lives.



UVM anesthesia resident **Dr. Jennifer Hay** has been awarded a Society for Education in Anesthesia/Health Volunteers Overseas Traveling Fellowship for 2010-2011. As one of nine SEA/HVO fellows dedicated to "Improving Global Health Through Education", Jennifer will be teaching in Peru for four weeks.



Steve O Down Under

UVM anesthesiologist **Dr. Steve O'Donnell** is on a six-month sabbatical with his family in Ohope, New Zealand. A letter home:

Friends and Colleagues:

As I pass the halfway point of my adventure, a few things stand out. First is the people. They are incredibly friendly, welcoming, and fun loving. Kiwis truly live in the moment. In this part of the country, the sunny Bay of Plenty, they are not concerned with the size of their house or retirement account. I hear "no worries, mate" several times a day (and they truly mean it). Foremost on people's mind in how big the surf is and how the fish are biting.



Pauline and the kids are adjusting well. The town of Whakatane is small, but has a lot to offer. The schools are much more relaxed than home. Most schoolchildren go barefoot all day and homework is one-fourth of their usual. If my kids could relocate a few best friends over here, they would stay indefinitely.

Our traveling adventures have centered around volcanoes so far. We've worn gas masks inside the crater of an active one (White Island), hiked the 19.4 km Tongariro alpine crossing, (NZ's best one day hike), and visited Auckland (home of 50 volcanoes). Later today, we leave for a ten-day South Island trip. It has

actually been hard to leave our oceanside house. The hospital has put us up in Ohope, a beach town fifteen minutes from work.



Work has been interesting. The drug differences took a few weeks to get used to, but luckily the anesthesia machines are ten-year-old Ohmeda's. The hospital has three operating "theatres", usually only running two at a time. The hospital desperately needs to be updated; it is 40 years old and not up to modern earthquake standards. There usually are four patients to a room, privacy nonexistent. The waiting list is alive and well, it can take over a year for an elective operation and six months to see a cardiologist. That being said, the care delivered is top notch. The patients routinely comment on the "United Nations" feel of the hospital. Due to socialized medicine and our rural location, Whakatane Hospital has only two Kiwi doctors, both pediatricians. The rest are from the US, Iraq, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Germany, and the UK.

My family and I have been incredibly fortunate for this opportunity to live and work abroad, but will be really glad to come home. Cheers,

Steve O

The blog of the O'Donnell family adventure (with more photos) is at: <http://kiwiod.blogspot.com>



Burlington's airport, circa 1939.



Upper Church St. in downtown Burlington, 1939.

1939: John Abajian & The Birth of UVM's Anesthesia Division

Part seven of a series on UVM anesthesia history.

With the dismissal of Francis Ford in 1939, UVM was once again in need of an Anesthesia Instructor. Its first choice was Mass General's new Anesthesia Chief, Henry Beecher, who (not surprisingly) declined the offer. The school then contacted James Gwathmey, one of the founding fathers of American anesthesiology, asking for help. Gwathmey had the perfect candidate, a talented, hell-raising young protégé who needed removal from New York City's temptations - John Abajian.

The eldest son of Armenian immigrants, John Abajian was born in 1912 in Providence, RI.



He attended Long Island University and New York College of Medicine, where his classmates described him as "an unusual medical student: apparently, he knows everything - at any rate, he always has a logical answer to the problems besetting us." Gwathmey, a professor at the school, recognized Abajian's potential and enlisted him to

conduct experiments in his physiology lab. By graduation in 1937, John Abajian had decided upon a career as a physiology instructor, but the \$40/week salary didn't appeal to him and he began to look at other options. After interning at Norton Memorial Infirmary in Louisville, KY, Abajian signed up for a one-year preceptorship-style anesthesia residency at Gotham and Lennox Hill Hospital in New York City, under 75-year-old Gwathmey's supervision. It was unusual anesthesia training for the time, considered obsolete by most, and would come back to haunt him in a few years.

One day in mid-1939, after his conversation with UVM, Gwathmey announced to his surprised resident that he "was to go to Vermont to establish an anesthesia department." Gwathmey's order wasn't negotiable. John Abajian arrived at Burlington's airport (left) on a cold night in December 1939, feeling as though he'd been banished to Siberia. He headed straight to the Sugar House, a bar on St. Paul Street, where surgeon Al Mackay found him. "I can still recall the look of horror on his face when he found out what they had bought for Vermont," Abajian later said. It was an inauspicious start to what would be a legendary 37-year UVM anesthesia career.

Next issue: Big John makes friends, & enemies.

Maybe Another Day

I'd like to tell you about a friend of mine who passed away recently. Esther "Jackie" Roberts was one of the first members of the UVM anesthesia family, a very long time ago. She was hired as a Mary Fletcher Hospital nurse anesthetist in 1942, fresh out of nursing school, chosen for her intelligence and spirit. Jackie was the second addition to John Abajian's new UVM Anesthesia Division (Betty Wells was the first), but a few months after her hiring, Dr. Abajian joined the Army and left Burlington. Jackie's next three years were brutal - every other night call, lots of emergencies, and no vacations - all for \$65/month. When John Abajian returned from Europe in 1946 and began hiring anesthesia residents, Jackie dutifully moved on to other jobs. She served as O.R. supervisor for a while, then became neurosurgeon R.M.P. Donaghy's surgical assistant. Jackie helped train a generation of neurosurgery residents and was internationally recognized as the "Mother of Micro-neurosurgery" in 1969. She retired a few years later and all institutional memory of her began to slowly fade away.

In 2005, I discovered Jackie's story in an old, forgotten UVM anesthesia history written by Betty Wells. A "senior" FAHC nurse told me that Jackie had once lived in South Burlington, so I checked the phonebook and there she was - E. Roberts, 15 Woodbine. I decided to pay her a visit. When I called on her, Jackie was guarded, at



*Esther "Jackie" Roberts, R.N.
(1919 - 2010)*

first, but she gradually realized that I wasn't a con artist and began to tell me about her life. She wasn't very interested in talking about her anesthesia career, though, and hadn't spoken of it with anyone in more than fifty years. The truth be told, Jackie hadn't enjoyed doing anesthesia very much, admitting that she had been "scared to death of it," something that all of us in this business can relate to. She hadn't lost any patients, but had come close a few times. Jackie was clearly proudest of her neurosurgery career and had loved working with Donaghy (a framed portrait of him still hung on her living room wall). I tried to convince her to visit the hospital, just to meet a few members of our department or tour the operating rooms. Maybe another day, she said.

I saw Jackie occasionally after that and she seemed to enjoy my visits. She even gave me hugs eventually (my wife Gale's homemade cookies may have had something to do with it). We just sat in her kitchen, eating the cookies and talking about her family and friends, rarely medicine. Jackie was truly uninterested

in recognition and never accepted any of my offers of that hospital tour. Even though she never said so, I think that Jackie was pleased that she hadn't been forgotten by her UVM anesthesia family after all, and happy to learn that the grueling, dangerous work she had done as a young anesthetist those many years ago is remembered.

Joe Kreutz MD

Upcoming Events

5th Annual Mazuzan-Abajian Classic Golf Tournament

A fundraiser for the UVM Department Of Anesthesiology Johns' Fund.

2PM, June 19th, 2010, The Links at Lang Farm, Essex Jct, VT.
Contact: Mitchell Tsai MD at mitchell.tsai@vtmednet.org for details.

8th Annual Northern New England Critical Care Conference

September 29th - October 2nd, 2010, Stoweflake Resort & Conference Center, Stowe, VT.

Contact: Mark Hamlin MD at mark.hamlin@vtmednet.org for details, or visit <http://cme.uvm.edu>.

Tax-deductible contributions to The Johns' Fund and the UVM Anesthesia Research & Development Fund are welcome and should be directed to Howard Schapiro MD, Chair - UVM Dept. of Anesthesiology, Fletcher Allen Health Care, 111 Colchester Avenue, Burlington, VT 05401.



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