

SURGERY Synopsis

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Chairman’s Message pg 1

Alex Clowes:
A Life Well-Lived pg 1

Save the Dates pg 5

The Alexander W. Clowes, MD
Endowed Chair in Vascular Surgery . . . pg 6

2015 Faculty Promotions pg 7

Welcome 2015/16
New Surgery Residents pg 10

New Research Residents pg 12

2015 Chief Residents’ Dinner pg 13

24th Annual Visiting Scholar
in Cardiothoracic Surgery pg 15

14th Annual David Tapper
Endowed Lecture pg 15

Department of Surgery
Peer Support Program pg 15

Researcher Profiles:
Drs. Jefferey Friedrich and
Kari Keys pg 16

#Getting To Know DOS—
Dr. Andrew Wright pg 17

Honors and Awards pg 18

Department of Surgery
Grant Activity Report pg 20

Publications pg 21

Department of Surgery
In the Media pg 22

Surgery Synopsis Reader Feedback pg 23

Chairman’s Message



Carlos A. Pellegrini, MD,
FACS, FRCSI (Hon.)
The Henry N. Harkins
Professor & Chair

Friends & Colleagues of the Department of Surgery: This column and issue of Surgery Synopsis reflect upon the “bookends” of our professional lives as surgeons, from those who are beginning residency, to those who have recently graduated and are beginning their careers, to one whose career has come to an end. In observing all these stages, I have been profoundly reminded what a privilege it is to be a surgeon; but also how stressful and out of balance this life can become if we do not pay attention to all aspects. Life’s many parts must be acknowledged and harmonized to be a life well lived.

We have an exceptional example of a life well lived that we have paused to celebrate and grieve in recent weeks. The whole Department, the School of Medicine, as well as professional organizations, family and friends grieve the passing of **Dr. Alexander Clowes**. Dr. Clowes passed away on July 7, 2015 of a brain glioblastoma. This is a tremendous loss for all who knew him, particularly his family, but also a very big loss for the

(continued on page 2)

Alex Clowes: A Life Well-Lived

Alexander (Alec) Whitehill Clowes (pictured right), professor of surgery at the University of Washington and renowned researcher in vascular diseases, died of a brain glioblastoma on July 7, 2015, at the age of 68.

Alec was born into a family with a legacy of medical research. His forbearer, Sir William Clowes, physician to the admiral of the British fleet as it fought the Spanish Armada, published in 1588 one of the earliest textbooks on surgery in the English language. Alec’s grandfather was George Henry Alexander Clowes, PhD, the scientist and mastermind behind the purification of insulin for clinical use, and his father, George Henry Alexander Clowes, Jr., was an academic surgeon and researcher at Case Western Reserve and Harvard.

It therefore is no surprise that Alec’s favorite memories were of science classes in high school (Phillips Exeter Academy, 1964) and college (Harvard College, 1968) followed by his own



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Alec Clowes: A Life Well-Lived

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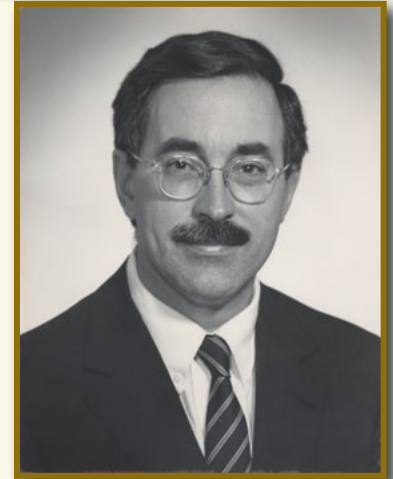
laboratory experience in Sheffield, England, during medical school (Harvard Medical School, 1972). Despite his original intention to restrict his career to research, Alec discovered profound enjoyment in patient care. He switched to concentrate on a career in academic surgery.

He obtained his general surgery training at Case Western Reserve in Cleveland, Ohio, between 1972 and 1979, and advanced training in vascular surgery with Dr. John A. Mannick at the Peter Bent Brigham Hospital in Boston (1979 -1980). His thoughts never far from research, he interrupted his general surgery residency to work in the laboratory of Dr. Morris Karnovsky at Harvard Medical School. It was during this period (1974 -1977) that Alec developed his life-long interest in vascular biology and arterial wound healing.

In 1980 at the conclusion of his training, Alec departed his native New England for Seattle, joined the faculty of the Department of Surgery at the University of Washington School of Medicine, and never looked back. He rose through the ranks to Professor of Surgery in 1990, Acting Chairman of the Department of Surgery in 1992-3, and Chief of the Division of Vascular Surgery from 1995 to 2007. No offers from other institutions could lure him away. He developed an intense loyalty to the University of Washington where he found a cooperative environment that nurtured innovation, research, and outstanding patient care.

Throughout his years at the UW, Alec's focus remained on his research, the training of physicians for careers in academic vascular surgery, and the care of patients with vascular diseases. Along the way, he assumed leadership responsibilities in numerous

national and international professional organizations. The National Institutes of Health funded his research for a third of a century, an astonishing record. His efforts engendered many honors and awards; most recently Alec received a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Society for Vascular Surgery. His collected scientific publications fill over six volumes.



Dr. Alexander W. Clowes
1992-93 Chair Portrait

Despite the acclaim of his peers, Alec remained a modest person. Nothing gave him more professional satisfaction than witnessing the success of his students and colleagues. A generation of young vascular surgeons and investigators consider Alec their role model as a leader who inspired with his intellect and with the warmth of his friendship and collegiality. He considered his greatest achievements to be the care he gave his patients and his mentoring of young physicians.

Alec and Susan Detweiler found great happiness together in their marriage in 2000 after Alec was widowed in 1998 (Monika Clowes). Alec delighted in the family life he shared with Susan's children, Aaron and Amanda, as he experienced their college and graduate school years, family vacations and, later, their marriages. Being a grandfather to Aaron's daughters, Charlotte and Claire, and Amanda's daughter, Alice, he said, was "the joy of my life."

As the Clowes family patriarch and president of The Clowes Fund since 2001, Alec provided leadership for his family's collaboration in philanthropy in Seattle, Indiana and New England. Alec wrote a biography (forthcoming 2016, Indiana University Press) of his paternal grandfather, George Henry Alexander Clowes, who played a pivotal role in the early history of insulin and established the Fund.

A long-time member of the Board of Trustees of the Seattle Symphony, Alec was particularly proud to have been involved in the building of Benaroya Hall and, more recently, the recruitment of the Symphony's new music director, Ludovic Morlot. Alec, who considered music essential to life, contributed his energy to furthering music education in under-served schools through The Clowes Fund.



Left to right: Dr. Peter Lawrence, President of the Society for Vascular Surgery, Dr. Benjamin Starnes, Dr. Alexander Clowes, Dr. Carlos Pellegrini and Dr. Susan Detweiler.

(continued on page 5)

Alec Clowes: A Life Well-Lived

Continued from page 4

Admired by his family and friends for his elegant mind, truly kind nature and generous spirit, Alec leaves a hole in the universe impossible to fill.

Alec is survived by his wife, Susan Detweiler, her children Aaron Patterson (Erin) and Amanda Lovelace (Blake), and granddaughters Charlotte, Claire, and Alice; by his mother Margaret Jackson Clowes; by his sisters Margaret Bowles (Frank) and Edith Clowes (Craig Huneke), and his brother Jonathan Clowes (Evelyn); and by ten nieces and nephews. Alec's brother Thomas Clowes (Markie) died in 2010. This diverse tribe love Alec dearly and will miss him forever.

A memorial celebration of Alec's life was held on Tuesday, July 28, 2015, at Benaroya Hall. The Hall was filled to overflowing with Alec's many friends, colleagues and family. Several family members eulogized Dr. Clowes as did Dr. Pellegrini, who was asked to speak for all of his colleagues.

Reprinted with permission by Dr. Alexander Clowe's wife, Susan Detweiler, and originally printed in *The Seattle Times Sunday*, July 12, 2015.

For those who may wish to give a gift in memory of Alec Clowes, the Clowes family has asked that gifts be designated to either:

* University of Washington: indicate that the donation is to be applied to the Alexander Whitehill Clowes Endowed Chair, Department of Surgery

By mail: UW Medicine Advancement, Box 358045, Seattle WA 98195-8045

Online: uwsurgery.org and click "Make a Gift"

* Seattle Symphony Orchestra, PO Box 21906, Seattle WA 98111-3906; please indicate that the gift is in honor of Dr. Alexander W. Clowes

Save the Dates

AMERICAN COLLEGE OF SURGEONS CLINICAL CONGRESS

October 4-8, 2015

Chicago, IL

www.facs.org/education/clinical-congress

HARKINS SOCIETY RECEPTION AT THE ACS

Tuesday, October 6, 2015

Chicago, IL

More information TBA

66TH ANNUAL

ALFRED A. STRAUSS LECTURE

Friday, October 16, 2015

4:00pm, Hogness Auditorium

Health Sciences Building

Room A-420

Speaker: **Dr. Thomas M. Krummel**

Emile Holman Professor, Department of Surgery

Stanford University School of Medicine

Co-Director, Stanford Biodesign

Susan B. Ford Surgeon-in-Chief

Lucile Packard Children's Hospital

HARKINS SURGICAL SYMPOSIUM

Friday, October 16, 2015

7:30am-2:00pm

UW Tower Auditorium

22ND ANNUAL HELEN & JOHN SCHILLING LECTURE

Friday, February 26, 2016

3:00pm, UW Tower

Speaker: **Melina R. Kibbe, MD**

Professor of Surgery

Northwestern University

Please see the
Department of Surgery's
monthly Grand Rounds
schedule under
Special Events on our website:
www.uwsurgery.org