

November 18, 2013

Mary Eiseman and Family

Dear Mary and Family,

I am writing this letter to you and your family on the occasion of the dinner celebrating Ben's life at the Grand Seawell Ballroom on November 19th. I wanted to be sure that you and your family fully understand the major role that Ben has played in my life and career and in our Department of Surgery, the University of Colorado School of Medicine, as well the Denver VA Medical Center and Denver Health.

I originally met Ben when he returned to Denver in 1967 as Chief at the then Denver General Hospital. I was a General Surgery Resident and became acquainted with him in the old Halsted Lab during the year that I was working with Bruce Paton in that lab. That is when I first met Jane, who was working for him just a few tables down from where I worked. I then had the very positive experience of rotating as a senior general surgery resident at Denver General and operating with Ben and being part of his teaching rounds and his famous mortality and morbidity conferences. He was a strong personality who demanded excellence, attention to detail, hard work and honesty, all of which are values I truly believe in and that he further instilled in me. I developed a close relationship with him that has continued to the present time. Ben always paid great attention to what my career plans were, to the point where he actually put in a call to Surgeon General Brown to be sure that I would be stationed in San Diego Naval Hospital for my Navy obligation. This was a major teaching hospital which also had a cardiothoracic surgery program so it was an ideal experience for me and our family.

He continued to follow my career during my time in the Navy and when I was looking for a job at the end of my two year Navy assignment, it was Dr. Eiseman and Marv Pomerantz who suggested that I look into San Antonio where Ken Trinkle, one of his former residents at the University of Kentucky, was assuming the role of Chief of the Division of Cardiothoracic Surgery. To make a long story short, that is where I decided to go and that was largely Ben's and Marv's influence on me, with Bruce Paton confirming that it was a good choice. This was a tremendously positive decision for me. As you know I spent nineteen years there and it allowed me to develop my early and early-middle career as an academic surgeon and positioned me to be invited back here to be Division Head of Cardiothoracic Surgery and to start the lung transplant program.

During my last twenty two years here in Denver, first as Division Head and then as Department Chair, Ben frequently would drop by my office and offer sage advice. We would sit down and talk a lot about the vision

that we both had for the Department of Surgery and the future Anschutz Medical Center. Often when I had difficult decisions to make, I would talk to him about those issues and get his advice, which played a key role in my generally making pretty good decisions. I was also very pleased that we were able to have the National VA recognize him as a VA Distinguished Physician, which is quite an honor and were also able to dedicate the Denver VA Surgical Intensive Care Unit in his name. In addition, we were all very proud of him when he received the Society of University Surgeons 2010 Lifetime Achievement Award.

I was always very impressed with Ben's commitment to medical student teaching. He would teach the medical students every morning at 7 a.m. at the VA and many of them expressed to me what a role model he was and what a great link he was to the history of surgery as well as the current practice of surgery. In addition, he was an absolutely loyal participant at our Department of Surgery Grand Rounds, generally asking the best questions of anyone in the audience. He would frequently challenge our medical students and residents to become interested in a difficult area of surgery where there are a lot of unanswered questions and stimulate them to pursue research in that area. He was always encouraging them to be active and passionate in their search for new surgical knowledge and practice.

In closing I would like to reiterate the tremendous positive influence that Dr. Eiseman has had on me, my career and our Department of Surgery, and also the tremendous influence he has had on so many others, beginning with Gerry Rainer, his first resident, right on up through Larry Norton, Jack Gallagher, me, Gene Moore, and virtually all of the residents that have come through our program. He has also had a very positive influence on our faculty, many of whom did not train here but got to know Ben after joining our faculty. He was highly respected by other department chairs, faculty in other departments, and certainly by our Dean, Richard Krugman. I was deeply touched that he made one of his rare evening appearances to honor me at the October dinner. I am sure that you and your family appreciate his contributions to medicine and his tremendous dedication, although often at the expense of time with family. On behalf of our faculty, residents and students, I thank you and your family for sharing him with us all of these years. I very much hope that you will continue to be involved in our Department of Surgery functions and be part of our Department by attending the various evening events and other special events. We want to keep in touch with all of you. Again please accept Carol's and my sympathy on Ben's passing away, but also please balance his loss with the comfort the memory of all of the many positive things that he accomplished and what he has done to make medicine and the world a better place.

With kind personal regards,



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