A time to recall lifelong memories

BY TYLER FRANCISCHINE

One thing became clear during Alumni Weekend 2016 at the UF College of Medicine: The passing of time enhances the memories created on this campus.

This year’s Alumni Weekend featured two days of events, held Oct. 14-15 in the George T. Harrell, MD, Medical Education Building, and plenty of reminiscing.

Alfred W.H. Stanley Jr., MD ’66, sat on a bench outside the Harrell Medical Education Building and recalled with great clarity how it felt to ride in Dr. Robert Cade’s old, gray Studebaker in 1966. The UF nephrology professor took Stanley and classmate Alan Bartel, MD ’66, back and forth to Jacksonville for their senior rotations. One evening, as they stopped at the usual pub halfway between Gainesville and the coast, Cade presented the pair with a proposition:

“He said, ‘You know, the Gators just run out of gas in the second half,’” Stanley said. “He told us, ‘I want to do an experiment, and I want you to help me.’”

A few days later, Stanley and Bartel were running laps at Florida Field, plastic bags strapped to their elbows to collect and measure the sweat they lost. Cade ran some tests and then approached the Gator football team for five more test subjects. The rest is history.

Stanley remembers getting a choice of payment for his participation in the study: either $100 (a tidy sum in 1966) or 1 percent of the future Gatorade stock. He’ll never forgive himself for choosing the former.

Bartel, who could not attend this year’s reunion due to a family emergency, said he and Stanley had no idea of the national legacy they helped birth.

“We did it because it sounded cool and interesting,” he said. “Anything we could do to make the Florida team play better.”

While not all stories during Alumni Weekend had the historical impact of Stanley’s and Bartel’s, they were just as meaningful to those who recalled them. In addition to catching up with former classmates, Alumni Weekend featured a research roundtable on Friday, at which three UF faculty physician-scientists discussed their latest findings. It also included a student-alumni speed-networking session and a family-friendly tailgate before the UF-Missouri football game on Saturday, complete with barbecue from 4 Rivers Smokehouse, face painting and a photo booth.
Michael L. Good, MD, dean of the UF College of Medicine, was presented with the Gerold L. Schiebler, MD, Humanitarian Award July 30 during a meeting of the Florida Medical Association Student Section. Fourth-year medical students and UF Medical College Council co-presidents Hunter Pattison and Jacob Burns presented Good with the award, which honors his service, advocacy and commitment to enriching the experience of medical students. The award, established in 2003, is bestowed annually. Good serves as the ninth dean of the UF College of Medicine, where he focuses on continually strengthening the educational curricula for more than 1,600 students. He joined the college’s faculty in 1988.

Fourth-year UF College of Medicine student Hunter Pattison received the American Medical Association’s 2016 Excellence in Medicine Leadership Award. Pattison and 14 other recipients from around the nation were chosen for their outstanding leadership in areas of advocacy, community service and education. The award provided recipients with training sessions during the AMA annual meeting in June to develop their leadership skills in both medicine and community affairs.

Pattison serves as the chair of the Florida Medical Association Medical Student Section and president of the UF Medical College Council. As a member of the board of directors for UF’s Equal Access Clinic Network, Pattison helps the underserved population of Gainesville receive the health care they need. He is passionate about health policy. After graduation, he aims to pursue a career in emergency medicine.

Jennifer Miller, MD ’96, Jennifer Gilby, MD ’96, and Stacey Newsom; Alumni Weekend included a look back through the decades as the college celebrated its 60th anniversary.
UF HEALTH RECEIVES AWARD FOR PUTTING FAMILIES FIRST OUTREACH PROGRAM

UF Health’s Putting Families First program received a Josiah Macy Jr. Foundation Award for Excellence in Social Mission in Health Professions Education Sept. 19 at a conference held in Miami. The program, offered through the UF Office of Interprofessional Education, involves students from all six UF Health colleges who work with local families to maintain and improve their health. Students make regular home visits, work with families in small group sessions and provide medical, dental and mental health care free of charge to the families who join the program.

NATIONALLY RECOGNIZED ORTHOPAEDIC SURGEON CHOSEN AS UF HEALTH SHANDS CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER

Orthopaedic oncologist C. Parker Gibbs Jr., MD, was named chief medical officer for UF Health Shands. As part of his new duties, Gibbs will perpetuate the UF Health Shands mission of safety and quality care by overseeing medical staff, recruiting physicians, credentialing and continuing to be an active, practicing member of the medical staff. Gibbs earned his medical degree from UF in 1989 and joined the UF faculty in 2003. He is one of fewer than 200 surgeons in the nation who are considered experts in limb salvage surgery used to treat bone and soft tissue sarcomas. Gibbs also directs the UF Musculoskeletal Oncology and Stem Cell Laboratory and serves as chief of the College of Medicine division of musculoskeletal oncology.

Said David S. Guzick, MD, PhD, senior vice president for health affairs at UF and president of UF Health: “Dr. Gibbs is the embodiment of a ‘triple threat’ academic physician, and thus has the respect and support of the entire faculty.”

A SNAPSHOT OF THE CLASS OF 2020:

- 40% of the class identified as either a minority student (25.9%) or disadvantaged student (14.1%)
- 17 members of the Medical Honors Program
- 61 received undergraduate degrees from UF
- 5 MD/PhD students
- 3.78 average GPA
- 512 average MCAT (new) and 32 (old)
- 2 students have parents who also graduated from UF COM

The 135 members of the class of 2020 pose for a group shot during their orientation on July 27.
Growing up in South Florida, Jason Rosenberg encountered several people who helped shape his hopes and dreams, from an art teacher he often swapped stories with before class to a high school principal who frequently drove him home from soccer practice. “All of us have those people who encourage us to do things we didn’t know we could do,” said Rosenberg, a 1995 graduate of the UF College of Medicine and a Gainesville plastic surgeon specializing in breast cancer reconstruction. As a member of the first generation in his family to attend college, Rosenberg not only earned a bachelor’s and medical degree from UF, but he also completed a master’s degree and his residency training at the UF College of Medicine.

Through an estate gift of $1 million to establish the Rosenberg Family Florida Medical Opportunity Scholarship, he and his wife, Denise Rosenberg, aim to be voices of encouragement for aspiring physicians who might otherwise be unable to afford a medical education. The couple hopes the endowed scholarship will open “doors of opportunity” by helping first-generation college students pursue their dream of attending medical school.

“It’s the ultimate pay-it-forward to give somebody an education that they can then use to help other people,” Denise Rosenberg said.

And, at a time when an estimated 80 percent of American medical students are poised to graduate with $100,000 or more in medical education debt, the UF College of Medicine has embarked on a campaign to encourage philanthropic support of scholarships.

“We know many of the very best candidates will have difficulty handling the cost of earning their medical degree,” said UF College of Medicine Dean Michael L. Good, MD, “so we must offer those students not only an exceptional educational opportunity but also exceptional financial support with scholarships.”

As part of the campaign, the UF Medical Alumni Board launched the Legacy Challenge, a call to alumni like Rosenberg to leave their mark on the future of medical education while helping to shape the next generation of UF medical students.

“The value of our degree continues to increase as the quality of our college continues to increase,” said Rosenberg, a member of the UF Board of Trustees and a past president of the UF Alumni Association and the UF Medical Alumni Board. “He added that he hopes his family’s gift will inspire other alumni to show their appreciation to the UF College of Medicine through philanthropy.

Over the years, he and his wife have been avid supporters of UF and the UF College of Medicine, funding an endowment for the Machen Florida Opportunity Scholarship program and initiating the Alumni Challenge, a fundraising campaign that led to the creation of the George T. Harrell, MD, Medical Education Building.

“Our philosophy has always been that we have been very blessed with a number of opportunities as a result of our education at the University of Florida,” Jason Rosenberg said, “and we’d like to see our College of Medicine attract the best and brightest students to Gainesville.”

For Denise Rosenberg, the ideal recipient of the Rosenberg Family Medical Opportunity Scholarship would be someone who has a strong work ethic and prides himself or herself on being an independent thinker — “someone who has a drive for success, a drive to help people and a drive to give back,” she said.

Similarly, Jason Rosenberg hopes the recipient is someone who has a passion for serving others. And, while he doesn’t know whether these scholarship recipients might go on to cure major diseases like cancer and diabetes or open a private medical practice to provide top-notch health care for their community, one thing is certain: He looks forward to seeing where their future and medical education will take them.

“I want someone who’s going to go out there and change the world,” he said. “The possibilities are limitless.”

Interested in accepting the Legacy Challenge? Visit www.scholarships.med.ufl.edu to learn more.
"We wanted to assist the UF College of Medicine in moving the School of Physician Assistant Studies from the top 50 to the top 10 in the nation."

— Randolph B. Mahoney, MPAS, PA-C
When Randolph B. Mahoney, MPAS, PA-C, attended the UF College of Medicine, he found it to be a place of innovation, collaboration and progress. That’s why, through his family foundation, he donated $1 million to the UF School of Physician Assistant Studies.

“The UF College of Medicine was, is and continues to be a very special place,” Mahoney said.

Mahoney’s $1 million gift will fund an endowed directorship for the UF School of Physician Assistant Studies. The directorship position is currently held by Ralph W. Rice, DHSc, PA-C, who plans to retire later this year.

Mahoney said his most recent contribution to the PA school is intended to help keep the UF College of Medicine moving forward on its path toward absolute preeminence.

“We wanted to assist the UF College of Medicine in moving the School of Physician Assistant Studies from the top 50 to the top 10 in the nation,” he said. “By endowing this position, it would potentially help recruit the best candidate because it is the only endowed directorship of its kind in the country.”

Mahoney, who serves as an emeritus assistant professor at the UF PA school and received his master’s degree from the school in 2001, has a clear vision of the qualities Rice’s successor should possess. He said he has complete faith in the search committee, led by Joseph C. Fantone, MD, senior associate dean for educational affairs for the UF College of Medicine.

“This position needs someone who has the capability, the leadership and a vision for moving the school from great to preeminent,” he said.

This is the third of three major gifts Mahoney has made through the Hall-Halliburton Foundation Inc. In 2012, he established the William M. Hall professorship in PA studies, the first of its kind for a physician assistant school in the nation. The second gift came in 2014 when Mahoney gave $500,000 to help fund the administrative suite of the PA school in the George T. Harrell, MD, Medical Education Building, named the Randolph Mahoney Physician Assistant Studies Suite.

Mahoney said he is motivated to give by the exemplary leadership shown by Michael L. Good, MD, dean of the UF College of Medicine, and his staff.

“Dean Good and his team have really moved the UF College of Medicine forward and will move it toward absolute preeminence,” he said. “We’re very appreciative of their leadership.”

The Hall-Halliburton Foundation is a private foundation that was started in 1977 with legacy endowments from Mahoney’s relatives. It provides grants to charitable organizations and institutions, including arts programs in Jacksonville, a Labrador retriever rescue organization and a farm for retired horses.

“Our goal is to move the needle, see change, do things that move us forward,” Mahoney said. “Instead of giving a small amount to a thousand people, we give larger gifts to a small number of organizations that we feel can make a difference. We like to step in and do things when others can’t help.”

Mahoney, who earned an undergraduate degree from Duke University, previously served as the director of clinical studies for the UF School of Physician Assistant Studies. He practices general and surgical dermatology with Jacksonville’s Advanced Dermatology and Cosmetic Surgery a few days a month. Much of his time is spent in the sky as an international commercial pilot for American Airlines, flying between Europe and North America.

Though flying is a full-time job for Mahoney, he remains enthralled with the practice of medicine.

“I love the challenge of figuring out what the patient’s problem is and how to improve their life,” he said. “The fun is in the puzzle of getting there — using your clinical skills and knowledge. Being able to move someone toward improvement is a blast.”

BY TYLER FRANCISCHINE

New School of PA Studies endowment is first of its kind in the country
On June 3, I took the last exam of my first year of medical school. Countless college-ruled papers, keyboard clicks and catecholamines later, I found my way to the “Submit Exam” button. With the push of my finger, with the touch of my mouse, these past 10 months would be over, a written chapter finished, a milestone carved. Sudden relief nudged me forward, my second digit slowly pressing down. Click. And just like that — I was one-fourth a doctor.

A few weeks later, I was on Delta Flight 466 to Ben Gurion Airport in Tel Aviv, Israel, to participate in Save a Child’s Heart’s medical internship. SACH is a nonprofit organization operating out of Wolfson Medical Center in Holon, Israel. Regardless of identity marker, SACH performs free, lifesaving heart surgeries for children who do not have the access or the financial resources to afford care. As a medical intern, I observed surgeries, saw catheterizations and studied echocardiograms. I sat in on surgical consults, Israeli medical student lectures and morning rounds. Most excitingly, I stayed at the SACH house — a facility about 10 minutes away from the hospital where all patients and their guardians live while being treated.

It doesn’t take an internship to realize that we treat people, not patients. It doesn’t take a program to understand that finite ailments and medical histories and surgical notes offer minimal insight into the infinite depths of the humans we treat. But admittedly, we can get lost in facts. Somewhere between the cerebral and spiritual, we become methodical. Somewhere between the cortical and mindful, we become robotic. Between the body and soul, logic narrows our philosophical insight. Science blurs us. Statistics make numeric what stories should make into connection.

SACH was a beautiful reminder that our patients walk out of hospital halls, step out beyond office walls, into a world undivided by organ systems, into a world undefined by weak hearts, stenotic valves and regurgitant flaps. The heart exists beyond the anatomical. The heart beats beyond its mediastinal borders. There is fullness to their lives. There is fullness to our lives. There is wholeness to who we are.

Read more about Lieberman’s experience in Israel and the pediatric patients she encountered there on The Huffington Post at http://huff.to/2aMiDEm.
On joined twin girls who were connected at the heart and other organs were successfully separated in an extremely rare surgery performed in June by physicians at UF Health Shands Children’s Hospital.

The girls, who were born in April, each had their own complete set of organs but were attached at the liver, diaphragm, sternum and heart. Their hearts were the most critical element of the separation, according to Mark Bleiweis, MD, chief of pediatric and congenital cardiovascular surgery at UF Health and the surgeon who performed the heart separation. The twins shared a connection at the upper chamber of the heart.

“In the world, there have not been many successful separations with a cardiac connection,” Bleiweis said. “It became a very challenging planning process for us, and, ultimately, a challenging separation.”

Jennifer Co-Vu, MD, FAAP, first studied the unborn twins during a hourslong ultrasound in mother Jacquelyn’s 21st week of pregnancy. She and the team used cardiac CT and MRI scans before and after the twins were born to create what appears to be the first-ever 3-D printed conjoined twin heart.

“When I saw the heart structures and liver structures in utero, I had a feeling that we could separate them, but I had to examine the anatomy more closely and consult with my cardiology colleagues at the UF Health Congenital Heart Center,” said Co-Vu, director of the Fetal Cardiac Program. “I was able to give them hope, yet at the same time, I told them I was cautiously optimistic.”

Conjoined twins occur only in about 1 in 200,000 live births. Only about 5 to 25 percent of conjoined twins survive, and survival of twins connected at the heart is extremely rare. In cases where the hearts are joined, the decision is often made to not do separation surgery.

Physicians at a different hospital discovered that mother Jacquelyn was carrying conjoined twins when the parents went for their first ultrasound at 20 weeks. Previously, sonograms captured only one heartbeat because the babies’ hearts were in sync. Initially, Jacquelyn and her partner were told the babies would not survive — or if they did, they would only live a few days outside the womb.

“We went in to find the sex of one baby, and found out not only were they twins, but they were conjoined and weren’t going to make it,” Jacquelyn said. “Many opinions later, we found Dr. Co-Vu, and she told us not only were our twins going to live, but they thought they could separate them.”

In early September, the twins went home.

“I know that Mark and Jackie were told by many not to pursue this because it was daunting, and it could not and would not be successful,” Bleiweis said. “Nothing gives us greater satisfaction than seeing the two twins separated, and to see both parents holding their twins.”

Conjoined twins connected at the heart and liver successfully separated at UF Health

“Where is (Zika) coming from, where is it moving, how is it evolving? Our entire purpose is to try to answer these questions.”

— J. Glenn Morris Jr., MD, director of the UF Emerging Pathogens Institute

For the Miami Herald, April 29

“While Muhammad Ali is best known as one of the greatest athletes of our time, we will always remember him as one of the strongest fighters in the Parkinson’s community. He lived as an example of a man who was not for a single day of his life defined by his disease.”

— Michael S. Okun, MD, ’96, medical director of the National Parkinson Foundation and chair of the UF College of Medicine department of neurology

For CNN, USA Today, MSNBC and other media outlets, June 4
UF Health administers first commercial therapy for Duchenne muscular dystrophy

The first commercial therapy for Duchenne muscular dystrophy was administered at UF Health Shands Children’s Hospital to a 9-year-old patient from Jacksonville. Exondys 51, developed by Sarepta Therapeutics, is administered through weekly infusions and targets a specific genetic mutation, which affects about 13 percent of Duchenne patients. The treatment is linked to an increase in the protein dystrophin in skeletal muscle, the deficiency of which is the underlying cause of this disease. Duchenne muscular dystrophy is the most common form of this genetic disorder, characterized by progressive muscle degeneration and weakness. The disease primarily affects boys, and symptoms usually appear between ages 3 and 5. Those affected usually experience severe disability in their teenage years and die in their mid to late 20s.

Barry Byrne, MD, PhD, a professor of molecular genetics at the UF College of Medicine and director of the Powell Center for Rare Disease Research and Therapy, is the treating physician for one of the 12 patients in the original human study of Exondys 51. That patient has been receiving weekly infusions at UF Health for more than three years.

"This therapy is a culmination of decades of work by basic science and clinical researchers around the world," Byrne said.

UF Health study confirms: With age comes increased sensitivity to pain

A small, preliminary UF Health study suggests that as we age, our sensitivity to pain may increase. The results of the study, determined by researchers Yenisel Cruz-Almeida, PhD, an assistant professor in the UF College of Medicine department of aging and geriatric research, and Joseph Riley, PhD, director of the pain clinical research unit in the UF Pain Research and Intervention Center of Excellence, were published in the peer-reviewed journal Experimental Gerontology.

The pair discovered that inflammation can occur more quickly, at a higher magnitude, and last longer when older adults experience pain, in comparison with their younger counterparts. That’s because the proteins associated with inflammation increase more and stay around longer, while the proteins that soothe inflammation peak later for older adults. This elevated inflammatory response means more pain in the tissue and limbs outside of the spinal cord and brain, which may put older adults at risk for developing chronic pain.

The researchers determined that older adults may benefit from taking anti-inflammatories sooner after an injury or surgical procedure, since they have a certain level of chronic inflammation already present in their bodies.

UF Health selected for “unprecedented” national pancreatic cancer clinical trial

The UF Health Cancer Center has been selected as one of 12 initial clinical trial sites participating in Precision Promise, the first large-scale precision medicine trial designed to transform outcomes for patients with pancreatic cancer. An initiative of the national nonprofit organization Pancreatic Cancer Action Network, Precision Promise was announced Oct. 4.

Bringing together clinicians, researchers, and diagnostic and drug developers, Precision Promise will advance the Pancreatic Cancer Action Network’s goal to double survival rates by 2020, according to the organization’s website. “Being an inaugural member of the Precision Promise clinical trial consortium ensures that our patients have access to some of the most leading-edge and innovative therapies available in the world for pancreatic cancer,” said Thomas George, MD '98, principal investigator at UF and medical director of the GI Oncology Program. “The tools to help our patients fight pancreatic cancer and advance the field are now at our ready.”
Members of the UF College of Medicine’s class of 2020 attended the Mark S. Gold, MD ’75, Distinguished Professor and Alumnus White Coat Ceremony Nov. 20 at the Curtis M. Phillips Center for the Performing Arts, bringing each of them one step closer to becoming a practicing physician. Wayne Dell, academic chair for the class of 2020, addressed his peers. J. Patrick O’Leary, MD ’67, far right, was recognized as a past Wall of Fame recipient along with Robert Watson, MD ’69, not pictured.

Robert L. Phillips Jr., MD ’95, MSPH, and Richard “Jude” Samulski, PhD ’82, were recently inducted into the UF College of Medicine Wall of Fame and honored during the 2016 Alumni Weekend celebrating classes dinner Oct. 14. Samulski is renowned for pioneering the development of gene therapy approaches. While he was a UF student, he became the first researcher to clone the adenovirus-associated virus, which is used extensively in gene therapy. He currently serves as a professor of pharmacology and the director of the Gene Therapy Center at the University of North Carolina School of Medicine.

“He has been instrumental in translating basic science discoveries into clinical trials, with the ultimate aim of influencing the standard of care and curing disease,” said UF College of Medicine Dean Michael L. Good, MD, during the class dinner. Phillips practices family medicine part time in a community-based residency program in Fairfax, Virginia, and holds faculty appointments at Georgetown University, George Washington University and Virginia Commonwealth University. He was elected to the prestigious Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Science in 2010 and currently serves as the vice president for research and policy on the American Board of Family Medicine.

“Dr. Phillips is a nationally recognized leader in primary care policy and health care reform,” Good said.

The Wall of Fame award was started in 1988 to recognize alumni who have made outstanding contributions to medicine, government, education and the community. Nominations may be made by any student, faculty member, alumnus or housestaff alumnus. Pictures of those honored are displayed in the Founders Gallery of the Academic Research Building at the UF College of Medicine.

Pharmacology professor and family physician inducted into Wall of Fame

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Treading in the scalpel for the pen, UF College of Medicine alum Barbara Harty-Golder, MD ’77, has published her first novel in a series of murder mysteries. Her book, “Dying for Revenge,” is the first of The Lady Doc Murder series and was published this year through Full Quiver Publishing of Ontario.

“Dying for Revenge” follows medical examiner Jane Wallace as she searches for answers concerning the murders of Telluride’s rich and famous.

“It’s a fairly conventional murder mystery on the surface. There is a deeper story in that the woman is a medical examiner who lost her own husband to murder. She ultimately discovers she and the murderer have some things in common she’d rather not have in common with a killer,” said Harty-Golder from her home in Lookout Mountain, Tennessee. “It’s a woman’s journey from revenge through justice to mercy.”

She said readers may discover something about themselves after finishing the book. “I think of the murder mystery as the last, great morality tale,” she said. “Morality tales have the ability to show us something about ourselves that other forms of literature can’t.”

Harty-Golder received her residency training in pathology at UF and practiced hospital and community pathology before earning a law degree from Stetson University. She then practiced legal medicine, focusing on malpractice defense and risk management. She also served as the treasurer of the Florida Medical Association and the director of medical quality assurance for a large disability insurer before she switched gears again to write full time.

She said having a rich, varied professional history has made her nimble in the face of life’s changes. “They say a book takes on a life of its own, and as a writer I had to be willing to take those turns,” she said. “My experiences in law and medicine prepared me for that.”

Barbara Harty-Golder at her home in Lookout Mountain, Tennessee.