



WHAT I HAVE LEARNED

What I've learned

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Richard J. Hawkins, or “Hawk,” as he is known to all, did all of his training at the Western University in London, Ontario, where he quarterbacked the football team as an undergraduate. After his residency, he spent a year in New York doing fellowships with Dr. Charles Neer and Dr. William Fielding (in cervical spine surgery). He was on staff at Western until 1990, when he helped form the Steadman-Hawkins Clinic in Vail, Colorado, with subsequent satellites in Denver and Greenville, South Carolina. Hawk is a founding member and a former President of the American Shoulder and Elbow Surgeons (1991–1992). He has trained almost 200 fellows in sports medicine and shoulder surgery, and he and his former fellows, termed the Hawkins Society, meet yearly at Hilton Head Island, South Carolina, for an academic and social meeting, and also communicate almost daily on a message board called Hawknates. – W.J.M.

Dr. William Mallon, editor of our *Journal of Shoulder and Elbow Surgery*, has invited several of the “older” esteemed members of the American Shoulder and Elbow Surgeons to put their thoughts down regarding “What I’ve Learned.” I am not sure about esteemed, although I am older, we will do our best to share our experiences.

Over the years I have had the privilege of giving a motivation type of talk, “The Journey through Orthopaedics and Life.” It actually has been geared toward almost anyone, especially graduating residency programs, fellowship programs, and even orthopedic surgeons practicing surgery. Many of you have contributed, especially our fellows. In this essay I will share some of my favorite quotes, songs, and poems to signify lessons learned in the journey of life.

This article is fairly personal but, in fact, could be written by any of us. I will quote some of my favorite individuals, such as John Wooden, Voltaire, and Nelson Mandela. John Wooden stated, “Failure to prepare is preparing to fail.” I have prepared such a report for some 76 years now. The theme of this report is the journey in orthopedics but more importantly, the journey through life, including various aspects that

will impact journeys down that road. This article talks about such subjects that I have learned, including teaching, family, friends, teamwork, goals, challenges, and success.

Learning

Life is a journey so enjoy the ride. So as the saying by Robert Louis Stevenson goes, “It is better to travel with hope than to arrive.” Confucius said, “Knowledge is to know what you know and True knowledge is to know what you don’t know.” In his book *Snowball in a Blizzard*, Steven Hatch talks about the uncertainty in medicine. I have learned that we live with this every day in our practice of orthopedics. Donald Rumsfeld’s quote about the known knowns, the known unknowns, and the unknown unknowns, exemplifies how little we know.

We have learned along the way that “Doctors are men who prescribe medicine of which they know little, to cure diseases of which they know less, in humans whom they know nothing,” stated by Voltaire. As a result, we have learned that the less we know the better chance we have of learning.

Mentoring

We have learned to appreciate the great mentors in our lives and hopefully we can be mentors to others. As Isaac Newton

This invited paper did not require Institutional Review Board approval.

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stated, "If I have seen further than other men, it is because I have stood on the shoulders of giants." *Webster's Dictionary* defines a mentor as a *trusted counselor or guide, tutor or coach*. Hopefully, we can come to appreciate our mentors and pass that onto others.

I had the privilege of studying under 3 great mentors, Jack Kennedy in the knee, Bill Fielding in the spine, and Charles Neer, the true giant of shoulder surgery. I had the privilege of being Dr. Neer's first fellow and may have been the first shoulder fellow ever. With a small committed group of shoulder surgeons, as emphasized by Margaret Mead, American cultural anthropologist, we were able to start the American Shoulder and Elbow Surgeons. If we think about the number of shoulder surgeons trained by Dr. Neer, in turn, shoulder surgeons trained by myself, numbering now more than 200 worldwide, we can see the great influence Dr. Neer had in spreading the knowledge to shoulder surgeons worldwide. Even now I have the dubious or proud honor of having grand-fellows.

Teaching fellows and residents

It has dawned on me along life's road, as Voltaire said, "If you speak to me define your terms," otherwise, we may be talking apples and oranges. Through teaching fellows, residents, and other orthopedists, I have learned, for me, these keys to life:

1. Communication—we all work on this daily.
2. Attention to detail—no more emphasized than our approach to surgery. At John Wooden's first basketball practice, he sat all his players down and taught them to roll up their socks and tie their shoes.
3. Be a good person—which includes honesty, integrity, being positive, humility, being appreciative, being persistent, and spirituality—all defined somehow as character. I love the quote by Mark Twain, "Always tell the truth, that way you don't have to remember what you said."
4. Always have a passionate curiosity to learn.

It amazes me in assessing our patients, we have learned that we have to have the right diagnosis. As Dr. William Osler said, "Listen to your patient, he is telling you the diagnosis." René Laennec, inventor of the stethoscope, said, "Without diagnosis, there is no rational treatment." It is so common in our practice to treat frozen shoulder as tendinitis, leading us down the wrong rabbit hole.

Goals

I learned from my daughter, Danielle, who was 12 at the time, about setting goals after she returned from sports camp. She said, "Dad, do you have goals?" I said, "Yes I do. Do you have goals?" She said, "What are your short-term goals?" I

said, "What are your short-term goals?" She said, "I want to make the basketball team and score 10 points this year." It is amazing what we can accomplish if we track and write down our goals. For me, I do my research goals every 5 years.

As quoted by Don Quixote, "It is not unreasonable to dream the impossible dream or to attempt to reach the unreachable star." My oldest grandson, now graduating from university, had goals of going to medical school and running in the Olympics. Even this writer had a goal of getting into medical school. To everyone's amazement, he made it.

Teamwork

I have learned to treat the staff in the office, operating room, and those who move patients around the hospital or clean between cases with respect and dignity. It seems to me that if we reached out to all these people, they will protect us and go to the wall for us. As a result, I encourage fellows to thank each person by name and for their contribution to the case. As Maya Angelo said, "People will forget what you said, forget what you did, but they will never forget how you made them feel."

One of the quotes from General George C. Marshall exemplifying selfishness, humility, and teamwork, "There is no limit to the good you can do if you don't care who gets the credit."

I have learned that individuals can make a difference and that a small group of committed citizens can make tremendous change in this world. The simple aspects in human relations are to say "thank you, you did a good job" and to show appreciation. No "I", but "we." French author Albert Camus said, "Don't walk behind me; I may not want to lead. Don't walk in front of me; I may not want to follow. Walk beside me and be my friend."

Humility

I include humility as a section in this article because we have learned of its importance. British author Jeffrey Archer said, "I find I don't learn a lot while talking."

Dr. Seuss said, "Be who you are, say what you feel, those who mind don't matter and those who matter don't mind." Most importantly, Oliver Cromwell from Jacob Bronowski's, *The Ascent of Man*, said, "I beseech you, in the bowels of Christ, think it possible you may be mistaken." As orthopedic surgeons we need to practice with humility not arrogance. And we learned along the way and as Tim McGraw's Grammy winning song states, "Always be humble and kind."

Family

Tony Dungy, upon losing his son to suicide, said, "Hug your children every chance you get, you never know when it may be your last." We have learned along the way what a critical

job parenting is. Dr. Terry Canale, Editor of the *AAOS Bulletin* and previous President of the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons, wrote in his editorial “I have lived my life to regret that I have spent too much time on my career to the neglect of my family.” Mitch Albom, in *Tuesdays with Morrie*, quotes Morris Schwarz, who was dying of amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, said his family is “What I call your spiritual security, knowing that your family will be there watching out for you, nothing else will give you that, not money, not fame.”

My father at age 6 was shipped out from the streets of Liverpool as an orphan with a sign around his neck “I am Jim Hawkins.” He never played sports, never had the chance, and hardly went to school. Mark Twain said, “When I was 16 I couldn’t understand how my Father was so stupid. When I got to be 18, I was amazed how much he had learned in just two short years.” That was my situation, I am ashamed to say. He taught me honestly, integrity, and most importantly, humility. When I was 14, my father and my mother sat me down and said, “Rich, my boy, you need more humility.”

Friends

As we get older, the importance of friends perhaps plays a larger role than when we were young. As William Butler Yeats said, “Think where man’s glory most begins and ends, and say my glory was I had such friends.”

Outside interests

It seemed to me as I observed others surgeons along life’s road, most of them had outside interests. For me it was reading and sports. I have also had the opportunity to invest in coaching and humanitarian projects such as attending patients in Haiti after the earthquake.

My favorite, besides John Wooden, is Mike Shanahan of the Denver Broncos. He was not only the consummate coach and gentleman but was also extremely smart. With Mike Shanahan we learned about the pain generated by the biceps tendon. After our quarterback (John Elway) ruptured his biceps, we won 2 Super Bowls. We learned though all of that, pain can be generated by a diseased biceps tendon. As Giles Walch is, I became known as the biceps killer.

Challenges in life

We learn in life that there are many things that we cannot change and we have to accept those. The Alcoholics Anonymous Serenity Prayer by Reinhold Niebuhr: “God grant me the serenity to accept the things that I cannot change; courage to change the things I can; and wisdom to know the difference.”

We all face failure and face significant challenges in life. As Michael Jordan said, “If you run into a wall, don’t turn around and give up, figure out how to climb it, go through it, or work around it.” And as Winston Churchill said, “Never, never, never give up. If you are going through hell, keep going.”

We can accept failure; everyone fails at something, we just can’t accept not trying. Someone I admire a lot and learned a lot from is Nelson Mandela. He said, “I am the master of my fate, the captain of my soul,” quoting the poem *Invictus* by William Ernest Henley.

Sometimes we wonder in life, what is success? If we are happy with what we do, that might be success. As I indicated, I love to read. Brad Thor writes in the acknowledgments in his book *The Act of War*, “Happiness in life is all about three things—something to do, someone to love, and something to look forward to.”

So here we are at the end of the journey. For me at age 76, where from here? For you, you’ve got a lot in front of you. Toby Keith sings, “I ain’t as good as I once was, but I’m as good once as I ever was.” I might add: “The older I get the better I was—as I get older now, I simply refuse to look in the mirror, especially sideways when naked.” “Growing old is not for sissies.” Garth Brooks, “I’m much too young to feel this damn old.”

2 Timothy 4:7 reads, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.” This was also quoted by Peyton Manning upon retirement. Perhaps it will apply to us in our older years.

I want to close this essay by my favorite quote: “The journey home is never a direct route. It is in fact always circuitous and somewhere along the way we discover that the journey is more significant than the destination and that the people we meet along the way will be the traveling companions of our memories forever.”

As Nelson Mandela said in *A Long Walk to Freedom* when he was released from prison in February 1990 at age 72, “The journey has just begun.”

And from Susan Hawkins, my wife of 52 years. . . “The best years are yet to come.”

And finally, Grantland Rice, early 20th century American sportswriter said, “For when the One Great Scorer comes to write against your name, He marks not that you won or lost—but how you played the game.” I truly hope we have tried to play the game.

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