

Orthopaedic Connection

James K. Hall, M.D. My Patient, My Friend

By Thomas J. Haverbush, M.D.
Orthopaedic Surgeon

Transforming patient information into patient understanding.

I have written 103 Orthopaedic Connection articles for Gratiot County Herald. This will be the most personal as you will see when you read on. It does, however, still have a strong Orthopaedic connection.

I was already in practice in Alma when Jim came in 1975. I moved here from Cleveland on November 9, 1974, which was my birthday.

Jim and I met and became friends and colleagues at Gratiot Community Hospital the following year when he moved to Alma from Akron to join the practice of Dr. Jack Stack.

Jim and I discovered that we had many things in common. We were both from Northwestern Ohio. He came from Lima and I came from Toledo. He completed his family practice training at Akron City Hospital and I completed my Orthopaedic Surgery residency at the Cleveland Clinic, 30 miles to the North.

Our lives had diverged for four years, unknowingly, when he went to Ohio State to medical school and I went to the University of Michigan.

When we first met in 1975 we discovered that we had both been in the Peace Corps in the 1960s. Jim and Ann were Peace Corps volunteers in Ethiopia and I was a Peace Corps Staff Physician in Saipan in the Pacific Islands of Micronesia on the other side of the world. Our Peace Corps experiences were very different, but in many ways similar and this experience remained a common bond.

When Jim and Dr. Larry Mangel built their medical building in 1978, I built mine the following year using the same national builder of medical buildings.

We were friendly rivals in sports since he supported Ohio State, his alma mater and I was and remain a Michigan Wolverine to the core; so much so that Alice and I have established the Alice M. and Thomas J. Haverbush, M.D. endowed scholarship in Men's Ice Hockey at the

University of Michigan. He and I frequently talked about things remembered from past games and current teams and games as well.

Jim loved sports and was in his time a very good basketball player. Because he was so quick, he was hard to guard, as I remember. Besides sports his interest and participation in community activities was tremendous culminating in his receipt of the Order of the Tartan award in 1997. Those activities are well documented elsewhere and I need not dwell on that aspect of his life.

Alas, the sports activities started to fade when he began to have hip pain which progressed over several years. Four years ago when conservative treatment no longer helped, he and I decided he should have a total hip replacement.

As you can imagine Jim was a model patient. He did beautifully and recovered as I knew he would.

When another physician places themselves or their family in your care you know you have reached the highest professional respect.

It allowed him to continue to practice medicine and do things he wanted to do. I am very happy that I was able to continue to be part of his life as a friend and colleague for four more years after his surgery.

Most of us will not experience such a noble, selfless end of our life as Jim did. He went with his patient willingly, because Don so needed him at that time. It was so characteristic of Jim to do what he did.

Jim, I will always miss you and think of you. As you have ridden on ahead so to speak, I plan to continue my work as long as I am given the strength and ability to do it. Jim, you are now in a position to help us in a very powerful way. Here on earth God's work and healing are done by those who remain. Pray for us.

I know Jim's final note included me as his friend and surgeon.

Goodbye my friend. I will also always love you and honor you and the profession we both chose to follow. I will be with you sometime in the future.

Dr. Haverbush