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journal homepage: www.americanjournalofsurgery.comSurgical education: Lessons from parenthood[☆]Clay Cothren Burlew, MD^{*}*The Department of Surgery, Denver Health Medical Center and the University of Colorado School of Medicine, Denver, CO, USA*

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ABSTRACT

Although one might think surgery and parenting have little in common, there are clear parallels. Historically there has been little formal education for either role. Educators and parents relied on modelling the behavior of others, or trial and error techniques. Mentorship and role models have played a critical role in professional development and continue to have a profound impact. Over the past two decades there has been a marked increase in the resources that are available. Coaching, debriefing, deliberate practice, and formal training are now incorporated in residency programs. Specific lessons from parenthood that can be applied to surgical education include: providing a framework, learning through graduated responsibility, communicating expectations, creating a culture, setting the example, encouraging resilience, promoting autonomy, providing feedback, and navigating failure. The final lesson from parenthood: trust that you have taught them well. And you have to let them go.

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The Southwestern Surgical Congress has been a family for me over the past 2 decades. There are so many individuals in this audience that are special to me. And no doubt, I am missing many of you in these pictures. Each of you deserves recognition for your contributions to this organization, your enthusiasm for its growth, and the friendships that have developed at these meetings. I have so many wonderful memories over the years, and there have been many that have touched my life for the better.

There are 4 members of the SWSC to whom I would like to say a

special thank you. First, to John Potts who preceded me in the Presidency. No email went unanswered and no question was too small. For his successful baton pass, I am so appreciative. To Ronny Stewart, whose unwavering support and insightful advice was always on hand. If you ever find yourself in a bind, Ronny would be there. Ken Murayama was the Secretary/Treasurer just before I entered the role. He helped me navigate some of the trickier moments of my leadership years, and for that I am eternally grateful. Plus, his love for the SWSC is infectious. And finally, Robert McIntyre, whose encouragement and belief in me over the past 2 decades never wavered. Thank you.

Critical to the success of any academic surgeon is their network of support at their home institution. I have had many partners over the years, most of whom are in the audience today. Our trauma group has seen its share of craziness over the years, and I am grateful to each of you for your laughter, dedication, and incredible clinical care. Your patients, your current partners, and your families are lucky to have you. It turns out that getting all of the trauma surgeons in the same place at the same time is nearly impossible, so here you see 5 of my current partners, Gene Moore, Fred Pieracci, Eric Campion, Ryan Lawless, and Chuck Fox as well as the 2 latest additions to our trauma group, Mitch Cohen and Barry Platnick, but not our breast surgical oncologist, Kshama Jaiswal or our pediatric surgeon, Denis Bensard. Two other people at Denver Health who have been truly invaluable to me are Susan Jackson, my NP for over a decade, and our chief of Neurosurgery Kathy Beauchamp. One of my partners, Fred Pieracci, has served as your program chair for this meeting. In this role he has worked tirelessly to pull together what I

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^{*} Department of Surgery, Denver Health Medical Center, 777 Bannock Street, Denver, CO, 80204, USA.

E-mail address: clay.cothren@dhha.org.

think is a spectacular meeting. His organization, enthusiasm, and innovation have resulted in a terrific program. Plus he tolerated my random ideas and input with aplomb.

I have been fortunate to have fallen into step with some powerful role models and mentors over the years. As a fledgling medical student at UT Southwestern, Dr. Jim Carrico, provided me with encouragement and vision. He invited me to the annual meeting of the College, to be UT Southwestern's representative to the medical student program. And with one meeting I was hooked on academic medicine. His professionalism, leadership, and mere countenance provided a singular role model for me. Dr. Alden Harken convinced me that Denver had over 300 days of sunshine a year, and hence was the only place I should consider doing surgical training. As the Chairman at the University of Colorado he universally demonstrated that we could be more – he taught us how to ask questions, to seek answers, and to enjoy the path of learning. I still hear his voice booming in the halls. Although I was supposed to return to Texas for my surgical career, how do you say no to Dr. Gene Moore when he offers you a job? Simply put, you don't. There are not enough words to describe what an impact Gene has made on my career and more importantly on my life. He leads by example. He sets the bar high and propels those around him to live up to his example. His respect for others, his intellectual curiosity, and his sheer stamina is unparalleled. He encourages and he listens. He helped me develop my career and still serves as my sounding board. He is technically gifted and clinically astute, and he has taught me to be a great surgeon. And he is the first to remind me of the importance of family. I am forever in awe of his ability, dedication, and resilience. Gene, thank you. Four women have been inspirational to me over the past decade. Dr. Grace Rozycki embodies grace and kindness coupled with amazing intelligence and accomplishment. Dr. Roxie Albrecht is exemplary in her eloquence, fortitude, and character. Dr. Rosemary Kozar demonstrated academic success while embracing the role of wife and mother. She showed me it could be done. And Dr. Chris Cocanour, who has been one of the women to pave the way for others, is one of the most caring people I know and became a big sister for me.

And my family. I would not be standing here today without them. My in-laws, Maureen and Bill Burlew. I am so lucky that in marrying Paul I gained an incredible second set of parents. Their unwavering support and love just means the world to me. My parents, Laurin and Bill Cothren. From my Dad I inherited my tenacity and incredible work ethic. And although he is the hardest worker I have ever known, he always made time for fun at the lake or on trips. Plus, he makes the best biscuits in town! My Mom is unbelievable. So much of who I am today is thanks to her. I am thankful she always listened to me, and still does. She is one of the

smartest and most optimistic people I know, and she passed on her love of adventure and travel. My husband Paul simply makes life better every day. From our first meeting over a decade ago to today, he is my best friend and the love of my life. And without him, I never would have had the joy of being a mom. Catherine is now a curious, joyful 1st grader. Seeing the world with her has been a blessing. I honestly can't quite believe my good fortune – my family's love, constant support, and encouragement enable me to stand up here to deliver my Presidential address.

1. Surgical education: lessons from parenthood

When I began to think of this my Presidential address for my surgical family, the Southwestern Surgical Congress, I wanted to somehow combine the two greatest influences in my life, the two most important things in my life: my love of surgical academia and educating residents with the joy of my family and being a mother (Fig. 1). As I have stumbled along the path of parenthood and academia, I have noticed that there appear to be commonalities between the two. Although one might think surgery and parenting have little in common, I am often surprised that at times they seem to be parallel worlds. So I thought it might be interesting to explore some of the common themes; the lessons I have learned, the mistakes I have made, and the humor that I have found. You may recognize some of my path and you definitely may have found better answers to the dilemmas, but I hope that each of you enjoy your own journey as much as I have enjoyed mine.

2. Surgery and parenting: parallels

The first and most obvious parallel in my two worlds is that I am only partially through the journey. I haven't reached retirement from surgery and Catherine has yet to leave for College. Some might argue that all surgeons appear to work in some surgical or educator capacity well beyond typical retirement years. Similarly, my Mom would say that her journey as a Mom is still underway, especially when I get sick and call her so that she can tell me the best Mommy-prescribed remedy. In some ways, my journey as a surgical educator is further along than that of my parental role. In fact, some might argue that I really shouldn't give this talk until I have successfully parented a teenager. So for the sake of argument, I'm going to pretend that Catherine is 7 going on 14.

First, how does one embark on this journey and where is the formal education? Did anyone here ever take a real class or course before becoming either a parent or a surgical educator? Nowhere during the span of medical school or surgical residency was I given any real instruction on how to educate others. We were each



Fig. 1. The two greatest influences in my life: being a surgical educator and being a wife and mother.

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