

## Eastman's influence on trauma systems profound

By DEBRA BAKER BECK, ALUMNEWS Editor

A colleague in Athens, Greece, once told 1997 distinguished alumnus A. Brent Eastman (BS '62) that the Greek derivative of the word "physician" means "remover of arrows."

An internationally-renowned trauma surgeon, Eastman finds that definition to be particularly descriptive and reflective of the frontier origin of his own specialty — quite literally, "man caring for his injured fellow man."

That has been his goal for most of his life. Eastman knew that medicine was the career choice for him while growing up in his native Evanston, Wyo.

"It seemed to me to be the ultimate profession," he says. "It combined the sciences with the humanities, and that was right for me."

"There was never a question, for me, about medicine," he adds. "I couldn't imagine why everybody didn't want to be a doctor!"

Focusing on trauma also was a wise career decision to make.

"I found it to be one of the most challenging areas in surgery," he says. "I chose to focus my professional life on that."

Eastman didn't necessarily know he would end up developing an international reputation in the field of trauma. But it was perhaps inevitable, given the path his career has taken. After graduating from UW in 1962 with a degree zoology, he headed, scholarship in hand, to the University of California/San Francisco medical school.

San Francisco in the 1960s was a "very interesting place to be," particularly if, like Eastman, one lived three blocks from the infamous Haight-Ashbury district. In addition, one of the strong points of UCSF's medical program was the partnership it had with three area hospitals, including San Francisco General Hospital. That facility was "one of the original great county hospitals," medical units which became de facto trauma centers. Every injured person ended up being treated there, regardless of that individual's background or circumstances.

Eastman headed to Scripps Memorial Hospital in La Jolla, Calif., after completing his residency in San Francisco in 1972. There, he began his career as a general and vascular surgeon.

"The Scripps hospital system is an unusual community hospital-based system," he explains, "with tremendous academic and research resources." When Scripps created its trauma system in 1984, Eastman became its director of trauma services, a position he continues to hold today.

Eastman was the major architect of the San Diego County Trauma System, which has since become a model for trauma systems in the United States (and around the world). Scripps Hospital is only one of the hospitals which Brent brought together in this unique system. Eastman created the position of trauma director, and he holds the funded Whittier Chair in that position.

Since the institution of the San Diego County Trauma System, the preventable death rate (the death of someone who arrived at the hospital alive and could have survived the injuries with proper



Brent Eastman

care) has dropped to near zero and remains there.

Eastman received major recognition from the American College of Surgeons (ACS) for this achievement, which also led directly to his appointment in 1990 as chairman of the Committee on Trauma for the ACS. In this capacity, he was responsible for development of trauma systems in the entire western hemisphere. One of his duties was to meet with the White House physician to plan trauma care for the president, wherever he might be. Brent met with both Presidents Bush and Clinton in this role. He was the first practicing community physician to serve in the ACS position.

Eastman's approach to his work focuses on the system that treats injured patients. The hospital is but one part of the process; so, too, are the mechanisms for notifying emergency personnel that the injury has occurred and the means of transporting the individual to the appropriate facility for treatment.

"The whole purpose of a trauma system is to ensure that, if you are injured, no matter how..., you will get to the level of care that you need to care for your injuries in the shortest possible time," he says.

As a result of his work with the Committee on Trauma, Eastman has become a highly sought-after consultant on trauma systems. For example, he has worked with medical professionals in countries that include England, Ireland, Saudi Arabia, Brazil, Israel, Australia, Chile, Argentina and Mexico. He has set up trauma systems around in the world, including Brazil, Australia and South Africa. He also speaks at conferences around the world.

It is not surprising that Eastman has no regrets about the course his career has taken.

"Professionally, I feel extremely blessed to the op-

portunity to make the decisions I did," he says. "The choice to focus my surgical career on the injured patient opened up the broadest possible horizons for me....It was an opportunity to deal with an aspect of surgery that is at the absolute basis of my profession."

### Wyoming Inspiration and Role Models

Just as pre-medicine was an obvious major once Eastman decided to go to college, the decision to come to the University of Wyoming also was a fairly easy one. While he did ponder other possibilities, UW was Eastman's first choice. Besides the natural draw for a young man coming from a small Wyoming high school (54 graduates his senior year), UW also offered an exemplary pre-medicine program and a strong role model, professor L. Floyd Clarke.

"Even before I met him, I felt that was probably the major factor, in terms of the academic reasons I chose the University of Wyoming," Eastman says.

"Dr. Clarke was an exceptional man," he adds. "He created an intellectual environment...which was very stimulating." Clarke also succeeded at helping his protégés reach their professional goals.

"Dr. Clarke had a reputation for being able to get his pre-med. students into excellent medical schools," Eastman notes.

The lives of teacher and student intersected frequently over the years. Clarke was Eastman's undergraduate adviser. But the two also interacted regularly during the summer in Jackson Hole, Wyo., where Eastman worked as a river guide and Clarke ran the UW Biological Research Station nearby. The station sponsored weekly seminars on such topics as wildlife management, and Clarke invited Eastman to sit in on those talks. He did so, every summer through college and medical school.

Since establishing himself professionally, Eastman has been able to return a bit of what his mentor and his university gave to him. For example, he serves on the L. Floyd Clark Committee in the UW Department of Zoology and Physiology, a committee that promotes a fund that will create an endowed professorship. It currently provides visiting professorships, a memorial lecture series, symposia at the UW Biological Research Station near Jackson Hole, graduate student stipend enhancements and awards for outstanding undergraduates and faculty. Eastman launched the Clarke Fund Memorial Lecture series in 1993 with presentations at Laramie and Cheyenne.

Wyoming is never far from his heart. Eastman frequently returns to the state to visit family, support his university and enjoy the best that the state has to offer. He also has consulted with the Wyoming Committee on Trauma, advising that group during its efforts to establish a rural trauma plan.

Whenever — and wherever — Brent Eastman encounters friends from Wyoming, he experiences some of the strongest bonds of his life.

"It's really Wyoming."

(Continued on page 27)

page 4

### Eastman...

(Continued from page 4)

#### Biographical Information

A. Brent Eastman earned his medical degree from the University of California-San Francisco School of Medicine in 1966. He served his internship and his surgical residency at the UCSF hospital and served as its chief surgical resident from 1971-72. Eastman also served as surgical registrar at Norfolk and Norwich Hospitals, Norwich, England, from 1969-1970. He has been director of trauma services at Scripps Memorial Hospital at La Jolla, Calif., since 1984. He has been chairman of the board of ScrippsHealth Physicians and senior vice president of medical group development for Project Scripps and ScrippsHealth since 1996. He is licensed to practice medicine in California and Wyoming.

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Over the years, Eastman has served medical organizations such as the American College of Surgeons, the Centers for Disease Control, the American Association for the Surgery of Trauma, the California Emergency Medical Services Authority and the Department of Health and Human Services.

Eastman and his wife, Sarita Doyle Eastman, have three children: Roan, Ian and Alexandra. The couple moved to La Jolla, Sarita's hometown, because her mother (Anita Figueredo) was a surgeon in need of a partner. Sarita is a pediatrician, and her father (William Doyle) also needed a partner.