



Humanitarian Award

Robert B. Cady, MD

Class of 1971

As a child growing up in the shadow of Archbold Stadium on the east side of Syracuse, my life revolved around sports. My dad took us to so many games. He actually drove our whole family—my brother Al, sisters Jane and Betsy, and my mom and me—to the Cotton Bowl in Dallas, Texas, where we watched Ernie Davis lead SU to the National Championship on January 1, 1960.

In the fall of 1961, Ernie, who was my hero, became the first African-American to win the Heisman Trophy. I was playing on the Nottingham High School football team at that time and my little sister, Betsy, was my biggest fan.

In the fall of 1962, the newspapers reported that Ernie Davis couldn't play professional football because he had been diagnosed with leukemia. I was told that Betsy had leukemia around the same time.

Betsy's doctor was Dr. William Waters, the first pediatrician in Syracuse to specialize in treating children with cancer. My mom and dad could not have gotten through the ordeal of losing their little girl without his support. I remember how fantastic all the doctors were while visiting Betsy in the hospital. I started thinking about being a doctor.

Betsy died during my senior year in high school in February 1963. Ernie Davis died in May. Those were dark days for me. In the fall of 1963, I entered Hamilton College's pre-med program.

I started Medical School at Upstate in the fall of 1967. Linda and I were married in 1970. Linda supported us by teaching second grade. After graduation in 1971 we headed west for my rotating internship at Multnomah County Hospital in Portland, Oregon.

The patients that I cared for were very poor, often homeless, and uninsured. They were all treated by me and the other interns and residents. There were no attending physicians.

We did the absolute best that we could and our patients were very grateful for the care they received. I found that I really enjoyed caring for and giving hope to people who had run out of hope.

At the end of my internship I was unsure as to which specialty to pursue so I decided to

complete my military obligation and entered the USAF in 1972. After three months training at the flight surgeon school at Brooks Air Force Base in San Antonio, where our first son Sam was born, I was assigned as a flight surgeon to the 23rd bomb squadron at Minot Air Force Base, in Minot, ND.

Minot was very close to the Fort Berthold Sioux Reservation in New Town, ND, where I would occasionally volunteer. While at the clinic one day, I was asked to see a baby born with a clubfoot, and my interest in pediatric orthopedics began.

I applied for orthopedic residencies at Upstate and a few other programs in the west. Dr. David Murray, the chairman of the orthopedic department at Upstate called one morning while I was at work and advised Linda that I was being offered a spot in the orthopedic residency program in Syracuse. "He'll take it," she said on the spot. She thought there was no point in waiting for the other programs because Syracuse is where we should go and she was right.

Working as an orthopedic resident under Dr. Murray was a wonderful experience. He was a great surgeon, but also a kind and caring physician who was the perfect role model for me. During my last year of residency, he offered to send me to The Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto for a pediatric orthopedic fellowship and then have me return to develop the pediatric orthopedic section at Upstate.

Our next two sons, Charlie and Jeff, had arrived during my residency, so in 1978, the five of us left for Toronto. When I returned to Upstate and joined the Department of Orthopedics as an attending in 1979, all orthopedic surgeons cared for children. Pediatric orthopedics was in its infancy as a recognized sub-specialty.

Developing and building the pediatric orthopedic section was the focus of my life for the next 25 years. I recruited John Lubicky, MD, and Steve Albanese, MD, two phenomenal young pediatric orthopedic surgeons to join me. We gave many local, regional, and national courses for pediatricians concerning the early diagnosis and treatment of pediatric orthopedic conditions.



Dr. Cady with his team of Haitian orthopedic surgeons at a clubfoot training session in Kenscoff, Haiti

We opened rural clinics in the Southern Tier and North Country and our section grew dramatically as we became the primary pediatric orthopedic referral center for much of New York State.

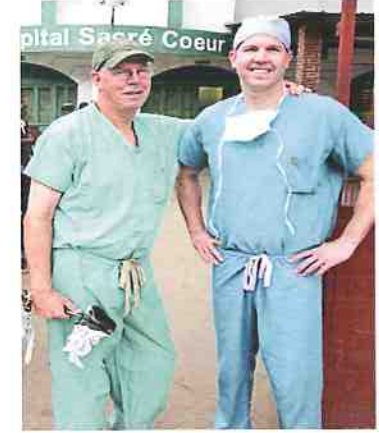
I spent another six years of practice at Crouse Hospital focusing on the treatment of clubfeet and continuing to develop rural clinics throughout Upstate New York.

A dramatic change had occurred in the treatment of clubfeet in the late 1990s. The "Ponseti method," a conservative serial casting technique named for Ignatio Ponseti, who perfected it at the University of Iowa, had replaced aggressive surgical treatment as the standard of care.

As the technique can be performed by non-physicians, it is particularly well suited for countries with limited resources and few orthopedic surgeons. Ponseti clubfoot treatment programs had been started in Uganda and Malawi and the Global Clubfoot Initiative had been established with the goal of providing access to care for every baby in the world born with a clubfoot.

I was eager to join this international clubfoot group and retired from my full-time practice in Syracuse on January 1, 2009. I decided to develop a Ponseti clubfoot treatment program in Haiti, and joined a colleague, Dr. Kaye Wilkins of San Antonio, who had been there for years working with the Haitian orthopedic residency program.

My first visit to Haiti was in July 2009. At that time, one clubfoot clinic for the entire country existed at St. Vincent's School in Port au Prince. Six months after my first visit, St. Vincent's was totally destroyed in the devas-



Dr. Cady with his son Sam (Upstate '99) outside of Hospital Sacre Coeur in Milot, Haiti

tating earthquake of January 2010.

In spring 2010, we started over at Adventiste Hospital in Carrefour, just west of Port au Prince. We established a clubfoot clinic at Adventiste and then used it as a teaching center to train Haitian orthopedic surgeons and cast technicians from cities and villages all over Haiti.

Now, despite earthquakes, hurricanes, cholera epidemics, and political instability, we have nine clubfoot clinics in Haiti supervised by six Haitian orthopedic surgeons we have trained.

Our son, Sam, is an eye surgeon in Portland, Maine, who graduated from Upstate in 1999. He does cataract surgery for the blind in developing countries all over the world.

Sam has joined me on trips to Haiti where I treated babies with clubfeet and he performed cataract surgery for blind Haitians. Our trips together are one of the highlights of my life.

I've spent much of my life at Upstate Medical University as a student, resident, attending, and alumnus. I consider it my home and will be forever grateful for the chance Upstate gave me to make the world a little bit better place.

*Bio submitted by Dr. Cady



A ten-year-old Haitian boy with untreated clubfeet, a not uncommon sight in developing countries