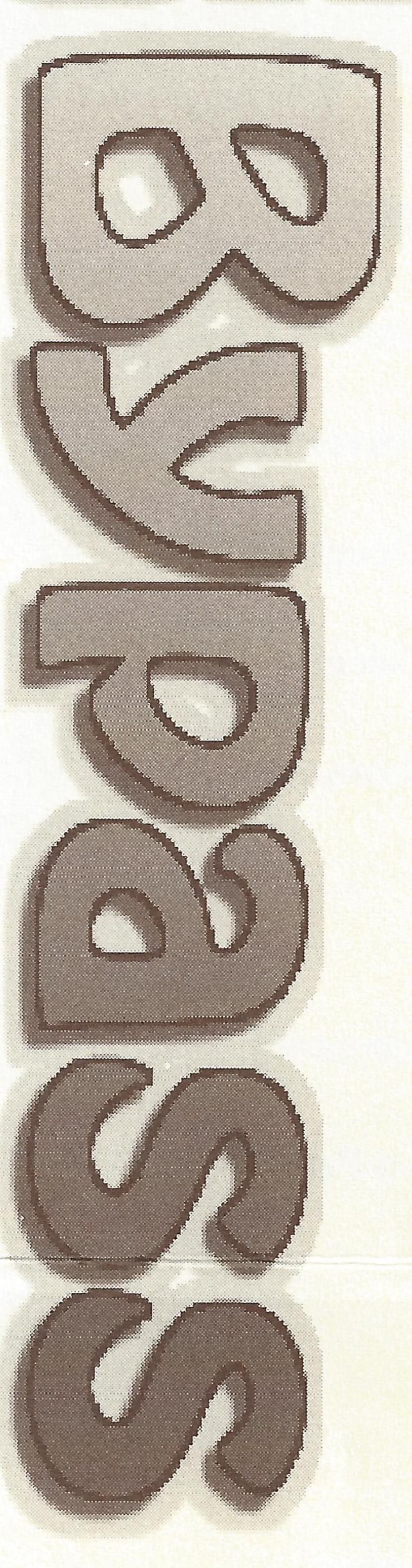


Standing On The Shoulders Of Giants

"Never read any book that is not at least a year old." - Ralph Waldo Emerson 1803-1882

"Learning hath gained most by those books which the printers have lost." - Thomas Fuller 1608-1661



Kelly D. Hedlund, CCP

Hays, Kansas

tantalizing. Shortly after arriving in Topeka in 1955 to originally asked for. begin a practice in thoracic surgery, Ben toyed with the idea of building a heart-lung machine. In 1958, he successfully removed a sewing needle from a young woman's left ventricle. Starting in 1959, he made yearly trips to Methodist Hospital in Houston to visit with Dr. Michael DeBakey about the latest advances in cardiovascular and thoracic medicine. But Ben never became a heart surgeon. By the early 1960's, he had a wife and six children to support. Additional training and all the expenses that invariably came with it seemed out of reach and out of the question. Besides, his thoracic practice was getting busier by the day. He performed lobectomies, pneumonectomies, drained empyemas, resected blebs, and saw enough tuberculosis cases to last a hundred lifetimes. He treated patients suffering from pericarditis by creating pericardial windows or even stripping away completely the inflamed tissue. He learned to implant pacemakers, and he experimented with nylon, Teflon, and Dacron grafts to replace blood vessels in the upper and lower extremities. Remarkably, he became interested in cardiopulmonary resuscitation and devised experiments to asphyxiate and then resuscitate dogs respiratory therapy students.

Benson Powell was completing a one-year tho- was white and thinning, his handshake was firm and racic residency program in Kansas City in 1953 when his eyes sparkled like sapphires. Heart surgery in Tonews of Gibbon's first successful use of the heart- peka had begun in the mid-1970's, and Ben was never lung machine to correct an intra-cardiac defect in very far from the action. He harvested vein and first Philadelphia made national headlines. Ben knew that assisted whenever needed. When one of the heart the era of open-heart surgery was about to be ush- surgery teams traveled to Kansas State University in ered in. He had assisted on the first twelve closed the early 1980's to practice heart transplantation on mitral commissurotomy procedures in the Kansas City cows, Ben went along. His personal library of thoarea. While serving a two-year appointment in the racic textbooks and medical magazines filled several Air Force in Salina from 1953-1955, he successfully rooms in his home. Whenever I was in need of an operated on a young man who, while crossing a older article or journal that the hospital library didn't barbed-wire fence, had sustained an accidental self- have, Ben would say, "Let me do some digging and inflicted gunshot wound to the chest. Indeed, the see what I can come up with". Incredibly, he always prospect of a career in open-heart surgery appeared produced more information on the subject than I had



Dr. Benson Powell, in 1994, the year that he retired.

In 1994, Ben formally announced his plans to reusing open chest massage. His makeshift laboratory tire from medicine. One afternoon just a few weeks located in the basement of one of the local hospitals prior to his departure, he was standing at the front in Topeka became a favorite rotation for nursing and desk of surgery and motioned for me to come over. As I approached him, his eyes twinkled like Christmas lights. "I've got nearly fifty boxes of medical books I first met Ben in the summer of 1986. He had that I'm donating to the hospital library", he said in a slowed down his surgical practice considerably, and whisper. "You might want to come over and go through was coordinating the rural outreach program for the them in case there's something you want". My heart Kansas University Medical School. Though his hair skipped a beat. I knew three things about Ben's book

collection. First, it was immense. Second, a lot of the stuff was old and historic. And third, once the boxes were turned over to the hospital they would either be left to collect dust in a storage closet somewhere, or simply discarded. Ben winked at me with his left eye, nodded slightly, and then turned and walked away. Little did I know the treasures that awaited me.

There is a scene in the movie Vegas Vacation where Clark Griswold (Chevy Chase) and Cousin Eddy (Randy Quaid) are digging in the desert sand outside Eddy's trailor house looking for buried money. The more money they find, the faster they dig. And the faster they dig, the more money they find. I envisioned myself looking somewhat like these guys as I began to delve through Ben Powell's boxes of books one chilly Saturday morning. The first box I opened revealed a near perfect edition of John Gibbon's classic Surgery of the Chest published in 1962. A few boxes later I found a series of monographs published by the American Heart Association entitled Cardiovascular Surgery 1964-1967. As the day went on, I discovered a rare treatise entitled Cardiovascular Diseases published in 1947 by Scherf and Boyd of The New York Medical College. Then, by shear happenstance, a box with the words "other specialties" written in black magic marker caught my eye. It was the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. I found a brand new copy of Extracorporeal Circulation For Open-Heart Surgery written in 1969 by Dr. E. Converse Peirce II. I know it was brand new because the cellophane wrapper was still on the cover completely intact. I also found Raymond Stofer's 1968 publication entitled, A Technic For Extracorporeal Circulation. This little known text was largely written as a primer for setting up and operating a disc oxygenator. Dr. Norman Shumway, who wrote the book's foreward, humorously compared the disc oxygenator to the bubbler by stating, "... compared with the rotating disc oxygenator, the bubbler must be considered a second-class ticket good only for the short distance, and all too frequently the return trip has been cancelled ... ". Next, a rather thick manual emerged entitled simply, Extracorporeal Circulation. The inside cover showed a publication date of March 1958. As I thumbed through the yellowed pages, this extraordinary compilation was actually the proceedings of a meeting held in Chicago in the fall of 1957 on the current advances being made in extracorporeal circulation. Dr. J. Garrott Allen edited the text, which apparently sold enough copies to warrant a second printing by the publisher in 1960. As the sun began to set on a most amazing and fulfilling day, I decided to open just one more box and then be on my way. As I pulled back the lid, a small corner of red peeked out from under a stack of magazines. To my utter surprise, it was a slightly faded copy of Galletti and Brecher's 1962 classic text, Heart-Lung Bypass. As I opened the front cover, the color diagram of von Frey and Gruber's pump oxygenator from 1885 appeared as clear and as crisp as though it had been painted by hand the day before. I stared at it for a moment, then I carefully closed the book.

As I drove towards home, the cold winter breeze caused leaves to dance from their trees and furnace smoke to bend and curl. Ben's kindness and generosity had placed at my fingertips a small glimpse of the early days of my profession. I had not lived it like he had, but I could read about it and think about it. And come next

May when we celebrate the 50th anniversary of Gibbon's remarkable achievement, that incredible day in Philadelphia will not seem so long ago. I think that's worth something.

Editor's Note: Dr. Benson Powell currently lives with his wife in Colorado and spends his time camping and enjoying the outdoors.

In Memoriam

The members of The Academy wish to express their sincere condolences to the families and friends of the following members of the perfusion community who have recently passed away

Ben Mitchell
Sheryl Purpora
Mary Elizabeth Turner

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You know this stuff, Sherry. Besides now you cannot see the audience (along with the screen) so you cannot see how confused they are. Keep going! At the close of the session, Dr. Bartlett came up and congratulated me. He said he felt my work would help many patients and hoped that he saw more of my work in the future. I always wondered; how did he do on his first presentation?

What is the moral of the story? We owe it to our patients to face our fears. We must bring knowledge and information to other perfusionists, which will help the patients. Everyone has something to share. If you have had an interesting case or experience write it up. If you do not feel you have good enough writing skills, still go ahead and write it up. Contact someone that has experience in writing articles. Ask them to review it for you and assist you in making it stronger. Either submit it as a case report, article, or for oral presentation. Go to the podium and proudly present your work. As a wise ole sage (Zwish) once told me, "If you have the b***s to stand up there and present no one can say anything that will make you or your work insignificant." Rest assured that if you go to the podium, those of us that have been to the podium before you will become your guardian angels while you are there. And you will become our patients' heroes as well as ours. Besides, can your first time at the podium be as bad as mine?