

PHYSICIAN PROFILE:

Drs. George Edwards

By Fiona Morgan

For George Edwards, Sr., the obvious path led nowhere near medical school. After graduating from Davidson College in 1950 with a degree in business, he moved with his wife Katherine to Rocky Mount and joined his father and grandfather in business. In 1951, his son George Edwards Jr. was born.

The following year, he decided to venture down another road. He enrolled at University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill to take courses to prepare for medical school there.

“My parents did not encourage me to go into medicine, they tried to discourage me,” George said. His exposure to the field had been minimal: besides delivering newspapers as a teenager to Park View Hospital in Rocky Mount, he knew the profession through a favorite uncle who was a urologist in Greensboro whom he saw only occasionally. However, he said it was enough to like his profession.

During this time, the field of orthopedics advanced rapidly. Total joint replacement, arthroscopic surgery, microsurgery, CT and MR imagine all led to enormous advancements in care throughout the 1970s and 1980s.

Meanwhile, the next generation of Edwards was discovering his own love of medicine.

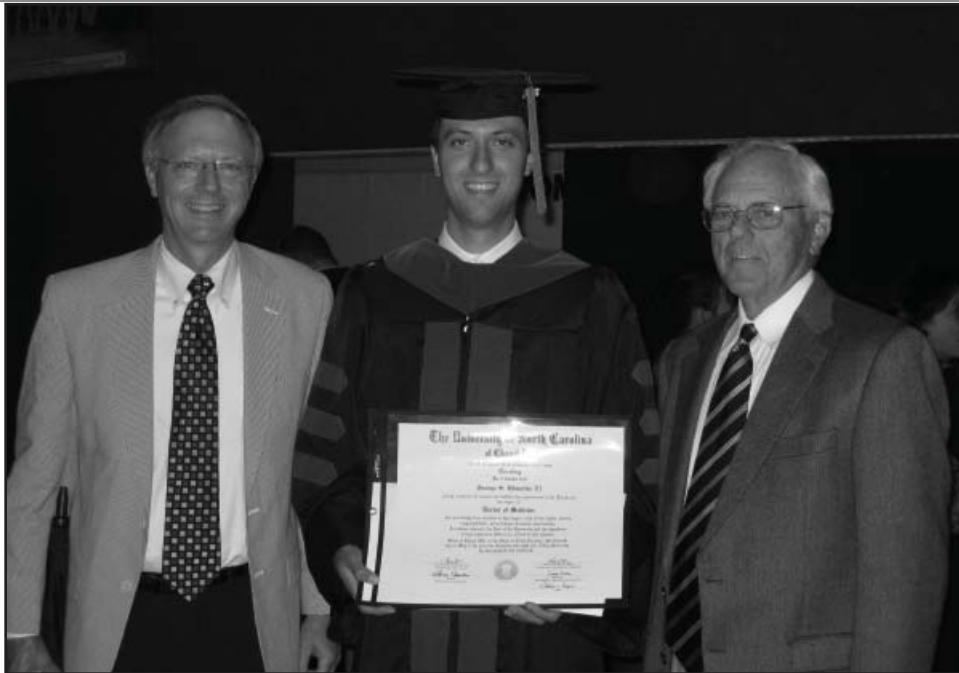
You might say that George Edwards, Jr. began his career in the third grade, when he helped dip plaster for body casts at the North Carolina Orthopedic Hospital in Gastonia, where his father spent one year of his residency. Later, when the family moved to Raleigh, the son recalls that after church on Sunday, he would occasionally accompany his father on rounds at the old Rex Hospital, where he would watch his father set wrist fractures.

The younger Edwards developed a view of medicine as a combination of science and human communication. His father

Three generations reflect the modern history of orthopedic surgery in Wake County

Medicine appealed to Edwards both because of the freedom and independence it offered and because of the opportunity to help people and “mend the maimed.” He said, “After two years of training in surgery, I knew orthopedics was for me. I chose surgery over medicine, as I liked the action and quick decisions. I chose orthopedics for the fun, carpenter skills, and the atmosphere seemed more fitting to my personality.”

Ultimately, he decided to establish private practice in Raleigh because there were five other orthopedists available for consultations when needed. In Rocky Mount, by contrast, he would have been the only one. Beginning in 1962, he practiced alone for about ten years, teaching medical students at his alma mater once a week. Then in the mid 1970s, he and Dr. Paul Burroughs Jr. started The Bone & Joint Surgery Clinic; they were soon joined by Dr. George Venters and Dr. David Rendleman III.



Left to right: George Edwards Jr., George Edwards, III, and George Edwards Sr.

certainly influenced him to become a doctor. He said, “His love of medicine is contagious.” Yet he also learned the sacrifice the work requires through his father’s days-long absences during residency and departures to the Emergency Room late at night. George said, “Dad always put honesty and integrity first and stressed ignoring a patient’s ability to pay.”

After graduating from Davidson

College, George Edwards Jr. entered medical school at University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill and completed an orthopedic residency at the University of Texas in San Antonio. “I inherited a spirit of optimism, and orthopedics, more than most other areas of medicine, seems to embody this quality, with its capability to cure peoples’ problems or at least make them better.”

Within that specialty, he became fascinated with the hand, “the ultimate creation for interacting with our world and those in it. In essence the hand is the creation that

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George Edwards, Sr.

BORN: March 1928 in Rocky Mount, NC

EDUCATION: McCallie School (a prep school for boys) in Chattanooga, Tennessee, 1946

Davidson College, B.S., Business, 1950.
University of North Carolina School of Medicine, MD, 1957

CAREER HISTORY: General Surgery Residency, North Carolina Memorial Hospital, 1957-1959

Orthopaedic Residency, North Carolina Memorial Hospital, 1959-1962

Orthopedic surgery, private practice, 1962-1975.

Co-founded The Bone and Joint Surgery Clinic, 1975.

Retired April 12, 2006.

COMMUNITY: Deacon, White Memorial Presbyterian Church.

PROFESSIONAL SOCIETIES: American Medical Association, Wake County Medical Society, American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons, North Carolina Orthopedic Association, Raleigh Academy of Medicine, North Carolina Medical Society.

PUBLICATIONS: Man's Chief End, Chapel Hill Press, 2010.

FAMILY: Katherine Banks Edwards (married 1949). Three children: George Edwards, Jr.; Nancy Edwards Fitzgerald: artist, mother and grandmother, Winston-Salem; Elizabeth Edwards Gladen, accountant for General Electric, Atlanta; W.A.Banks Edwards, accountant with Deloit, New York. George Sr. and Katherine have 9 grandchildren and 4 great grandchildren.

FAVORITE LEISURE ACTIVITIES: Golf, traveling with my wife, swimming, yard work.

FAVORITE MOVIE: It's a Wonderful Life

FAVORITE BOOK: The best book ever written is Homer's Odyssey. It has everything all other good books have.

George Edwards, Jr.

BORN: 1951 in Rocky Mount, NC

EDUCATION: Davidson College, 1974
University of North Carolina School of Medicine, MD, 1978

CAREER HISTORY:

Orthopaedic Residency, University of Texas, San Antonio, 1983

Hand Fellowship, Harvard University, Massachusetts General Hospital, 1984

Physician, Bone and Joint Surgery Clinic, 1984-1991

Founding physician, Raleigh Hand Center, 1991-present

COMMUNITY: Teaching Sunday School; mission trips to Nicaragua with wife, son, and friends.

FAVORITE LEISURE ACTIVITIES:

Studying Spanish, reading, playing with grandchildren, travel with family, swimming, golf.

FAVORITE MOVIES: Beyond Borders, an insightful expose into the dirty politics sometimes required to help the destitute in developing countries.

LAST THREE BOOKS READ: Better by Atul Gawande, Blink by Malcolm Gladwell, The Fountainhead by Ayn Rand.

LIKES ABOUT THE TRIANGLE: Observing the strong, traditional core values of the area challenged by outsiders new to the area and seeing these values not only preserved but, for the most part, understood and accepted whole-heartedly by the newcomers. Ultimately, exposure to the huge influx of new residents from all over the globe has stimulated the Triangle in positive ways never imagined. The medical climate here reflects this same dynamism.

DISLIKES ABOUT THE TRIANGLE: (No answer)

ADVICE TO YOUNG PHYSICIANS

STARTING PRACTICE: More than ever, go into medicine because you love to help others, not for the money. Also, try to learn at least one thing, anything, from

George Edwards, III

BORN: April 1982 in San Antonio, TX

EDUCATION: Broughton High School, Raleigh, 2000.

Davidson College, B.S. Biology, 2004.
University of North Carolina School of Medicine, MD, 2008

CAREER HISTORY:

Orthopedic Residency, University of North Carolina Hospital, 2008-present

COMMUNITY: Habitat for Humanity, providing meals to the needy through church, working at a free clinic in Chapel Hill.

FAMILY: Wife: Rebecca Edwards. Son: George Ryland Edwards, age 6 months.

FAVORITE LEISURE ACTIVITIES:

When I can, I enjoy fly fishing and taking my 150-pound Great Dane for a walk in the woods. I play the guitar, mandolin, and banjo [...] and I enjoy attending folk music festivals.

FAVORITE MOVIES: The Shawshank Redemption

FAVORITE BOOK: Cider House Rules by John Irving

LIKES ABOUT THE TRIANGLE: The great combination of Southern small town culture with big town amenities.

DISLIKES ABOUT THE TRIANGLE:

All the traffic that's appeared in the past ten years.

ADVICE TO YOUNG PHYSICIANS

STARTING PRACTICE: Being a young physician myself, I'm still trying to gather all the advice I can.

WISHES THE PUBLIC BETTER UNDERSTOOD ABOUT MEDICINE:

I wish they understood the sacrifice it takes to become a doctor, and that no one in their right mind would become a doctor for the money aspect of it.

George Edwards, Sr.

LAST BOOK READ: Fall of Giants by Ken Follett, book one of the Century Trilogy.

LIKES ABOUT THE TRIANGLE: It has been quite fascinating to watch it grow from a Southern, friendly area and continue to be a Southern, friendly area. The climate is close to perfect and the area is in rather close proximity to the mountains and the ocean.

DISLIKES ABOUT THE TRIANGLE: The way young pedestrians and bicyclists walk and ride in front of moving vehicles without looking in any direction ... although that may increase the orthopaedic traffic.

ADVICE TO YOUNG PHYSICIANS STARTING PRACTICE: There will always be a need for good physicians. Don't be bitter over the Washington politics in medicine. Be positive and try to improve the situation. Remember, there is nothing to give as much happiness to you as helping your fellow man.

WISHES THE PUBLIC BETTER UNDERSTOOD ABOUT MEDICINE: That the medical profession is NOT a business. It is a profession, a profession designed for helping people and not designed as the primary purpose for making money. Physicians should not advertise in the media, but only by word-of-mouth. Advertising makes it a business.

George Edwards, Jr.

each patient encounter.

WISHES THE PUBLIC BETTER UNDERSTOOD ABOUT MEDICINE: Physicians are only one cog in the healing team along with the patient, nurses, therapists, and family. Physicians do not perform miracles. Only one being is capable of such acts.



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continues to create." He completed a hand fellowship at Harvard in 1984.

After nearly moving to Atlanta to join a hand surgery group, he followed his wife's sage advice and joined his father's practice in Raleigh. Then, like his father, George Edwards, Jr. embarked on his own entrepreneurial venture, establishing the Raleigh Hand Center in 1988. The enterprise helped to establish hand surgery as a distinct specialty in Raleigh.

His love of his profession was also passed down to his son, George Edwards III, born in San Antonio during George Jr.'s residency.

George III recalled, "When I was little I loved visiting my father's office on Saturdays with my sister. While Dad was getting his work done, we would race down the hall on the wheeled stools. As I grew, I loved to sneak into my dad's study at home, and look through his surgical slides by myself or show my friends the more gory slides, although I was frequently in trouble for getting the slides out of order."

While his father and grandfather encouraged him to pursue whatever profession he wished, hearing their own enthusiasm and love of the field, whether it was excitement over a difficult case gone well, or hearing about the heartfelt thanks a patient had given them, had a huge impact on him. Also, he said, "The values they instilled in me such as the importance of helping your fellow man, the value of a hard day's work, and the importance of giving

back to society certainly influenced my career choice."

As an undergraduate at Davidson, George III studied science and spent a semester abroad in the rainforest of Australia. He said, "I almost decided to be a field scientist for a career. It was hard to pull myself back to the premedical classroom once I was back in the States, though I'm glad I did."

In 2008, George Edwards Sr. and George Edwards Jr. watched the third generation of their family graduate from University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill's School of Medicine. George III is currently in his third year of a five-year orthopedic residency at University of North Carolina.

Besides his family's professional legacy, George Edwards Sr. has also contributed a book, *Man's Chief End*, an account of his career, his observations of local history, and ruminations on the personal and spiritual vocation of medicine. (See review, page XX.)

And the family legacy itself continues, or may. George III and his wife Rebecca are also busy raising young George Ryland Edwards, who will be six months old at the time of publication.

George III said, "He can certainly go into whatever profession he wants, but I have already begun teaching him the "muscle song" set to the tune of "My Favorite Things" from *The Sound of Music* that my dad taught me as a child." §



Drs. Edwards with the late Dr. H. Robert Brashear (3rd from left), a professor of orthopaedics at UNC who taught all three generations as they came through their training at UNC.