



Conversations about Education, Research & Patient Care
with Dean Mary Klotman

Episode 3: Coming Back and Giving Back . . . Duke Med Alums Talk About the Ties That Bind

Dean Klotman: Well good afternoon. I'm Mary Klotman, Dean of the Duke University School of Medicine. Welcome to my monthly podcast From One Duke to Another. This month I'm recording a special episode at Duke's alumni weekend. I'm joined by two alumnae, Cathy Upchurch and Betsy Harden. Cathy is a 1976 graduate, and until recently the clinical chief in the Division of Rheumatology at the University of Massachusetts Memorial Medical Center. She's the current president of Duke's Medical Alumni Association. I've had the pleasure of working with Cathy for two years in that role. Betsy is a 1978 graduate and hematologist in Newport News, Virginia and has been a valued supporter of the school for many years. Thank you for joining us.

Betsy Harden: Absolutely. Glad to be here.

Kathy Upchurch: Thanks for having us.

DK: So you're back on campus for the weekend. What's your memories as you walk through the buildings and campus?.

BH: Oh brings back a lot of memories. Most of the memories are seeing my former classmates. I think those relationships have been with me for so many years and all of the times we shared here. I just remember being so excited to come here and finally be able to study medicine in such a beautiful environment. And the basic University hasn't changed that much. When you walk around you still see the beautiful buildings and it takes you back.

KU: And I echo your comments about the friends that I made here. I've had the good fortune of coming at least twice a year, actually usually more than that, for the last ten years or so with my involvement with the alumni affairs and other on campus endeavors. So I still marvel at how gorgeous this place is, and I'm also struck by how much it's changed and grown and expanded. And then the final thing that I was reminded of today, actually we had a wonderful lecture by a member of the Class of '83 who's a fabulous, fabulous clinician researcher. But now it's largely a researcher. And my memories of this place, among my fondest memories were the opportunities I had my third year to do some basic research, and that really came back to me full force in hearing that lecture today.

BH: It really was a unique thing. Most programs you did two years of basic science and then two years of clinical that were very structured and one of the things that attracted me to Duke is that

you did a rather intensive first year of basic science and then they threw you into the clinical, which was so exciting because that's what you wanted. You just wanted to get away from the books and to the bed side and then you had the third and fourth year essentially elective to put together the program that you wanted. And I thought that was very exciting.

KU: And it's a model now for medical schools all over the United States in fact Harvard just finally gave in.

DK: And you know that new curriculum has not changed in 40 years.

KU: That's right.

DK: And I don't think it's going to change.

KU: No it's a successful model.

DK: So as a Dean, I'm particularly interested in what keeps alums connected to the institution. What is it that brings you back?

BH: Well I have to talk to you in the perspective of 30 years in private practice. Because a private practice hematology oncology about three and a half hours from here in Newport News Virginia. And Duke has been invaluable to me. I trained here in hematology oncology as well as medical school and I stayed very close to that department and I can't tell you how many times I picked up the phone, shot an e-mail, got advice. My practice continued to do research and does now with Duke, and has access to many of the Duke protocols, and that has just been wonderful and my patients like that connection. And many of them have come down here and gotten excellent care, so that that's really driven a lot of my connection. And then from a personal and professional point of view, I've really loved staying connected to the institution.

DK: What about you Cathy?

KU: From my point of view I don't have the proximity of where I practice to Duke so it would be very unusual for me to consult with physicians here because I live in the Boston area. The thing that I have found, time and time and time again, is that when I'm here and when I'm involved in the alumni meetings that I come to, I learn about what's going on at Duke. And it's just plain an exciting place to hear about, and to be part of. So that's really the reason that I've stayed connected and active and want to support Duke.

DK: I'm an alum as well. And when I was in New York and got invited by a colleague to join the Alumni Council, I thought what a great way to keep tabs on what's going on at Duke. Which helped inform my leadership at Mt. Sinai and then it turned out to be a wonderful segue back to Duke.

KU: And that's exactly what I'm talking about because you come here and you hear and you see and you understand the initiatives and you understand a little window into the science and you learn about the Vaccine Institute and you hear about wonderful work in the pharmacology of cancer drugs and you just learn about things you never could imagine learning about and you learn about them when you come back.

DK: And we try to do that with the Council, to really keep them informed of some of the exciting work being done. But you've both given back in terms of time, in terms of resources. What is it that motivates you to do that? That's a little bit different than staying connected.

BH: Well I just see tremendous value in an institution like Duke. Duke has to thrive and survive for medicine. Again my perspective is more hem-onc. I remember when I finished my fellowship here there were only 10 or 15 drugs I needed to know. And you got a new drug you had three years to figure it out and everything. My goodness, they're 10 a month that are coming down the pipeline and you realize how important basic science research is, translational research, and you recognize the real value of an institution like this in bringing all of that together. And I see it firsthand when my patients are able to access all of that. So that's why my husband and I chose to support Duke, and actually started a foundation with the Duke Cancer Institute that we're very, very proud of and hope to be able to continue to contribute to it as the years go on.

DK: That is wonderful.

KU: And from my perspective, I totally mirror your belief that this is an institution that has to not only survive but thrive. Not only the medical school but also the university at large. I believe in my heart, and I've actually written this down. It's been published. That a gift of mine could potentially be life changing for someone, or world changing for someone, or could solve the problem of malaria, or could lead to a vaccine against HIV. Something unimaginable. Because I think Duke has the potential to do that.

Narrator: From one Duke to Another, hosted by Dean Mary Klotman, is a production of the Duke University School of Medicine. Tune in each month to hear discussions about important and timely topics related to medical education, science and discovery, and patient care. For more information please visit medschool.duke.edu