

John H. Gibbon, Jr., Lecture: Introductory remarks

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It is a strong pleasure to have the honor of offering the following introductory remarks regarding Dr. John Waldhausen's presentation of the John H. Gibbon, Jr., Lecture at the 2000 Clinical Congress.

Dr. Waldhausen and I met during surgical residency training at Johns Hopkins over 40 years ago. I was a chief resident; he was an intern and, hence, my responsibility. This started a lifelong warm, professional, personal friendship. I attended his Baltimore, MD, wedding to Marian, later followed his academic star with both interest and pride, and had the honor, following his firm instructions, of performing a coronary bypass on him at two different times.

Dr. Gibbon would have been most pleased that John Waldhausen gave this lecture in his honor. Their careers have some remarkable similarities, both overcoming seemingly impossible obstacles with persistent hard work.

Dr. Gibbon's story is legendary. In the mid-1920s, he was in surgical training at the Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston. After staying all night with a patient dying from a pulmonary embolus, he started a seemingly impossible lifelong quest to build a heart-lung machine. After 20 years with little progress, his laboratory was removed. I think that means he was "fired!" Undaunted, he returned to Philadelphia, continued his laboratory work, and subsequently performed the first successful open-heart operation in 1953.

John Waldhausen's father was a German businessman, but John was born in New York City and, hence, is an American citizen. On the eve of World War II, when John was about 10 years old, his father was ordered back to Germany. Hence, he finished high school in Germany during World War II. After the war, he wanted to get a scholarship to

continue his education in the U.S., but no college wanted him. You can imagine the enthusiasm in this country in 1946 for an American-born German student with no money!

Fortunately, a Jesuit priest who knew of John's ability and potential intervened. (The Jesuits are widely respected and admired for their strong commitment to education.) This led to John's entering the College of Great Falls, MT, at age 18, probably with the shirt on his back and 50 cents in his pocket.

The rest is history: medical school in St. Louis; residency training at Hopkins, the National Institutes of Health, the University of Pennsylvania, and the Indiana University; followed by faculty positions at Indiana and the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia and the University of Pennsylvania. In 1969, at age 40, he ventured with others to a cornfield near Hershey, PA, to start a new medical school at the Pennsylvania State University, where he founded the department of surgery and served as its chair for 25 years.

He recently finished his five-year term as editor of *The Journal of Thoracic and Cardiovascular Surgery* and is currently the John Oswald Professor of Surgery Emeritus at Hershey. He has been an active member of the American College of Surgeons for over 30 years, is a member of numerous surgical organizations, and was president of the American Association for Thoracic Surgery in 1991. His bibliography includes more than 230 papers and over 40 books and chapters.

He and Marian have three sons—John, Robert, and Gordon—one of whom is firmly launched in his early surgical career at the Children's Hospital of Seattle and the University of Washington.

Hence, with obvious great pleasure, I present the 30th Gibbon Lecture, by Dr. John Waldhausen. □