Walter Guralnick: Looking back on 100 years

The year was 1916. The Boston Red Sox won the World Series for the second year in a row. The summer Olympics, to be held in Berlin, Germany, were cancelled due to the outbreak of World War I. Woodrow Wilson was re-elected for a second term as president of the United States. The first woman was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives. Norman Rockwell’s first cover was published on the Saturday Evening Post. The cost of a stamp was 2 cents. Albert Einstein published “The Foundation of the Generalised Theory of Relativity.” And Walter Guralnick, DMD, now chief emeritus of the MGH Department of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery (OMFS), was born.

The year is 2016. At the age of 100, after a century of world progress and personal achievements, Guralnick still remains an active member of the MGH, where he has worked for 65 years. He comes to work four days a week aiding Maria Troulis, DDS, MD, chief of OMFS, with her role as program director, with integration of the residency in the curriculum and fundraising.

During his residency in oral surgery at Boston City Hospital, Pearl Harbor was bombed. “I can remember it very vividly,” says Guralnick. “I was up in my room when all of a sudden the radio announced what had happened. And I knew – although wars in general are a horror and one shouldn’t seek them out – I knew that I was going to go into service and I wanted to go into service, because, as they said, this was our war.”

He finished his year of residency and married his wife Betty on Jan. 1, 1942 before reporting for duty. He was assigned to an air base in North Carolina and then to the Seventh General Hospital, where he was stationed in England, France and Belgium.

“We arrived in England on Dec. 15, 1943, the day that my son, Peter, was born. So I didn’t get to see him until he was about 25 or 26 months old,” says Guralnick. “When I got home, I knew what I wanted to do. I knew I was going to do oral surgery. There weren’t that many oral surgeons in Boston at that time.”

After the war, Guralnick set up a private practice in Boston, then joined the staff of the MGH in 1951 where he served as chief of OMFS from 1966-1983. For the next 10 years he was the medical director of the MGH operating rooms, while continuing to see patients on a consulting basis well into his 80s.

“I am retired from active surgery, that’s true,” says Guralnick, “but I am not retired from participating in the activities of the service and the hospital, working with the faculty and residents and students.”

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— Guralnick
(Continued from page 1)

A PIONEER IN DENTAL INSURANCE
“In the 1950s-1960s, it was very apparent that there was no sort of insurance for dental care, so a lot of people couldn’t get care because they couldn’t afford it on their own,” says Guralnick. He sought to change that by lobbying for oral surgery insurance coverage.

With the help of a few other area oral surgeons who argued that more patients would come in for procedures if they had insurance, Guralnick fought for nearly a decade to get a bill through the state legislature. In 1966, the bill was passed and paved the way for the formation of the Dental Service Corporation of Massachusetts, which later became known as Delta Dental in 1980. Guralnick served as Delta Dental’s president for 10 years.

A NEW KIND OF OMFS PROGRAM
Although Guralnick never had a medical degree, he always believed strongly in its importance. He credits his war experience and apprenticeships with his father and brother with providing him a broader understanding of surgery, but says it was still not one that a formal education could offer.

“One of the things that I had started early on was asking the chief of medicine or the chief of surgery if my residents could rotate on their service for a period of three months, and I thought that was educationally very important. But that was just a taste,” says Guralnick. “I had always felt very strongly that you needed to do some general surgery to be adept at any kind of surgery you did. And to do general surgery, you needed to have finished the training of a physician and have a medical degree. And it wasn’t just the degree. It was the education that went with getting the medical degree.”

Initially, HSDM offered a two-year program – and students with five or more years of experience could finish in just one year. In 1972, with Guralnick’s proposal, it was changed to a six-year program offering residents both a medical degree and an OMFS residency. Guralnick’s program was the first of its kind and today more than half of oral surgery degrees follow a similar structure.

WORLDWIDE AND LIFELONG INFLUENCES
In addition to his leadership at the MGH, Guralnick has traveled to China more than 15 times giving lectures about topics in dentistry and oral surgery. He worked with colleagues in China and with the Chinese Ministry of Health to improve preventative dental care.

Among his accomplishments and countless other accolades, Guralnick was elected to the Royal College of Surgeons in England and into membership of the Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Sciences, both in 1996. He received the Harvard Medal in 2005 and in 2009 received the Arnold K. Maislen Award at New York University and the Gavel Prize of the Forsyth Institute. There also is an endowed professorship named for him at HSDM – the Walter C. Guralnick Professor of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery.

Throughout the past 100 years – the span of a single continuing lifetime for Walter Guralnick – the field of oral surgery has grown by leaps and bounds – from focusing only on extractions, prosthetics and cavity filling to preventative care, dental practice, research and more extensive surgery to the face, jaw and teeth. And Guralnick has made his mark on the field’s history, contributing more than his share of advances.

“In life you do what you think is important to you and is hopefully useful to others. I’ve had a long, fairly productive life. It’s been interesting,” says Guralnick. “My affection for this hospital and for the people here is very real. And I think that I am treated here so graciously by everybody, making this a very pleasant place for me to continue to be.”

Honoring and saluting MGH veterans

NOV. 11 IS A DAY to pause and reflect to honor the men and women who have served the United States in uniform. The MGH community celebrates veterans from generations past, welcoming new generation returning from war and thanks future veterans serving home and abroad.

To honor the many veterans here at the MGH, here are some photos from members of the MGH’s Military Veteran Partners – a group of veterans and non-veterans dedicated and committed to serving and supporting MGH’s active duty, reserve, former military and service member employees, as well as their families and the veteran community.

VETERANS DAY MESSAGES OF THANKS FROM MGH STAFF
“Thank you for your service to our country.”
“I would like to honor Thelma Matthews at MGH Danvers for serving our country as a Marine. It is because of women like you, we are the greatest nation. You are an inspiration to all of us! Thank you for your service.”
“We cannot imagine what you sacrificed during your service, but remain forever grateful, and we will not forget.”

Mark Price, MD, Orthopaedic Surgery – U.S. Navy – 2007-current
Jonathan Paolino, MD, Pediatric resident – U.S. Army – 4 years
Rebecca Coburn, CPP, CHPA, right, senior manager, Security Satellites – U.S. Air Force – 4 years
November 11 is a day to pause and reflect to honor the men and women who have served the United States in uniform. The MGH community celebrates veterans from generations past, welcomes the new generation returning from war and thanks future veterans still serving home and abroad.

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Veterans Day Messages of Thanks from MGH Staff

“Thank you for your service to our country.”

“I would like to honor Thelma Matthews at MGH Danvers for serving our country as a Marine. It is because of women like you, we are the greatest nation. You are an inspiration to all of us! Thank you for your service.”

“We cannot imagine what you sacrificed during your service, but we remain forever grateful, and we will not forget.”

“In today’s fast-paced world, it’s easy to forget that our busy lives would not be possible were it not for the men and women who have fought to preserve the safety and security of the United States. On Veterans Day, let us all pause and reflect upon the sacrifices and contributions from our veterans and active duty members of our armed forces. Thank you all.”

“Appreciation is an understatement. Thank you to all our veterans who give up their lives to serve this country!”

“For David R. King, MD, LTC, MC, U.S. Army, Joint Special Operations Command: To a hero who fights not only on the battlefield for our entire country but also in the operating room for our loved ones right here at home and an awesome person to work for. I appreciate your sacrifices, your dedication to your skills and your desire to share your knowledge and save more lives beyond your immediate reach. I thank you so very much.”

“Thanks to John Brennan from the Emergency Department’s finance team and all other veterans for your dedication and service to our country.”

“Thank you to every woman and man who has served in our armed forces and have protected us and our country from harm’s way. Your sacrifice is truly appreciated and I am humbled by your courage.”

“Thanks to all who served, and a special thank you to the Vietnam veterans, who were treated so badly when they got home and not given the appreciation and respect they deserved for their service.”

“To all of the men and women who have worked and fought for, and who are currently working and fighting for our freedom, a few words could not ever express my gratitude and pride for you, the United States military and armed forces and all of your continuous efforts. We enjoy the greatest freedoms and rights on earth because of your absolute dedication, resilience and sacrifice. I thank you all for giving your all every single day. I wish you everlasting peace and honor for your duty to this country and to humanity around the world. Your labors do not go in vain.”

“Thank you to every service member, veteran and military family member for your dedication and for your sacrifice. A special thank you to our outstanding team of veteran outreach coordinators at Home Base, a Red Sox Foundation and MGH Program that — after answering the call in the armed services — continues to serve as community leaders, raising awareness of veterans’ issues and serving as conduits to clinical care for other veterans. Thank you for your invaluable contributions to our nation and to Home Base.”

Honoring and saluting MGH veterans for service and sacrifice

Ellen Andrew-Kasper, RN – U.S. Navy – 15 years


Helene Feist, Development Systems manager – U.S. Coast Guard – 5 years


Blaze Montelo, center, Security Officer – Army National Guard – 8 Years

Bethany Marullo, administrative fellow – U.S. Army – 2004-current

Darbie Kurashima, RN, MSN, right, MGH Case Management – U.S. Navy – 3 years

Robert Sheridan, MD, Department of Surgery – U.S. Army – 22 years

Richard Ehrlichman, MD, Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery – U.S. Army – 8 years


Harry W. Orf, PhD, senior vice president for Research – U.S. Army Reserve – 33 years

Armand K. Hunter, veterans outreach coordinator – Army National Guard – 2001-current

Harry W. Orf, PhD, senior vice president for Research – U.S. Army Reserve – 33 years

Armand K. Hunter, veterans outreach coordinator – Army National Guard – 2001-current
Supplies to benefit storm-ravaged hospital in Haiti

MEN ANPIL, CHAY PA LOU.

It is one of the most common proverbs in Haiti and loosely translated into English means, “with many hands, the work is light.” It is a phrase that Harold Roy, of MGH Police and Security, says comes to mind often when he sees the continued support the MGH and area communities provide to the Haitian people.

Most recently – in the aftermath of the devastation caused by Hurricane Matthew – a donation drive was hosted in Somerville, gathering items including hand sanitizers, bandages, non-perishable goods, hydrogen peroxide and first aid kits. In addition, Jamie Harisiades, RN, of the MGH Cardiovascular Research Center, Jacky Nally, RN, of Emergency Preparedness, and Gary Mulrey and Felix Mojica of Materials Management, teamed up with a number of other MGH departments to spearhead supply drives at the hospital. The items were packed into freight containers by members of Buildings and Grounds and Materials Management and shipped to The Aquin Hospital earlier this month.

Roy, whose extended family lives in Haiti, has been an active and ardent supporter of providing much-needed relief to the impoverished nation, which has been hit by a number of earthquakes and hurricanes in recent years.

“The MGH is the heart of the support,” Roy says. “It’s been wonderful – it’s really a blessing to see people come together and provide help where it is so desperately needed.”

Rehabilitation medicine in Haiti

Rachel Lampros, PT, DPT, SCS, of the Sports Medicine Center in the MGH Department of Orthopaedics, was awarded the Durant Fellowship to work with STAND Haiti, which provides care in Port de Paix, Haiti. Here Lampros shares her first-hand experience during Hurricane Matthew.

AT 7 AM, the air in Port de Paix is heavy and still. It is already 82 degrees and humid. As clinicians walk through the entrance of the clinic, they are greeted with a sea of somber faces, both young and old. We see babies crying while mothers combat mounting fevers, fragile fathers – too weak to walk – carried in their sons’ arms and children bent in spastic postures on the ground. Many have travelled days to be treated. Many haven’t eaten in days to afford the travel.

Haiti is the poorest country in the western hemisphere, where 80 percent of Haitians live below the poverty line and 54 percent live in abject poverty. There is no public health infrastructure, making access to basic health care impossible for the majority. Half of the children in Haiti are unvaccinated and more than 10 percent die before the age of 5. Mothers provide two numbers when asked how many children they have: how many born, and how many living.

This October, I embarked on my third trip to Haiti to work in a small home repurposed as a rehab clinic. We provide multiple services including general medicine, orthopedics, pediatrics, neurology, women’s health, wound care and prosthetics. We sleep, eat and treat in the community. Our presence is tangible. This marked my first trip as a Durant Fellow, revitalizing my purpose and polishing my practice. Unbeknownst to me, Hurricane Matthew would craft a different narrative.

When we arrived early Saturday morning, Matthew was still a tropical storm warning. Our team anticipated some rain, road closures and flooding; a recipe for inconvenient travel days at worst. Located in the northwest region of Haiti, our clinic boasts “beachfront property,” a coveted luxury during oppressive days but a dangerous site before a storm surge.

As Matthew manifested into a Category 4 hurricane, we were shocked to learn many of our neighbors were unaware of the storm’s imminent arrival. Unlike in the United States where we were inundated with the latest satellite imagery on Matthew’s trajectory, there was little to no awareness that we were on the threshold of possible disaster.

Despite closing the clinic for the day, we were swarmed with patients seeking medical attention. We triaged the patients that required emergent care and sent the remainder home emphasizing the severity of the storm. Projected winds of 145 mph and 25 inches of rain meant our neighbors living in tin sheds and tents could literally be swept away. The forecast was devastating.

After Matthew decimated the southern peninsula, it took a hard westward turn away from our clinic. We sustained little to no damage and minimal surge. Our community was spared and our clinic reopened. It is the “disease of poverty” that has chronically enveloped this struggling nation. The lack of indigenous resources, integrated resource management and emergency medical response magnifies the impact of natural disasters and facilitates the spread of illness. In the wake of Hurricane Matthew, this devastated country will become even more vulnerable to disease outbreaks and less equipped to manage its long-term sequelae.