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Fall 2020

Footprints

By Alexander Norbash, MD, MS
UCSD School of Medicine
UC San Diego Health



Alexander Norbash

I am privileged to serve as the president of the ARRS in this most unusual and unsettling of years. We are all to greater or lesser degrees surrounded by uncertainty and turbulence, and therefore, we may sur-

render to a natural tendency of only seeing clouds. As we all know, clouds eventually pass. This is particularly evident to those who are wisest among us, who possess a wisdom that is most highly valued in times of crisis. We know that wisdom resides in the hearts and heads of those who have the greatest amount of experience, the greatest accumulated knowledge, and perhaps the largest number of scars.

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I come to you as the members of the SRS, the keepers of wisdom in our beloved specialty, to thank you for the lifelong inspiration you have provided me. I now enter the 31st year of my life as a practicing radiologist, and because of you it has been a wonderful journey. You have shown and led me to my own North Star, you have given me footprints to follow, and you have given me a code of conduct. You know,

even though we landed on the moon too long ago, the footprints of those who were there will likely last for millennia.

I believe you will appreciate seeing names that resonate with all of us, names I have been privileged to follow for either a moment or a stretch; perhaps for a few footsteps, to walk beside for a space, or to regard at a distance.

Joe Marasco and Frank Perrone taught me fluoroscopy as a resident. They cared for each and every patient as if he or she were their own family member. They taught me compassion. Bert Girdany taught me pediatric radiology. He taught me the value of caring for your team. Herb Abrams taught me cardiac radiology. He showed me the value of strength and confidence. Henry Jones taught me how to read a chest x-ray. He showed me the sustainable degree of enthusiasm and joy one may possess for a lifetime, with a light that burned brighter each passing year. Norm Blank and Les Zatz taught me how to articulate my thoughts, to convince others, and to sharpen my thoughts with a keener edge in each passing year. Juan Taveras taught me how to be magnanimous, cultivate broad friendships, and to be genuine in every moment. Jim Adelstein taught me how to respect, follow, and create policy and structure to benefit a department and a school. Paul Friedman showed me that brilliance and radiology extend beyond the specialty into ethics, generosity, deportment, and legacy. Elliot Lasser taught me that success as a radiologist means cultivating an insatiable hunger for innovation and technology that must never end.

I cannot thank you enough. The greatest privilege of my life has been to consider you my wayfinders, my guides, my advisors, my teachers, and my colleagues. I am touched, and indebted, and changed because of it. For the better.

Writing this column, enveloped by the smoke from over 100 wildfires in the Pacific Northwest and California, the COVID-19 quarantine has an additional dimension: terrible air quality, some of the worst on the planet, at the moment!

Another relocation and move for me, in the late summer of this year, to the high desert of Central Oregon, capping off several of my early retirement years in Chicago.

The Oregon Trail, dating from 1811 to 1840, was a 2170-mile, large-wheel wagon route from east to west (Pacific Northwest), beginning near the Missouri River going all the way to the Oregon Valley (Oregon City) in the Columbia river basin. In the early 19th century, "Oregon country" was disputed territory to the north and west of land encompassed by Jefferson's Louisiana Purchase. In the 1830s, the so-called trail, first traveled on foot or horseback and later by wagon, ran from Independence, Missouri through Kansas, Nebraska, Wyoming, and Idaho. Britain held the territory from California to Alaska, west of the Rocky Mountains, including Oregon. Eventually, as part of the United States' belief in "manifest destiny"* and its spirit and theme, "from sea to shining sea," Oregon was annexed and then became part of the United States of America as a state in 1859. A 55-mile recreation trail, the Highline Trail, exists today from southeastern Idaho to Oregon, where California trails branch off to the southwest. Later, the Oregon Shortline Railroad came through the Pacific Northwest, further opening up the territory. Why did travel commence and thrive on the trail back then? Free land, as well as the lure of California gold, coupled with

Tales continues on page 2

SRS Birthdays

We wish these SRS members a very happy birthday.

September

- 6 Peter E. Doris
- 9 Harry E. Morgan
- 15 James M. Tallman
Harbans Singh
- 22 William H. Sutro
- 23 Joe F. Jacobs
- 24 Lee F. Rogers
- 27 Thomas Archambeau
- 30 Wyman Yee

October

- 4 James R. Custer
- 8 Eric J. Udoff
- 9 Melvin L. Turner
- 12 James E. Reinhardt
- 16 Hernani S. Tansuche
- 20 William M. Thompson
- 25 Ellen L. Wolf
Ruedi Thoeni
- 29 Sarah G. Pope
Tie S. Ong

November

- 4 Janette L. Worthington
- 16 John E. Madewell
- 26 Kay H. Vydareny
- 28 Richard S. Colvin

December

- 3 John Meehan
- 5 Harry J. Barr
- 6 Stephen F. Albert
- 10 Frank T. Daly, Jr.
- 17 Charles Walter Snyder
- 26 Herbert F. Gramm
- 28 Lynne S. Steinbach
Charles A. Herbstman

Tales *continued from page 1*

farming’s economic limitations east of the Mississippi and new business opportunities in the west, such as they were pre-Civil War, spurred on in some ways by a religious fervor directed towards converting Native Americans—all are listed as reasons for the excitement associated with hitting the trail. Wagon tracks exist today near Boise, Idaho, yet travel then was very dangerous. It is said that 1 in 10 people died on the 4- to 6-month journey from Missouri to the Willamette Valley, due to fever, dysentery, cholera, exhaustion and dehydration, drowning, and accidents. My trip here obviously was safer, shorter, and less eventful, notwithstanding the rigorous COVID-19 precautions associated with air travel. Plus, I shipped my car and possessions.

Going to press at this time, 1 million or more acres are ablaze. Coupled with the uncertainty surrounding our ability to contain and/or prevent these relentless fires, it is certainly new territory for us all. I previously wrote of UNCERTAINTY and the now daily attempts to interpret and understand the current pandemic from a health and political viewpoint or zeitgeist. Apocalyptic scenes and descriptions show the fury

of mother nature, unchecked as she plays her role in the changed environment facilitated by significant droughts and rising temperatures—all on the stage set by past forestry practices, resulting in extremely dry or desiccated vegetation, against the backdrop of expanding communities go-

perienicing the anxiety of life-threatening moves or journeys with serious economic and health consequences, some yet to be realized. The effects on health care systems and providers of the current fire and smoke conflagrations are additive, to that of the current COVID-19 pandemic. Certainly, meetings and gatherings, professional and otherwise, as many of us have experienced in the past, and still expect in the future, are also on that growing list of uncertainties. To me, in my new home here in Oregon, the new normal seems still to be defined. My hope is for the SRS membership and the entire ARRS, so ably led today by Dr. Norbash, to experience and enjoy the virtual offerings and online gatherings until actual face-to-face encounters are safe and practical, and the smoke finally clears.

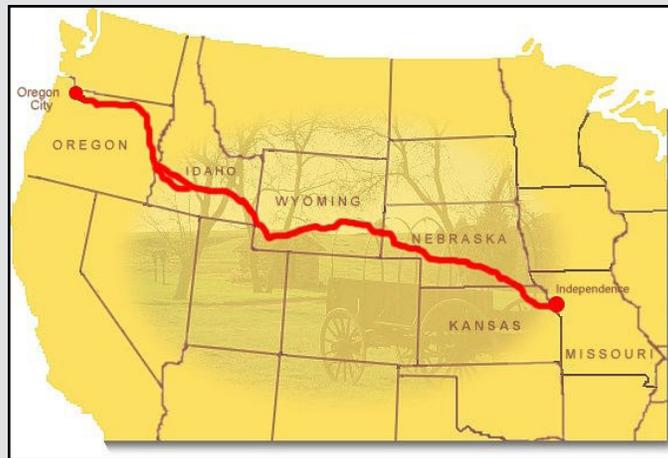


Figure 1. Oregon National Historic Trail (<https://www.nps.gov/oreg/index.htm>).

ing right up to or actually into the forests. Words or comments from the leadership of western states such as “unprecedented” or “never before” and the threat or reality of evacuation are all part of the daily news scene here. Oregon has a population of 4.2 million people and about 1 in 10 are ex-

* Term coined by John O’Sullivan, newspaper columnist and editor from the *New York Democratic Review*, 1845.



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- Be a current ARRS member age 65 or older

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