

SECTION I SYMPOSIUM: SHOULDER ARTHROSCOPY: APPROACHES FOR THE NEW MILLENNIUM

Dedication to Dr. Richard Caspari

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It is only fitting that the symposium “Recent Advances in Shoulder Arthroscopy” pay tribute to one of the original pioneers who set the stage for the development of these new techniques. Richard Caspari was born in Montgomery, AL on April 20, 1942 and passed away on January 19, 2000. He was teacher, mentor, and friend to many who had the fortune to know him during his brief and brilliant career. But for me, he was a phenomenon. He embodied the term brilliant, if one considers that creativity is truly brilliance. Early in his career, he was exposed to arthroscopy and used this method to redefine our approaches for the treatment of shoulder problems. He viewed this as a subspecialty, not a technique, and he approached problems from the standpoint of solving them from the fringe of established knowledge. In fact, he worked outside the box of accepted treatment, and his original techniques and approaches simply enlarged the box of treatment options. During his career, he developed many original devices and held more than 40 patents. Some of these instruments are asked for using his name, such as The Caspari, and allow us to continue to do techniques of arthroscopic rotator cuff and Bankart repair.

Caspari also was a gifted teacher. His vision of hands-on education finally was realized with the development of the Orthopaedic Learning Center. He was founder and director of Orthopaedic Research of Virginia, a nonprofit teaching and research foundation that trained more than 40 fellows. Many of these individuals have continued on as leaders and innovators in shoulder arthroscopy.

Caspari was an adventurous man who was an entrepreneur. This probably is why he was so creative within the sphere of shoulder arthroscopy. He became an avid sailor and at the end of his life, had realized the opportunity of sailing around the world. He developed a very successful company that leased and rented helicopters. He often acted as a stand-in for the routine air traffic reporter for a local radio station in Richmond, VA

In his presidential address to the Arthroscopy Association of North America in 1991, he described himself as a rebel and renegade operating on the fringe. Most of his friends and colleagues, however, remember him as a creative innovator whose mischievous grin simply indicated a new idea destined to advance shoulder arthroscopy to another level.

Although I never was his fellow or his student, I can think of no other shoulder arthroscopist who has influenced me as much as he. He defined modern operative shoulder arthroscopy with his visionary approaches. He dared to challenge conventional wisdom of open repair of soft tissue injuries around the shoulder, and our patients are better because of his bold attitude.