New orthotics and prosthetics faculty member brings unique perspective

When the 18 students selected for BCM’s new Master of Science in Orthotics and Prosthetics Program start their training this summer, they will receive instruction from top quality faculty, including one new faculty member who has unique first-hand experience in prosthetics.

Earl Fogler, instructor in the new program who joined BCM in March, was the victim of a school yard bombing in Houston in 1959. He lost his leg in the incident, and the experience ultimately drove him to pursue a career in prosthetics.

The fourth-generation Houstonian was in second grade at Poe Elementary in the Rice University area when the bombing occurred on Sept. 15, 1959. He doesn’t remember much from that day but his mother clipped articles about it from the Houston Press and Houston Chronicle, which provide details of the day.

During a school recess, a man carrying a briefcase full of explosives walked onto the school yard, along with his own son. He reportedly approached a teacher and may have also struggled with the school custodian before detonating the suitcase, killing six. Among the dead were the teacher and custodian, two school children and the bomber and his son. Nineteen others were injured, including Fogler.

“I was fairly close, maybe 20 to 30 feet away,” Fogler says. “My memory is sketchy but I do remember trying to stand up but falling back down.” He was transported to Hermann Hospital where he underwent surgery to amputate the injured leg. Fogler was fit with his first prosthesis several weeks later at a Houston company called Muilenburg Prosthetics Inc.

Setting a career in motion

By high school, he started to realize after numerous visits to Muilenburg that he was interested in prosthetics as a career.

“Believe it or not, I liked the way the place smelled. It had a certain woodshop smell that I liked.”

After high school and a couple years of college, Fogler attended a technical school in New Orleans and worked as a prosthetics technician fabricating the devices for four years. He went on to earn a certification as a prosthetist and joined Muilenburg, where he worked for 38 years, retiring in 2012.

During that time, Fogler has seen many changes in the industry. He recalls that his first prosthesis was wood, with a rubber foot. He wore that type of prosthesis through college and then started using plastic and carbon fiber prostheses.

“The feet on prostheses are now carbon fiber; they provide more spring and feedback, making it easier to walk on them. Comfort level in general has improved because of new interfaces and materials that are available now,” he says.

What’s more, the training to enter the field has changed significantly since he started out.

“Over the years, it’s become a bachelor’s program and now requires a master’s degree like the one offered at BCM.”

Joining BCM

On joining BCM, Fogler says he knew the new master’s program here was something he wanted to be a part of.
For Kathy Cook, pursuing a doctorate of nursing practice in nurse anesthesia at Baylor College of Medicine is not only a necessity to continue her career as a nurse anesthetist and program administrator, but also a fulfillment of a dream she’s had throughout her career.

To continue as a program administrator in the field of nurse anesthesia, one must have a doctorate degree by the year 2018, so it was a necessity for Cook to pursue this degree. BCM has offered a degree in nurse anesthesia for many years but now the program has transitioned to a doctorate program.

“It’s so relevant to the work I’m doing, and I think that’s true for any nurse anesthetist,” said Cook. “We’ve stayed in a microcosm as nurse anesthetists just giving anesthesia in the operating room, and I think that obtaining a degree of this nature really gives us better tools in terms of relating to hospital administration, other nursing colleagues, other advance practice nurses, physicians, legislatures and so on. It helps us on so many levels.”

Cook is not your ordinary BCM student, however. She has a unique situation that allows her to pursue her doctorate virtually. She’s the interim program director for the nurse anesthesia program at Oregon Health and Science University and as such, cannot travel to BCM to train in this new program.

All of Cook’s courses are virtual and she is only required to travel three times throughout her coursework—the program orientation, the end of the first year and finally, commencement.

“The program at BCM has made it as easy as it can possibly be for someone who is working full-time and may be located out of state to obtain a degree of this nature,” said Cook. She says it does not detract at all from the rigor of the program.

“It’s difficult, it’s challenging, but it’s very rewarding as well,” she said. “The curriculum is so relevant to what we’re doing now.”

The program allows Cook, who hasn’t been in a classroom setting as a student for 25 years, to learn new tools that allow her to communicate better with her students in Oregon as well. Cook is also the chair of the National Council on Accreditation for Nurse Anesthesia Educational Programs, so time management is essential. The 24-month program allows students to enroll in one course at a time with seven week terms. The American Association of Colleges of Nursing recommends that all advance practice nurses become doctorally prepared. By 2025, all students in nurse anesthesia must graduate with doctorate degrees, so Cook will work to transition the program in Oregon as well. The training she receives at BCM will aid her in planning for this transition.

Yanuck says that he finds joy in working with the various tribes and visiting reservations and hopes students at BCM would consider working with the Indian Health Service.

Yanuck said he remembers his years at BCM with great fondness.

“I could never get it out of me to not want to help those in greatest need. That’s what the experience of working at Ben Taub instilled in me—caring for patients there, having that experience, being given that kind of opportunity from those patients and that sacred trust with their lives. After that, I was going to dedicate myself to the care of those in greatest need,” he said.
Alumni Events

Monday, May 27 (Memorial Day)
P.A. Alumni Reunion
5:00-7:00 p.m.
District ChopHouse in Washington, DC
509 7th St NW

Monday, May 27
Washington, DC, Area Alumni Reception
District ChopHouse
5:00-7:00 p.m. (a separate reception)

Wednesday, May 29
Dr. Klotman attending/presenting
Central Houston Alumni Reception
5:30 – 8:30 p.m.
Guadalajara Bar & Grille
2925 Southwest Freeway, Houston, Texas 77098

Tuesday, June 4
Dr. Klotman attending/presenting
Sugar Land Alumni Reception
6:00 - 8:00 p.m.
Lupe Tortilla
15801 Southwest Freeway, Sugar Land, Texas 77478

Wednesday, June 26, 2013
Dr. Klotman attending/presenting
The Woodlands Alumni Reception
6:00 – 8:00 p.m.
Lupe Tortilla
19437 Interstate 45, Shenandoah, Texas 77385

RSVP to alumnievents@bcm.edu or 713-798-6277.