



Family Practice of a Different Kind

BY DAVE SHELLES

Drs. Larry and Greg Seitz enjoyed sharing a dermatology practice in Cheyenne from July 2011 to December 2018 when Larry retired after 42 years in practice. Seitz Dermatology continues under Greg's ownership.

The family that practices medicine together stays together.

Just ask the Winters and Seitzes- practicing families in Wyoming who enjoy working together each day.

Drs. John and Bret Winter have worked as orthopedists at Wyoming Orthopedics and Sports Medicine in Cheyenne since 2013 when Bret joined the practice, while Drs. Larry and Greg Seitz practiced at Seitz Dermatology in Cheyenne from July 2011 until December 2018. Larry retired in 2018 after 42 years in practice, leaving the practice in good hands.

"It's rewarding (to see the business thrive under Greg). I did this for 42 years, so I've got 42 years of energy in developing a dermatology relationship with our community, and it's very nice to have that 42 years continue to blossom."

When John Winters' sons pondered their careers, he stressed the importance of finding bliss at work.

"I have another son (Eric) who's two years older than Bret, and he works as a dentist. When they were both still at home in high school is when, at the dinner table one night, they were talking about careers and both of them did well in school," he

said. "I said to them, 'I'm not going to tell you what you ought to do in life because you have to decide for yourself, but the most important thing is you're lucky enough to choose a career you like and you want to do it, instead of one you just can't stand.' I think that was important for both of them."

From the beginning, each father let his sons do their own things and never pressured them to follow into the footsteps of medicine- let alone a specific branch of medicine.

A Cheyenne native, Greg earned bachelor's degrees in zoology and psychology from the University of Wyoming before earning his medical degree from Oregon Health Sciences University and rotating through a few specialties during that time. Growing up with a dermatologist father, Greg knew the ins and outs of that field while also experiencing other things.

"It takes time to hone in and focus on a specialty because it's a life choice and you've got to be comfortable with that life choice and understand what that life choice means," he said. "You've got to work out the nuances of the good and the bad of lots of different practices."

"It's fairly easy at the beginning to remove some of the dif-

ferent specialties. Everybody has their own ideas about, 'I don't want to do this for sure, this might be OK,' and it goes back and forth. It was probably midway through my third year of medical school when I started to focus on dermatology and say, 'This is really what I want to do.'"

Also born and raised in Cheyenne, Bret spent time working in his father's orthopedic practice in high school and for a summer in college. After earning a degree in biology from the University of Kansas he went on to KU medical school in Kansas City, going through rotations but keeping orthopedics in mind.

"Part of it was working with my dad while I was in high school and then maybe one summer while I was in college," Bret said. "And then when I decided to go to medical school, orthopedics was the thing that interested me the most. I like the fact that you get to work with your hands and I like the fact that there are mechanical things involved. I felt like there were concrete ways to make people better, but I've learned that's not always the case. I like that problem-solving aspect."

After graduating medical school, Bret had practiced orthopedics in the Salt Lake City area while his wife, Natalie, completed her internship, residency and fellowship in anesthesiology at the University of Utah. Over time the two decided they wanted to move back to Cheyenne, and during a family ski trip in Steamboat Springs, John made Bret a job offer.

"So we were riding the ski lift, and I told him, 'If you decide you want to come [to Cheyenne], there's a place for you, and I'll basically give you whatever surgery I can give you to get you started. But that's your choice, whatever you want to do.' That was the end of the conversation," John said.

"Six months later or so, he called and said, 'We want to come to Cheyenne.' I said, 'That's great.' He knew that I had offered to make a place for him. Growing up here, he knew what it was like... And there was a good practice opportunity for his wife, and I think that was part of it."

Larry made a similar offer to Greg when the youngster finished his medical degree.

"I actually asked him to join the practice when he got out of medical school," Larry said. "But we kept those communication doors open, and there's a lot of unsettled decisions being made throughout that whole time. And I think as he got to the end of his residency we firmed it up. I think that he understood that the door was open for him to come here for a long time."

Greg said he signed the standard three-year contract, understanding that he and his wife might change their minds about Cheyenne. That didn't happen, and he purchased the practice in 2014, before the initial three-year contract was up. Now he said he can't imagine being anywhere else, in any other field.

"Let's be honest, I hope someday that one of my children comes in and takes over for me. I can't think of any easier transition," he said.

"There's something about being able to have an understanding of what happens and how the patients and how the practice runs, and then have someone you know and love take over for you. That's true of all business. I think most parents want their



Dr. Bret Winter, left, joined his father Dr. John Winter in 2012 at the Wyoming Orthopedic and Sports Medicine office in Cheyenne.

kids to come into their business. It's what I like and what I enjoy doing. It's nice to share a common interest with your kids. I'm here until I retire at this point. Hopefully someday I have somebody who takes over for me."

While Larry has headed into retirement with the dermatology practice in the worthy hands of his son, John said he tried to retire once but admitted got bored without the work. He continues to practice, heading to work every day alongside Bret. The two said they have a nice back-and-forth, things one doctor might have a greater knowledge of than the other.

And neither one sees an end in sight.

"It's nice to have someone you can bounce ideas off of, and look at things together," Bret said. "We share interests at work and interests outside of work as well. I probably won't be in practice with my son when he gets into a field where he's working. But if I am, it would be nice to share a common interest with him like that."

"I get to see him in ways I wouldn't get to otherwise," John said. "It's been quite a pleasure to see how well he takes care of patients. He's an excellent surgeon and it's fun to operate with him. We've had the last few years, almost always having a good time together, more than what most people get to do. It's been a pleasurable existence."