

UCSF Department of Orthopaedic Surgery

Our History



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Dr. LeRoy C. Abbott

History of UCSF Orthopaedic Surgery

The UCSF Department of Orthopaedic Surgery has a rich history which begins in 1930 under the tutelage of Dr. LeRoy C. Abbott.

By 1930, Orthopaedic Surgery had developed into a field requiring specialized knowledge and techniques. Dr. Howard Hafzinger, chairman of the Department of Surgery at UCSF School of Medicine, chose Dr. Abbott to develop orthopaedic surgery as a separate division within the Department.

Abbott graduated from UC School of Medicine in 1914 and had postgraduate training at Harvard Medical School. During World War I, Abbott had joined the Army and practiced surgery in Edinburgh, London, and at U.S. base hospitals in France. After the war, he completed a surgical residency in Edinburgh, then taught at the University of Michigan and Washington University in St. Louis.

One of the first things Abbott did in his new capacity was to start a brace shop. In January, 1931, he recruited August Kern from Shriners Hospital for Crippled Children in St. Louis to open a facility to manufacture orthopaedic appliances for patients of the clinics.

From 1930 to 1949, Abbott slowly built a first class orthopaedic surgery group by recruiting new teachers with excellent qualifications and expanding the [undergraduate](#) teaching program.

In July, 1949, Orthopaedic Surgery became a separate, autonomous department with Abbott as chairman. The quantity and quality of research as well as the caliber of professors who conducted the research, had a strong impact on the level of teaching the Department was able to provide. Students working in close association with professors were exposed to basic research and research aimed at solving clinical problems.

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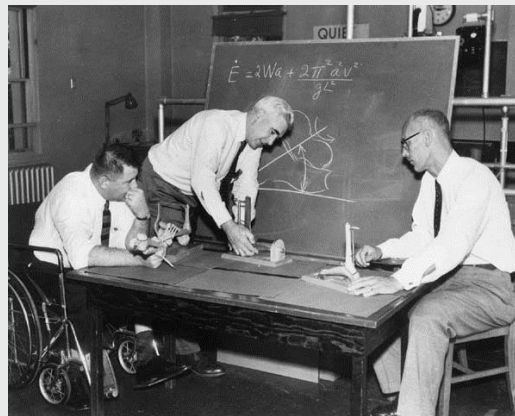
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In 1957, Dr. Verne Inman became the second chairman of the Department of Orthopaedic Surgery. Serving as chairman from 1957 to 1970, he is best known for his role in starting the Biomechanics Lab, which combined engineering, science and medicine. He directed this laboratory until 1973.



Dr. Verne Inman



Dr. Inman was born in San Jose in 1905, and he attended the University of California at Berkeley as an undergraduate. While in medical school, he worked as an assistant in anatomy and earned an M.A. degree for studies of electrical stimulation of cutaneous nerves in humans.

Upon completing his medical studies, he commenced a Ph.D in Anatomy. An internship and residency in orthopaedics followed, and by 1940, Verne Inman had become a clinical instructor in orthopaedic surgery as well as an instructor in anatomy.

As World War II neared its end, he published an important paper on the biomechanics of the shoulder. Shortly thereafter, he began developing a research program directed at the physical problems of the tens of thousands of amputees who were returning from the war. The lower-extremity research program, in which he was one of a major leader, began as the Biomechanics Laboratory at UCSF and UC Berkeley.

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Dr. Donald Lucas

Dr. Donald Lucas became chairman following Dr. Inman, and served from 1970 to 1978.

During Dr. Lucas's tenure, the department achieved a number of "firsts": first total knee replacement, first total elbow replacement, first finger joint implant (1971), and first ankle replacement (1973).



Dr. William Murray

Dr. William Murray, the department's fourth chairman, already had a reputation as a pioneer when he took the helm in 1978. During his tenure, the Department became a center of total joint replacement surgery.

The surgeons on staff worked with the School of Dentistry to develop antibiotic cement for use in joint replacement and to use photogrammetry to x-ray the hip.

Surgeons in the Department developed artificial joints for the hip and the knee, eventually making important contributions to the development of cement-less devices.

Dr. Murray was born Dec. 4, 1924 in Ottawa, Canada. He graduated from St. Patrick's College, Ottawa University and McGill University School of Medicine in Montreal. He completed his internship and surgical residency at the Detroit Receiving Hospital and finished his orthopedic residency at UCSF, where he became a faculty member in 1958.

After 32 years at UCSF, Dr. Murray was awarded an honorary chair in the department of orthopedic surgery in 1993 and he was voted teacher of the year three times by his orthopedic residents.

With the help of collaborators, Dr. Murray developed several artificial joints for the hip and one for the knee -- one of which his friend and colleague, Dr. Robert Gilbert, implanted on him.

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Dr. David Bradford

Dr. David Bradford served as chairman from 1991 – 2004.

Dr. Bradford was instrumental in assisting the Department in evolving from a regional service to one with an international reputation in all areas of musculoskeletal disease.

By enhancing clinical programs and recruiting highly skilled clinician/teachers in all of the orthopaedic subspecialties, he promoted the department to national prominence.

Prior to chairing the Department, Dr. Bradford was chief of Spine Surgery at the University of Minnesota Hospitals. He received his medical degree from the University of Pennsylvania, and completed his residency and a fellowship at Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center/NY Orthopedic Hospital in 1969.



Dr. Thomas Parker Vail

In 2007, Dr. Thomas Parker Vail joined the Department of Orthopaedic Surgery as its sixth Chairman.

Dr. Vail's research interests include hip and knee joint biomechanics, reconstruction and repair of articular cartilage, and clinical outcomes after joint replacement. His clinical interests include joint preservation options for younger patients, hip and knee joint replacement, hip resurfacing, and treatment of osteonecrosis.

Dr. Vail is piloting many new initiatives, including the creation of our new Orthopaedic Institute at Mission Bay, which houses outpatient operating facilities and state-of-the-art programs in Sports Medicine, Hand and Upper Extremity surgery, Foot and Ankle reconstruction, Prosthetics and Orthotics, Human Performance assessment, and Sports Injury prevention.

Other important projects recently started include the renovation of the basic science labs, with expansion of both the faculty and the research mission. The Department has also formed a section for clinical outcomes research and hired a Director for that program. Education remains a focus for the Department, highlighted by an innovative curriculum for residents that includes a very unique exposure to the role of orthopaedic surgery in global health.