THE SENIOR CARDIOVASCULAR SURGICAL SOCIETY

To the Editor:

Recently, a prominent cardiovascular surgeon visited my private office and was reviewing the items on my “ego wall,” which features diplomas, certificates, and a few photographs. He asked me about a prominent plaque entitled “Senior Cardiovascular Surgical Society” (Figure 1). I explained that in 1991, Drs George Magovern, Sr, and John Ochsner had created a society of senior cardiovascular surgeons, all of whom were past 60 years old and were respected pioneers in the field. They included Jay Ankeney, Case Western Reserve University Medical Center; Harvey Bender, Vanderbilt University Medical Center; Mortimer Buckley, Massachusetts General Hospital; Richard Cleveland, Tufts University Medical Center; John Connolly, University of California Irvine Medical Center; Denton Cooley, Texas Heart Institute; James DeWeese, University of Rochester Medical Center; Paul Ebert, University of California San Francisco Medical Center (and at the time Executive Director, American College of Surgeons); James Mackenzie, University of Medicine and Dentistry, NJ; George Magovern, Sr, Allegheny General Hospital; John Ochsner, Ochsner Clinic Foundation; and Norman Shumway, Stanford University Medical Center. Most of us

were chairs of our departments of surgery. Most importantly, we all shared one main interest—the game of golf. I designed the society’s diploma, which included a logo and a Latin motto, *Mors Ortiosa Est*, roughly translated as “Death Takes a Holiday.” (We joked that the mortality was expected to decline during our absence from our respective institutions.)

The initial group consisted of 12 members, so there were 3 foursomes. Each annual meeting was held at a resort area with a well-known attached golf course. The inaugural get-together was held in 1992, at the PGA National Resort, Palm Beach Gardens, Fla. All the meetings included a series of scientific sessions, which covered a wide array of cardiovascular topics and satisfied the Internal Revenue Service’s requirements for deductions. At many meetings, a scientific presentation was made by an invited guest, who was often a good golfer and played with our group. We enjoyed the presentations, the sport, the informality, and the fellowship. In 2001, at The Villas of Grand Cypress, in Orlando, Fla, I made my one and only hole-in-one on a 165-yard hole. Cocktails that evening were on me!

A few years ago, the meetings were discontinued. The last one was held in

2003 at Torrey Pines, in San Diego. Norman Shumway declined to attend because of deep venous thrombosis. Soon, similar ailments began to occur among the members. With time, most of us retired from surgery and cut back on playing golf for health reasons. Some have gone to the Great Operating Room in the Sky. I miss our meetings, which are among my fondest recollections. It seems a pity that our specialty no longer has a group of senior surgeons dedicated to education, fellowship, and recreation—especially golf. I would encourage eligible surgeons in our organization to develop a new chapter of the Senior Cardiovascular Surgical Society.

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FIGURE 1. Senior Cardiovascular Surgical Society “diploma” from the wall of Dr Denton Cooley.