



"So let me introduce my staff. I'm the only surgeon, and I have one nurse, four billing clerks, two accountants, two attorneys, a nutritionist, two social workers, a Medicaid specialist..."



"George, the doctor told me that you're my biggest risk factor."



"After the lab studies, angiograms, MRI, and the full body CT scans, the physical examination revealed the knife in his back."



"Thanks again, Virginia, for continuing in our study. We have just a few new forms to complete..."

The Surgeon Is in the House. And He's Laughing.

"You realize you've got to be a little nutty to do this, right?," **Walter Pories** '55M (MD), '62M (Res) says into the telephone.

He's just come from a presentation by a visiting scholar—"this really fancy professor"—on palliative care. "She was so serious," he says, drawing out the word serious. "Seeee-rious." He's already sketched up a cartoon in which a patient arises from bed and removes the "Do Not Resuscitate" sign from his door.


Pories has gone to (and delivered) a long list of presentations, and sat through (and led) countless faculty meetings in his 50-plus-year career in academic medicine. He arrived at East Carolina University in 1977 to help establish the medical school. The founding chair of surgery, he's now the director of East Carolina's Metabolic Surgery Research Group.

He's responded to life in academic medicine through humor since his time as a resident at Rochester. When it came time to choose who among his 12 cohorts in the general surgery residency program would remain to become chief residents, "I had some real concerns, like everybody else," he says. "But my biggest concern was that fact that I made cartoons of a lot of these faculty

members. I thought, 'I'm really dead meat here.'"

It turns out Pories was wrong. "By God, I got picked to be a chief resident," he says. "So I said, 'What in the world happened?' And they said, 'Well, the only people upset were the ones you didn't cartoon.'"

Pories's cartoons are regular features of the journals *Bariatric Times*, which runs "Walter Pories's Cartoon Corner, as well as *Surgery for Obesity and Related Diseases*, which features a cartoon by Pories on the back page of every issue. In 2015 the American College of Surgeons published a collection of Pories's cartoons, *Is There a Surgeon in the House?*

"I was amazed that the American College of Surgeons would ask to publish" the collection, Pories says. He deals with controversial themes in the messy and uncertain world of fast-changing health care economics. "Patients have become commodities, and the rules are made to save money," he says. He doesn't spare the academic leaders caught in that bind. But so far, he's kept many of them laughing. 

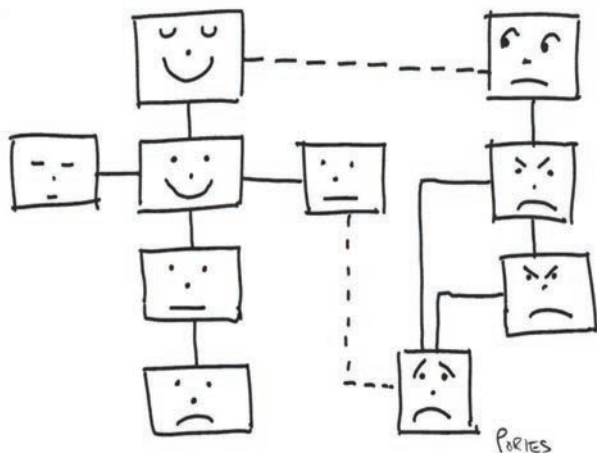
—KAREN MCCALLY '02 (PHD)



“My faculty agrees with you that we need to run this center like a business. Accordingly, we voted to shut down the medical school and invest the reserves.”



“Yes, you are fully insured.”
“Yes, we require six months of consecutive visits for dietary control prior to bariatric surgery even though the NIH has found it not useful.”
“No, of course we don’t pay for these visits.”



Departmental Organization Chart

(Continued from Page 47) for a young chef at any restaurant—then left D.C. for Raleigh, North Carolina, quickly finding a job in a much more casual restaurant. There, he learned for the first time about seasonal cooking, and that it was possible to have fun in the kitchen.

In 2007 Lustbader moved to Chicago, working in the heady environment of a Michelin-starred restaurant (North Pond) and eventually finding a home in a kitchen pioneering farm-to-table eating (Lula Café). There, he met Vincent and went on to work under his direction for five years at Nightwood. A regular in the Michelin Guide’s Bib Gourmand category (for restaurants offering exceptional food at a moderate price), Nightwood specialized in locally sourced products and conceptual recipes.

Lustbader and Vincent clicked. Their bond remains palpable. “I’ve always liked working with Ben,” says Vincent. On a May afternoon, the duo joked and teased one another through a round of recipe testing for Giant.

Experimenting with a microwave cake, they tried one batter mixture with eggs, piping it through an aerosol into different containers. The cake, baked in a plastic cup, had a Wonder Bread-like texture, but could only be torn, not cut. They tried an alternative, baked on a ceramic plate, which turned into a spongy crepe. Then

“We were invested 24/7 at Nightwood, and at some point, no matter how good your intensions are, you’ve got nothing left. You’re burning the candle at both ends.”—Ben Lustbader ’01

they tried a batter with sour cream, which burned in a shallow dish, leaving a sweet flavor resembling marshmallows. In a ramekin, it became a rubbery rice cake.

The recipe testing process is part inspiration, part experimentation. Recently the partners spent about 20 hours working out the perfect onion ring; other dishes can come together in minutes. The cake idea needed time to rest.

Giant will have a menu of small and large plates, based as much as possible on locally sourced, Midwestern-style fare. While Nightwood had been a foodie destination, Lustbader, Vincent, and a third partner, beverage director Josh Perlman, hope the new restaurant will be much more of a neighborhood mainstay, affordable and unpretentious. They also want it to be a foundation for a good life outside the kitchen.

“Priorities are a big deal,” Lustbader says, “We were invested 24/7 at Nightwood, and at some point, no matter how good your intensions are, you’ve got nothing left. You’re burning the candle at both ends.”

Vincent says that the meat of animals slaughtered in distress tastes different from that which comes from animals who die peacefully. Similarly, he says, “if you’re stressed out and you don’t like you your job, are you really going to do the best job that you’re being asked to?”

Lustbader doesn’t quite agree. “There’s been tons of amazing food that’s been put out by completely stressed out, miserable cooks, at the highest levels,” he says. Vincent has second thoughts. “Most of it, actually,” he admits, laughing.

But that’s not the point. “Our goal,” says Lustbader, “is to show that you don’t have to have that kind of culture to create great food.” 