

A Cowboy brain surgeon

Anything can be possible with a degree from Oklahoma State University, even brain surgery.

Neurosurgeon Barry Pollard, a 1973 biochemistry graduate, began his academic studies preparing to be a veterinarian.

Pollard, who was raised in the agricultural community of Hennessey, Okla., grew up with a strong farming and ranching background. As a youth, he was active in FFA and enjoyed working on his family's farm. His interest in farming was encouraged by his father, Russell Pollard, who was a high school vocational agriculture instructor.



Above: Neurosurgeon Barry Pollard lives near Waukomis, Okla. Right: A creek flows through Pollard Farms. (Photos by Amanda Jones and Chris Stephens)

His father and all four of his siblings graduated from OSU, so attending the university was part of a family tradition.

When Barry Pollard entered college, he wanted to become a veterinarian. However, a string of unusual circumstances caused him to change his mind. One fateful day, an "ornery" cow changed his future plans.

"My dad sent us out to treat a cow, and we did not have very good facilities," said Pollard. "The vet threw a rope at a cow and unfortunately caught her. The cow tore down the barn door, and it fell on me and the vet. It was about then that I decided to go to medical school."

He was also encouraged to attend medical school by his roommates in FarmHouse fraternity who were studying to become doctors. Following their lead, Pollard began working toward a degree in biochemistry.

"OSU was the greatest place for me," said Pollard. "I could absolutely do anything I wanted to do. I could pick any future I wanted to pick. There was always a lot of enthusiasm and people with goal-oriented futures at OSU."

Pollard recommends students take full advantage of all the opportunities available at OSU. He was active in a fraternity and competed in Spring Sing, Varsity Revue and intramural sports.

"It is important to have a good time and become a well-rounded student," said Pollard. "But, you cannot get away from the obligation that you need to study and work hard."

While attending the university, he had a part-time job in the agronomy department, working in the weeds lab and organizing research projects for graduate students.

"All of it was very scientific until the last chore," said Pollard. "Measuring how well a chemical performed was dependant upon maintaining a steady hoeing rate, which was sometimes more difficult at three in the afternoon than it was in the morning."

Upon completion of his undergraduate degree, Pollard attended the University of

Oklahoma Medical School where he specialized in neurosurgery.

"I have always been interested in the surgery part of medical school, and I was fortunate enough to meet some neurosurgeons who took me under their wings and were very kind to me," said Pollard.

Pollard has been practicing neurosurgery at St. Mary's Hospital in Enid, Okla., since 1982.

"We probably do 15 surgeries a week on average; we specialize in spinal injuries and brain tumors," said Pollard. "Having the training and knowledge to be able to help people with their pain or disease problems is very satisfying."

Bob Kropp, professor of animal science at OSU, is one of Pollard's patients.

"Dr. Pollard is a tremendous neurosurgeon, world renowned and highly respected for his skills," said Kropp. "It is tremendous that a man of his medical stature has continued to live in Waukomis and work in Enid. He is an asset to the people of Oklahoma."

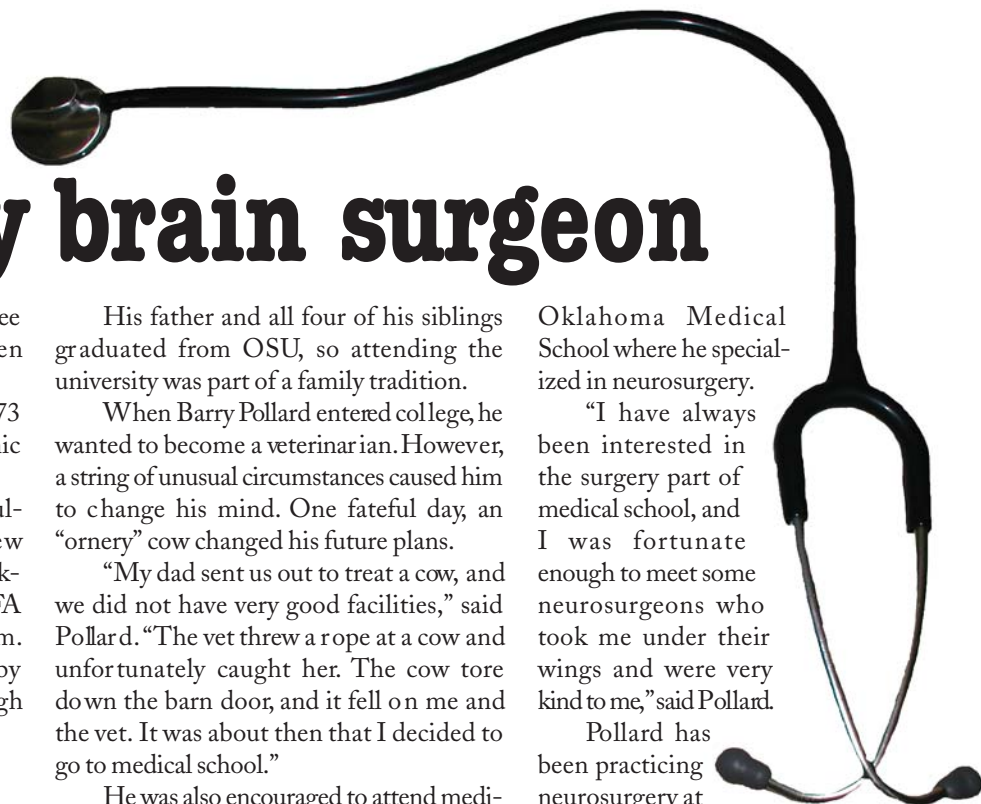
Most of Pollard's patients have come from Oklahoma, as well as southern Kansas and the Texas Panhandle.

"I have been told that if you have problems with your spine or brain there are only four places to go: the Mayo Clinic, John Hopkins, M.D. Anderson and St. Mary's Hospital in Enid, Okla.," Kropp said.

Pollard works with fellow neurosurgeon Bruce Pendleton and nurse Regina Krause at the hospital.

"If it were not for having them to share work with, I would not be able to be involved as much in other projects," said Pollard.

Barry Pollard's "other projects" are more than hobbies. His agricultural interests include P&K Equipment and Pollard Farms.



In 1983, Pollard bought the John Deere dealership in Kingfisher, Okla., with partner Wendel Kirtley, the managing operator who retired in 1996.

“The operation, which is called P&K Equipment, has become very successful,” said Pollard. “In the next 10 years, you will see our dealerships grow and prosper.”

As the business flourished, Pollard purchased dealerships in Enid, Norman and Purcell with new partners Shane Clifton and Drew Combs.

“The opportunity to own and operate a John Deere dealership in my home county offered me a future with my kind of people,” said Pollard. “The hard-working farm and ranch families of Oklahoma are a pleasure to work with.”

Through his involvement with P&K Equipment, Pollard is a supporter of 4-H and FFA activities in the counties with his dealerships. Helping with the areas’ premium sales allows Pollard to give back to the community. Another way he supports local agricultural programs is through regional and state youth shows.

After developing his private neurosurgical practice and building a dealership business, Pollard decided to invest in developing a cattle operation. He purchased land and cattle and began a stocker-calf operation.

Eventually, he became interested in raising registered Angus cattle as a project he and his family could work on together.

“He is a self-made man who is very down to earth,” Kropp said. “I have even seen him in the pastures with his scrubs on. He is an example of the local boy from a small town who made good. He operates one of the elite Angus programs. He is an asset to the American Angus Association.”

Pollard said his main goal for the Angus breed is to have the product remain the most highly sought after meat product in the industry, something accomplished through product testing and genetic selection.

“I wanted to use my medical knowledge of genetics, embryo transplant and artificial insemination to produce high-quality Angus cattle,” said Pollard. “Hopefully, it will let us develop something that will stay in the family a long time.”

Pollard has three sons, Barrett, Austin and Preston, as well as two step-children, April Smith and Jeffrey King. His wife is Roxanne Pollard.

Next semester, his youngest son, Preston, who is the most active in the family’s farm, plans to study agribusiness at OSU.

“I am not sure I want everyone to know, but the best advice my dad gives me is to take the good from the people you have to be involved with and leave the bad,” said Preston Pollard.

Barry Pollard said helping his children to become successful adults is a major priority for him.

“I want to always be able to help my family grow and be as successful in their careers and family lives as possible,” he said.

Barry Pollard has proven an OSU alumnus can achieve a wide variety of goals ... from the farm to the operating room to the dealership and back to the farm. ♦ *By Amanda Faith Jones, St. Francis, Kan.*

