

Constructing the future of medical progress

By Danielle A. LeBlanc

To others, it may have appeared to be a typical case of homesickness. Then a freshman at the University of California, Berkeley, Tom Hornaday transferred to the University of California, Los Angeles, so he could spend weekends with his mother in Chula Vista, Calif. She passed away later that year, losing a five-year battle with breast cancer.

“Losing your mother when you’re 19 is tough,” says Tom, who later returned to — and graduated from — UC-Berkeley. “We were a close-knit family, and her death deeply affected me. I became extremely concerned about cancer as a disease.”

As a result of their personal experiences with cancer, Tom and his wife, Ruth Ann, became involved in cancer research. He served as chairman of the advisory board at the Arizona Cancer Center in Tucson, but his commitment to fighting the disease intensified in 1990 when the Hornadays’ daughter Kristi was diagnosed with malignant melanoma.

Because of his involvement with the Arizona Cancer Center, Tom was able to consult with some of the best physicians about his daughter’s care. After months of researching available treatment options, the Hornadays discovered a remarkable lack of communication and teamwork among cancer centers around the country.

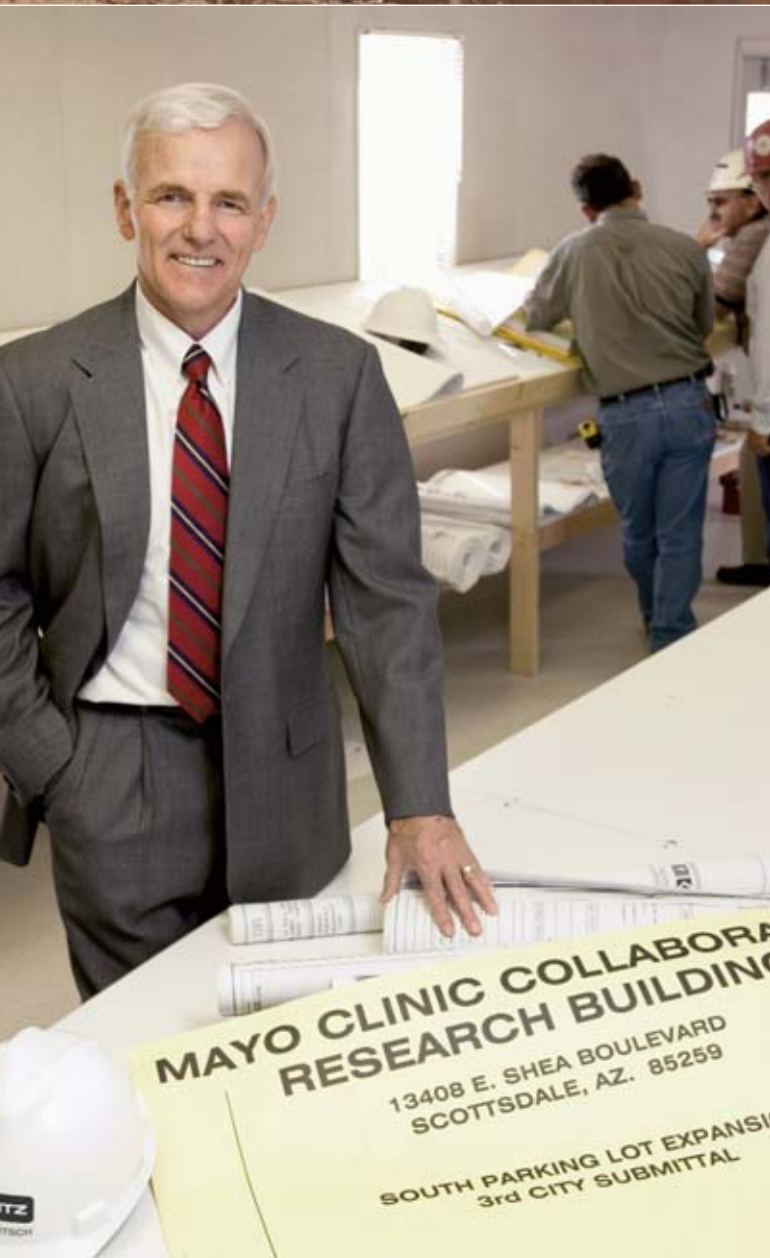
“We were disappointed in the lack of cooperation between the institutions and individuals who essentially research the same diseases,” says Tom. “Physicians and researchers need to cooperate with one another and share information if they are going to provide maximum benefits to patients in the shortest amount of time.”

In 1993, Kristi Hornaday Garrett lost her battle with melanoma. She was 26.



Tom Hornaday has helped bring together Mayo Clinic and TGen in a promising research collaboration at Mayo Clinic in Scottsdale.

PHOTOS BY RICK MADSEN



Above: A 110,000-square-foot biomedical research facility is under construction at Mayo Clinic in Scottsdale campus.
Left: Tom Hornaday's belief in the benefits of collaborative cancer research comes through in the plans for Mayo Clinic Collaborative Research Building.

Combining strengths

Tom's unwavering interest in cancer research and his involvement with the Arizona Cancer Center led him to its director, Dan Von Hoff, M.D., whom he assisted with the design of a melanoma initiative with the aim of developing tailored treatments for the disease. The future of cancer research, Dr. Von Hoff told Tom at the time, lies in genetics and the ability to manipulate genetic responses at the molecular level.

It was this interest in genetics that encouraged Tom and Dr. Von Hoff to begin their work with the Translational Genomics Research Institute (TGen) and the International Genomics Consortium (IGC), both of

"I have loved three women in my life unconditionally: my mother, my wife and my daughter. Each of them has been a great blessing to me. My mother died from breast cancer when she was 52, and I was 19. My daughter died from melanoma when she was 26, and I was 52. I am thankful that my dear wife is in great health. My hope, my prayer and my belief is that the research conducted in this building will result in treatments that will provide cures so others will not experience these same kinds of untimely loss."

— Tom Hornaday



Tom and Ruth Ann Hornaday have channeled their family losses from cancer into action by helping cancer research collaborations.

which had recently committed to locating facilities in Arizona. Dr. Von Hoff urged Tom to work closely with geneticist Jeffrey Trent, Ph.D., president and scientific director for TGen, whose primary interest over the past two decades has been melanoma research.

"Once the commitment was made for these two groups to move to Arizona, I volunteered to assist with the construction of this facility in downtown Phoenix," says Tom. "I attended construction planning meetings to ensure the parties involved were communicating effectively."

With construction under way on the downtown project, TGen signed an agreement to collaborate with Mayo Clinic in Scottsdale, Ariz., to conduct joint melanoma research projects. This research would take place in Mayo Clinic's existing facility, the Samuel C. Johnson Medical Research Building. Dick Love, chief operating officer for TGen, suggested that Mayo lease a portion of the adjacent property to TGen, which would construct additional laboratory space for both institutions.

The intent was to have Tom construct the building, with the assistance of the city of Scottsdale, and to donate the building to Mayo at a later date.

In early 2004, less than nine months after initial talks, ground was broken on the 110,000-square-foot biomedical research facility. Mayo Clinic Collaborative Research Building will house research laboratories for a new TGen initiative called the Center for Translational Drug Development, as well as provide additional laboratory space for Mayo Clinic and other research entities. Construction is scheduled to be complete by mid 2005.

"When someone you dearly love is fighting the battle against cancer, you want to do everything you can to help in that battle," Tom says. "With time, the research conducted in this new facility by Mayo Clinic, TGen and others will result in the development of new therapies for various cancers and other diseases. The collaborative efforts of these institutions will produce exciting results." ■