

J.E. “Betsy” Tuttle

Keywords: J.E. “Betsy” Tuttle, Critical Care Fellowship, Pierre Clavien, David C. Sabiston, William B. Anderson, Danny Jacobs, Mike Slaughter, East Carolina University, W. Randolph Chitwood, Women Surgeons

Summary: During the interview, Dr. Tuttle describes her first interaction with Dr. Sabiston during her residency at the New England Deaconess Hospital, her fellowship at Duke with Dr. Pierre Clavien, her experience as faculty at Duke, her pregnancies and maternity leave during her tenure, and her professional experiences after she left Duke.

Stewart [00:00:00] This is Emily Stewart and I'm interviewing Dr. Betsy Tuttle, who was on staff while Dr. Sabiston was Chair of Surgery at Duke. Dr. Tuttle is now chair of the Department of Surgery at ECU [East Carolina University]. So, could you go ahead and start off by talking a little bit about where you're from and where you first went to college?

Tuttle [00:00:20] Oh, sure. I'm from Madison, North Carolina which is not too far from where you are.

Stewart [00:00:26] Oh.

Tuttle [00:00:26] It's right across the Virginia line down 29.

Stewart [00:00:29] Wow. OK. Yeah, that's not far.

Tuttle [00:00:30] And I went to college at Wake Forest, which is... Wade Stokes, one of my college friends is some Dean at Virginia Tech now.

Stewart [00:00:42] Oh, wow. Great. And then, what was your undergrad degree in?

Tuttle [00:00:49] Biology?

Stewart [00:00:51] Biology. Great. So, when did you decide you wanted to pursue medicine?

Tuttle [00:00:58] I was a late bloomer. I didn't decide to do anything until my third year in college. Second or third year in college. I had wanted to be a biologist. I had run track and didn't wanna... I had run track at Wake Forest and didn't want to be a doctor because we were all noncompliant. [laughter]

Stewart [00:01:24] So, where did you end up going to medical school?

Tuttle [00:01:27] Wake Forest.

Stewart [00:01:28] Wake Forest too.

Tuttle [00:01:29] Bowman Gray.

Stewart [00:01:30] Okay, great. And what years did you go to medical school?

Tuttle [00:01:34] I'm old. I went in 1980 to [19]84. So wait, [19]84 is when I went to college. [19]84 to [19]88 is when I went to medical school.

Stewart [00:01:44] Great. So then, when you were in medical school, what got you interested in surgery?

Tuttle [00:01:50] Oh, you know, it was love at first sight. It just was where I felt like I fit. And I belonged and I enjoyed it. And I was really bad on internal medicine about the differential diagnosis because it was a mental exercise that I wasn't very good at and frankly wasn't very interested in. If you knew what the problem was, why did you have to discuss everything else? [laughter]

Stewart [00:02:18] That's funny. So, where did you end up for your residency? Was that Wake Forest, too?

Tuttle [00:02:24] That's a long story. Just briefly, I ended up doing my internship at Wake Forest and took a categorical spot at the University of West Virginia. And after my second year, they sent me to Boston to do research and I stayed.

Stewart [00:02:45] Oh.

Tuttle [00:02:46] So, I stayed in Boston. I finished... I did a year at the children's. That was [19]89 to [19]91. And then, I spent the next four years at the New England Deaconess Hospital.

Stewart [00:03:02] Oh, wow.

Tuttle [00:03:03] So, I finished in [19]95 at the Deaconess.

Stewart [00:03:10] OK. So then, [19]95, was that when you did a fellowship at Duke?

Tuttle [00:03:14] I did a fellowship at Duke. I did a fellowship at UNC [University of North Carolina] from [19]95 to [19]96, I was a critical care fellow. And then, I did a transplant fellowship at Duke. [19]96, it was kind of odd. I went from [19]96 to [19]97 as a transplant fellow, but they decided in [19]97, because they were short critical care attendings in the surgical intensive care unit. So, I became a junior faculty member and the transplant fellow. [laughter]

Stewart [00:03:50] Well, I guess that was a nice transition. Wow. So, what was it like during your fellowship slash junior faculty time at Duke? I think you were only there for a couple years while Dr. Sabiston was still Chair is that right?

Tuttle [00:04:11] Well, he had retired.

Stewart [00:04:13] Completely?

Tuttle [00:04:15] He had, well. Define completely.

Stewart [00:04:19] Well, he was still around. I knew that.

Tuttle [00:04:20] He was still around.

Stewart [00:04:20] Yeah, okay. So, did you interact with him much?

Tuttle [00:04:27] That's an interesting story. He was our last visiting professor when I was at the Deaconess Hospital.

Stewart [00:04:36] OK.

Tuttle [00:04:37] He came as one of the visiting professors and this is before the Deaconess merged with the Beth Israel. So, it was a it was an independent training program at that time. And the Chairman at the deaconess with a fellow by the name of Glenn Steele. So, that's s-t-e-e-l-e. And if you look him up, you'll notice that he's the he was the... He did a lot of things. He was the C.E.O...He was the Dean at Pritzker's in Chicago. He then moved to the Geisinger Clinic and was responsible for their efficiency, modern management strategies and that sort of thing. So, Dr. Steele is very... He has a very irreverent sense of humor. How about that? [laughter]. And so, at the time, I think, if I am correct and I think I am, actually. At the time, they had not finished a woman in surgery at Duke. Maybe they had finished one. They had finished Chace Lottich, I think at the end in the beginning, the early [19]90s. And he had been, Dr. Sabiston had been to Wake Forest when I was a medical student and had given grand rounds. It was quite clear that he did not... He did not think that women have the ability to be surgeons. That we we were very... We couldn't manifest the dedication or whatever. And he came to the Deaconess as our visiting professor. Well, we were in the [19]90s, one of the only programs in the country that were 50 percent women. And Glenn Steele... You know, Boston was a very competitive market for residents. You know, if you had a Harvard medical student, most people in the Harvard system did not go to the Deaconess for surgery. They went to the Mass. General or the Brigham. And so, he felt the way that he could accrue talent was by recruiting women. And he was very dedicated to that. Not necessarily because he was a proponent of women's rights, but he wanted the best people in the job at the time. And he was sort of very Machiavellian that way. And in some ways is still, having family had lunch with him recently. [laughter]. But I digress. So, he decided when Dr. Sabiston came that he would bring the girls. And he put Dr.. .. There were, let's see, there were five chiefs and he put Dr. Sabiston between me at dinner and Liz Pomfret. Now, Liz is the Chairman of Transplant Surgery at Denver.

Stewart [00:07:58] Oh, OK.

Tuttle [00:07:59] And she... I'm about 5'11", almost six feet. Brown hair. Very, not very flamboyant, I would say. At least I wasn't at that time. Liz, on the other hand, was about 5'6", 5'7". Platinum blonde. Makeup was never out of place.

Stewart [00:08:27] Oh, wow.

Tuttle [00:08:28] So, we went to dinner and she wore... I never will forget this as long as I live. She wore a pink satin suit.

Stewart [00:08:41] Wow.

Tuttle [00:08:41] Diamond buttons.

Stewart [00:08:43] Oh.

Tuttle [00:08:46] She looked fabulous as she always did. And this was the mid [19]90s. So, I was wearing a dark, charcoal gray, Donna Karan suit. Very understated, makeup wasn't very bright. Her makeup was always really bright. But it was perfect for her. And he

was fascinated by her. So, he sat with his, you know after we made the introductions and and where we're from and what we do and that sort of thing, what we're interested in doing. He very... he turned his chair slightly away for me. And spent most of the dinner talking to Liz. He, I mean, he literally was fascinated by her.

Stewart [00:09:47] Wow.

Tuttle [00:09:48] Liz had a tendency to, you know, that was back in the day when we didn't have an 80 hour workweek. So, if you gave any of us a glass of wine, we were completely under the table. And so, Liz spent most of the evening talking about Kim Lyerly, you know, HKL, H. Kim Lyerly. Lyerly. Dr. Lyerly. And how Dr. Lyerly was going to be the next Chairman and that sort of stuff. And I remember Liz leaned over to him after a couple of glasses of wine and said, "So, Dave, tell me... Women at Duke, I hear they don't do so well." Glenn Steele started laughing. He was directly across the table from us, and I think he set this thing up in retrospect. And so, he busted out laughing and our program director Al Bothy. He was across from me was horrified. And Dr. Sabiston stammered through some response and then turned his chair to me and spent the rest of the evening talking with me. [laughter].

Stewart [00:10:57] Oh man. That's a great story. [laughter]. Wow.

Tuttle [00:11:04] "So, Dave, tell me. I hear women and they don't do so well."

Stewart [00:11:09] "They don't do so well." That's awesome. I wish you had a picture of all of you sitting there.

Tuttle [00:11:17] It was really funny.

Stewart [00:11:18] Wow. So, did Dr. Sabiston... was he the one that hired you at Duke? Or was it the next chair?

Tuttle [00:11:25] It was Bob Anderson.

Stewart [00:11:26] OK. OK. And were you one of the first women on staff at Duke?

Tuttle [00:11:34] There was a woman who was there before me. It was... Oh thunder. What was her name? Hang on a second. It was the pediatric surgeon's wife. Why can't I remember her name. I'm usually really good at this. She was on staff. There was another woman in E.N.T. Which technically wasn't, which technically at the time with the Department of Surgery, but not the core group of the department. And the woman that was... The woman that was on the faculty wasn't really on faculty. She was clinically appointed, but didn't work there. She was doing advocacy work for the American College in Washington. And so, she would come back and forth to Duke to be with her husband, but she wasn't always, you know, she didn't have a clinical practice. So she kind of was in the department, but kind of not.

Stewart [00:12:49] I'm trying to look through my notes to see if I can find her name.

Tuttle [00:12:56] Hold on. I can tell you her husband's name. Hang on. Keith, Keith Oldom, Keith Oldom was his name.

Stewart [00:13:11] OK. Did she have the same last name?

Tuttle [00:13:14] She did not.

Stewart [00:13:15] OK. I don't know.

Tuttle [00:13:22] Hang on. I can tell you who it is. I can text one of my faculty. She was the first woman. Keith Oldham's wife. O-l-d-h-a-m. It's on the tip of my tongue. Mike Slaughter would know it. He hated her. [laughter]. He didn't hate her. Let me take that back. That's not...

Stewart [00:13:52] They weren't friends?

Tuttle [00:13:53] Well, they weren't friends. But she cost him money. You know, Mike was the business man of Dr. Sabiston. So, you know, if you weren't recouping your salary, then he was very distressed about it, about that.

Stewart [00:14:09] Yeah, we've interviewed a lot of women who... Like Chace Lottich is on our list and a couple others who were some of the first women to go through the residency program. But on our list, it looks like you were one of the first women, or the only one of the first women that we have that was on faculty. So, I'm interested to see who this other... If she's on our list.

Tuttle [00:14:37] I think she came with her husband and had sort of... They had two children, and I think that they you know, at the time she wanted to do advocacy and policy. So, she went through the Terry Sanford School of Government down there. And I'll find her name for you.

Stewart [00:14:55] OK, great. So, let's talk a little bit more about... So, during your fellowship, your first year as junior faculty, Dr. Sabiston had retired. Do you remember him still being around the Department of Surgery? I know he had an office still at Duke.

Tuttle [00:15:15] Yeah, he had an office at Duke. And he would come to conference every Wednesday. And Pierre Clavien was my fellowship director. And Pierre was from Toronto and Switzerland. He was Swiss, French, and they had hired him from Toronto, Bernie Langers' program, because they wanted to make sure that they resuscitated the liver transplant program. Dr. Sabiston, according to the the urban legend, Dr. Sabiston never thought that liver transplant program, that liver transplant was going to be a viable procedure, service line, whatever you want to call it. And so, Bill Myers was put in charge of the program. And he was not... Duke had a tendency to do things their own way. They still do, I think. In some ways that's good. In some ways it's bad. And so, the Duke method for doing the liver transplant was they had different people do a different parts. And so, Bill Myers would take the liver out. Richard McCann, he was one of the vascular surgeon's who trained there, he put the liver in. He did all the vascular anastomosis. And then, Randy Bollinger would come in and do the bowel duct, which sounds like a good idea, except that everything took way too long. So, they weren't really doing very well. So they hired Pierre to come from Toronto. Bernie Langer at the time was, sort of a big name in the liver transplant community. Pierre came down to Duke and rebuilt the program and part of that was having a fellow. Because you've got to have somebody go get the organs in the middle of the night and bring them home. And so, he had a guy that he had hired from the Mayo Clinic. Vivek Kohli, who's now the head of transplant in Oklahoma City. Vivek spent two years at the Mayo Clinic, but had never operated. I mean, he had never really operated there, so he was doing a remedial year with Pierre in the lab and and he hired

me and Vivek and I had had to have a little... We had to have a little prayer meeting, he and I. As did some of the chief residents who were not used to having very many fellows. And the chiefs at Duke in the training program were quite... I don't want to say entitled I mean, they worked really, really hard. And, you know, and they wanted it their way. When you got to be a chief at Duke, you were all powerful. And I remember being called into one of the chief's offices on the second floor when I was there about a week. And having the guy tell me that he was going to do all the living donor transplants because he was the chief. And that I could do the cadaveric donors. I could do the cadaveric kidneys, but he was going to do all the living donor kidneys. And I remember looking at him going, "Really? So, you're telling me the only elective case that I have, you're going to take and I'm going to stay up in the middle of the night and do the nonelected cases. Is that right?" And he looked at me and he said, "Uh." And I said wasn't a Harvard chief resident to deal with this kind of nonsense. [laughter]. I said, "So, I don't think that's going to happen."

Stewart [00:19:06] Yeah. So, how long were you... Were you at Duke until just [19]98 , when you were...

Tuttle [00:19:17] No, I was at Duke...

Stewart [00:19:19] Or how long were you there?

Tuttle [00:19:19] I was at Duke until 2009.

Stewart [00:19:21] Okay. So you were there... Well, were you there when he started having strokes?

Tuttle [00:19:30] Yes.

Stewart [00:19:31] Yeah?

Tuttle [00:19:32] Yes. So about six months into my... It was interesting because I had done my fellowship in critical care and about three months into my transplant fellowship, I didn't have a day off. I didn't have a weekend off. It was before the work hour rules. And I went to Pierre, and I said, "Look, I need I need a week. I got to study for my critical care boards. And he said, "No, I don't want you to do that." I said, "Pierre, I spent a year doing this. I'm gonna get... I'm gonna get the ticket punched." And at the time, there were only about... I think at the time there were about five of us in the country who were doing transplants that actually did the fellowship in critical care. And so, I said, "No, I'm going to get my ticket punched." So, he was quite angry, but he let me off for a week so I could go study. So, when I came back, you know, it was business as usual. And then, Mark Sebastian, I don't know if you've heard about Mark yet, but just make a note and I'll tell you that story too. Mark Sebastian decided that he wanted to go to the Brigham to do the one year vascular fellowship, which was going to make them short in the ICU. And so, they could recruit for another intensivist or they could just field promote me. So, I went from being the transplant fellow to being the junior faculty in the ICU, but I still had to do my transplant duties and do that at the time. So, about six months into my fellowship, I got a call from the number and I don't remember the number. Oh thunder. It was Dr. Sabiston's office number.

Stewart [00:21:21] Oh yes.

Tuttle [00:21:21] And everybody knew what it was.

Stewart [00:21:24] I've heard the number, but I can't remember.

Tuttle [00:21:26] I can't remember the number. So, I got called to the number. [laughter]. I got called to the number and I got called to Dr. Sabiston's office. And I was like, "Oh, OK." So, I run over to the, you know, the surgical office. And I don't know if anybody's told you that he had his desk on a riser.

Stewart [00:21:54] Oh, no, I haven't heard that.

Tuttle [00:21:56] So, the desk was on the riser. A little bit subtle. Very subtle. And so, when you sat down in the chair to talk to Dr. Sabiston, he was always above your eye level.

Stewart [00:22:07] Oh, man.

Tuttle [00:22:08] So, you had to look up. And so, here I am, 5'11", looking up at Dr. Sabiston. And he wanted to talk to me about my career. I said, "Okay." And then, he started with, "I remember meeting you at... I remember meeting you at the Deaconess Hospital. Your mother's name is Anne. Your father's name was Tom. You're from Madison, North Carolina."

Stewart [00:22:36] Wow.

Tuttle [00:22:37] And apparently he had the habit of when he met people, he would immediately go back to his wherever it was, and he would write down people's names and the stories. So that when he saw you again, he could completely take you off guard by remembering who you were, where you from, whatever you told him, so he had that ability to remember, at least in short order to go back and take notes on who you were. And apparently, he had quite the file system about this. This is what I'm told. I never saw it. So he, of course, knew everything that I had told him at the at the dinner. And of course, I didn't remind him about Liz. I just let that go. But I never will forget this either. He leaned over to me and he looked at me and he said, "You know, I hear you can operate."

Stewart [00:23:31] Wow.

Tuttle [00:23:32] And I said, "Thank you." And he goes, "That's only going to get you into trouble."

Stewart [00:23:37] Why is that?

Tuttle [00:23:39] Because it was going to detract me. People were gonna ask me to operate as opposed to developing my scientific career and that I needed to have a scientific career, that I needed to have some basic science, something that I hadn't done. I had not done enough basic science in my residency to, you know, make me an independent scientist, and he was very devoted to the concept of a surgeon scientist. So, that was my meeting with him and I was given a list of people that I needed to go talk to about how to develop my scientific career because learning how to operate was one thing, but doing real science was another one. And he gave me the name of a fellow by the name of Jeff Platt. Who was a pediatrician, but had a big basic science lab looking at xeno transplants of pig transplants and into humans and things like that. And he was very

committed to the concept of the surgeon scientist and the independent funding and all that sort of stuff. So, that was my first interaction with him. Other than dinner.

Stewart [00:24:58] Yeah. Other than that one interaction at dinner. So what it was the... I made a note of Mark Sebastian. Is that his name?

Tuttle [00:25:08] Mhm.

Stewart [00:25:08] Yeah? So, he moved away and that's how you became junior faculty, right?

Tuttle [00:25:13] Right. So, he went to the Brigham to do a year fellowship. And then at the end of my second year, my husband was still in training at Duke in neurology, my husband at the time. And I needed a job, so I had talked to Pierre about staying on as, sort of, a super fellow or going into his lab or that sort of stuff. And I think was April, it was this time of year. I had looked at... We made a call scheduled three months in advance and I was scrambling. What was I going to do for work? And, you know, you too busy to actually take any time out because you were off. You know, I was the fellow and the attending and I noticed my name was on the call scheduled for July for a liver transplant. The entire month of July, I might add. [laughter]. So, I go into Pierre's office and I said, "What is this?" And he goes, "Oh, I've hired you as faculty. I haven't seen my family in Switzerland. I'm taking a month off. You'll be OK." [laughter]. So, I was on call for the month.

Stewart [00:26:36] Wow. So that was that kind solved your... for a month at least.

Tuttle [00:26:41] Well, no, I was on. I mean, I was junior faculty.

Stewart [00:26:43] Yeah.

Tuttle [00:26:45] And so, I think a couple of months after I became faculty, I got called up to Dr. Anderson's office. And I won the Davison Teaching Award. [19]97, [19]98. It was a teaching award from the Duke medical students. And the only other surgeon who had ever won that was Dr. Sabiston.

Stewart [00:27:13] Oh.

Tuttle [00:27:15] And so, I won it as the fellow. And which was unheard of at the time.

Stewart [00:27:22] Is this the award where the students voted?

Tuttle [00:27:24] Yes.

Stewart [00:27:25] OK, OK. I've heard of this.

Tuttle [00:27:28] And so, I won the Davison Teaching Award and I got called to Anderson's office in the fall. I think in the fall. And the statement... And I walked in the door and I said, "What's?" You know, "Eek, what's going on." And he goes, "Well, you like those students, don't you?" It was that sort of approach. And I said, "Yeah, I like the medical students fine." "Well, you need to take over the medical student, the undergraduate surgical education course." And I said, "Excuse me?" Because that was Dr. Sabiston job. And that's when I knew Dr. Sabiston had the stroke. So I took over the medical student course from Dr. Sabiston after he had a stroke.

Stewart [00:28:23] Yeah, wow. And, you know, he had multiple strokes. He passed away in 2009, right?

Tuttle [00:28:34] Yeah.

Stewart [00:28:34] And that was your that was your last year at Duke?

Tuttle [00:28:37] Mhm.

Stewart [00:28:38] OK.

Tuttle [00:28:40] So, I was the first woman on surgical faculty. I was the first woman surgical faculty to have children in the department. And I operated through both pregnancies. I was the first woman surgical faculty at Duke to be promoted, at that time, from assistant to associate. And I was the first woman in the department of surgery to earn tenure, not be given it when I came in for a job.

Stewart [00:29:12] Wow. That's awesome. That gives me gives me chills. So after 2009, did you go straight to ECU?

Tuttle [00:29:24] No, I... Dr. Jacobs had come in.

Stewart [00:29:28] Yes.

Tuttle [00:29:32] And despite the. Well, how do I say this in a nice way? He and I did not necessarily see eye to eye on lots of different things. We did in the beginning. But he, in fact, we had been competitors. And when I was in Boston as a resident, I did some time in a lab that he was the competitive lab across the street at the Brigham. And I had known him for years and years and years. But I fell out of favor. I think it's the easiest way to say it. And he was absolutely hell bent on punishing me, I think, is the best word to say because I didn't carry the party line. And so, he hired Deb Sudan over me as division chief. And Paul Kuo, was the general surgery division chief. But Sudan was put in charge of transplant. And she does not have the reputation for being collaborative. How's that? There were too many hens in the rooster house. And, you know, I could have easily stayed there and sucked it up. I was tenured. The dean liked me. There were lots of people in the faculty that did not want me to leave. But there was a core group of people, Scott Levin being one of them, who's now the chair of orthopedics at UPenn, who felt that the direction the department was taking was not in line with the Duke ideal and the Duke tradition. And so a bunch of us left. So, I went to St. Louis University in St. Louis to be division chief of transplant and probably did my best work out there. I was able to blow the transplant programs up and put them back together. I was able to do the pediatric work that I wanted to do. Deb came in and basically kicked me off the Peds team. You know, one day you're on, one day you're not. [laughter].

Stewart [00:31:54] Wow.

Tuttle [00:31:56] So, you know, I mean, I didn't. I loved being at Duke. I loved being at the old Duke. I didn't love being there under Dr. Jacobs. And there are lots of people who probably will tell you the same thing.

Stewart [00:32:11] So then, after St. Louis, is that when you went to ECU?

Tuttle [00:32:14] Mhm. I spent five years in St. Louis.

Stewart [00:32:15] OK.

Tuttle [00:32:15] And then came here five years ago to be chair... Chief and chair. I'm the first woman chair of surgery in the southeast.

Stewart [00:32:24] Wow. So when you... So, I had the pleasure of interviewing Dr. Chitwood.

Tuttle [00:32:31] Oh, good.

Stewart [00:32:33] I think last July. Well, it's hard. It's crazy that it was that long ago. We had almost a two hour interview, which was great. But he... I know he kind of started that program there. So did you, you know, are you still did you work closely with him when you transitioned to ECU?

Tuttle [00:32:53] You know, he has been... He was not the chair right before me.

Stewart [00:33:00] OK.

Tuttle [00:33:01] The chair before me was a fellow by the name of Mike Rotondo, who's now the chancellor at the University of Rochester. And then, the chair before Chitwood was Walter Pories. So, I'm the Walter Pories Chair of Surgery here. So, I have worked with him, I interviewed with him. Actually, when I came to do the chair interview and it was really funny because he was so aggressive during the interview, asking me all these questions and asking me about Duke and Duke traditional questions. And all sorts of things. It was actually really funny. I mean, I thought he was trying to take me off guard. And finally, at the end of the interview, he stood up and I stood up. And of course, I got on six inch heels. And of course, I was taller than he was. He looks at me and goes, "My God, you're tall. I can look right. I can look right into your eyes." And I said, "And I can look right down on you, sir." [laughter].

Stewart [00:34:04] He was he was a funny interview. I can't imagine him being aggressive because his interview he was so kind.

Tuttle [00:34:17] That's okay. He's a traditional Duke cardiac surgeon. That's all I'll say about that, from that era.

Stewart [00:34:20] Yeah. Yeah. He had lots of things to say. Well he considers himself kind of a Sabiston historian.

Tuttle [00:34:29] He is.

Stewart [00:34:29] Yeah. That was a that was a great interview. I always like to ask people this question. You know, some people don't really have an answer. But did you ever interact much with Mrs. Sabiston while you were at Duke?

Tuttle [00:34:44] I did not. I did not. But the stories are legendary. You know, she's Governor Morehead's daughter.

Stewart [00:34:51] Yeah. And I always hear about a Christmas party that they had. A lot of the residents talk about going to a Christmas party at her house and how they actually threw two parties for each of the shifts of residents. So, that's always a fun question. So, do you have any particular stories you want to share about Dr. Sabiston other than the ones that you've already shared.

Tuttle [00:35:25] No. I think the best story I've got is the Liz Pomfret story. [laughter].

Stewart [00:35:33] That's a great story. These are just some kind of random questions I'm going through now. Did you ever see Dr. Sabiston interact with patients while you were at Duke?

Tuttle [00:35:48] No.

Stewart [00:35:49] No. Let's see. This kind of goes back a little bit. But while you were, and you kind of talked about this with a dinner story, did you while you were going through your residency, do you remember hearing of Dr. Sabiston and like the reputation of Duke during that time?

Tuttle [00:36:14] Oh, sure.

Stewart [00:36:15] Yeah.

Tuttle [00:36:15] Absolutely. They weren't very women friendly and they weren't very family friendly.

Stewart [00:36:24] Yeah.

Tuttle [00:36:26] And he was very. I'm sure you heard the Bill DeVries story. Which is the Jarvik heart guy, who was Mormon. And had a bunch of children and on his salary he couldn't afford his children. They had gone to apply for food stamps and Durham County was pretty small. Have you heard this story?

Stewart [00:36:51] I don't... I interviewed Dr. DeVries, but he didn't...

Tuttle [00:36:56] Oh I bet he wouldn't tell you this story.

Stewart [00:36:58] No, I didn't hear this story.

Tuttle [00:37:00] So, he had just enough... He fell below the poverty level at the time in North Carolina based on the number of children that he had, and so the story is that he his wife went down to apply for food stamps. Well, the county was very tight with Sabiston at the time, and so of course, they let him know that one of his residents had applied for food stamps and apparently, he called the DeVries in and chewed him out and gave him just enough of a raise that he wouldn't qualify for food stamps because he wasn't going to have one of his surgeons on food stamps.

Stewart [00:37:37] Wow. No, I haven't heard that.

Tuttle [00:37:39] And Walter Wolfe is dead. Did you get to talk to Walter before he died?

Stewart [00:37:47] I didn't. I don't think anyone did.

Tuttle [00:37:54] You know "the man" story?

Stewart [00:37:56] Yes, "the man" story, I've heard "the man" story. Let me look.

Tuttle [00:38:05] I do have Dr. Sabiston's leather chair in my office.

Stewart [00:38:09] Oh, really? Yes, we did interview Dr. Wolfe just last summer.

Tuttle [00:38:16] Good. He just died last week.

Stewart [00:38:18] Well, I'm sad he died, but I'm glad we got to interview him.

Tuttle [00:38:25] So he and Chitwood probably, and Mike Slaughter are the people that know the most about Dr. Sabiston, I would say.

Stewart [00:38:32] Yeah. So how did you end up with his, Dr. Wolf's leather chair or Dr. Sabiston?

Tuttle [00:38:38] I have Dr. Sabiston... I have the spanking chair in my office.

Stewart [00:38:42] Oh, how did you end up with that?

Tuttle [00:38:44] Well, I left Duke under an enormous amount of fire. And I left from Dr. Jacobs and the folks that he had brought in, Dr. Sudan. And so, when I was closing down my office Mike Slaughter was also being pushed out at the same time. And I said to Mike... So, when I went to Duke. When I originally started on faculty and I finally made full faculty, I asked Dr. Bollinger for... I had asked Dr. Bollinger for a different computer than most people got because I was doing outcomes research and statistics and things like that. And so, I asked him for a pretty fast computer, which at the time cost a lot of money. And he said, well, "You know, if I do this, you can't... I'm not going to buy this furniture for your office. You can go to the surplus." So, he must... Sabiston must have had the stroke in my second of fellowship. Now I'm thinking about it. So, I went to the warehouse. And of course, I was collecting furniture for my office and there was the chair, there were the two chairs in Sabiston's office, green leather chairs, big wingback chairs. And I didn't have room for for two them, but I had room for one of them. So, I took the chair. And at the end of my career at Duke, you know, they were gonna take my furniture back to the warehouse, which is fine. I had gotten some I had gotten a new couch and some other stuff. But over the 13 years I was there, but I had the big leathe chair. And so, I called Mike, Mike Slaughter. I said, "Mike, I don't really want to give back my chair." And Mike said, "Well, you know, I remember Dr. Sabiston giving you that chair." And I said, "What?" And he goes, "Yes. He gave you the chair." I said, "Oh, OK." So, the chair fit in the back of my car and he's gone, that chair's gone with me everywhere I've been since then.

Stewart [00:40:56] That's awesome.

Tuttle [00:40:56] In my office now, as you come in my front, as you come in the foyer of my office, the chair is down and to the left. And so, it's really funny because we have... So, Chitwood trained at Duke. There's another cardiac surgeon, John Mark Williams, who trained at Duke, who's here. And then Alan, Kitson. Kitson and I trained together and oh, and Shahab, Shahab Akhter's here. They're all cardiac surgeons. And so, to a cardiac

surgeon, they will walk in my office and look to the left and go, "Is that the chair?" And I'll go, "Yeah."

Stewart [00:41:37] That's awesome. So, is the chair just famous because it was his chair? Or is there more significant meaning to, you know people...

Tuttle [00:41:47] That was the spanking chair. And so, if you were in trouble, that was the chair you sat in and Dr. Sabiston's office below the riser. So, that was the chair, or there there was a pair of them. This is just one of a pair. I don't know where the other one is, but this was the chair below the riser at the desk. There were there were a set green leather chairs. And this is one of them.

Stewart [00:42:10] Yeah, it probably traumatizes some people to see the chair.

Tuttle [00:42:15] It gives me a great deal of sadistic, you know, not sadistic, but it just I think it's kind of funny, actually.

Stewart [00:42:22] I think it's funny, too. Well, those are all the questions I had prepared. It's been a pleasure speaking with you.

Tuttle [00:42:31] Yes, ma'am, you too.

Stewart [00:42:31] Is there anything else that you would like to let us know about yourself? Dr. Sabiston? Your time at Duke? Before we sign off here.

Tuttle [00:42:42] Well, I will tell you, it was an interesting experience being pregnant there. And if you've talked to Dr. McCann or not?

Stewart [00:42:51] No, I I haven't.

Tuttle [00:42:53] So he's from Maine, Richard. Richard McCann. Richard. And very hard core, a great surgeon and a nice person. But he would never let you know that. So, I was I was on call one day. And I had been on faculty a couple of years at this point and it was a Saturday and no, it was a Sunday. And I was throwing up in the scrub sink because I had morning sickness. And I was really early and I was old. I had my first child at 37 and... I remember McCann walking past me going, "Are you OK?" Then I turned around, looked at him and said, "I'm pregnant. But don't tell anybody because I'm not past my first trimester and I don't know how Dr. Anderson's going to take this." And he said, "Your secret is safe with... Your secret is safe with me." I said, "Okay." So, Monday morning comes, and I get a dozen long stemmed red roses in my office with a card that says, "your secret is safe with me." And there were so many people in the department that were so supportive of me. There were some people that were less than, I will give you that. But Dr. Anderson came to my baby shower. Dr. Bollinger rolled over in his chair. I had to get the coordinators to come help me get him out. He got stuck behind his chair. Sol had to get the coordinators to help me lift him up in the office. He was kind of roly-poly. And but I had other people that were not as supportive.

Stewart [00:44:42] Right.

Tuttle [00:44:43] But for the most part, you know, they were OK.

Stewart [00:44:48] Yeah. So did you... Did you take full maternity leave?

Tuttle [00:44:54] Yes. So, Dr. Anderson gave me three months maternity leave.

Stewart [00:44:59] OK, great.

Tuttle [00:45:01] Back in the day and I came back it was very interesting because I came back full bore and in fact, I was at home on maternity leave. And I got a call, I was probably a month out and I got a call from the O.R. one night in the middle of the night that Brad Collins, who was my partner at the time, was struggling with a liver transplant and he was the only person in town with the fellow. So, I left Gracie with my husband and drove in and showed up in the O.R.. The nurse called me, not Brad, the nurse called me and I walked in the O.R. and started laughing. And I said, "Miss me yet?" [laughter] So, I scrubbed in and then helped him out of the spot and and he went back.

Stewart [00:46:00] Was three months, I'm not really familiar with this at all, with three months standard maternity leave at the time?

Tuttle [00:46:08] Six weeks.

Stewart [00:46:11] Six weeks. OK.

Tuttle [00:46:12] So, at some point... We had six weeks. He gave me an additional six weeks and paid me.

Stewart [00:46:20] Wow.

Tuttle [00:46:21] Well, I was a liver transplant surgeon, so I was you know, I remember Stigler [Seigler?] stopping me in the hallway going, "You know, we're paying for your maternity leave." And I turned around, looked at it. "Really? I don't think so. I see my PNL statements. I think I'm paying for you." [laughter].

Stewart [00:46:39] Wow.

Tuttle [00:46:41] Which at that time was true, actually. You know, it was they were very supportive. And when I had my second child, they were very supportive as well. Dr. Anderson was my chairman then. And, you know, at some point during that time, I was the on the board of directors for the Association of Women Surgeons. And we were charged to come up with a maternity leave policy to give to the American board of surgery, and I had already written one for Duke and if you look at the two, they're eerily similar, that's all I'll say. [laughter]. I had a great time at Duke. You know, I had a great time. It was a lot of fun. And, you know, Sabiston trained Dr. Anderson. And at one point, fifty percent of the sitting chairs of surgery in the United States had trained with him. And so, you know, he clearly was a mover and shaker at that time and in surgery in America. And, you know, he went along with the social mores at the time. Right. The first woman who finished surgery in North Carolina was actually at East Carolina. Beth Furlough.

Stewart [00:48:07] I didn't know that.

Tuttle [00:48:10] Yep. 1981. And I think the second woman to finish surgery was Chace in North Carolina. Or was it Mary Hook? It may have been Mary Hook around the same time as Chace Lottich. Mary was at UNC, but that was in the late [19]80s, early [19]90s. Wake

Forest didn't finish anybody until the late [19]80s who as a woman. And so, you know, he was just he was just doing what the society did.

Stewart [00:48:46] Well, thank you for sharing.

Tuttle [00:48:49] You're very welcome.

Stewart [00:48:50] It's been great.

Tuttle [00:48:51] Yeah, I appreciate. I'm not sure how you got my name, but I appreciate you calling me.

Stewart [00:48:55] Yeah, well, I always love... I learn a new perspective from almost everyone I interview. So, it's been great. So, I got your consent form. I was just looking. I received that last week. And eventually this interview will be archived in the Duke Medical Center library. So, if you're thinking about it and there's any part of it that you don't want to be made public, we can change your transcript request.

Tuttle [00:49:29] Oh good lord no.

Stewart [00:49:30] OK. I just have to put that out there, everyone.

Tuttle [00:49:32] Yeah, no, listen, it's one of the things that Dr. Steele, when I was a resident, used to call me and say, "I need to know if the story... I need to know what the truth is about this." And I'd sort of look at him and go, "Really?" And he'd go, "Yes, because you have no filter and you'll tell me." I was like, "Okay, fine." [laughter]. So, things haven't really changed very much.

Stewart [00:49:58] Okay, great. And then... That's awesome. And then, eventually they are planning on using all these interviews to write a biography about Dr. Sabiston. So, they're just kind of in the early stages of that. But once they move forward in that process, you will be included in all the communication about the different stages since you've kind of helped us gather the information and so forth.

Tuttle [00:50:26] Well, you know, Dr. Chitwood has all of his original papers.

Stewart [00:50:30] Yeah.

Tuttle [00:50:31] Oh. I forgot to tell you about Mark. Wait wait wait. I have to tell you about Mark.

Stewart [00:50:35] Yeah, tell me.

Tuttle [00:50:36] I'm sorry.

Stewart [00:50:38] No no no. You're fine.

Tuttle [00:50:39] No, I have to tell you. So, Mark Sebastian was... He finished in the class I think around the same time that Tommy D'Amico did. He may have been after Tommy. Mark, was the trauma critical care person who made the spot for me to go into critical care. And he was one of Dr. Sabiston favorites. And you know, Bryan Clarey, who's the chair of

UC San Diego, is the last chairman's choice. He was the last person that Sabiston said, "I have to have that student in the rank list." So, I don't know if you know that or not.

Stewart [00:51:25] No, I don't.

Tuttle [00:51:26] So, Bryan's the chair out there. He can probably tell you some things about Dr. Sabiston, too. But Mark stayed at Duke. And was also part of the undergraduate medical student education. Medical students, and was one of the Deans at one point. One of the advisory deans. And Mark was very much a renaissance man, was very kind and gentle, but had a side that apparently none of us really knew about. He was... He had poor taste and poor discretion in that his relationships with the medical students and the residents, sometimes cross lines with them that he shouldn't have. But Dr. Sabiston thought a whole lot of him. When Dr. Jacobs came in and Paul Kuo came in, they did not. And I don't know exactly what happened in terms of the clinical, but Mark essentially was fired. And he wandered for a while. There was, again, retaliation, and I think I can say that there was some retaliation from Dr. Jacobs. And certainly he tried that with me, Dr. Anderson and the cardiac boys saved me when I went up to St. Louis. But, you know, Mark was a gentle soul and ended up having to go to Dubai to work for a while or to Cater for UPMC and ended up in Hartford, Connecticut as the division chief of trauma. Brilliant guy, incredibly good writer. And he just sort of lost his way. And he killed himself. Hung himself. And, you know, he was somebody who did really well with support, but not well when he didn't and didn't have the strength, the character to stand up when the arrows started flying at him and he'd made some mistakes. Let me just say, he gave them bullets for the gun, but he was Dr., one of Dr. Sabiston favorites. So... I don't want him to be forgotten.

Stewart [00:53:54] Yeah. Well, thank you for sharing that. Yeah, I think it's good for him not to be forgotten, too.

Tuttle [00:54:03] All right. Thank you.

Stewart [00:54:05] Yeah. Well, thank you. I hope you stay well amongst all the crazy.

Tuttle [00:54:11] You too! And your mom.

Stewart [00:54:13] Yeah. Thank you. I appreciate that. And it's been a pleasure speaking with you. So if you if there's anything else you think of, let me know.

Tuttle [00:54:23] I will. All right.

Stewart [00:54:24] Great. Bye.

Tuttle [00:54:25] Bye bye.