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To the Cornell Hockey Team

Fellows:

As you know, I have been team physician for the team for the past twenty-four years. On Sunday, you will be playing Harvard. Unfortunately, I must miss the game and I regret it in the worse possible way. It will be the first Harvard game that I have missed since we first beat Harvard in 1962. In that game, the present Athletic Director, Laing Kennedy, was the goalie and really stoned the Harvard Crimson. This was the first really big hockey game that Cornell had ever won. The fans in Lynah were so elated that they hopped over the boards (there was no glass at that time) and danced on the ice.

Since that time, there have been many, many victories. I counted through the record book the other day and I estimate that I have seen well over 600 Cornell games. Most of them we have won.

As you know, before almost every game, I put my nose in the locker room and shout "Good luck, give 'em hell!" The team frequently answers, "Thank you, doc." This little ritual has made me feel like I am a member of the Cornell hockey family for the past 25 years. Hockey has been a passion for me, consuming fall and winter months. I love the game because of the speed, the grace, the emotion. I love you kids who play it. You may not know it, but you consume and dominate the feelings of many Ithacans over the winter.

As I said, I will not be able to see the Harvard game. I must go to Pittsburg for neurosurgery. I have a brain tumor. Don't grieve for me. I am in no pain. I have had a rich and wonderful life with wonderful family and friends.

This is not a letter saying win one for the Gipper or win one for the doc. I know from long years exposure to hockey, that hockey games are won on the ice. They are won by hard work in the corners, in front of the net. They are won by a fierce forechecking, by concentration and intensity. They are won by getting to the puck first. They are won by playing both ends of the ice and by just playin' damn hard work. It means not giving up on any loose puck, always trying to get to the puck first. You guys demonstrated your ability to do this with a fine effort against Colgate. You demonstrated the pride necessary to win. If I might add a note of criticism, and I regret doing so because I feel doctors belong in the training room or in the hospital and not on the coaching bench, I would say you still lack the ability to shift into over-drive and go for the kill. (That's a hell of a way for a doctor to talk).

In my earlier years, I spent some time as a neurosurgical resident, so I go into surgery with my eyes wide open, hoping for a cure. I know that sometimes patients come out of neurosurgery not the same as they went in and my major fear is that I will come out a blithering idiot. I would prefer if you thought of me as a bright, attentive, and compassionate surgeon. I've always strived to provide you with the best medical care that was available. I've turned these chores over to a doctor in my office, Dr. Chuck Morrow, who I believe will continue the tradition. He is a superior surgeon and has been in the best training programs in the country. I've watched him work and would have no qualms about having him as a surgeon on myself or anybody in my family. He has not been bitten by the hockey bug yet and I don't know if he will. However, he is an avid skier. It is my guess that he will get the hockey infection in a short period of time. Incidentally, he is a fine fellow with a good sense of humor and an engaging personality. I am sure he will be an asset to a program that is already a class act.

Work hard in the corners. Good luck. Give 'em hell.

David L. Gale MD