Tilney, Nicholas L.: **A perfectly striking departure.** Surgeons and surgery at the Peter Bent Brigham Hospital 1912–1980. Sagamore Beach, Science History Publications, 2006. XI, 282 p. Ill. \$ 35.–. ISBN 0-88135-382-5.

The author writes that the generation of 20th-century surgeons witnessed «a period of growth and discovery so unique that it may never be repeated». He may be right and at least 10 other retired surgeons have written memoirs about those years. I mention only 3 of the most significant ones: Rudolf Nissen's "Pages in the History of Chest Surgery". Nissen's memoirs are important as he was one of the fathers of thoracic surgery. Of interest in relation to the present memoirs are the ones by Claude Welch "My Life at the MGH", and Herbert Adams' about his life at the Lahey Clinic, both equally world famous Boston institutions, almost within walking distance from one another. Undoubtedly all three surgical autobiographies should be of interest to future generations.

However, the very special interest of Dr. Tinley's book lies in the historical documentation of the Peter Bent Brigham Hospital, beginning with its construction by a private grant from 1910 through 1913, and of course of the careers of 3 important pioneers, successive chief surgeons at the PBB: Harvey Cushing, Elliot Cutler and Francis Moore. Equally interesting is the documentation on the parallel construction of the classical building of the Harvard Medical School across the street, surprisingly far away from the Cambridge Harvard University. The relative importance of the MGH and the PBB hospitals as teaching institutions of the Harvard Medical School is also clearly explained.

Of special interest to the reviewer is the chapter on R. Gross and Ch. Hufnagel and the story about the first Patent Ductus operation by Gross. It is well known that Gross, at the time still a resident, performed this "world premiere" operation against the strict orders of his chief who was then conveniently out of town. Having known Dr. Gross 10 years later quite well, I nevertheless never dared ask him about his chief's reaction to this daring insubordination. Now Dr. Tinley fills in the rest of this quite unique story: in fact, on his return, chief Ladd furious fired his "brilliant" resident. However, when persuaded by the rest of the staff to take him back, Bob Gross, in a way typical of his character, responded: "No, you fired me and I am building a barn. I will return when the roof is on." Si non e vero, e ben trovato!

Andreas P. Naef, Pully

Vallisneri, Antonio: **Epistolario, 1714–1729.** A cura di Dario Generali. Firenze, Leo S. Olschki, 2006. 13 p. 1 CD-ROM. (Edizione nazionale delle Opere di Antonio Vallisneri. Carteggio). € 50.–. ISBN 88-22-5509-7.

This is a CD-ROM edition of 1,100 letters of Vallisneri completing the two printed editions of the earlier 476 letters (1679–1713) published in 1991 and 1998. The digital edition consists of a simple pdf-file with a list of the correspondents and the transcription of the letters, mostly without any commentary. The reason for such a plain scheme is obvious: the edition is a provisional product which on the one hand makes the letters accessible to a wider audience and on the other hand serves as an aid