

CLASS NOTES

'40s

At the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn., **William Parsons** (MD '48) helped pioneer the first drug that successfully lowered cholesterol. In 1955, during his internal medicine residency, Parsons and his Mayo colleagues conducted the first systematic study of how cholesterol levels were affected by nicotinic acid—the vitamin we know as niacin. Their results were published in 1956 in Mayo's nationally distributed journal (now the *Mayo Clinic Proceedings*). In the late '60s, the Coronary Drug Project, an eight-year study sponsored by the National Heart and Lung Institute involving more than 8,000 men, showed that prescription-strength niacin significantly reduced incidences of heart attack and stroke. Parsons says his initial work at Mayo became the basis for his research career in Madison, Wisc., and later in Scottsdale, Ariz. Now retired, Parsons has self-published two books on niacin that help doctors and patients better understand the drug and its side effects.

'60s

A few years back, **Norman Weinberger** ran his own pediatric practice in Norwalk, Conn., where he joined forces with a family therapist, a social worker, and a child psychologist. Weinberger (MD '66, Res '69) and his colleagues conducted therapy sessions with parents that stressed how family dynamics influenced child behavior and development. He frequently highlighted the father figure in the family. In one instance, Weinberger encouraged a mother to leave her baby alone with her husband on a Saturday morning. She did, and when she returned the baby was wrapped in duct tape. The father had used it to fasten a diaper. She held the baby up and shouted, "You just don't duct tape a baby!" This definitive statement became the title of Weinberger's book (Warner Books, 1997) exploring child development through the eyes of a pediatrician and parent. Today, Weinberger is an associate clinical professor at Yale University, and he practices at Stamford Community Health Center, a clinic for underserved children.

'70s

Eric Kraus (MD '77) is one of six American coinvestigators of an implantable hearing aid called the Envoy Esteem. He has implanted the device into 20 patients at his private practice in Greensboro, N.C. He describes it as a breakthrough for sensorineural hearing loss patients, who normally wear conventional external hearing aids. The Esteem is placed under the skin behind the ear, where it interfaces with two of three hearing-related bones. The FDA is still reviewing the device, but it was approved in Europe in July 2006. Kraus has been training doctors from Europe in his office's temporal bone laboratory to perform the surgery. He estimates that the device could benefit millions of people with hearing loss if it is approved in this country.

Barbara Wilhelm (MD '79) has published a novel called *Murder Makes the Rounds* (Pemberton Mysteries, 2006). The story is a mystery romance at heart, but Wilhelm slips in commentary on managed care in hospitals. Writing gives Wilhelm a chance to get on a soapbox and express her preference for small, community-based practices. She used a pseudonym so her patients and colleagues at Mountain Springs Medical in Western Pennsylvania won't assume that the murderous plot describes a true story from their local hospital—a thought Wilhelm chuckles over. She'll keep the alias, Mela Barrows Bennett, which was her great-grandmother's name, because she thinks it's a tremendous pen name for a murder mystery. "Besides," Wilhelm says, "it's a nice way to honor my family."



Jones back in the saddle

In 1991, gastric cancer forced **Greg Jones** to shut down the family practice he'd built. Rehabbing from double chemo treatments, he could only walk 100 feet at a time and couldn't work—"I was bored out of my mind." At that point, Jones began writing letters and speaking with local officials on how to improve the horse trails around his Eastern Kentucky community. Now, Jones (MD '79) works with congressmen, senators,

DUFFERS BREAK 6,000

A GOOD WALK SPOILED FOR A GOOD CAUSE

The weather was rotten. The same could be said of some of the golf. And at a time of particular crisis, the beverage cart could not be located. Despite the inclement conditions and lack of timely liquid refreshment on this late April Saturday, the eighth annual Pitt Med Golf Outing at Quicksilver Golf Club in Midway, Pa., raised $6,000 for Pitt med scholarships.

Matt Kaufman (Class of '09) organized the event with **Dan Welchons** (Class of '10) and **Rob Klune** (Class of '08). Kaufman golfed with his father, Stuart, and uncle, Mel—all three are accomplished golfers. The same cannot be said for the *Pitt Med* writer who completed the foursome. Kaufman played the chilly, rain-soaked course with skill and precision. Yet none of the foursome, who lost the third-place tiebreaker, or any of the other 100-plus (in number, not age) golfers, could sink a hole-in-one on a water hazard-protected par 3, where a bright yellow Mini Cooper practically begged to be won.

All money raised via the outing—from greens fees, raffles, and donors like UPMC—goes to the Student Executive Council Scholarships and Loans Fund. The fund makes possible the Dr. Edward Curtiss Leadership Service Award. This competitive award, named after Pitt med's late associate dean of admissions and financial aid, is given to

FRANK HARRIS



Surgeon Pituch (third from right)

and national forest superintendents on developing a $9 million, 100–150 mile trail. On the job, Jones is the medical director for three ambulance services that cover five local counties. He's assistant professor of emergency medicine at Ohio University, where he is helping to start the emergency medicine residency program that will begin next year. His undergrad education (which included a minor in animal science) comes in handy in more ways than one: He enjoys talking about farming with his patients in this rural area, and he and his wife own a 170-acre horse farm.

'80s

Al Hergenroeder (MD '80) played football for Central Catholic High School in Oakland. On break from attending medical school one summer, he returned to coach wide receivers. When he graduated, Hergenroeder left for a pediatrics residency at Duke University, intending to return home after three years of training. "I was a Pittsburgh guy from start to finish," says Hergenroeder. "But if you wanna make God laugh, tell him your plans." Hergenroeder ended up in Houston, Texas, at Baylor College of Medicine, where he further indulged his love for sports. He started the section of adolescent medicine and sports medicine pediatrics, the first of its kind in the country. He's a professor of pediatrics and the principal investigator for Baylor's Leadership Education and Adolescent Health Training Program. Every fall, Hergenroeder returns to the football sidelines of local Houston high schools to look after young athletes.

'90s

Dawn Marcus (Neurology Resident '90) has published *10 Simple Solutions to Migraines* (New Harbinger Publications, 2006). In her book, Marcus suggests that keeping a daily diary and taking the book's interactive quizzes will help a patient reflect on the possible causes of migraine symptoms. The methods are designed to help patients open dialogues with doctors about the results they've found, possibly leading to more effective treatment.

The chief of oral and maxillofacial surgery for Pittsburgh's Mercy Hospital and Jefferson Regional Medical Center, **Daniel Pituch** (MD '94), is one of three principal faculty members designing a dental implant center at Pitt's School of Dental Medicine. (Pituch got his DMD at Pitt in 1990.) He also serves as an associate clinical professor at the dental school and teaches in the school's residency training program. He's gotten some favorable press of late for his work with two noteworthy patients: Pittsburgh Steelers quarterback Ben Roethlisberger and an Iraqi child who came to Pittsburgh to have a disfiguring birth defect corrected.

'00s

Liz Cuevas (MD '01) assisted in soup kitchens and homeless shelters in Pittsburgh, but it wasn't until she joined Operation Safety Net that she witnessed the vast medical needs of the homeless. She says those experiences strengthened her resolve to dedicate her career to the underserved. She and classmate Patrick Perri married in their fourth year of med school. Cuevas is at the Boston Healthcare for the Homeless Program, developing a curriculum for med school students and grads on the needs of the homeless.

When Cuevas' husband, **Patrick Perri** (MD '01), was at Pitt, he also ventured under bridges and into alleys with Operation Safety Net to bring medical care to the homeless. Perri sees himself working for a social justice cause rather than charity: "It doesn't matter how or why these people suffer," Perri says, "it's the fact that they *are* suffering. Our primary obligation as healthcare providers is to help alleviate that suffering in some meaningful way." He and his wife matched to residencies at Massachusetts General Hospital to be near the Healthcare for the Homeless program—where he currently practices, mainly as a street physician. He is a Harvard University clinical instructor in medicine on staff at Massachusetts General. Cuevas and Perri saw their family double when they welcomed fraternal twins—a boy and a girl—in February 2006. —*Matt Minczeski*



graduating students with high levels of educational debt who have made significant contributions to the community. This year's winners are **Joseph Barton** and **Jamie Cavallo** (both MD '07).

The tournament's winners represented Pitt's Department of Surgery—clinical assistant professor **Richard Bondi** (MD '64), professor and chief of pediatric surgery **George Gittes**, and residents **Steven Gribar** and **Kevin Mollen**. They finished 5 under par as a team using the event's "best ball" format. They were also the first winners to have their names inscribed on the Pitt Med Cup, which is brand-new this year. —*Joe Miksch*

THE WAY WE ARE

2007 HONOR ROLL

Graduation from medical school is an end to a formative period, but at Pitt's annual senior class luncheon for graduating medical students, it quickly becomes apparent that graduation is an induction, too. Sometime shortly after dessert and coffee, the senior class takes part in its first official meeting of Pitt's Medical Alumni Association. These newest members get a sense of the club they are joining when the MAA presents awards to two distinguished alumni.

Beth Piraino (Res '80, Fel '82) received this year's McEllroy Award, given annually to a distinguished physician who completed a residency or fellowship at Pitt. Piraino, a Pitt professor of medicine and associate dean of admissions and financial aid, has worked with the MAA to create a scholarship for Pitt med students between their first and second years to experience health care in other cultures. Piraino made the scholarship possible by donating honoraria that she receives from speaking engagements.

The Hench Award for a distinguished MD graduate of the School of Medicine went to **Bertram Lubin** (MD '64), director of the Children's Hospital Oakland Research Institute in California. (See p. 39 for our profile of Lubin.)

By the end of their fourth year, Pitt med students are already accustomed to these rituals—honoring those among them who excel in creativity, diligence, and selflessness. As third-year students, they recognize teaching excellence in Pitt's medical residents by awarding six "Little Apple" awards.

This year, **Michele Odrobina** (Res '07) won her fourth Little Apple in the four years she trained at Magee-Womens Hospital of UPMC.

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"I try to get the students involved. If I can't take them to a patient, I give them something to read," she says.

She's not the only resident at Magee who won a Little Apple. **Susan Lareau** says she recalls her own experience as a med student: "People do a better a job if you tell them what they are doing well."

Plastic surgery resident **Galen Wachtman** (MD '04) thinks he won a Little Apple because he takes time for students. He was also recognized by the Class of 2006 with the Charles C. Moore teaching award for best resident teaching in the Department of Surgery.

Ophthalmology resident and Little Apple recipient **Mike Alunni** strives to create an inclusive environment. "When you are rotating through a bunch of specialties, it's tough to feel like you are part of a team. I try to make the students feel like they are."

Internal medicine resident and Apple awardee **Thomas Conlon** (MD '06) says teamwork makes teaching easier: "When you make a team function well together, it's inspiring."

John Falcone (MD '06), who won a Little Apple as a general surgery resident, says that teaching has become a personal passion.

The Class of 2007 handed out its own awards. They honored **Thuy Bui**—the medical director of Pitt's program for health care to underserved populations and a Pitt assistant professor—with the Leonard Tow Humanism in Medicine Award for her compassion and sensitivity. **Lou Ghanem** (MD/PhD '07) won the student award. Says Ghanem: "I think I just cared for my patients and that showed."

Susan Dunmire (MD '85, Res '88), associate professor of emergency medicine and executive director of the MAA, won the Golden Apple Award once again. She says Pitt Med grads like her late grandfather, **Harold Mitchell** (MD '21), and her father, **Lester Dunmire** (MD '48)—have always inspired her: "Both of these men showed me how to teach with gentle guidance and respect for the student."

—Meghan Holohan

IN MEMORIAM

'30s

JOHN WUNDERLICH
MD '36
JAN. 25, 2007

'40s

GEORGE E. SPENCER
MD '43B
MAY 22, 2007

C. LEONARD O'CONNELL
MD '44
JAN. 14, 2007

ARTHUR PATTERSON
MD '44
APRIL 13, 2007

JAMES C. HAYES
MD '45
JAN. 13, 2007

'50s

ROBERT B. STUART
MD '55
SEPT. 13, 2006

JOHN A. WOODSIDE
MD '56
APRIL 21, 2007

GEORGE J. CARSTENS
MD '57
MARCH 29, 2007

'70s

JOHN GARROTT
RES '74
MAY 13, 2007

'80s

WILLIAM STANDING MERTZ
MD '87
MARCH 14, 2007

'00s

CARLOS JOSE TORRES
MD '06
MAY 4, 2007

ELIZABETH ELMER

MARCH 30, 1911–APRIL 15, 2007



Elmer

When she was a young social worker at Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh, Elizabeth "Betty" Elmer was asked to locate the medical records of a child who'd come in with broken bones. The doctor couldn't remember the name, however. Looking through charts, Elmer was stunned to see how many children suffered repeatedly broken bones.

This chance discovery led her to a long career in child abuse research in the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine. She published two books and numerous research papers on the subject.

She died this year at age 96.

Elmer was a relentless advocate for children and families at a time when there was great resistance to frank discussions of child abuse. Colleagues remember her as 5 feet tall and not afraid of anyone.

In addition to her research and teaching at Children's Hospital, Elmer worked in Pitt's Child Guidance Center and helped to found the Parental Stress Center. Family Resources, a Pittsburgh nonprofit that aims to stop child abuse, annually gives a Betty Elmer award to a person who exemplifies her passion for helping families and protecting children from abuse. *–Chuck Staresinic*

JAMES MCCLENATHAN

JAN. 11, 1922–JUNE 1, 2007



McClenathan

James McClenathan (MD '47) retired from a long career as a navy surgeon about the time that his three sons were in high school. It was 1965, and after years as chief of surgical research and chief of thoracic and cardiovascular surgery at the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, Md., McClenathan became professor of surgery at George Washington University School of Medicine and associate chief of surgery at the District of Columbia Children's Hospital (now Children's National Medical Center). He helped launch that hospital's cardiac surgery program, introducing several open-heart procedures there.

One of his sons, James Jr., eventually became his student at GWU. He says that his father, who died this year at age 85, inspired him in myriad ways. The elder McClenathan personally and meticulously prepared for every aspect of his surgical procedures, from anesthesiology to prepping the ICU staff, especially in those early years of the hospital's cardiac program. And he displayed "an almost childlike wonderment at how it was possible to fix these complex pediatric heart problems," says James Jr.

Now a professor of surgery at Stanford University School of Medicine, the younger McClenathan says that his father continued his journal subscriptions long after retirement and always served as a sounding board for him on surgical issues. "There were very few things in medicine that I couldn't ask him about." *–CS*

ELMER AND MCCLENATHAN PORTRAITS BY FRANK HARRIS; ELMER PORTRAIT REFERENCE BY CAROL MAURIN PHOTOGRAPHY

BERTRAM LUBIN
ON DISCOVERING SCIENCE

BY MEGHAN HOLOHAN



COURTESY LUBIN

A long-time jazz drummer, Lubin still plays at benefits.

The 4-year-old lay on his hospital bed awaiting a neurosurgical consult. The boy—we'll call him Bryan—had a misshapen head. His skull was square, with pointed edges. Doctors thought Bryan suffered from a structural cranial defect.

Bertram "Bert" Lubin (MD '64), then a pediatric resident at Philadelphia Children's Hospital, examined Bryan when he arrived at the hospital. Lubin ordered some tests, the results of which would prove important for them both.

More than 40 years later, Lubin was awarded the 2007 Hench Distinguished Alumnus Award by the University of Pittsburgh's Medical Alumni Association for his accomplishments in hematology, an interest that began with Bryan.

The tests revealed that Bryan suffered from hereditary stomatocytosis—a severe form of hemolytic anemia that causes the bones, especially those in the skull, to expand abnormally.

Lubin gave Bryan a red blood cell transfusion to increase his hemoglobin, but that didn't work. Hematologists recommended removing his spleen. Although Bryan got a little better following surgery, he continued to suffer from anemia.

Bryan's became one of the first well-studied cases of hereditary stomatocytosis, helping physicians better understand how red blood cells transport water and electrolytes. The increased red blood cell production in response to anemia caused his bones to be weak and misshapen.

Today, Lubin is president of the Children's Hospital Oakland Research Institute (CHORI) in California, where he still investigates blood diseases.

Lubin talks quickly, and his enthusiasm is infectious. He says he was just an average student growing up in Bellevue, in suburban Pittsburgh. His father owned a produce market, where Lubin worked throughout high school and college. After graduating from Washington & Jefferson College in Washington, Pa., he attended the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine because, he says, it was the only med school to accept him. Lubin's dad wanted him to keep working at the market while enrolled. So Lubin landed a lab research gig. It took up time he would otherwise have been expected to sell strawberries and spinach. He now has more than 250 published papers to his credit.

Lubin joined Children's Hospital and Research Center Oakland in 1973 as director of hematology/oncology and became president and research director of CHORI in 1980. During his tenure, annual National Institutes of Health (NIH) funding at CHORI has increased from $1 million to $50 million. Lubin has been the principal investigator (PI) on NIH-funded grants for 30 years.

He coordinated an NIH–supported Pediatric Clinical Research Center and a postdoctoral pediatric hematology training program. He also serves as PI for an NIH translational science grant affiliated with the University of California, San Francisco, Clinical and Translational Science Institute.

Lubin developed a unique umbilical cord blood storage program for siblings of children who might need a stem cell transplant. The program, the first to be funded by the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute, provides an alternative to bone marrow transplantation for kids with disorders like sickle cell anemia, thalassemia, and leukemia. It's the first and only nonprofit bank of its kind in the world.

Parents whose children could be cured through cord blood transplants can cryopreserve newborn sibling cord blood to be used in the event that a transplant is needed.

Says Lubin: "We've cured a number of kids following sibling cord blood transplantation."

At CHORI, Lubin also started an NIH-funded undergraduate research program that exposes underserved undergrad students to medical science. Students work on research projects in CHORI labs and write grant proposals. The program is one of Lubin's proudest accomplishments. It accepts only students who have, as he once did, average grades, Lubin quips. Those with top marks, he notes, will not lack for opportunities. ■

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M-200K Scaife Hall
University of Pittsburgh
Pittsburgh, PA 15261
tel 412-648-9090; fax 412-648-9500
medalum@medschool.pitt.edu