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JULIA MAROUS STRAUT

In an enchanting tale by Gabriel García Márquez, children find the drowned corpse of a giant stranger that's washed onto the shore. "He has the face of someone called Esteban," the village women agree as they prepare the body for a proper burial at sea. In time, everyone in the small village falls in love with the corpse—even the men. They decide he is the strongest, most handsome, most sincere man ever to enter their town gates.

They also knew that everything would be different from then on, that their houses would have wider doors, higher ceilings, and stronger floors… they were going to break their backs digging for springs among the stones and planting flowers on the cliffs so that in future years at dawn the passengers on great liners would awaken… and the captain… pointing to the promontory of roses on the horizon, he would say in 14 languages, look there… where the sun's so bright that the sunflowers don't know which way to turn, yes, over there, that's Esteban's village.

Through Esteban, the villagers touched something much bigger than themselves. In the world of medicine and science, we are blessed—such moments aren't so infrequent. In this issue, Geoffery Kurland tells the story of his experience as a resident: A boy with leukemia whom he befriended hates bone marrow biopsies but tells "Dr. K" that it will be all right if Kurland performs his first biopsy on him. Such are the quiet stories of courage and generosity that transform us one at a time. The stories of medicine that can capture the imagination of a whole community—in effect, our Estebans—typically come from great research: *Yes, over there, that's Bernard Fisher, Thomas Starzl, and Jonas Salk's village.* The breakthroughs that do so much for human health have tangible effects on our medical school and the quality of education we offer. The headlines and renown attract other great faculty as well as top students. And surrounding students with stellar research minds encourages them to be rigorous, imaginative, and analytical in their thinking—traits you want in your physician.

Pittsburghers reap the benefits of a fertile medical community as well. The local population is privy to new therapies often years before they're commonplace. Further, medicine and medical research are fast becoming Pittsburgh's new "steel," creating high-quality jobs and helping ensure the economic future of this region.

Our own Drs. Patrick Moore and Yuan Chang this summer received the prestigious Mott Prize from the General Motors Cancer Research Foundation. This top international honor was awarded to the husband-and-wife team for their discovery of the virus that causes Kaposi's sarcoma. (Kaposi's is the most common malignancy in people with AIDS, and the virus offers cancer researchers extraordinary insights into oncogenesis and tumor cell biology.) As the nation's eighth-leading institution with respect to support from the National Institutes of Health, this university is rich with many other faculty members who've the promise of Drs. Moore and Chang. Though we take great pride in this, it also means we've much to lose. We don't want the next Jonas Salk moving on to California or anywhere else, yet the threat is real. Attracting and retaining outstanding faculty is a critical challenge. Hurdles such as declining reimbursements and the cost of providing care to 61 million under- or uninsured Americans have left academic medical centers in a precarious position. More than ever, we need the support of our community and alumni to sustain our momentum, so that—to borrow a García Márquez metaphor—we can build higher ceilings and stronger floors.

Arthur S. Levine, MD
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