

CLASS NOTES

'40s

William Miller (MD '48), a practicing physician in Pittsburgh for the past 50 years, is thought to be the School of Medicine's oldest living African American alumnus. In 2004, he received the Lifetime Achievement Award at the Minority Alumni Reunion, a four-day annual event. Miller was raised in Pittsburgh's Hill District, and he opened a private practice there in 1950. At the time, Miller's practice was one of about 10 in the Hill; now his is the only private practice in that neighborhood. Miller never considered leaving Pittsburgh, especially the Hill. "This is my home. It's been my home since I was 3 years old," he says. He plans to phase out his practice and retire in Pittsburgh.

Fred J. Payne (MD '49) was tracking down viral diseases in Mauritius, an island east of Madagascar, in 1960. At the time, he was with the World Health Organization (WHO), serving as the leader of a diarrheal diseases advisory team. Payne and the rest of the team were trying to prove that infection, not malnutrition, was the source of diarrhea in many developing countries. On the island, Payne and his team identified a connection between the environment and health and determined an unknown virus was at fault. WHO set up a series of surveys for the next five years, which confirmed the team's research. Years later, in 1978, Payne began working for the Fairfax County Health Department in Virginia, just before the emergence of HIV in the United States. Although Payne and the other health department physicians did not know what was causing HIV, they suspected it was a virus. Payne now is with the Children's AIDS Fund in Washington, D.C., which supports the treatment of children with AIDS in Africa.

'60s

Lois Pounds Oliver (MD '65) retired from teaching and medicine after her husband, Tim Oliver (former chair of pediatrics), became ill and died. Yet the one-time Pitt med dean of student affairs can't seem to leave academia. She volunteers at Duke University's gardens and chapel and takes classes, too. She has enrolled in a series of writing classes there—her assignments have turned into a memoir. Her classmates in an ethics class included other senior citizens from Duke's Institute for Learning in Retirement but also undergrads. She especially had fun comparing views on sex and dating with her classmates.

If you've had a hard time tracking her down, that may be because she lasted



Pounds Oliver



Wechsler (left) and LaRosa are this year's distinguished alumni awardees.

NO STUFFY SCIENCE | JOHN LAROSA

On a whim, John LaRosa (MD '65), president of SUNY Downstate Medical Center in Brooklyn, began studying cholesterol and metabolism with a mentor at the National Institutes of Health in the '60s because that investigator was unlike the other stuffy and preoccupied scientists he had met on interviews. Luckily, he found cholesterol and metabolism to be just as fascinating as his initial interest, infectious diseases.

Forty-some years later, LaRosa, winner of the Medical Alumni Association's 2005 Hench Award, is internationally recognized for his work on statins. Even with his formidable administrative duties, he's still an active researcher. He led a five-year study of the impact of administering intensive doses of the lipid-lowering drug atorvastatin; the study followed 10,000 people from the United States, Canada, Australia, Europe, and South Africa. Study results, published in April in *The New England Journal of Medicine,* suggest that lowering cholesterol below currently recommended guidelines offers significant additional benefit in preventing both heart attacks and strokes.

Looking back on a lifetime of effort to help people maintain or lower their cholesterol levels, LaRosa realizes that half the problem is getting people to adhere to a regimen. "Fifty percent of people on prescription stop taking their medicine because they feel okay," he says.

During his six-year tenure at SUNY Downstate, he has established major biotechnology initiatives and doubled extramural research funding. Before joining SUNY Downstate, LaRosa was chancellor of Tulane University Medical Center in New Orleans.

If LaRosa could have an alternate profession, he says it would be music. He plays jazz piano and has performed in New York and New Orleans. He even formed a band called Generation Gap with his kids.

"It unstiffens you, makes you look human. But I don't really care about all that. I'm just glad that I've had the chance to play with some really great musicians," he says. —*Nita Chawla*

about four months in a nearby retirement village, where she says she felt a bit restricted: "Maybe I'll go back there someday but—"

In 1966, **Elvis L. Barnes** (Pathology Resident '66–'67) took a break from his medical education to help out at Darnall Army Community Hospital in Fort Hood, Texas. The sprawling military post desperately needed doctors during the Vietnam War. Barnes was chief of pathology and laboratory director. At the base, there were frequent accidental deaths, caused by episodes like soldiers drowning or being hit by cars. Barnes performed autopsies to determine whether drug or alcohol use contributed. As an anatomic pathologist, Barnes now analyzes tissue from patients undergoing surgery, specifically for head and neck cancers. "We're like the doctors who guide the surgeon's hand," says Barnes, who determines the type of tumor and whether or not the surgeon completely removed it during surgery. He is at UPMC Presbyterian.

While in Vietnam as a battalion surgeon, **Michael Landay** (MD '68, Internal Medicine Resident '69–'70) met a superb radiologist who inspired him to switch fields. Since 1975, Landay has practiced at the Parkland Memorial Hospital and taught at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas. He was recently named the Jack Reynolds Professor of Radiology.

'70s

In the late 1970s, when **James Cottrell** (Pediatric Anesthesiology Resident '70) worked at New York University, he was frustrated by the lack of textbooks on neuro-anesthesiology. Too much blood in the brain can be devastating—and young anesthesiologists needed a reference to avoid such mistakes during brain surgery. So he wrote one of the first textbooks on neuro-anesthesiology and later founded the *Journal of Neurosurgical Anesthesiology.* (He is still editor in chief.) Cottrell is now chair of the anesthesiology department at SUNY Downstate Medical Center in Brooklyn, where he teaches and researches ways to prevent perioperative strokes. He is also interested in how deep anesthesia can cause cognitive dysfunction and cell death.

'80s

One day during his critical-care fellowship, a colleague told **Ernesto Pretto** (Critical Care Fellow '83–'85) about a doctor named Peter Safar. Pretto had never heard of this doctor, but his friend assured him that Safar was conducting exciting research. So Pretto called Safar to see whether he could work in his lab. It was only after Pretto started—at what is now Pitt's Safar Center for Resuscitation Research—that he learned Safar was a giant in critical care medicine and the "father of CPR." Pretto is now chief of the division of solid organ transplant at Jackson Memorial Hospital in Miami. Pretto is creating an animal model to study how doctors can better care for both donors and recipients of organ transplantation. Many donated organs are marginally efficient because of trauma that the donor undergoes during illness. Pretto believes that if doctors were to treat both the donor and recipient with antioxidants, for example, the organ would be healthier and perform better in the recipient. Pretto also earned a Master of Public Health, studying under Lewis Kuller, while at Pitt.

'90s

When a cult dosed an Oregon salad bar with salmonella in 1984, local doctors didn't realize what had happened until 750 people were sickened. As chief of the Division of Emergency Medicine at Northwestern University, **James G. Adams** (Emergency Medicine Resident '88–'91) is trying to prevent situations like this from happening again by automating area emergency medical departments. Adams hopes that tools like data storage and geo-mapping (storing patient information by zip code) will track unusual events. If such a system had been in place during the 1984 outbreak, doctors would have quickly noticed that the illnesses were clustered in one area, and they might have zeroed in on the restaurant sooner.



Pretto in Sarajevo, where he worked in a trauma center and delivered donated blood- transfusion machines in 1993.

When she was 13 years old, **Sylvie Blumstein** (MD '91) visited an old cemetery in Boston. She still remembers the many crumbling headstones of young women and the tiny tombstones beside them for the babies who, like their mothers, didn't survive childbirth. Blumstein believes that moment had something to do with why she became an ob/gyn—so she could protect the lives and safety of women and their children. She is a clinical assistant professor at Stanford University, where she directs the med student clerkship program. Blumstein prepares her students for what she calls the "go get 'em field of obstetrics and gynecology, where one second you're sipping a cup of coffee and the next all hell is breaking loose."

Ken Robinson (MD '91) specializes in emergency medicine and is now the clinical director for air medical transport at Hartford Hospital. In addition, he teaches at the University of Connecticut's School of Medicine and researches clinical issues surrounding air transport safety. He's investigating the dexterity of doctors who wear Nomex Gloves (which racecar drivers use to prevent burns) under their surgical gloves.

After graduating from med school, **Seth Borquaye** (MD '94) returned to his native Ghana—a country he'd left in 1981—to volunteer. It soon became an annual event. Borquaye has recently turned these self-funded trips into Ghana Visions Foundation, which funds and supports improvements in public health and education for the people of Ghana. In three years, Ghana Visions restored classrooms and gave students much-needed books and supplies. The foundation also offers healthcare services and recently received approval to perform surgery in the local hospitals. It has formed an orphanage that currently houses eight kids whose ages range from 18 months to 20 years. Borquaye is an ob/gyn in Hinesville, Ga. *—Nita Chawla, Jen Dionisio, Meghan Holohan, Erica Lloyd*

***Stay in touch, view alumni photos, or post a Class Note at* www.medschool.pitt.edu/alumni**

CLOT BUSTER | LAWRENCE WECHSLER

A patient suffering from a mild stroke came to Lawrence Wechsler (Res '80) and a colleague in 1988. Wechsler was a young neurologist recently returned to Pittsburgh after several years of additional training at Massachusetts General Hospital. Instead of giving the man a blood thinner, aspirin, or another oral drug that needed hours to take effect, the doctors inserted a microcatheter into an artery in the man's leg, then threaded it to the clot threatening the brain where they administered a new clot-busting drug, urokinase. Wechsler and his colleague would be among the first doctors anywhere to report on using urokinase to dissolve clots this way. (There's still interest in this interarterial therapy today.) The patient went home a day later. Encouraged by the patient's recovery, Wechsler has applied himself to improving stroke treatments ever since.

Now a Pitt professor of neurology and neurological surgery, Wechsler is the winner of the 2005 McEllroy Award for an outstanding physician who completed a residency at Pitt. He is the founder and director of the University of Pittsburgh Stroke Institute. With his institute colleagues, Wechsler develops and tests such treatments for stroke as cell transplantation. The transplantation process begins with immortalized cells, which originate from tumor cells but have been treated to become the precursors of human neurons. Not long ago, it was thought impossible to restore brain function through regeneration of damaged neural elements. But Wechsler's team has shown that implanted cells can integrate into the patient's brain, survive, and even reverse brain damage due to stroke. Exactly how the cells improve brain function is still under investigation. In a groundbreaking 2003 paper in *Stroke*, Wechsler and others at the institute also showed that the standard measurement for determining the type of treatment for stroke—time elapsed since the onset—may not be the best tool. Instead, they believe that determining the amount of brain tissue that is dead and the amount at risk of death may widen the therapeutic window for reversing the effects of stroke. *—Nita Chawla and Chuck Staresinic*

THE WAY WE ARE

CLASS OF '55



Members of the Class of '55 at the senior class luncheon, from left: Roy Titchworth, Robert Eisler, Vincent Albo, Alfred Perfett, Charles R. Wilson Jr., Joseph DeCenzo, Anthony Bruno, and Samuel Aronson.

The Class of '55 originated the annual musical revue now known as Scope and Scalpel, and the members of the class have since evolved into the backbone of the Medical Alumni Association. They were out in full force for their 50th reunion in May. **Roy Titchworth** seemed to be enjoying the fact that he has become a little more retired each year. Formerly chief of cardiology at three Pittsburgh-area hospitals, he also has held a political appointment as chair of the Allegheny County Board of Health since 1969. That came to an end last year, but the service he and other board members provided to the community are among his proudest accomplishments. They successfully pushed for greater pollution controls on the steelworks in Clairton and helped form a nonprofit—Tobacco Free Allegheny, which administers grants to local groups helping people to quit using tobacco and live healthier lives.

Amid all the reminiscing about med school, **Vincent Albo** took a few moments to mull over four decades in hematology. After a pediatrics residency at Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh, he went to Los Angeles for a hematology fellowship. Many kids the hospital staff cared for had leukemia, which was a death sentence then. He joined Pitt's faculty as a junior investigator on a National Cancer Institute grant in 1961. Two years later, he was the principal investigator and continued the work until 1992. All those years, he did the slow, steady work of science—testing new drugs, testing old drugs in new ways, and devising new treatment protocols, which gradually helped turn the numbers on childhood leukemia around. Today, most children survive. (And many of their parents find shelter and support at Ronald McDonald House; in 1975, Albo orchestrated the opening of the house here in Pittsburgh.)

Robert Berk attended the musical put on by his graduating class—he thinks he may have been an usher—but he was probably too busy studying to take part. These were the habits that won him a few awards in med school, including Most Likely to Succeed. He recalls Davenport Hooker's attempts to intimidate first-year students, too: *Look at your classmates on either side of you. One of them won't be here next year.* Berk had a long career in radiology, researching better ways of imaging the gall bladder. He was chair of radiology at the University of California, San Diego, and left to become the full-time editor in chief of the *American Journal of Roentgenology*. He's now the journal's editor emeritus. —*CS*

IN MEMORIAM

'30s

EDWARD M. SCHULTZ
MD '32
MARCH 20, 2005

ROBERT L. LOEB
MD '34
JUNE 6, 2005

PHILIP L. BECKER
MD '37
APRIL 21, 2004

'40s

AMOR FRANCIS PIERCE
MD '41
OCTOBER 3, 2004

RANDOLPH W. LINHART
MD '43A
APRIL 10, 2005

'50s

JEAN KAISER MIGLIORATO
MD '50
JUNE 3, 2005

SEYMOUR M. WEISMAN
MD '50
APRIL 11, 2005

CHARLES A. PROVAN
MD '54
APRIL 13, 2005

'60s

DALTON L. HOFFMAN
MD '62
SEPTEMBER 18, 2004

CLARENCE D. LEIPHART
RES '62
FEBRUARY 6, 2005

'70s

DAVID M. LOBUR
MD '78
MAY 12, 2005

FELIX "BEBE" MILLER
OCTOBER 5, 1928–APRIL 25, 2005



Miller

It must have been two o'clock in the morning when one of the final frantic Scope and Scalpel rehearsals wrapped up, but the time didn't matter to Felix "Bebe" Miller (MD '55, Res '62). He insisted that Susan Dunmire (MD '85, Res '88), as the new faculty adviser, needed to take the students to Ritter's diner. In fact, he couldn't understand why she'd want to go home. In 15 years as faculty adviser for this annual production (1964–78), Miller had found that sitting together at Ritter's brought the class closer and made everyone feel a part of the team. The way people around him were treated was important to Miller. (At the same time, he wasn't afraid to speak his mind.)

Miller completed an ob/gyn residency at what is now Magee-Womens Hospital, and practiced in Pittsburgh for more than 30 years. The University has probably never had a booster quite like him. (Miller had a Pitt chemistry degree, and one of his two sons, Andrew, is an MD '91.) As a popular longtime Pitt clinical professor, Miller was a draw at reunions. He started the tradition of the senior-class picnic for med students. (If Dean Levine ever flipped a burger for you, it was because Bebe handed him a spatula.) He also chaired the Chancellor's Circle—a group of major University donors. No wonder one of his retirement gifts was an appointment book accompanied by a watch.

Memorial contributions may be made to the Hillman Cancer Center or to the Gwen and Bebe Miller Scope and Scalpel Award, care of the Medical Alumni Association. —*CS*

REBECCA FRANCES DREW TAYLOR
APRIL 30, 1917–MARCH 22, 2005

Everyone in Scaife Hall knew Penna Drew. She didn't have a shy bone in her body, and the fact that she smoked a pipe made her stand out, too. But many of her charges—more than 15 years' worth of Pitt med students—remember her for how well she knew them. As the associate dean of student affairs from 1975 to 1984, Rebecca Frances Drew Taylor looked after and spoke up for her students.

Robert E. Lee (MD '56), emeritus professor of pathology, recalls how she picked up on people's needs, like if students felt they were in trouble or were ill. "You can call that a trifle, but if you're a student, it's not a trifle," he says.



Drew Taylor

Drew Taylor, a clinical professor, received her medical degree in 1942 in Montreal, where a friend dubbed her "Penna" because of her home state. The name stuck, even after she returned to her native Pittsburgh, where she received master's degrees in public health and creative writing at Pitt. She remained a clinical professor in the School of Medicine until 2000. —*CS*

MARY CARRASCO: PROTECTS KIDS AND COACHES PARENTS

BY JEN DIONISIO



COURTESY MERCY HOSPITAL

Carrasco came to believe that she couldn't give adequate care to kids without helping parents, too.

The man in Mary Carrasco's office was tall and burly, like an NFL lineman. He was also the father of her patient—a boy who was clearly the victim of periodic beatings. When Carrasco confronted him with the evidence, the man crumpled and began to sob. He never knew he was angry until he found his fist in the wall, he said. He wanted to be a better father. He just did not know how to control his temper or stop criticizing his son for being interested in art and music instead of athletics.

After seeing many parent-child relationships like this, Carrasco began to develop ways to protect children and help parents.

"I never thought I'd end up being interested in child abuse," she says 20 years later in her office, peering from behind rimless, oval spectacles. It's a busy day, with patients being walked to their exam rooms outside. Her stethoscope and a few other tools of the trade are set on the table during these few minutes between appointments.

"I came to it by realizing I couldn't provide adequate care to the children I was seeing without some way to address broader issues of prevention and parenting," she says.

Carrasco (Pediatrics Fellowship '78) just returned from Boston, where she received the 2005 Ray E. Helfer, MD Award for her contributions to child-abuse prevention. She directs the international and community health program at Mercy Hospital and contributed to the core programs that led to Pittsburgh's being noted on *ABC World News Tonight* as a national model for child welfare systems. These include family-support centers (she created the first in Allegheny County) and child-advocacy centers.

Her work with Pittsburgh families started with a positive parenting program that addressed a spectrum of issues: disciplining children, drug and alcohol treatment, assistance getting Medicare coverage, and even looking for jobs. Though it had a rocky start (the first parenting class was attended by only herself and other staff members) and some negative side effects for Carrasco ("finding funding is what made me go gray," she laughs, twirling a lock of her short hair), the program has been so successful that it has been duplicated time and again. Allegheny County now has 27. These programs teach parenting skills to those who may never have experienced positive parenting themselves.

Carrasco's philosophy is that prevention is the most important goal, but she also has implemented changes in intervention and treatment on behalf of abused kids. The advocacy center she started at Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh is one of the first to enlist victim advocates and child-welfare workers as well as forensic experts to gather testimony for prosecutors. A team offers counseling and medical treatment in one location. Carrasco opened a similar center at Mercy.

Her beeper goes off. The phone rings a second later, and she answers it, huffing out a concerned, "Okay, I'll be there." A kid is tearing up an exam room, she explains. She apologetically hurries out the door, then pivots. In her rush, she forgot her medical supplies. She laughs at herself, waves, and heads off to find out why a child acts up at the doctor's office. ■

FOR MORE INFORMATION:
http://nccanch.acf.hhs.gov/topics/prevention/index.cfm

MEDICAL ALUMNI ASSOCIATION OFFICERS

JOHN F. DELANEY (MD '64)
President

M. DELARESE LARKINS-PETTIGREW (MD '94)
President-elect

GRAHAM JOHNSTONE (MD '70)
Secretary

PETER FERSON (MD '73)
Treasurer

ROBERT E. LEE (MD '56)
Historian

DALE ADAIR (MD '85)

SAMUEL TISHERMAN (MD '85)

Members at Large

SUSAN DUNMIRE (MD '85)
Executive Director

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