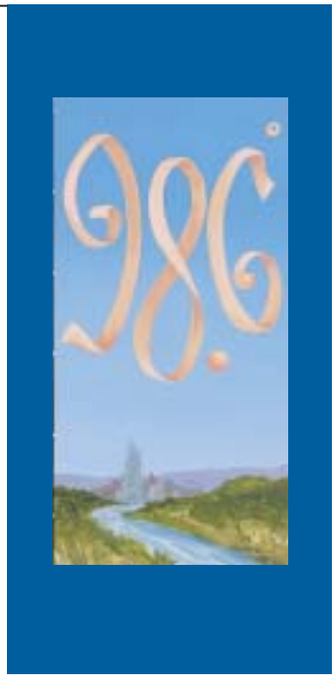
People and programs that keep the school healthy and vibrant

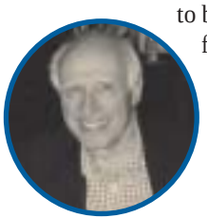


MARCHING IN STEP

WHEN A CLASSMATE CALLS

BY MIKE RANSDELL

The "clomp-clomp-clomp" of 60 pairs of boots smacking the concrete echoed through the hills surrounding the University of Pittsburgh. After a long day of medical school, Private Sidney Busis (MD '45) and his company, all doctors in training, marched steadily across campus under the forceful command of "real sons of guns" army lieutenants. As they passed the old Municipal Hospital on Terrace Street, women—rumored to be members of the world's oldest profession and being treated for sexually transmitted diseases—leaned out the windows and yelled encouragement to the tired young men. "Come on fellows! Come on up here!"


Busis

A decade later, Busis would get called to Municipal Hospital—site of today's Salk Hall—frequently. Rather than for dubious invitations from ladies of the evening, it was for the gravest of reasons: to perform emergency tracheotomies on polio-stricken children.

"Those were scary days," Busis says. "We would pull [the children] out of the iron lung, and start working on them; operating 'til they turned blue. Then [we would place] them back in the lung to ventilate them again, to get pink again, and then pull them out again and do more. It was very tough."

At the same time that Busis was at Municipal—starting his long career as an ear, nose, and throat specialist—a University of Pittsburgh undergrad named Charles Copeland was working his way through school as an elevator operator in the Cathedral of Learning. The part-time job paid $1.10 an hour—about 50 cents more than other student jobs. By living with his parents in Jeannette and taking the bus to school, he made enough to cover books, lunch, and the $320 tuition bill each year.

Copeland's days began when he got out of bed at 6 in the morning. By 7, he was on a bus for an almost 90-minute commute to campus. From 8:30 until 4, with a break for lunch, he was in class or studying. After a quick change into a blue sports coat and tie—required attire for the job—he was off to the Cathedral, where he shuttled visitors from floor to floor until 8:30 p.m. During the rare slow times on the job, he studied class notes that he wrote on cards and kept in his pockets. After work, he would dash off to catch the 8:50 bus back to Jeannette, where he'd grab some dinner and then hit the books until he went to bed, usually around 1 a.m.

After surviving this sleep-deprived schedule as an undergraduate, Copeland was well suited for a career as a doctor. He graduated from the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine in 1958 and is now a surgeon at Mercy Hospital.

Although Busis and Copeland took different paths on their way to becoming MDs, they're now marching together as part of a group of 24 medical school alumni charged with stepping up fund raising for their alma mater. Led by Bebe Miller (MD '55), these Chancellor's Circle volunteers will be calling 200 medical school alums. The volunteers will encourage alumni to join them in pledging at least $1,000—the Chancellor's Circle level—to the School of Medicine, especially to sponsor student programs organized by the Medical Alumni Association that run the gamut from scholarships to the White Coat ceremony.

Busis, a long-time Chancellor's Circle contributor, says his 9-year-old grandson, Ethan, played a key role in his decision to join the group. Ethan asked his grandfather to take him to a Panther football game. When Busis visited campus to pick up the tickets, he was treated to a tour of the John M. and Gertrude E. Petersen Events Center—right next to the site of the old Municipal Hospital, where Busis spent many hours as a young doctor. The tour stirred Busis' pride for his alma mater; he says he felt the need to help the school raise money to train its next generation of doctors.

FOR MORE INFORMATION: 1-877-MED-ALUM

BOOSTER SHOTS

Local singer-songwriter **Chuck Navasky** was discouraged when he lost part of his vocal cords to cancer. But the Philipsburg native, whose family business supplies high-end clothing to rock stars and other celebrities, realized his connections could help raise money for cancer research. The resulting all-star CD, *One Less Tear*, features inspirational songs by artists ranging from Olivia Newton-John to Mötley Crüe's Vince Neil. The proceeds, which Navasky hopes will clear $10 million, are being divided among four research centers, including the University of Pittsburgh Cancer Institute (UPCI). **Jonas Johnson**, professor of otolaryngology and radiation oncology, treated Navasky; he'll apply the funds to search for new ways to spot high-risk cancer patients.

Scleroderma, meaning "hard skin," is a painful disease in which the body's immune system attacks its own tissue, causing internal organs and skin to become stiff and inflexible. The form that strikes during childhood is relatively rare, which makes it difficult for researchers to obtain blood and DNA samples for examination. **Thomas A. Medsger Jr.**, director of Pitt's Scleroderma Research Program, has received a $150,000 grant from the **Scleroderma Foundation** to develop the first National Registry for Childhood Onset Scleroderma. With this new database, researchers will have access to samples from patients all over the country, which could lead to a new understanding of a disease that can have life-threatening complications. —*MES*