



ABOVE: LeRoy Bowers's 1951 class photo.
LEFT: The family sets out from New York for Iran via Lebanon. (Photo courtesy Bowers family.)

GOD WILLING

In 1946, seminary graduate and New Jersey native LeRoy Bowers set out for the University of Louisville. He'd been accepted to its medical school. When he arrived to start classes, he was turned away at the door because he was African American. The University of Pittsburgh would later accept him as a member of the School of Medicine graduating Class of 1951. That was after admitting him to the Class of 1950 and, upon realizing he was black, telling him that he had to wait until the following year—the school had already admitted one black student to the class.

Undeterred, LeRoy Bowers would go on to graduate from Pitt Med, train in surgery at Montefiore Hospital, then live and practice in Pittsburgh and rural Blair County, Pa., for four decades. He also supported local churches as an ordained Presbyterian minister.

In 1958, he and his wife, Jean, boarded an ocean liner in New York Harbor to cross the Atlantic with their four small children. They traveled to Hamadan, Iran, where they lived for seven years. LeRoy Bowers learned Farsi so he could serve his newfound community as a physician, surgeon, and director of the local hospital. His son Richard Bowers (Res '90) was born while the family was living in Hamadan. Inspired by his father's work, Richard, an ophthalmologist based in Sewickley, has taken his own family on medical missions. Richard's son, Levi, recalls working vacations in Sierra Leone, Kenya, and Honduras. Hundreds of people would flock to see his father for cataract surgery and other eye care.

Levi is now a member of Pitt Med's Class of 2022 (see p. 39). His sister, Eve, is in her second year here. LeRoy Bowers died in August at the age of 96, just five days after Levi's White Coat Ceremony.

"It is hard for me to imagine that I would be where I am today," says Levi, "without the acts of kindness that my grandfather shared quite literally with the world." —*Jon Kunitsky*