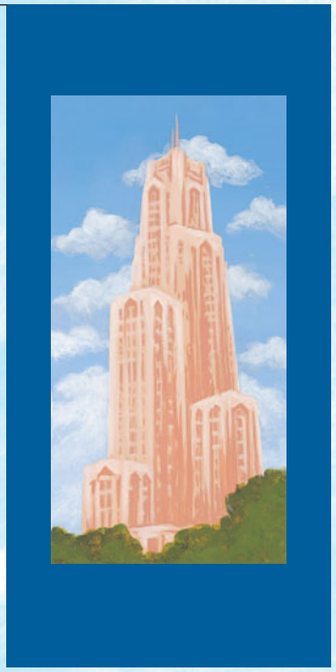


CLASS NOTES

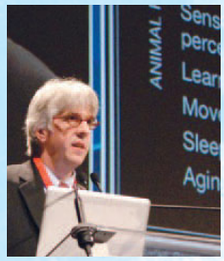
'70s

Ed Boyko (MD '79), a professor of medicine at the University of Washington who has devoted two decades to epidemiologic research, is the VA investigator for the Millennium Cohort Study, the largest prospective health project in military history. Using volunteers' self-reporting as well as Department of Defense medical records, Boyko and his team are evaluating the long-term physical and mental health effects of military service, looking for links between military experience and physical and mental health outcomes in their 150,000 study participants. "The main exposure everyone's concerned about is deployment to combat zones," he says. So far, they've found that in this population (active duty military and reservists, most in their 20s and 30s), PTSD has a strong link to type 2 diabetes—even stronger than the previously established link between depression and type 2 diabetes in the general population.

Boyko is also a principal site investigator for the Million Veteran Program, a VA patient biorepository in the making, which now has more than 70,000 enrollees toward its million-enrollee goal. (Pitt is one of the study's 40 sites, he notes.) Once complete, the biorepository will be a treasure trove for epidemiologic researchers, with blood samples, questionnaires on health and lifestyles, and health care records. "Typically, you need to get permission from regulatory bodies; you need to go out and recruit subjects; and you need to set up your processing and analysis of data. All this could take five years. A biorepository should create considerable savings in time," he says.

'80s

Imagine you could build a new organ from scratch. **David Gerber** (MD '89, Clinical Transplant Fellow '98), professor of surgery, surgical director of liver transplantation, and chief of abdominal transplant surgery at the University of North Carolina School of Medicine, hopes to make that dream a reality. Gerber is researching stem cells and nanotubes to meet the needs of many patients suffering from organ failure. "Our current strategies are not meeting this clinical gap," he says. Tissue engineering has a number of potential applications, including the creation of artificial pancreases to secrete insulin in diabetics or designing vascular grafts to repair blood vessels. Gerber's work in this field is focused on the three-dimensional growth of neo-tissues—he's currently principal investigator for more than 15 clinical trials aimed at better outcomes for kidney- and liver-transplant patients. "The longer-term goal is the development of implantable biologic units," he says.



Small

'90s

Language is among the many things that make us distinctly human. Studying how our linguistic faculties develop is one of the primary concerns of **Steven Small** (Neurology Resident '91), editor in chief of *Brain and Language* and founder of the Society for the Neurobiology of Language. After his residency, Small took on a number of positions in Pitt's Departments of Neurology, Psychology, Communication Sciences and Disorders, and Intelligent Systems, and also was a founding member of the Pitt-Carnegie Mellon University Center for the Neural Basis of Cognition. Now, as professor and chair of neurology at University of California, Irvine, Small studies language and hand-motor recovery following stroke. By observing the natural patterns of recovery, Small has devised various interventional techniques that could speed up the healing process.

A decade ago, only about 10 percent of plastic surgeons were women. But that's changing rapidly, says **Anureet Bajaj** (MD '96). Today, 30 percent of all plastic surgery residents are women. Bajaj, assistant medical editor of *Plastic Surgery News* and chair of the Women Plastic Surgeons Steering Committee for the American Society of Plastic Surgeons, is doing her level best to fuel the fire. The Oklahoma City–based reconstructive and cosmetic plastic surgeon organizes teleconferences each month for the committee, as well as workshop luncheons at the society's annual meeting, covering such topics as time management, legal issues, work/life balance, and social networks and practice. She's now organizing the committee's 2013 retreat, slated for sometime this spring in Las Vegas, Nev.

Sandeep Nathan (Internal Medicine Resident '98), director

FAMILIAL TALES

As kids, neither Susan Dunmire (MD '85) nor Samuel A. Tisherman (MD '85, Res '93, Fel '94) got to watch much of the *Super Friends* or other Saturday morning cartoons. They were off with their dads, Lester A. Dunmire (MD '48) and Samuel E. Tisherman (MD '55), on rounds.

Little Susan and Sam grew up and met decades later at the welcoming reception of Pitt med's Class of '85. They got to know each other. They fell in love. They chose specialties. (Susan is a Pitt associate professor of emergency medicine; Sam a Pitt professor of critical care medicine, as well as surgery.) Surgeon Lester Dunmire died this summer, but the familial medical tale continues as Susan and Sam's oldest, Robert Tisherman (Class of 2017), begins his first year at Pitt med. Robert is the 15th member of his family to do so and represents the fifth generation of a line of Pitt physicians dating back to Lester Haven Bodkin, who enrolled in 1886 as part of the first class to enter Pitt med's forerunner, the Western Pennsylvania Medical College.

Robert and the other Tisherman children have always been surrounded by medicine. When child-care arrangements fell through, Susan says, they put the children in an office behind the ER. "They splinted each other. … My kids learned to build trauma packs from the time they were 5 and 6 years old."

For those who aren't in the know, the family ties can cause confusion. A col-

RIGHT: Sun. BELOW: Asare (right) at the U.S. Capitol last year with former U.S. Congressman Louis Stokes.





of interventional cardiology research and education at the University of Chicago Medical Center, is among a small group of cardiologists who routinely perform coronary angiographies—to test heart health—via the radial artery in the wrist, rather than the femoral artery in the leg. Though the transradial technique is used in less than 10 percent of angiographies performed in the United States, Nathan and others believe it can cut costs, allow for earlier discharges, and reduce patient discomfort. He has taught the technique at national symposia and workshops and hopes that it will soon be a more widely practiced procedure. "There is a learning curve and some associated growing pains, but the potential payoff is huge," he says.

'00s

It's a common refrain in legislation: Health care policymakers often have little to no experience in health care themselves. But **Akua G. Asare** (MD '06) set out to change that as the 2011 American Psychiatric Association Jeanne Spurlock, MD, Congressional Fellow. Last year, Asare put her dual training in general medicine and psychiatry to work on a number of policy issues ranging from mental health to antimicrobial-resistant pathogens. She first became interested in health care policy during her residency in psychiatry at the University of Miami Leonard M. Miller School of Medicine/Jackson Memorial Hospital, when Asare was involved with the Committee of Interns and Residents, a national house staff union that advocates for better working conditions in health care. Though the Spurlock Fellowship kept her from practicing medicine, she says, "It's opened up a different world wherein I can become a change agent on a macro scale."

Smell tests—where people measure their ability to recognize distinct scents—have been featured on *The Dr. Oz Show* as simple and effective indicators of your risk of developing Alzheimer's disease. Finding evidence of this to be lacking, **Gordon Sun** (MD '06) sought to sniff out the truth. The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation clinical scholar at the University of Michigan reexamined the research behind such tests and published a paper this May in *Laryngoscope*, which caught the attention of WebMD and *Medical News Today*. His conclusion? "The evidence is not strong enough to support the regular use of smell tests in predicting the development of Alzheimer's dementia." He notes the correlation between decreased olfaction and Alzheimer's; however, rigorous studies are still needed before smell tests can be used to predict onset of the disease, he says.

'10s

In August 2011, the American Medical Association Foundation awarded **Alana Otto** (MD '12) a $10,000 Physicians of Tomorrow scholarship. Otto was one of only 18 to be presented with the honor last year. The foundation scholarships are given annually to medical students who not only demonstrate excellence within the classroom, but also have shown a commitment to community involvement and volunteering. A regular volunteer with the Allegheny Reproductive Health Center and the Women's Center and Shelter of Greater Pittsburgh, Otto started her pediatrics residency in June at Northwestern University/Lurie Children's Hospital in Chicago. She has also served as a mentor for pregnant teenagers around Pittsburgh. Otto says she looks forward to "the opportunity to be an influential member of patients' lives and communities in addition to providing medical care." As a pediatrician, she wants to make "health care more accessible, relevant, and effective for children."

—Hayavadhan Thuppal and Elaine Vitone





LEFT: The recently deceased surgeon, Lester Dunmire. RIGHT: Two more Pitt med generations—Robert Tisherman is flanked by his parents, Samuel Tisherman and Susan Dunmire.

league of Sam's was once approached by a student worried about an affair. When pressed for evidence, the student revealed seeing Professors Dunmire and Tisherman holding hands. The amused colleague responded, *They've been married for 20 years!*

Another time, Susan reports, she was "talking back" to Sam in the ER: "A resident turned to me and said, 'You can't talk to him that way—he's the attending for surgery.' And I said, 'Yes I can; he's my husband!'"

Robert shares dinner with his parents and sometimes stops by his mom's office to drop off a coffee. Eventually, he'll take classes taught by his parents, which will, in all likelihood, generate more entertaining stories. *—Em Maier*

THE WAY WE ARE

CLASS OF '88

When **Elaine Hylek** (MD '88) thinks about her days at the School of Medicine, she rattles off the names and residencies of her classmates as if she graduated yesterday. Hylek was the class president her first two years and got to know many of her classmates through a number of events: the hayride, the '50s-themed dance, the Scope and Scalpel performances. Today, Hylek is a world-renowned expert in the prevention of stroke and atrial fibrillation, as well as the safety of anticoagulants. She is also the director of the Thrombosis Service at Boston Medical Center, associate director of the Education and Training Division of the Boston University Clinical Translational Science Institute, and professor of medicine at Boston University.

Hylek recalls more than just the name and residency of fellow Pitt meder **Eric Peterson** (MD '88)—she regularly collaborates with him. Peterson is director of the Duke Clinical Research Institute and professor of medicine in the Division of Cardiology at Duke University Medical Center. He studies outcomes research and contemporary management of acute coronary syndromes.



Mosesso

Another classmate Hylek remembers fondly is **Vincent Mosesso** (MD '88, Emergency Medicine Resident '91). The two grew up together on Brinwood Avenue in Baldwin before reuniting at the School of Medicine. Mosesso is professor of emergency medicine at Pitt, medical director of prehospital care for UPMC, and medical director of the Sudden Cardiac Arrest Association, a nonprofit that promotes awareness and treatment of sudden cardiac arrest, as well as support for survivors.

As a med student, Mosesso performed in Scope and Scalpel with Hylek … sort of. "My singing was deemed so bad that I had to lip sync, and another classmate sang from backstage," he says.

Husband-and-wife alums **Ken Washburn** (MD '88) and **Anne Logan** (MD '88) met



Washburn and Logan

at Pitt med. Logan, a pediatrician, has a private practice in Boerne, a Texas Hill Country town the couple has called home since 2000. Washburn is the Valero Distinguished Chair in Transplantation and director of liver transplantation at the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio. An expert in pediatric and adult liver transplantation, he's led a number of clinical research protocols in the field. During the past decade, Washburn has also served on numerous state, regional, and national committees that match organ donors and recipients.



Faro

For **Albert Faro** (MD '88, Pediatrics Resident '91, Pulmonary Medicine Fellow '96), studying and training in Pittsburgh helped him discover his "two loves"—caring for patients with cystic fibrosis (CF) and transplant medicine. (Nearly half of pediatric lung transplant recipients have CF.) As the first president of the International Pediatric Lung Transplant Collaborative, he brought together lung transplant centers from around the world to better serve patients in need. Faro continues his academic and clinical work at the Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis, where he is associate professor of pediatrics. *—HT*

CHARLES E. COPELAND

NOV. 16, 1931–MAY 8, 2012

Charles E. Copeland (MD '58, General Surgery Resident '63, American Cancer Society Fellow '65, Vascular Surgery and Transplantation Research Fellow '66) was well known for founding UPMC Mercy's burn unit, the first of its kind in Pennsylvania, in 1967. He remained a constant presence there until six months before he died of liver cancer in May. But the 80-year-old's "biggest legacy" is the surgical training program at Mercy, says surgeon Harry W. Sell Jr., a longtime colleague who followed Copeland as the chair of Mercy's Department of Surgery. Copeland, a general, vascular, and trauma surgeon and clinical professor of surgery at Pitt, was among the first local doctors trained in advanced trauma life support in the 1960s and continued teaching residents at Mercy for some 50 years. Apart from a one-year fellowship in Boston, Copeland spent his entire career in Pittsburgh.

It has not been uncommon for former patients to call the burn unit asking to talk to Copeland decades after being in his care. Sell recalls Copeland as the sort of surgeon who gave himself entirely to his profession and his family.

"That kind of person doesn't come along too often," says Sell. "He had a tremendous amount of accomplishments here, and you couldn't tell. He was humble about it." *—HT*

PEARL G. MCNALL

FEB. 3, 1923–MARCH 26, 2012

As an anesthesiologist, Pearl McNall (MD '49, Intern '50, Anesthesiology Resident '52) was known for her precise manner, take-charge attitude, and lifelong devotion to treating patients with myasthenia gravis. She died March 26, at age 89, of congestive heart failure.



Copeland



McNall

"She was the most meticulous, careful anesthesiologist on my staff," says Rick Siker, an MD, longtime friend, and former director of anesthesiology at Mercy. "I would always assign new residents to have at least one week's rotation with Dr. McNall. She would teach them how important it was to be meticulously careful with patient safety."

She is also fondly remembered, Siker says, for once telling a too-curt surgeon who demanded she come to the hospital late one night, "You've got to wait until I get my girdle on."

"She was well known for that comment," Siker says. "One could not dictate to Dr. McNall, and I think it was one of her finest qualities." McNall was the first woman appointed to Mercy's senior medical staff, a position she accepted humbly.

As a young physician, McNall developed an early interest in studying and treating myasthenia gravis, a chronic neuromuscular disease that causes muscle weakness. With Francis Foldes, an MD and cofounder of the Myasthenia Gravis Clinic of Western Pennsylvania at Mercy Hospital, McNall authored numerous studies on myasthenia gravis treatments and protocol, as well as new localized muscle relaxants in anesthesiology. McNall became a physician at the clinic in 1957 and in 1962 was appointed its director. She later served as chair of the Myasthenia Gravis Foundation of America and received its Outstanding Woman of the Year Award in 1974.

Outside of the hospital, McNall was an ardent bridge player, world traveler, and botanist. Her family asks that donations be made on her behalf to the Myasthenia Gravis Association of Western Pennsylvania, to which she remained devoted throughout her career and late in life.

—Jenelle Pifer

IN MEMORIAM

'30s

THOMAS M. BALDWIN SR.
MD '37
MAY 2, 2012

PAUL M. RIKE
MD '38
MAY 10, 2012

'40s

CARL BENNETT BEAN
RES '44
JULY 14, 2012

LESTER DUNMIRE
MD '48
JULY 21, 2012

'50s

JOSEPH G. BURGER
MD '55
JULY 2, 2012

JAMES ANTHONY ROCK
MD '56
JUNE 1, 2012

'60s

NOEL JOHN GILLETTE
MD '60
MARCH 22, 2012

DAVID STELLE
MD '61
JUNE 27, 2012

JOHN R. MISAGE
MD '62
MAY 4, 2012

JOSEPH BRENNER
MD '65
JULY 30, 2012

LORETTA R. LOEB
MD '57, RES '68
MAY 11, 2012

'80s

GERALD BRETT WEISS
MD '87
JUNE 2, 2012

GREGORY S. SHEFFO
MD '89
MAY 27, 2012

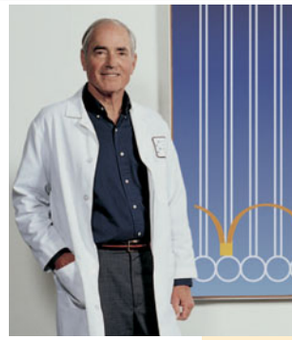
WE KNEW YOU WHEN CHARLES COCHRANE AND THE PITTSBURGH FIVE

BY JENELLE PIFER



1961 *HIPPOCRATEAN*

Pitt med's Department of Pathology in the 1961 *Hippocratean*. That year, the "Pittsburgh Five"—William Weigle, Charles Cochrane (top row, fifth and sixth from the left, respectively), Joseph Feldman, Frank Dixon (front row, third and fourth from the left, respectively), and Jacinto Vazquez (not pictured)—left Pittsburgh for California, establishing the forerunner of today's Scripps Research Institute.



Cochrane

On the afternoon of March 6, 2012, Charles Cochrane sat nervously near the phone in his lab at the Scripps Research Institute in La Jolla, Calif. "You're waiting, waiting, waiting," says the 81-year-old MD and former Pitt professor of pathology. The call he was expecting from the FDA was one that would determine the fate of a project he'd labored on for 25 years. The new drug he'd created was called Surfaxin, a synthetic surfactant that coats the lungs of preterm infants in respiratory distress and helps them breathe. Cochrane knew the potential was enormous.

The phone rang. A colleague spoke: "Charley, in 2 seconds you're going to be very happy." It was the team's fifth attempt, and Surfaxin was finally approved. The drug will be on the market this October.

In 1956, at 25, Cochrane joined a group of up-and-coming pathology researchers at Pitt. "Our department was always rated the best by the students because we were such young cowboys," Cochrane says.

"He displayed a lot of enthusiasm. That resonated with some students," says Richard Trackler (MD '61). "They thought, *He's more like we are.*"

In 1961 Cochrane decided to pursue research full time. He and four others from Pitt—then-department-chair Frank Dixon, Joseph Feldman, Jacinto Vazquez, and William Weigle, a sought-after group called the "Pittsburgh Five"—moved to California to a then-unknown complex called the Scripps Research Institute, where an enterprising hospital director promised to build them a facility and leave them alone. Dixon eventually became the institute's first director and led the research program for two-and-a-half decades.

In 1988, a pediatrician studying the human surfactant—which coats the air sacs in the lungs and helps keep them open—came to Cochrane for help. His team had identified the lipids involved but didn't quite understand its proteins. Cochrane set about isolating them.

"The first thing that struck me was that in our columns for separating the proteins there was precipitation at the top," says Cochrane. Until then, no protein in the human body was known to be insoluble in water. "I couldn't believe what I was seeing," says Cochrane, now professor emeritus in Scripps' Department of Immunology and Microbial Science.

He analyzed the DNA, determined the entire sequence of the protein, and pinpointed which regions were responsible for the surfactant activity. Knowing this, he made a very simple version of the protein, mixed it back in with synthetic lipids, and lo and behold: He'd made an entirely synthetic surfactant.

Infant respiratory distress syndrome is a life-threatening disorder that occurs when premature lungs don't have the proper elasticity to spring back open after exhaling. Surfactants restore the stretch and enable these babies to breathe on their own. Until now, they typically have been given surfactants derived from animal lungs, but Surfaxin has been demonstrated to work equally well, says Jennifer Kloesz, Pitt associate professor of pediatrics and clinical director of the neonatal intensive care unit at Magee-Womens Hospital of UPMC. Surfaxin eliminates risks of impurities inherent in animal products. "And sometimes different religious or cultural groups have concerns with us using animal-derived products," Kloesz says.

Getting approval from the FDA was a long and turbulent process in part because the drug type was so new, Cochrane says. He's now working on an aerosol delivery method, so Surfaxin can be administered in developing countries without ventilators. He's also confident the drug will find new applications, treating diseases like cystic fibrosis and acute asthma in adults.

The four other members of the Pittsburgh Five have since died, and colleagues at Scripps now jokingly call Cochrane "the last of the Mohicans."

"There is something almost mythical about the Pittsburgh Five," says Trackler. "They were the nucleus of the Scripps Research Institute, these cowboys." ■

MEDICAL ALUMNI ASSOCIATION OFFICERS

BRIAN KLATT (MD '97)
President

JAN MADISON (MD '85)
President-elect

MARGARET LARKINS-PETTIGREW (MD '94)
Secretary

PETER FERSON (MD '73)
Treasurer

ROBERT E. LEE (MD '56)
Historian

SUSAN DUNMIRE (MD '85)
Executive Director

DONALD MRVOS (MD '55)
CARL ROBERT FUHRMAN (MD '79)
GREGORY M. HOYSON (MD '82)
SAM TISHERMAN (MD '85)
JOHN F. MAHONEY (MD '90)
ADAM GORDON (MD '95)
CHARISSA B. PACELLA (MD '98)
HEATHER HEINRICHS WALKER (MD '99)
BRETT PERRICELLI (MD '02)
Members at Large

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