**CLASS NOTES**

**’60s** The past year looks like a major chapter in the storybook ride of Bert O’Malley (MD ’63). He received the National Medal of Science from President George W. Bush in September 2008. O’Malley, the chair of molecular and cellular biology in Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, is known as one of the leading experts in understanding how hormones turn genes on and off, particularly in breast cancer. In April 2009, as this issue went to press, O’Malley returned to Pitt’s campus as commencement speaker for 6,000 some new graduates and their families and to receive an honorary Doctor of Science degree.

“Just as no two human beings are the same, no two cancers are the same,” says Mark Orringer (MD ’87), coauthor of a 2008 paper in Nature that genetically characterized 188 individual lung tumors. The researchers identified 26 genes that were mutated at high frequencies in these tumors and, therefore, were likely involved in the genesis of the cancer. The findings shed light on how cancer develops and may lead to new targets for treatment or prevention.

Orringer is a professor and head of the section of thoracic surgery at the University of Michigan. In 2001, he served as president of the Society of Thoracic Surgeons. He says that he takes great pride in balancing professional and family obligations.

“I have five grandkids, and whenever one of the dogs gets hold of their little fluffy toys and rips them apart, they always run them to me to sew them up. That’s my job, to save them.”

**’70s** Jan Ehrenworth (MD ’73) has been known to set a few fires to make his points. Really. Ehrenworth gives talks at scientific meetings and elsewhere on fires in the operating room—covering safety points, including prevention and what to do when something starts burning. He notes that anesthesiologists and surgeons frequently bring together all the requirements for a blaze in the OR: fuel, oxygen, and an ignition source.

A professor of anesthesiology in the Yale University School of Medicine, Ehrenworth combines clinical work and resident training in the operating room.

One patient ended three years of self-imposed isolation to see Lester Gottesman (MD ’78). The woman had a sigmoid enteroccele, a hernia of the sigmoid into the rectum, and every other doctor she’d seen had told her there was nothing wrong with her. “They told her she was crazy. The symptoms are pretty subtle, but they often occur in young women who are in the prime of their physiological and social lives,” Gottesman says. Painful constipation had kept her housebound, but after surgery everything changed.

“She got her life back,” Gottesman says. “I think she got married soon afterward.”

Gottesman, an associate professor of clinical surgery at Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons, also serves as chief of colorectal surgery at St. Luke’s—Roosevelt Hospital. He’s working on several studies exploring HPV susceptibility in an HIV-positive individual.

**’80s** An otherwise normal, healthy boy, age 12, goes with his parents to see the pediatrician because of unexplained redness and swelling around his ankle. An otherwise normal, healthy boy, age 12, goes with his parents to see the pediatrician because of unexplained redness and swelling around his ankle. An otherwise normal, healthy boy, age 12, goes with his parents to see the pediatrician because of unexplained redness and swelling around his ankle. An otherwise normal, healthy boy, age 12, goes with his parents to see the pediatrician because of unexplained redness and swelling around his ankle. An otherwise normal, healthy boy, age 12, goes with his parents to see the pediatrician because of unexplained redness and swelling around his ankle. An otherwise normal, healthy boy, age 12, goes with his parents to see the pediatrician because of unexplained redness and swelling around his ankle. An otherwise normal, healthy boy, age 12, goes with his parents to see the pediatrician because of unexplained redness and swelling around his ankle.
Maynard's findings may one day help women with preeclampsia. In 2005, Maynard won a three-year Charles E. Culpeper Scholarship in Medical Science to continue this work. She is now an assistant professor in the Division of Renal Disease and Hypertension at George Washington University. In one project, funded by the Washington, D.C., chapter of the National Kidney Foundation, she’s hoping to discover the threshold range of sFlt1 levels that separates women whose preeclampsia can be managed with blood-pressure medication and bed rest from women whose health will deteriorate more quickly. Maynard will present her latest findings at the World Congress of Nephrology in Milan in May. —Elaine Vitone
In July 1990, William Cohen (Res ’78, Fel ’80) became the director of what was then the new Down Syndrome Center at Children’s Hospital of Pittsburgh. The developmental-behavioral pediatrician, a professor of both pediatrics and psychiatry at the University of Pittsburgh, once recalled some nervousness on starting the position. At that point, he had seen only a handful of patients with Down syndrome. By the time he died unexpectedly in February, thousands of children with Down syndrome had come to see “Dr. Bill,” and the National Down Syndrome Society described him as a “national leader in the Down syndrome movement” and a “dear friend.” He authored the seminal guidelines for care for children and adolescents with the condition and helped found the Down Syndrome Medical Interest Group.

Cohen died Feb. 6 of a heart attack in Miami Beach while pursuing one of his passions—in line skating. On July 4 this year, he and his partner, Donald Arnheim, were planning to exchange vows at a commitment ceremony.

Colleagues describe Cohen as a great listener, teacher, patient advocate, and a man who gave hugs easily. A charter member of Pitt’s Academy of Master Educators, he was known for his teaching interests in family counseling, hypnotherapy, adapting families to chronic conditions, and doctor/patient communication. He taught med students how to interview patients.

“He gave so much of himself. He really loved our families and our kids,” says Sheila Cannon, program coordinator for the center and one of its founding parents.

She recalls that Cohen enjoyed entertaining children by talking like the gravelly voiced Sesame Street character Grover. Cohen was buried with his stethoscope and a Grover doll that he wore with it. —Erica Lloyd

Alexander Minno’s Pittsburgh roots ran deep. Minno (MD ’47) was the son of a steelworker and a Slovakian immigrant. After receiving his undergraduate degree from the University of Pittsburgh in 1943, he enlisted in the navy and returned to Pitt for medical school while a reservist.

At the Mayo Clinic in Minnesota, Minno trained in rheumatology under Pitt grad Philip Hench (MD ’20), who was instrumental in the discovery of cortisone and its ability to relieve pain and inflammation. Hench won the Nobel Prize in 1950. In 1953, Minno left Minnesota to create the rheumatology department at Lahey Clinic in Boston, where he met and married Frances Fraher. When job offers came in from as far away as San Francisco, says Frances, Pittsburgh won out because of its proximity to friends and family.

Minno practiced rheumatology in Pittsburgh and was a Pitt clinical associate professor until his retirement in the late 1990s. The Minnos were active and generous supporters of the medical school, hosting reunion dinners and encouraging Minno’s classmates to donate to the School of Medicine. Minno served for several years on the board of Pitt’s Medical Alumni Association. —CS

IN MEMORIAM

'40s

GEORGE J. JACOBS
MD ’46
MARCH 12, 2009

'50s

JOHN H. SCOTT
MD ’54
MARCH 9, 2009

JOHN BRANDON
MD ’56
APRIL 4, 2009

'60s

MARCIA MEARS STAVRIDES
MD ’61
JAN. 20, 2009

ALAN RENTON
MD ’65
JAN. 14, 2009

VINCENT MACHAJ
MD ’76
JAN. 14, 2009

FACULTY
NANCY NIELAND-FISHER
MARCH 28, 2009

'70s

'80s

MARCH 12, 2009

'90s

MARCH 12, 2009

2000s

MARCH 12, 2009
The truck could only take them so far. When the trail steepened, they climbed on foot, bringing vaccines to families in the remote countryside. They announced their arrival with a bullhorn.

“It was a life-altering experience,” says J. Nadine Gracia (MD ’02, Res ’05) of her 1996 medical mission to Haiti. “It showed me just how difficult living conditions can be—not just in the lack of access to medical care, but also to opportunity.”

Gracia, who grew up in Novato, Calif., in a Haitian family, still carries the lessons of that trip as she serves in the most prestigious leadership and public service program in the United States, the White House Fellows program. She is one of two MDs in the current 14-fellow class, which began the yearlong program in September 2008. As part of her assignment in the Department of Health and Human Services, Gracia works on an interagency effort to improve health care delivery systems in the Outer Pacific Islands.

She has met with Presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama, as well as with members of their respective cabinets. There have been more than a few “pinch me” moments. “The first one was when I met President Bush for the first time,” she says. “Here I was, a daughter of immigrants, sitting in the Oval Office. At one point, I had to pause and ask myself if this was real. My family has worked so hard to get me to this point.”

Gracia’s parents were both educators in Haiti. Her mother was a math teacher, and her father was a school principal. “They fostered this yearning for learning in me. And they also helped me to embrace diversity,” she says.

In 2000, Gracia had the opportunity to bring both passions to the fore when she became Pitt’s first med student to serve as the president of SNMA, the Student National Medical Association. During her term, she spearheaded partnerships with more than 15 national organizations and oversaw the development of policy statements on gun violence, organ donation, and diversity in education.

Following her position as chief pediatrics resident at Children’s Hospital of Pittsburgh of UPMC, Gracia completed a two-year research fellowship at Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia. She examined community-level risk factors for violence, studying the built physical environment and its association with aggravated assault.

Gracia says her mentors in Pittsburgh were instrumental to her success, working with her to design an academic program that would accommodate her travel-heavy schedule throughout her SNMA presidential term—especially Paula Davis, assistant vice chancellor in the Office of Health Sciences Diversity; Joan Harvey, associate dean for student affairs; and Arthur S. Levine, senior vice chancellor for the health sciences and dean of the School of Medicine. Steven Kanter, the school’s vice dean, told Gracia about the White House Fellows program when she started med school and continues to mentor her today. Gracia met Henri Ford—a fellow Haitian and then a Pitt professor and chief of pediatric surgery—in her first year of med school.

“We bonded immediately,” says Gracia. “He’s been like an uncle to me.”

Davis, who interviewed Gracia for admission to Pitt and was a reference for her security clearance, saw something exceptional in Gracia from the start.

“Nadine is a gatherer of people,” Davis says. “She has a unique ability to bring disparate views together at the table and move them along.”

It is, perhaps, a quality of every great public servant, from the hills of Northern Haiti to Capitol Hill.