

*People and programs
that keep the school
healthy and vibrant*



Donald Fraley, center, with his son and a train-collecting friend



taking people under his wing. He invited students to dinner at his home, showing off his Lionel train collection, which twists through tiny villages in his basement. He took them to observe his wife at work (she is a hematologist and oncologist). He met with them one-on-one to help mold their futures.

Zella Zeigler, MD '68, Fraley's wife, finds it hard to explain what motivated him to devote himself completely to everything he pursued, "It's just the way he was; it was a God-given talent. I don't have it. Not a lot of people do."

So it's no surprise to many that the School of Medicine is working with Zeigler to establish a lectureship to honor her husband's memory. The annual lecture will focus on nephrology, featuring noted experts in the field. The lectureship seems a fitting way to memorialize a great mentor who was also a gifted physician. (His own doctor recalled how one of Fraley's patients survived what's normally a fatal condition because of his meticulous care.)

James Johnston, MD '79, also a professor in Pitt's renal division, says Fraley always questioned students and trainees, making them think, forcing them to answer. It didn't matter if students said the wrong thing. He would steer them in the right direction. Further, he was likely to encourage them to take on tasks they might, at first, think they could never accomplish. This was his *modus operandi*.

As part of a train-collecting group, Fraley partnered with eight men who were writing a collectors' guide about toy trains. The men began to think the feat impossible, then Fraley swooped in, taking notes and photographs, typing and editing, encouraging them so much, they found themselves occasionally chipping away at the project until 4 a.m. At the time, Fraley knew little about trains. It didn't matter; he was just doing what came naturally.

FOR MORE INFORMATION: Call Jennifer Rellis at 1-877-MED-ALUM.

ARRESTING BREAKTHROUGH

PNC FOUNDATION FUNDS GENE THERAPY RESEARCH

BY DAVID R. ELTZ

This year 20,000 Americans will be diagnosed with glioma, the most common form of brain cancer. Their tumors will grow rapidly, shoving aside healthy brain cells, blocking their ability to function. The patients might develop dizziness, exhibit uncharacteristic behaviors, become paralyzed. They will see doctors, undergo surgery, and most will discover that their tumors have returned, stronger than ever. Some 18 months after diagnosis, more than half will be dead.

Pitt's Shi-Yuan Cheng, assistant professor of pathology, and Xiao Xiao, assistant professor of molecular genetics and biochemistry, believe they can arrest that process. Along with Hsin-I Ma, a postdoctoral fellow, the two scientists are testing therapies involving the angiostatin gene. Angiostatin is a protein that stops blood vessel growth in tumors. The researchers hope to stifle tumors by choking off their blood supply.

In a recent study, the scientists injected an adeno-associated viral (AAV) vector carrying the angiostatin gene into the thigh muscle of mice. Soon after, high levels of angiostatin were circulating in the animals' blood—and the levels remained high over time. The researchers then injected glioma cells into the mouse brains. All the control mice, who did not receive the angiostatin gene, died within six weeks, while 40 percent of the mice who received the gene therapy lived more than 10 months.

The scientists' efforts have been recognized with the first PNC Foundation Innovation Award. The three-year, \$150,000 gift will fund two other research projects at the University of Pittsburgh Cancer Institute in 2003 and 2004.

Cheng envisions AAV, in combination with existing cancer treatments, effectively triggering tumor cell death. "The advantage is that this inhibitor will reach, in theory, every tumor in the body and prevent metastasis," says Xiao. ■

THE NATURAL

DONALD FRALEY

BY MEGHAN HOLOHAN

As head of the intensive care unit at UPMC Montefiore for 14 years, Donald Fraley, MD '68, encouraged his staff to talk to comatose patients, to avoid dehumanizing the unconscious. On the happy occasions these patients awakened, he made special arrangements to welcome them back. Once, he purchased a bottle of wine for a woman and her husband after she awoke from nine months in a coma. He pulled the curtains shut and instructed the staff to bother the couple only if the life-support buzzers waited for an hour. Fortunately, the buzzers didn't interrupt.

When Fraley, a professor in the School of Medicine's renal division, volunteered for a mentoring program, he was likely to ask for students who needed "extra attention." "I hope you're up to the task," he might tell students charged with helping him mentor their more junior counterparts, at the same time instilling confidence that they were in fact up to the task at hand. All they had to do was look at his record. In one program, Fraley was known to take on 25 mentees at a time.

Fraley, who died November 14 following a struggle with a brain tumor, had a way of