

CLASS NOTES

1953 Reunion

October 13•14, 2023

1955

Ronald H. Spiro, of Jerusalem, Israel, reports that his nuclear family is now 50, including 16 great grandchildren. "Best wishes to all my classmates," he writes.

1956

Michael L. Del Monico, of Raleigh, NC, still misses New York State.

1958 Reunion

October 13•14, 2023



Lillian and Bernard W. Asher '63

1960

Leonard R. Friedman, of Middleton, MA, writes, "As the historian of the class of 1960, one can say we had a good run. From operating the Massachusetts General Hospital to the Framingham Study, one-third of our class members highlighted their careers in the Boston Area.

Roger Moore, the class president and resident artist of more than 800 paintings, wished for a class alumni weekend. However, only four of the 31 living class members indicated they could travel to Syracuse. With the dawning of age-related diseases, I wonder if the school would run a moderated ZOOM program for this as well as for other classes. The firepower for discussion is still there in my experience talking with classmates. Of course, we should consider the time of day and schedule when **Julian Aroesty** would not be riding his bike multi-miles or writing short touching essays on life."

1963 Reunion

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Bernard W. Asher and Lillian have recently moved from Batavia, NY, to the Kendal at Ithaca retirement community, located adjacent to the Cornell campus. "We can highly recommend this place. It is filled mostly with Cornellians," he writes. "We welcome visitors."

GEORGE B. JACOBS, MD '58

Pioneering Spine Surgeon

When George B. Jacobs, MD '58, began his career as a neurosurgeon in the 1960s, the field was very small. "Today, there are probably 3,500 members of the American Association of Neurological Surgeons, but the AANS did not exist at the time. The Harvey Cushing Society (named for a founding father of neurosurgery) had about 350 members and you had to be invited to join," he recalls.

Dr. Jacobs helped pioneer the field of spine surgery, which was a perfect amalgam of his interests. An engineering student as an undergraduate at New York University, Jacobs came to the Norton College of Medicine thinking he'd pursue orthopedics. "I liked structure and problem solving," he says.

In his first year of medical school, he had an infection and became systemically ill. "I was treated with the new 'wonder' drug penicillin," he says. Nonetheless, he got sicker and sicker. When his father, a cardiologist, came to see him, he immediately asked the doctors to stop the penicillin. "No one appreciated the systemic effects of penicillin allergy at that time," he says.

Jacobs got better, but he had missed a great deal of course material. He buckled down and made up most of it, then found a summer course at the University of Michigan to take histology. Knowing that Jacobs would have a lot of downtime, his anatomy professor reached out to a colleague at Michigan and got Jacobs a part-time job in the neuroanatomy lab. "That focused my interests in a new direction," he says.

Jacobs did his residency in neurological surgery at the Montefiore Medical Center at Albert Einstein College of Medicine, working under world-famous neurosurgeon Leo Davidoff, MD, and then joined the faculty of Markland College of Medicine, at the time the only medical school in New Jersey.

Shortly after, he was recruited to the faculty at Einstein, where he would remain for 20 years (minus a two-year stint at the University of Pittsburgh as chair of spine surgery to help them keep accreditation). He attained the rank of professor at both Albert Einstein College of Medicine and the University of Pittsburgh, developing his own skills and technique as a spine surgeon and teaching others to help grow the field. He became a Fellow of the American College of Surgeons, a Fellow of the Scoliosis Research Society, and a Fellow of the International College of Surgeons.

In the 1990s, Jacobs became professor and chairman of the Department of Neurosurgery at Rutgers University New Jersey Medical School, the Hackensack University Medical Center Division. He retired from that position in 2012, wanting to clear the opportunity for one of his former residents to become chair, joining a large orthopedic practice as a spine surgeon.

Concurrent with Jacobs building his own career, his wife, Rosanne Wille-Jacobs, had served as dean of the College of Nursing and Health Care Professions and provost and senior vice president of Lehman College City University of New York. When she retired, the couple decided to relocate to Florida.

"I was ready to do something else," Jacobs recalls.

Retirement lasted two months. Jacobs joined the Bay Pines VA Healthcare System as a senior consultant in spine neurosurgery, a part-time post he held for six years, into his late 80s.

Now 90, Jacobs remains active on committees of various spine societies and serves on the editorial board of the spine section of *Surgical Neurology International*. He also serves on the architectural review board and board of directors of his community in Fort Myers. An Airline Transport-rated pilot, he believes he's the oldest flight instructor in the country still certified.

Jacobs current passion is training his new rescue dog, a four-year-old German shepherd, Thor III.

"We adopted him two months ago, and you'd never know he's a rescue, he's a completely different dog," he says.

A native of Switzerland, Jacobs grew up with German shepherds, which he says are a misunderstood breed. "They're not easy dogs; they're demanding. But if you have a good German shepherd, you never want another breed."

Through the years, the Jacobs have had a number of German shepherds, and at one time his wife bred dogs for show. Jacobs describes their last dog, Thor II, as a once-in-a-lifetime dog. "He was a huge, oversize dog, but incredibly gentle and the smartest dog you've ever seen. He worked independently as a service and therapy dog,



Rosanne and George Jacobs '58 with their German shepherd rescue, Thor III



and he befriended all the animals that came to our yard: coyotes, raccoons, even a white river rat."

Devastated by the dog's passing, the Jacobs chose an older rescue based on their own age. "We didn't want a puppy that would outlive us," he says.

Looking back on a very full life, Jacobs is proud of the cadre of spine surgeons he's trained, now in leading positions across the country. "That gives me an incredible amount of satisfaction," he says. "You can't accomplish much more in your lifetime than to educate young people."

—Renée Gearhart Levy