

TO SUSTAIN THE BEST IN SURGICAL SCIENCE, PRACTICE AND SERVICE

# Yale Surgical Society

SPRING 2024

## President's Corner

Warren D. Widmann, MD



Coming up soon! The Yale Surgical Society Annual Meeting and Dinner will be at 6 PM on Thursday May 16th at the New Haven Country Club. Please make your reservations ASAP using the website [Yale Surgical Society Dinner](#). Remember that the address is 160 Hartford Turnpike, Hamden, Connecticut 06517.

We will be welcoming the new members, the graduates of the various surgical programs, and will be presenting the named awards (remembering Sam Harvey, Deepak Naryan) to two of the graduating residents/fellows. The next two awards recognize members of the YSS, one for Distinguished Service to the Yale Surgical Society and the other, the Distinguished Alumni Award, to a senior member who has made significant contributions to the science of surgery.

On Friday, May 17th, at 7:30 AM, your society will be presenting the YSS Grand Rounds in the Fitkin Auditorium. The theme is Pathways to Leadership and our distinguished speakers Drs. Mary H. McGrath, Frederick L. Greene, and Robert S.D. Higgins.

As the academic year ends and the fellows and chief residents move on, it is a time to reflect on the changes from the past and the opportunities in the future. I was privileged to attend a reception at the Yale Club in NYC for the accepted applicants to the Yale School of Medicine (YSM) as a representative of the YSS. Dean Brown along with a group of Assistant Deans spoke about the features that make the YSM the ideal choice for students to learn in a warm, supportive community with the features of excellence in clinical care, research, and teaching. I encourage you to keep tuned to what is happening at the YSM as it and the Yale New Haven Hospital increase their interdependence.

The [Message from the Chair](#) in this issue is a link to Dr. Ahuja's recent thoughts on the department's commitment to research. Dr. Ahuja addresses the Department's increasing position in research, which is essential as we pay attention to the future of surgery.

We have moved along from a department focused on the development of and perfection of technical procedures to a department increasingly involved with basic research into the mechanisms of the diseases we treat and novel approaches to treatment.

The Executive Board approved a change in our by-laws in March, establishing the new category of Candidate Membership. Senior residents or fellows in their last two years of training can now be proposed by their Program Directors for Candidate Membership and once approved they can participate fully in the YSS activities.

Finally, all of us will soon be contacted and informed that Yale University now considers all former and current house staff as eligible alumni members of the all-inclusive Alumni Association. While that may help us to keep in touch with those outside of surgery, I trust that the YSS will remain our primary connection to surgery at Yale.

Looking forward to seeing you at the YSS Dinner and Grand Rounds

Warren D. Widmann, MD

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## Departmental Highlights



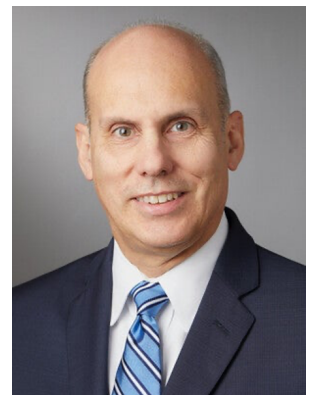
*Ronald Salem M.D. Retires After 34 Years -* **Ronald R. Salem, MD** joined the newly formed Division of Surgical Oncology in 1990 as an Assistant Professor. He recently retired from Clinical Practice after 34 years. Dr. Salem was born in Rhodesia and received his medical degree from the University of Rhodesia. To pursue further training in surgery he moved to London, UK and worked at Guy's Hospital and at the Hammersmith Hospital under the Mentorship of Professor LH Blumgart, M.D. He then moved to Boston, MA and completed his surgical residency and Surgical Oncology fellowship at the New England Deaconess Hospital and the Dana Farber Cancer Institute. The Department of Surgery honored Dr. Salem with a "Clap Out" and appreciation ceremony on Tuesday, August 15, 2023. Ronald Salem, MD, Lampman Professor of Surgery, performed his final surgery in August.

A renowned pancreatic surgeon, Dr. Salem specialized in minimally invasive surgery for patients with malignant and pre-malignant conditions and the management of pancreatic cysts. Under his leadership, Yale's Division Surgical Oncology became a destination medical center for complex pancreatic surgical procedures including the Whipple procedure. Surgical oncology was formally recognized as an NIH-designated comprehensive cancer center with the establishment of the state-of-the-art Smilow Cancer Hospital in 2009 to provide cutting-edge research and cancer treatment. The Department of Surgery was proud to congratulate Dr. Salem as one of the five recipients of the second annual Yale Medicine Distinguished Clinical Career Award. The award was created by the Yale Medicine Board to "recognize and honor the careers of physicians marked by significant accomplishments, exemplary dedication, and important contributions in advancing Yale Medicine, the overall medical profession, and the community."

Dr. Salem led surgical oncology at Yale since 1996, when he was appointed Division Chief in the Department of Surgery, and Chief of Surgical Oncology at Smilow Cancer Hospital. The division has since grown to include destination sites across the state, more than 17 physicians leading programs in Breast Surgery, Hepato-Pancreato-Biliary Surgery, and Endocrine Surgery. Dr. Salem is a master surgeon, educator, and leader. Dr. Salem's many institutional honors and recognitions include the Yale New Haven Hospital Heroes Award, the Smilow Cancer Center Clinical Award, and the Alvin Feinstein Teaching Award. In 2011, Dr. Salem was awarded the prestigious David and Cindy Lefell Award for clinical excellence and the the Alvin Feinstein Clinical Teaching Award, The Smilow Cancer Center Clinician of the Year Award, the annual Walter Longo MD Department of Surgery Citizenship Award, and the Yale New Haven Hospital Lifetime Service Award. Dr. Salem's two main passions were Clinical Excellence as a surgeon and Surgical resident education. In these two pursuits, he led the Division to be in the top 10% of NSQIP hospitals for the Whipple procedure, performing over 1100 Whipple procedures. Over 100 Chief Residents worked with him, many pursuing careers in Surgical Oncology and he was awarded the Edward Storer General Surgery Resident Teaching Award on 10 occasions.

*Raul Guzman, M.D. appointed the Donald Guthrie Professor of Surgery -* **Raul J. Guzman, MD**, a surgeon-scientist with an interest in the underlying mechanisms and clinical implications of arterial calcification, was recently appointed the Donald Guthrie Professor of Vascular Surgery, effective immediately, for a term of 10 years, renewable by the dean of the Yale School of Medicine. Dr. Guzman, follows a long line of prestigious previous Guthrie Professors, including Arthur Baue, M.D., Bernard Lytton, M.D., and Robert Weiss, M.D.

Dr. Guzman is Chief of the Division of Vascular Surgery and Endovascular Therapy at Yale New Haven Hospital and Surgeon-in-Chief of Vascular Surgery for the Heart and Vascular Center, Yale New Haven Health System. He came to Yale from Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center in Boston and Harvard Medical School. Dr. Guzman completed a fellowship in Vascular Surgery at Stanford University Hospital. In addition he currently serves as a permanent member of the Bioengineering, Technology, and Surgical Sciences Study Section of the NIH. His clinical interests center primarily on preventing amputation in patients with diabetic vascular disease.



## Divisional Spotlight: Plastic & Reconstructive Surgery



The Division of Plastic & Reconstructive Surgery has been led since 2021 by **Bohdan Pomahac, MD** who is the Frank F. Kanthak Professor of Surgery. A native of the Czech Republic, Dr. Pomahac graduated from the Palacky University School of Medicine and completed his surgical training in 2004 at the

Harvard Integrated Plastic Surgery Program in Boston. As a member of the surgical faculty at Harvard Medical School, Dr. Pomahac built its Vascular Composite Allotransplantation Program before bringing his world-class expertise to New Haven and establishing Yale-New Haven Hospital's face and hand transplant program.

His expertise adds to a growing faculty of plastic surgeons who lead novel and prominent programs across Connecticut, including wound healing, craniofacial surgery (Dr. Alperovich), melanoma treatment (Dr. Clune), hand surgery, targeted muscle reinnervation, peripheral nerve and brachial plexus treatment (Drs. Hill, Colen, Paik, Prsic, Thomson), lymphatic surgery, breast reconstruction (Drs. Ayyala, Butler, Addagatla), aesthetic surgery (Dr. Vazquez), and cutting-edge research in machine learning and 3D printing. This year will see the establishment of the Section of Reconstructive Oncology with new faculty member Dr. Siba Haykal as its inaugural chief, and the division is home to one of the oldest plastic surgery resident training programs in the country established in 1970 and currently under the leadership of Dr. Henry Hsia. There is also opportunity for fellowship training in Hand Surgery, Craniofacial Surgery, and Breast Microsurgery. Research by division faculty has led to several publications in major journals including Science, PLOS One, and the New England Journal of Medicine. The division's clinical and research portfolios have grown significantly under Dr. Pomahac's leadership, making Yale a leading destination for plastic surgery education, research, and clinical expertise.

## New Faculty Spotlight: David P. Kuwayama, M.D.

The Yale School of Medicine Department of Surgery is pleased to announce the recruitment of **David P. Kuwayama, MD, MPA** as Director of Aortic Surgery in the Division of Vascular Surgery and Endovascular Therapy, effective June 2023. Dr. Kuwayama will join the Yale



faculty via Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center, where he helped to lead development of the complex aortic interventions program. He is distinguished nationally for his expertise in novel and minimally invasive treatment options for aortic aneurysms and dissections.

"It is an honor to join the exceptional team of scientists and clinicians at Yale in our effort to provide the highest-quality care to our patients," said Dr. Kuwayama.

In his leadership role at Yale, Dr. Kuwayama will partner with faculty and clinical staff across the vascular and cardiac surgery specialties to grow the destination program, overseeing the quality, safety and patient experience of complex, multidisciplinary aortic procedures.

"Expanding our complex aortic program with breakthrough technologies has been a top priority, and Dr. Kuwayama's innovative spirit and significant experience make him an ideal leader for these efforts" said Dr. Raul Guzman, Division Chief of Vascular Surgery and Endovascular Therapy.

A graduate of Harvard Medical School, Dr. Kuwayama completed his residency in General Surgery at the Johns Hopkins Hospital and a fellowship in Vascular Surgery at Dartmouth. A humanitarian, he has worked extensively with Médecins Sans Frontières / Doctors Without Borders in sub-Saharan Africa and the Caribbean, and holds a Master in Public Affairs from Princeton University.

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*Yale Surgical Society*

## Caring in Medicine and Oddsdottir Grand Rounds

Among the annual Departmental Surgical Grand Rounds, two presentations have been orchestrated and named for Surgical alumni. The **Margret Oddsdottir, MD, HS '93** lecture honors Margret, who was our first Icelandic trained surgical resident who went on to a brilliant academic career. Margret grew up in a small fishing village in Iceland. Following her chief resident year at Yale in the early 1990s when laparoscopic surgery was in its infancy, she became the first laparoscopic fellow in the United States. In 1994 Margret and her husband and two small children returned to Reykavik, Iceland where she joined the general surgery faculty specializing in advanced gastrointestinal and digestive surgery. She also introduced laparoscopic surgery to her country. In 2002 she became Professor and Chief of General Surgery at Landspítali Hospital, the National University Hospital in Reykavik. She also fostered a pipeline for other Icelandic students to train in general surgery at Yale and then go on to fellowship training. The Ninth edition of Schwartz's textbook of Surgery was dedicated to Margret, and soon after, SAGES established the Margret Oddsdottir Traveling Fellowship



in Advanced Laparoscopic Surgery. The Margret Oddsdottir lecture was established in 2009 following her passing at age 55 from breast cancer. The annual lecturer, initially sponsored by the Division of Gastrointestinal Surgery and now the Division of Minimally Invasive Surgery, has brought in outstanding leaders in laparoscopic, endoscopic and robotic surgery led by John Morton, Division Chief.



The Caring in Medicine Grand Rounds has been sponsored by **Jonathan E. Lewis, MD, PhD HS '92**. Dr Lewis is a graduate of our General Surgery Residency Program in 1992, and then went on to fellowship training at Memorial Sloan Kettering in Surgical Oncology and remained at Memorial on staff and specifically Dr Murray Brennan's entrusted partner. After some time, he moved on and became CEO, officer, board member and trustee of multiple private and public biotechnology companies. Through it all, Dr Lewis realized that there may be a disconnect between all the advancements in medicine and the basic reason why we are here, and that is caring. Importantly and decisively, understanding how to care, and what to do is something that will distinguish the leaders of our calling long after technology subsumes other areas of medicine. This annual lectureship has been set up with the purpose of reminding all of us of this important quality in those that practice medicine with

distinction. Dr. Lewis is now Chief Medical Officer for Syncromune, a privately held, clinical stage biopharmaceutical company dedicated to the development of immunotherapies for metastatic solid tumors, that is located in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida.

## In Memoriam



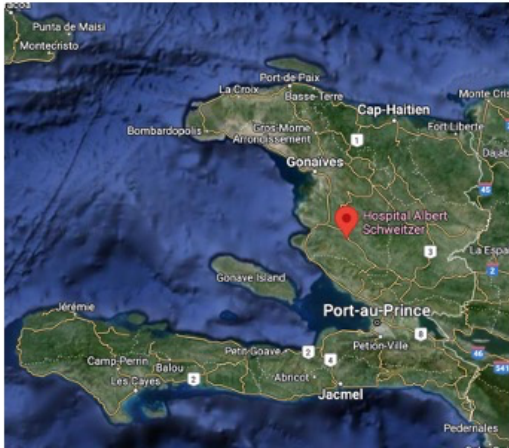
**Eiji Yanagisawa, MD, HS '59** of Woodbridge, CT passed away peacefully on February 1, 2024 at the age of 93. He embarked on an extraordinary Otolaryngological career that began in Japan, followed by acceptance by Dr. John A. Kirchner to the Yale Otolaryngology residency graduating in 1959. He immediately began practicing medicine in the Greater New Haven area with the Southern New England Ear Nose Throat & Facial Plastic Surgery Group and continued practicing until the age of 83. He had a profound influence on the training and development of over 100 Yale residents from the 1960s to 2010s, promoting clinical research and medical publications, and he gained national and international recognition for his clinical work.

He received numerous honors including President of the American Broncho-Esophagological

Association, President of the New England Otolaryngological Society. He pioneered both medical techniques and videographic techniques in Otolaryngology. He authored or coauthored 356 original articles, 80 book chapters, and 4 books. Two endowment funds honor and celebrate his contributions to otolaryngology: The Dr. Eiji Yanagisawa Lectureship and Resident Travel Fund at Yale University School of Medicine, and The Eiji Yanagisawa, MD International Visting Scholar (IVS) Endowment at the American Academy of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery are noteworthy. A devoted father, grandfather, and great-grandfather, he is survived by his four children and their families including Dr. Ken Yanagisawa.

# Remembering Haiti

by Bauer Sumpio, MD, PhD



For nearly 20 years, between 1963-1981, Yale surgery residents rotated for 2-3 months at the Hôpital Albert Schweitzer (HAS) in Haiti. HAS had been established by Dr. Larry Mellon and his wife Gwen in 1956. Their simple goal was to take care of health problems in this isolated, resource-poor area about 3 hrs from the capital Port-au-prince. Dr. Frank Lepreau, a Quaker, had a successful private practice in Falls River MA when he decided he wanted to serve and so gave up his practice to join HAS as the Medical

Director in 1962. Dr. Lepreau trained in general surgery at Yale and then completed a Thoracic Fellowship at Yale in 1945 under Dr. Gus Lindskog and he utilized this connection to structure an RRC approved rotation for Yale residents. Dr. Lindskog agreed and sent **Dr. Nicholas "Nick" Passerelli** as the first resident on June 15, 1963. Dr. Passerelli's case records indicate that in his 4 weeks there he performed 26 major cases and 9 minor cases. The major cases consisted of thyroidectomy, parotidectomy, prostatectomy, hysterectomy and thoracotomy. Because of the broad and unique exposure to surgical problems at this site, he was then succeeded by Yale residents who rotated there until 1981 when there was no longer any US board certified surgeon to supervise the residents.

Below are excerpts from a random sampling of former residents on their experience during that rotation.



**William Meffert HS '68.** "I was called to Dr. Lindskog's office as a 5<sup>th</sup> year resident and given airplane tickets for Haiti. He suggested that I take an Atlas of Surgical Procedures with me. A Haitian nurse advised "Keep your textbook near by." Dr. Meffert maintained a cardiovascular practice in Iowa and yet completed 9 medical missions in Haiti. He has written "Voodoo Baby-The Birth of a Surgeon" and "There are no Flowers" that recounts his experience there. At age 88, he still vividly remembers and cherishes his Haiti rotation.

**Michael Curci HS '72** rotated twice in Haiti as a 3<sup>rd</sup> yr in 1967 for 3 months and again in 1971 as a Chief Resident for 6 weeks. "The heart and soul of the rotation was Dr. Lepreau's presence as a mentor, his sense of mission and his extensive experience working in a resource-limited environment" He is seen (right) taking out a benign ovarian tumor.



Dr. Curci returned to Haiti to volunteer during the earthquakes and he received the Nathan Smith Distinguished Service Award from the New England Surgical Society in 2005 for his dedication. He is retired from his Pediatric Surgery practice in Maine.

**Steve Stein HS '72** rotated in Haiti for 10 weeks as a 3<sup>rd</sup> year and a 5<sup>th</sup> year. "It was without doubt one of the high points of my training. Today almost all of the MD's at the hospital are Haitian but when I was there, the majority were dedicated American doctors who spent prolonged periods of time working there. Dr. Frank Lepreau gave us a lot of autonomy, but was always there to bail us out if we needed him. We all benefit from

*Continued on next page*



role models, and he was one of mine—a great surgeon and an even better person. We saw a myriad of diseases that we never saw at home. These included tetanus, typhoid perforations of the small bowel, various manifestations of TB, and many others. One Sunday when I was covering the whole hospital, three kids came to the ER with Diphtheria! The experience was so meaningful that over the years I returned to work there several times, often with my family.” He is pictured with Dr. Curci and Dr. Lepreau at a reunion.

**Steve Ariyan HS '75** went to Haiti during his senior resident year in Gen. surgery for the 3 months covering April through June accompanied by his wife Sandy and 3 children who were at 11 months, 2-1/2 years, and 4 years. “Dr. Lepreau was there for only 2 months of my rotation before he retired and was replaced by Dr. Harold May and a local Haitian surgeon. I also visited Gary Price for 2 weeks during his three-month rotation there in 1980. I saw and cared for many burns there because the patients would usually go to their Voodoo doctor, the Bokor, first and many of the rituals involved fire.”



**Richard Moggio HS '76** rotated in Haiti as a 4<sup>th</sup> year in 1974. “...I had finished thoracic surgery and was eager to go based on all the cases of TB that was reported...I learnt what could be done with minimal resources and personnel and I got a world-wide view of medicine and surgery. Dr. Michael Hammar, a CT surgeon from New Mexico, replaced Dr. May and we did many thoracic cases in addition to the general surgery cases.” Dr. Moggio is seen here in foreground with his wife at Mike and Donna Hammar’s house at Thanksgiving. Dr. Mellon (standing) and his wife were in attendance.

**Barbara Kinder HS '77** did two tours of duty in Haiti in 1974 and 1975. “The rotation was a transformative experience for me. It was obviously important in terms of the number of unusual and extreme cases that were normally not found in the US. We had lots of opportunity for independent operating and had great assistance from Dr. Hammar and a local surgeon, Jim Eustache, when we needed. This rotation was incredibly valuable in also appreciating another culture and respecting their traditions. As a faculty member at Yale, I was terribly upset that the rotation was being dropped and fought hard to keep it in place. I almost volunteered to go back to Haiti to be the director of HAS and supervise the residents.”

**John Eleftriades HS '81** rotated in Haiti as a 4<sup>th</sup> year. He had just gotten married and this was part of their honeymoon! He recounts his first night in Deschapelles. “I guess I was on-call. I was roused from sleep at our spartan cinder block residence and called to the Hospital to see a woman who had been in labor for 12 hours. With meager OBGYN skills, I decided it was best to do an immediate C-Section. There was an old, worn book in the OR with line drawings of almost any operation one might need to do in the limited facilities. I found this book and quickly studied the page for “C-Section”. ...I opened the woman’s low abdomen, incised the uterus, and carefully extracted the baby..... when I went back to the table to close the uterus, I was literally terrified when *I saw the uterine walls move!* I literally jumped back from the table. My immediate, reflexive reaction was to reach in and hold the uterus still. In so doing, I realized the cause for the movement: There was a second baby in there!” Dr. Eleftriades has written a fictional thriller, *Transplant*, which recounts many of these stories.



**Lawrence “Larry” Gottlieb HS ’82** rotated during his 4<sup>th</sup> year. He felt that without a US Medical Director, the experience was not as worthwhile with only a local surgeon there to oversee. In addition, he contracted malaria during that rotation. Dr. Gottlieb is currently Prof of Surgery and Chief of the Burn and Complex Wound Center at U. Chicago.



**Gary Price HS ’83** rotated in Haiti as a 3<sup>rd</sup> yr for 3 months. “it is very difficult to make a short comment on what was such a profound experience for me. The inspiration provided by the accomplishments of Dr. Mellon and his wife was something that continues to inform my judgement to this day. .... My surgical judgement and confidence were certainly molded by learning to cope with what we had on hand and realizing that much could be done with ingenuity and thought. (Our pleur-evac was actually a true three bottle system made with rum bottles, our oxygen mask an exposed X-Ray taped into a cone, and our ICU bed the one with a mosquito net).... Perhaps the greatest insights came from my patients and their families as I began to understand their culture, circumstances, and daily struggles to survive. They taught me so much about myself and did so with a quiet dignity and patience I did not deserve. I left Haiti with a humility that was their invaluable gift.”

Dr. Price recently retired from his Plastics practice. He is in the leadership of the Physicians Foundation, whose mission is to empower physicians to lead in the delivery of high-quality, cost effective healthcare.

**Edward “Ted” Higgins HS ’83** did his 3 mon rotation during his 4<sup>th</sup> year. “.....touched by the Haitian people, their culture and needs”. The picture is Ted with his wife Kim spending an evening with Larry and Gwen Mellon Although he is in a busy general and vascular surgery practice in Kansas City, MO, he has made medical missions to Haiti and has trained local surgeons. This has motivated him to fund creation of the Higgins Brothers SurgiCenter for Hope in Fonds-Parisien, Haiti. He has received the 2023 Humanitarian Plaque from his alma mater, the Upstate Medical Center.



“This is the house where all the Yale residents stayed on campus, "kaye huit" or 8th house. There were over 14 homes built with swimming pools on the campus. Our cook was Carmen, and for \$10 a week, she would purchase all the fruits and vegetables for the week for my wife and me.”



**Arthur Dresdale HS ’83** was the last resident to go to Haiti, April-June 1981. “I initially was not enthusiastic about going to Haiti because I had skipped the third year of general surgery training and as a fourth-year



maximize the amount of instruction I received to compensate for the year of training I had missed... My first night around 10:00 PM, the phone clanged. I could not understand the Creole, but an attendant led me to a dark room where a young man in severe distress lay with a compound fracture of the tibia. They told me he had been dragged by stretcher for several days. And so, my adventure began at HAS.

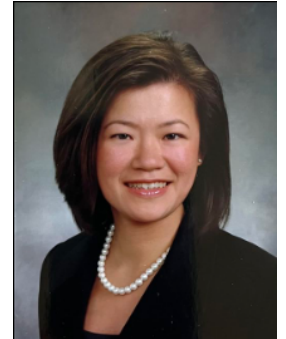
I now look back at my experience with immense gratitude and appreciation. It was such an extraordinary and unique experience. I was privileged to meet and get to know so many altruistic, compassionate, and kind people. I will always fondly remember the magical time I spent there and the wonderful people with whom I shared this exceptional experience.”

## Alumni Updates



**Stephen Kavic, MD, HS '04** did a fellowship in Minimally Invasive Surgery at the University of Maryland and stayed as faculty there ever since. His clinical interests include minimally invasive abdominal surgery, surgery of the gastrointestinal tract, endoscopy and surgical treatment of hernias. Dr. Kavic is also the Program Director of the General Surgery Residency Training Program. He has pursued multiple research projects on surgical education, clinical outcomes and quality-of-life studie and serves as the vice-chair of education in the Department of Surgery. Dr. Kavic was recently with honored with and named and the Campbell and Jeanette Plugge Endowed Professorship in Surgery.

**Janette Gaw, MD, HS '03** pursued a Research Fellowship at the Mayo Clinic followed by training in the Georgia Colorectal Fellowship Program in Atlanta. Janette joined The Colorectal Institute in Ft. Myers, FL and partnered. During the pandemic and after 18 years in practice she has decided to retire. Jeanette and her husband John enjoy the outdoors, running and mountain biking. They reside in a condo by the beach in Sarasota and are looking for a retirement home in Bentonville, AR, the home of mountain biking



**Maija Cheung, MD, HS '20** was the first Yale Global Surgery Research Fellow. Her current research is focused on global trauma and children’s surgical outcomes, developing education, simulation, and training programs both in the United States and in low-income countries, and building reciprocal clinical and research collaborations between international institutions. Dr. Cheung has worked with KidsOR since its inception in 2017 and serves as an International Advisory Board Member. She recently assumed a new role in 2021 as Chief Medical Officer for Kids Operating Room / Global Hospital. She is currently an Assistant Professor in Surgery in the Division of Bariatrics and Minimally Invasive Surgery at Yale.

**Seth A. Spector, MD, HS '01** did fellowship training at the UM-JMH Surgical Oncology program. After fellowship he was recruited to join the faculty in Surgical Oncology and lead general surgery at the Miami VA, where he became Chief of Surgery and Associate Chief of Staff in 2005, followed by Chief of Staff in 2022. He was promoted to Professor Clinical Surgery and also serves in regional and national leadership positions in the Department of Veteran Affairs. Seth continues to have an illustrious career with a busy clinical practice and many leadership positions. He is past-president of the Association of VA Surgeons.



### Yale Surgical Society Events:

Thursday, May 16, 2024:

**Yale Surgical Society Annual Dinner**  
*(Formal invitation to follow)*

Friday, May 17, 2024:

- **YSS Grand Rounds Special Guest Speakers:**
  - Mary McGrath, MD, MPH
  - Robert S.D. Higgins, MD, MSHA
  - Frederick L. Green, MD

## From the Desk of the Administrative Chief Resident

*Michelle C. Salazar M., MD, MHS*

As we end another successful academic year, I would like to reflect on everything we have been through. It has been a year of changes and challenges but also significant triumphs and moments of great pride. From professional accomplishments to personal triumphs, each story reflects dedication, perseverance, and an unparalleled work ethic that is a staple of the Yale Surgery Residency.



In the realm of academia and professional pursuits, the residents have demonstrated exemplary dedication and achieved significant milestones. Grace Chao had a podium presentation at the International Federation for the Surgery of Obesity and Metabolic Disorders in Italy. Erin White got her Master's thesis project published in *Academic Medicine*, gave her first invited Grand Rounds talk at Tufts on the new EPAs being rolled out by the American Board of Surgery, and as if this were not enough, received two grants as co-PI for a multi-institutional surgical education research project. James Stewart got selected for DSI 2.0. Carly Thaxton won a grant to further support her research in vascular diseases while still managing to score 98th percentile on ABSITE for the 4th year in a row. Elise Presser was accepted into a global surgery fellowship which she is currently completing in Ethiopia. Kurt Schultz was accepted into the Investigative Medicine Ph.D. Program at Yale's Graduate School of Arts & Sciences, and he was selected to the 2023-2024 class of the Diseases of the Colon & Rectum Reviewer's Guild. Danny Kerekes, finished his Master of Health Science and his thesis publication headlined *JAMA Oncology*. He was also re-elected as a delegate for the AMA resident/fellow section, and he won the Young Physician Advocacy Award from the CT state medical society. Last, but not least, Andrés Doval Rojas managed to secure a categorical spot within our ranks and will be staying to complete his general surgery residency. These achievements have not only contributed to their personal growth but also have enriched the broader academic community.

Beyond professional endeavors, this year, our residents also continued to celebrate important personal milestones. John Langford married Joanna Cambria and will become a father this summer. Sam Butensky is also expecting his first child at around the same time. Grace Chao got engaged to her beau, Patrick Clarke, while at her conference in Italy. They will be married in September. Emily Flom got engaged to Yale Surgery alumnus, Mark Eckardt and will be married this fall. Nick Peters, Erin White and Andrew Esposito welcomed to their families their second child. Nate Maassel received his firstborn this past fall and David Su did so on Leap Day Eve. Apparently, Oliver Zhao Su has impressed his parents with a ravenous appetite! Important other milestones this year included Danny Kerekes finally being able to recover his wedding ring from underneath his deck (it was about time!); and Carly Thaxton winning the NIH LRP award that will forgive hundreds of thousands of dollars in loans. Rumor has it she will be taking all of us on her new yacht soon!

In pursuit of physical and mental well-being, several of the residents embarked on journeys of fitness and self-improvement. Rachel Rivero and Carly Thaxton completed the Boston half marathon in under 2 hours, faster than Zane Hellmann's current time, of which they are very proud. Sam Butensky and Zane ran the New Haven Half Marathon. Caroline Richburg completed the Marine Corps DC Marathon, her third ever, and has classified to run the New York Marathon this fall, all while being an intern! Taylor Corsi and Sam Linhares will, possibly, be joining Carly, Zane, and Caroline in running the Providence Marathon. It is still undecided whether some of our attendings from the surgical oncology and trauma divisions might

### *Yale Surgery Residency Alumni at the Society of Surgical Oncology 2024 Annual Meeting*



**From left to right:** Annabelle Fonseca, MD, Daniel Thomas, MD, Danielle Heller, MD, Nicholas Klemen, MD, Timothy Murtha, MD

be joining them. Lastly, Holly Blackburn went international and has qualified to the Ironman World Championship being held in France this year. Their dedication to health and fitness not only inspires admiration but also fosters a culture of wellness within our community.

As I reflect on the past year's achievements and milestones, I look forward with optimism and excitement to the future of Yale Surgery. Together, the residents will continue to support each other, celebrate successes, and navigate life's journey with courage, grace, and determination.

It has been a great honor to be at the helm this year and to witness the excellence and comradery that sets our residency apart. I leave with endless gratitude, feeling immensely proud of my co-residents, and deeply honored for having had the opportunity to be a part of their family.

## Health System Updates

### *A Chance Confluence of Complimentary Talents: The Birth of the Aortic Institute at Yale*

*By John A. Elefteriades, MD*

Three decades ago, the pre-eminent cardiologist, **Dr. Lawrence Cohen** called me on a Saturday afternoon. “John,” he said, “she is deteriorating rapidly. I need you here as soon as possible.” Carmella was 35 years old. She had known, severe Marfan’s disease since birth, which, during childhood claimed the sight in one eye. Today, she had dissected her entire aorta, valve-to-bifurcation and lapsed into cardiogenic shock after rupturing into the pericardial space. “John,” Dr. Cohen said, sadly, “her husband is a professor here at Yale.”

We took Carmella to the operating room, replaced her ascending aorta and aortic valve, and re-implanted her right and left coronary arteries. **Professors Geha and Hammond**, here at Yale, had taught me well how to operate for acute aortic dissection. Several days later, Carmella was recovering well, having left the ICU for the step-down unit. I had several conversations, following Carmella’s very urgent presentation, with her husband, **Dr. John Rizzo**, a healthcare economist at the Yale’s School of Epidemiology here. Since Carmella first arrived, Dr. Rizzo was literally a “sponge” for medical information. He perused the extant aortic literature each night and discussed his readings with me each afternoon outside Carmella’s hospital room. I came to realize that Dr. Rizzo was an expert at data analysis. I was uncharacteristically forward when I suggested, “John, how about if we combine your knowledge of statistics with my knowledge of the aorta? Maybe we can write a paper someday.” Well, we now find ourselves over two decades – and 299 aortic papers and 11 books – later, since starting our collaboration at Carmella’s bedside.

In addition to Dr. Cohen from Cardiology, Dr. Rizzo from Epidemiology, and myself, from Cardiac Surgery, we recruited my teacher and supremely valued colleague, **Dr. Richard Gusberg** from Vascular Surgery. **Dr. Kevin Johnson** from Radiology joined the team. **Dr. Paul Barash** and colleagues from Anesthesia provided an additional critical component. **Dr. Gary Kopf** supported our scrubbing with me on extraordinarily challenging surgical cases. The multi-disciplinary Aortic Institute at Yale was born. Some years later, the distinguished cardiologist **Dr. Sandip Mukherjee** joined our team as Medical Director of the Aortic Institute.

In terms of bringing together a multi-disciplinary team and designating a specific “Aortic Institute”, I believe we may have well been the first. Now, every major hospital system in the world has, or wants to have, a multidisciplinary “Aortic Institute”, often patterned on the Yale team. Our Societal Practice Guidelines require such a multi-disciplinary team to offer aortic care in the present era.

The photograph was taken at the 25 anniversary of Carmella’s urgent aortic replacement. She had gone on to a stellar career as still life artist, despite having lost vision in one eye from birth. Dr. Lawrence Cohen is seen in the image on the right.



Thanks to this confluence of talented individuals, I have had the opportunity to teach and operate, representing the Aortic Institute at Yale, in 36 countries, literally around the globe. We have hosted about 325 talented Aortic Research Fellows from a myriad of countries, all of whom have gone on to match in their chosen fields. In recent years, we have accrued a talented team to carry the Aortic Institute into the long-term future, including Drs. Vallabhajosyula, Assi, DeLuzzo, Williams and Ramponi.

## Bridgeport Hospital

by Karen E. Gibbs, MD

It's been a very busy year at Bridgeport Hospital! With a continued focus on increasing access and enhancing quality care, we had an active and successful recruitment year. After a nationwide search, **Kevin Schuster, MD, MPH** (left) joined as the Section Chief of Trauma/SICU and Acute Care Surgery. Joining Dr. Schuster were (from left to right): **Ayodele T. Sangosanya, MD**, **Kate B. Savoie, MD** and **Luis C. Suarez Rodriguez, MD**.



Additional recruits included (from left to right): **Kamal Addagatla, MD** (Plastic Surgery), **Dan Lavy, MD** (Colon & Rectal Surgery) and **Fabio Ramponi, MD** (Cardiac Surgery).



These and other team members have been instrumental in continuing our mission of providing high quality care and clinical excellence to our community.

It has also been a year of transition as many “long time” leaders have retired or changed their career focus. As such, we've had the distinct pleasure of engaging new talent to our leadership pool. After many years of service Dr. Brian Debroff stepped down and passed the baton to Vicente Diaz, MD. Dr. Diaz now leads the Division of Ophthalmology and has jumped in and is generating new ideas and presenting a diverse set of opinions to enhance the surgical community.

In the coming year, we have two senior surgeons who will be retiring. Their service and leadership over the years have been outstanding. We'd like to recognize, **Dr. Michael Dewar** (Cardiac Surgery) and **Dr. Anthony Musto** (Ophthalmology) and look forward to moments of reflection and sharing stories in the coming months.

We've seen significant growth in the department with increasing opportunities in many areas. With our steady growth in operative volume, the daVinci robots at Bridgeport Hospital saw a significant spike in utilization. As such, we've now added our first ambulatory surgery robot at Park Avenue Medical Center. With a planned expansion of two additional ORs at PAMC, we'll be able to expand our services to patients.

Finally, Bridgeport Hospital hosted the 11th annual Walter Pleban MD Memorial Burn Lecture on January 31, 2024. The lectureship was established with the Connecticut Burns Care Foundation to honor Dr Pleban, one of the founding members of the Connecticut Burn Center. The Burn Center is the only facility in the state of Connecticut dedicated to the care of burn-injured patients. We were honored to have Dr Tina Palmieri as this year's invited speaker. Her lecture, “Coagulation Management in burn Injury after Resuscitation”, addressed a key concern of practitioners caring for burn patients. Dr Palmieri is a world-renowned burn surgeon, the burn division chief at UC Davis Medical Center, and a past president of the American Burn Association.



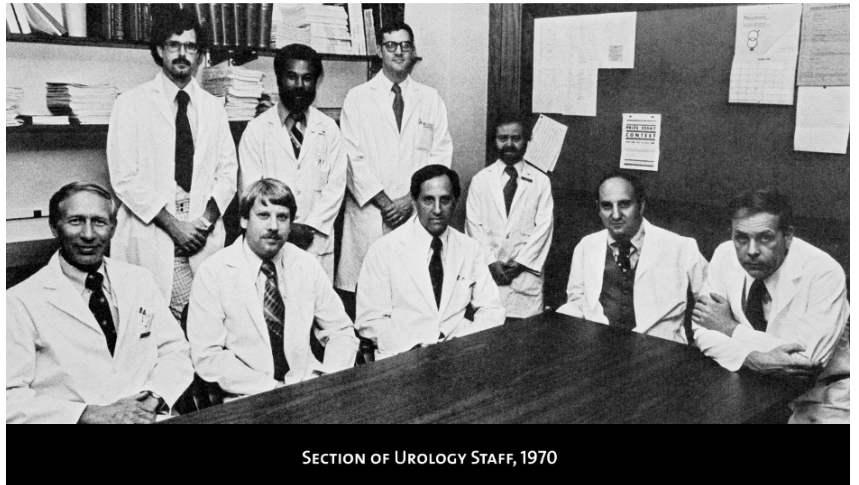
## Festschrift For Robert Weiss, MD: *A Legendary Leader in Urology*



**Dr. Robert M. Weiss** received his undergraduate degree from Franklin and Marshall College in Lancaster, Pennsylvania and his M.D. Degree from the State University of New York, Downstate Medical Center. Dr. Weiss obtained his urologic training at the Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center, where the chair, Dr. John K. Lattimer, was one of the founding fathers of pediatric urology. He is a physician-scientist and pediatric urologist. For many years, the Section of Urology was part of the Department of Surgery. Dr. Weiss served as Chief of the Section of Urology at the Yale University School of Medicine/Yale New Haven Hospital (1986-2011), as Interim Chair of the Department of Surgery at the Yale University School of Medicine from 1999-2001 and as an Adjunct Professor of Pharmacology at the Columbia University, College of Physicians and Surgeons (1977-2002). Dr. Weiss was in addition, the Donald Guthrie Professor of Surgery. Dr. Weiss' research interests have dealt with signal transduction of urinary tract smooth muscle, bladder

and prostate carcinoma, and the use of nanoparticles for delivering drugs to benign and malignant conditions of the bladder. Dr. Weiss has been awarded grants from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and was the first urologist to receive an NIH Merit Award. In addition to numerous national and international awards, He also received the inaugural Robert M. Weiss Urology Teaching Award from the Yale Urology residents. Dr. Weiss is a passionate New York Jets fan and season ticket holder since before he was a surgeon.

A Festschrift and its ceremonies honoring Dr. Weiss was held from April 12-13, 2024 in New Haven, CT. A dinner was held on the first night of the Festschrift at the Elm City Graduate Club with about 100 people in attendance. The second day of the Festschrift started with a Scientific Symposium in The Anlyan Auditorium with appropriately 100 attendees, including clinicians and basic scientists from multiple disciplines. Dr. Weiss's talk began with a history of the Department, the Medical School and the Hospital and was directed at principles



SECTION OF UROLOGY STAFF, 1970

that he had learned over the years. The second day concluded with a black tie optional dinner at the Yale Divinity School.

### YSS Announces Candidate Membership

The Yale Surgical Society has developed criteria for trainees in Surgery, Surgical Subspecialties and Foot and Ankle Surgery to be candidate members in the YSS. This position is open to senior residents or fellows in good standing in their last two years of training. They are to be proposed by their program director with an updated CV. They will be expected to participate in YSS activities such as the biannual Newsletter, the membership directory, Yale Surgical Society Grand Rounds and reunion activities.

## Where Are They Now?



**William G. Meffert, M.D.** obtained his undergraduate degree at Duke University then matriculated at Yale Medical School 1958-1962. He then did a surgical residency at Yale 1962-68 under Drs. Gus Lindskog and Jack Cole. He was also a Winchester Scholar in cardiothoracic surgical research. His wife was a business major at Yale when they met. Dr. Meffert served a tour of duty as an Army combat surgeon in a 400 bed hospital in DaNang, Vietnam. He then practiced as a Cardiovascular surgery for 30 years in Iowa. He has volunteered his services in several countries including Haiti, Russia, and China. He is currently a Consulting Professor for Stanford University, Department of Surgery and an active member of Pegasus Physician Writers at Stanford. He has authored a nonfiction book: *There Were no Flowers/ A Surgeons Story of War, Family, and Love* and has published short fiction stories related to his experiences in Haiti and Vietnam. He currently resides in Portola Valley, California.

**Dr. Robert A. Chase** obtained a Bachelor of Science from the University of New Hampshire in 1945 and earned his medical degree from Yale University in 1947. He completed his residency at Yale University and at the University of Pittsburgh before establishing Yale's first section of plastic surgery. In 1963, he was appointed Professor and Chairman of Surgery at Stanford University, where he was instrumental in the creation of an integrated general and plastic surgery program.

In 1973 Dr. Chase became Acting Chairman of the Department of Anatomy at Stanford University. From 1974 through 1977, he served as President and Director of the National Board of Medical Examiners in Philadelphia. Dr. Chase returned to Stanford in 1977 and assumed the position of Chief of the Division of Human Anatomy until 1992. He is a former President of the American Society for Surgery of the Hand.



**Richard Moggio, M.D.** “During my third year surgical clerkship as a Yale Medical Student, Dr. Graeme Hammond invited me to his lab, and after two days I was determined to become a cardiothoracic surgeon. He became my mentor for school, training and long into my practice. My research in his lab resulted in my receiving the Keese Prize for outstanding thesis in 1971. What a privilege was surgical residency at Yale, with a talented group of residents and attendings in every specialty, both in the academic and the private sector; too many to cite, and many of whom are still active in the YSS. CTS fellowship at NYU for two years with Dr. Frank Spencer and his staff was a challenging and exhausting run that prepared me for practice.

In 1978, I left NYU with Dr. George Reed to expand and strengthen CTS in the Department of Surgery at Westchester Medical Center under Dr. Lou DelGuercio. The cardiac group expanded to 7 surgeons and was a key practice that established the medical center as a tertiary critical care facility.

I retired from active practice in 2004 and began a second career as Medical Director at L-3 Communications, a defense and technology company in New York City. As one of the H&W team, I implemented wellness programs, wrote epidemic and pandemic protocols, and developed an AED program across all company locations and resulted in saving a dozen lives over about ten years – events as satisfying as operative saves or triumphs.

I fully retired in 2018, am now able to spend more time with my wife, Barbara, sons Sam and Jonathan, and their families. Our cottage in Connemara Ireland now receives more visits, and trips to Italy and France have enriched our lives. Surgery is far more complex now, and I enjoy watching AATS webinars on complex procedures performed by the most brilliant surgeons. I’ve stayed active with our med school class and continue to be amazed by what my classmates have done and continue to accomplish. Thank you, Yale and the YSS.”

## Where Are They Now? *(continued)*



**James B.D. Mark, M.D.** was born and raised in Nashville, Tennessee and attended Vanderbilt University (BA 1950, Phi Beta Kappa) and Vanderbilt University School of Medicine (MD 1953, Alpha Omega Alpha 1974). He spent the next twelve years in New Haven; the first seven for his residency in Surgery and Cardiothoracic Surgery at Yale-New Haven Hospital, which included two years of active duty in the United States Public Health Service, and the following five years on the faculty of Yale University School of Medicine. In 1965, Dr. Mark was recruited to Stanford University, where he was appointed Associate Professor of Surgery. He was promoted to professor in 1970 and was awarded the Johnson & Johnson Endowed Professorship in 1978. Dr. Mark's first position at Stanford was as chairman of the Department of Surgery at the newly-affiliated Santa Clara County Hospital (now the Santa Clara Valley Medical Center). In 1970, he moved to Stanford University Hospital, where he

concentrated his clinical and research efforts in the field of thoracic surgery. In 1972, the Division of Thoracic Surgery in Department of Surgery was approved by the university and Dr. Mark became its founding head, a position he held until he assumed emeritus status in 1996. At the time of reorganization of the Department of Surgery in 1990, the Division of Thoracic Surgery joined the Department of Cardiovascular Surgery to become the Department of Cardiothoracic Surgery. Over the years, Dr. Mark has held positions as Associate Dean for Student Affairs (1970-1972), Associate Dean for Regional Medical Affairs (1973-1974), Acting Chair of the Department of Surgery (1974-1977) and Chief of Staff of Stanford University Hospital (1988- 1992). He was a Senior Fulbright-Hays Fellow and Visiting Professor of Surgery at the University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania during the 1972-1973 academic year. He is a member of several professional organizations and has been president of seven of them, including the Halsted Society (1984), the Western Thoracic Surgical Association (1992-1993) and the American College of Chest Physicians (1994-1995). He has been recognized for his contributions to medical education by the Santa Clara County Medical Association (1984) and the Stanford University School of Medicine (1987). He received the Gold Medal of the City of Milan, Italy in 1990, the Distinguished Alumnus Award of Vanderbilt University School of Medicine in 1996, and the Albion Walter Hewlett Award from the Department of Medicine in 2005. Dr. Mark is the author of almost 150 scientific publications and was on the editorial board of the Journal of Thoracic and Cardiovascular Surgery (1987- 1994), the World Journal of Surgery (1995-2003) and The Pharos (2002-2010). Dr. Mark and his wife have been married for over 60 years and have lived on the Stanford campus for over 50 years. They have five children and seven grand children.

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### We would love to hear from you!

Please stay in touch and send us updates on your current practice, family, and life events. Pictures (recent and past) are welcome. Please include your surgical program (specialty), where you trained, years when you trained and the year you completed your training

Send your information to: [Walter.Longo@yale.edu](mailto:Walter.Longo@yale.edu)