



Dear Alumni,

It is always a privilege to have an opportunity to update you on what is going on at the mothership! By this quarter we are knee-deep in academic endeavors, and also have the opportunity to celebrate. We had the annual Ross H. Musgrave Lectureship lecture on November 6, 2024, featuring Scott Levin, with lectures on leadership and microsurgery. Really amazing.

Our Wednesday morning Grand Rounds lectures continue to be very informative, and after all these years are some of the favorite parts of my week. Some featured speakers included:

- Jim Higgins - *Integrated Hand Center Model: Sterling Bunnell to Today and Refinements in Microsurgical Treatment of Upper Extremity Trauma*
- Dennis Hurwitz - *Evolution of Body Contouring*
- Dhruv Singhal – *Lymphedema*

We had a “Special Grand Rounds” in December: *UPMC Department of Plastic Surgery Leadership Panel*

- William Futrell
- Gayle Gordillo
- Joseph Losee
- Vu Nguyen

Please keep in mind, we have a program where you can subscribe to our weekly lectures for \$1800 per year.

Mark Constantian addressed the Greater Pittsburgh Plastic Surgery Society (GPPSS) on December 4, 2024, and gave a number of informative lectures on rhinoplasty, sharing his wealth of experience.

A special shout out to Kia Washington, Class of 2011, at the University of Colorado, who accrued a \$46.4 million grant for eye transplantation. This is a project that she started at the University of Pittsburgh. What an amazing feat! We are so proud.

Lynne Garrison, Class of 1994, an amazing supporter for the Program, informed me that after 29 years in the same practice, she is announcing her retirement. We wish her and her husband Herb the best of luck!

Spotlight on Alumni! In this quarter we feature Nick Panetta, Class of 2014.

1. What are you doing now?

I have been in academic practice at the University of South Florida in Tampa, Florida for the past nine years. I am Chair of the Department of Plastic Surgery, Chief of the Plastic and Burn Surgery Service Line at Tampa General Hospital, and Director of the USF Health Multidisciplinary Lymphedema Program. The bulk of my clinical practice focuses on lymphatic microsurgery to prevent and treat cancer-related lymphedema, as well as the full spectrum of breast reconstruction.

This year my wife Michele and I will have been married for 21 years, and the Panetta team also includes our eight year old daughter Marcella, our 4 year old son Gianluca, and our 10 year old Maltese Aston Martin.

2. Do you have a resident moment you would like to share?

So many! All right, here is a classic...

I am about two months into training, recon service, and it is getting late. The day had been pretty crap, and it was getting worse by the minute. Jim Russavage has three rooms running – Jerrod Keith has a free flap takeback in one room, a second room is some poor soul being managed on the reconstructive rope algorithm (IYKYK), and I am making some ridiculous attempt with a second year ENT resident to manage a completely disastrous mandible fracture. In retrospect, the only reason I was in this position was because over the previous month Dr. Russavage had made the decision that he was going to tolerate me, but that was in no way clear at the time (he had given me the nickname Leon at that point – after Leon Panetta – so I knew “who the hell he was speaking to!").

Reports from outside our OR were that the free flap had went from bad to worse, and my case was no better. Dr. Russavage poked his head into the room and says, “Leon, how’s it going?” What I wanted to tell him was that I had managed to turn a three-piece mandible in to a five piece one, but all I could muster is “We’re working.”

The subsequent events were clearly indicative that the situation outside of our room had continued to deteriorate. About 45 minutes later the OR door swung open and Dr. Russavage leaned over my shoulder to assess the situation, “Well, Leon?” I had continued to struggle, and it was then that I said to Dr. Russavage “Sir, not great. Can you please scrub for a moment.” Wrong answer. That question was immediately followed by a powerful shoulder check, spinning me around. This was followed by a firm finger to the middle of my chest, and he looked me square in the eyes and said, “Plate it. Plate that goddamn mandible or it will be the last case you ever do here. PLATE THE MANDIBLE!” He then left as quick as he came. Now that is what you call motivation!!!

Needless to say the plates went on, and I did some growing up that night!

3. What did Pitt Plastic Surgery Residency mean to you as you look closely?

It was during Pitt Plastic Surgery residency that I was able to hone a comfort with the critically important skill of navigating difficult decision making in the face of imperfect and incomplete information. In our line of work, we are often faced with situations requiring expeditious action, and those around us are relying on our ability to provide a path forward even though at times the answer may not be clear. Moving forward with a confident and steady hand in the face of the incredibly challenging and thought-provoking situations that I was faced with during my training has undoubtedly paved the path and helped me progress to where I am today.

I also firmly hold the belief that two of the most important personal characteristics of people that I surround myself with in life are competence and loyalty. Pitt Plastic Surgery is defined by these traits.

4. What do you like to do in your free time?

Free time??? Maybe someone can fill me in on what exactly that is...

As is true for so many of us, the job consumes a great deal of time. When I am not doing the plastic surgery thing, the family enjoys spending time on the boat and at the beach. We also love to travel. I am pretty late to the snow skiing game in life, but it is turned into one of our families favorite annual trips. My wife has also got me going with some distance running. She has a goal of running a marathon on every continent, and I am joining her on the journey. Last year we were able to knock out a tough one when we headed south to run a marathon in Antarctica! (half-marathon for me)

5. If you could have dinner with anyone in the past or present, who would it be and why?

My wife and kids. A quick story...

A couple of months ago, I walked in at the end of a routinely eventful day, with more meetings still on the books. I was met by my daughter in the kitchen, and without pause she looked at me and says, “do you have more meetings tonight?” She knew the answer before she asked, but when hearing my halfhearted yes, she followed after a brief pause with “I don’t think I like you being chair anymore.”

After removing the dagger from my heart, I was able to embrace this exchange as a true teachable moment for me...a gentle nod towards the importance of maintaining perspective in the middle of what is a chaotic life at times. Balancing priorities and keeping my family front and center in life is so important. They deserve it, and the show does not go on without them!



~Panetta Family~

Please keep us informed of notable events so that we may share with our Pitt brothers and sisters. Remember, we still have the fleece campaign available for those that are interested.

Stay warm and in touch. And as always, stay well.



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