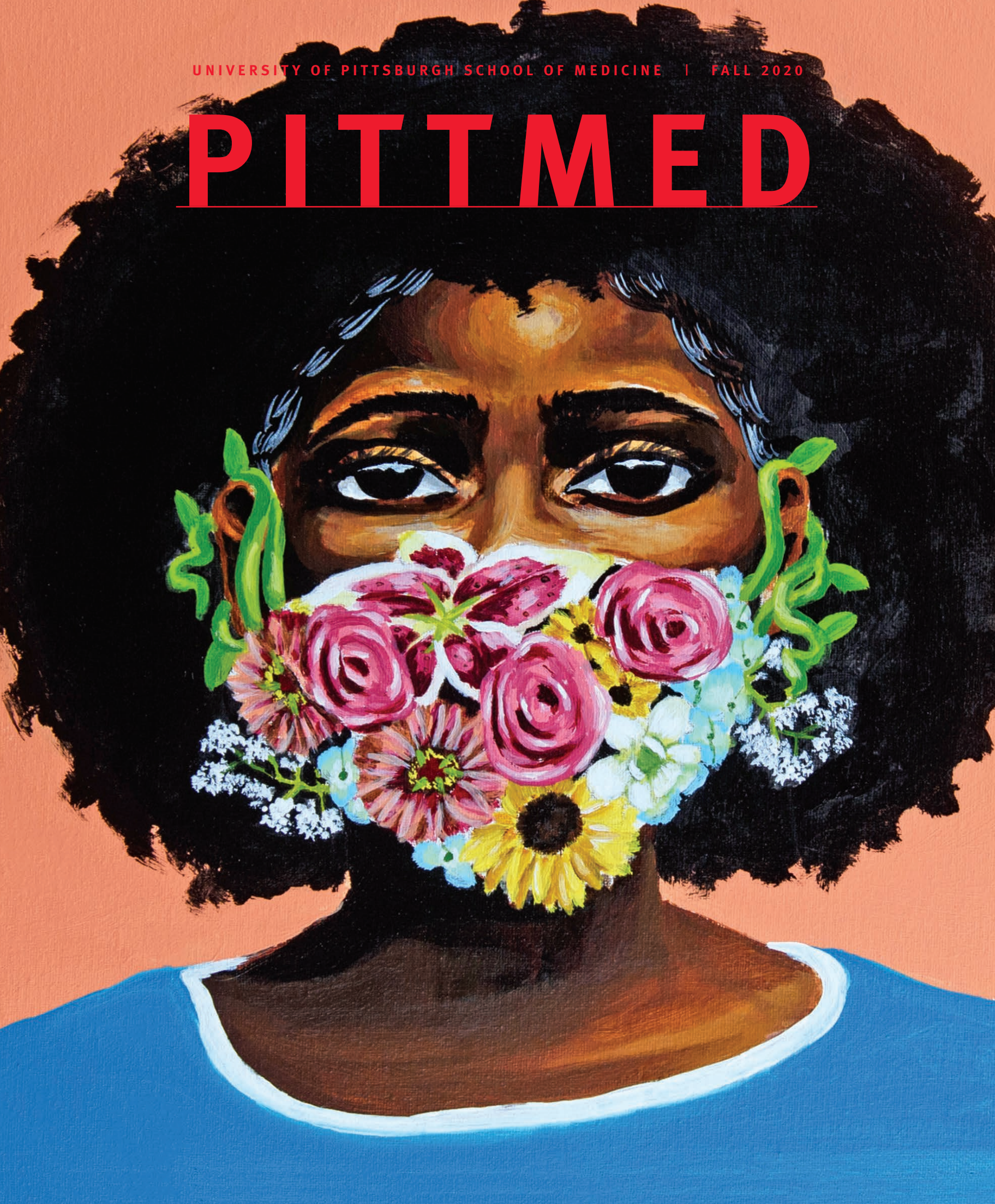


UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH SCHOOL OF MEDICINE | FALL 2020

# PITTMED



## STEVEN BEERING

AUG. 20, 1932–APRIL 3, 2020

Steven Beering's idea of retirement was to advise the president and Congress as chair of the National Science Board and to join Pitt's Board of Trustees as chair of the Health Sciences Committee and the Board of Visitors for the School of Medicine. The academic leader who served as a physician to a president and astronauts died in April at age 87.

Although Beering was behind in high school when he immigrated to Pittsburgh from Germany after World War II, he quickly caught up and went on to attend Pitt, where he graduated *summa cum laude* in 1954 and earned his MD in 1958. To cover tuition, Beering tutored French and German, drove a cab, worked in a steel mill and translated medical articles. Decades later, he received an honorary doctorate from Pitt (and nine other universities), and was named a Pitt Legacy Laureate, as well as a Distinguished Alumni Fellow.

After medical school, Beering became a lieutenant colonel in the Air Force Medical Corps, where he treated President Eisenhower and the first NASA astronauts. He served as dean of the Indiana University School of Medicine and 18 years as president of Purdue University.

Arthur S. Levine, dean emeritus of the School of Medicine, says Beering "combined a European elegance and classicism with an American ease, intellectual hunger and abundant leadership ability."

—Samantha Paige Rosen

## PAUL CAPLAN

NOV. 21, 1912–MARCH 7, 2020

Paul Caplan's (MD '36) hallmark was listening. After graduating from Pitt Med, Caplan began his internship at Montefiore—the only Pittsburgh hospital hiring Jewish physicians in the 1930s. There, notes his great-nephew Joshua Levenson (MD '11, Res '14), "he learned the skill, the art, of medicine ... being able to talk to people and comfort them."

Caplan was probably Pitt Med's oldest graduate when he died at age 107 in March.

During World War II, Caplan treated wounded D-Day soldiers on Omaha Beach as a captain with the U.S. Air Force. Decades later he returned to Europe as the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra tour physician.

A professor of medicine at Pitt for 66 years, Caplan taught from 1946 to 2012 and was named a Master of the American College of Rheumatology. With a National Institutes of Health grant, he researched osteoarthritis in Pennsylvania coal miners in the 1960s. He traveled to Haiti, where he treated patients outside of rheumatology: "I carried a textbook and learned as I went," Caplan told the Pitt Medical Alumni Association upon receiving the Lifetime Achievement Award in 2017.

"I asked questions and, more importantly, I listened."

Caplan retired at age 96. Levenson—who remembers Caplan as a "second grandfather"—remarks, "If he could have kept going, he would have done it forever."

—John Hansen

## JAMES L. FUNDERBURGH III

JUNE 30, 1945–NOV. 27, 2019

James Funderburgh had a musical laugh that rang through the halls—sometimes even reaching the floors above and below his office. As Paul Kinchington, who holds Pitt's Joseph F. Novak, MD, Chair in Ophthalmology Research, remembers: "Jim laughed a lot. Loud and often. I could hear him from 50 feet away."

That laugh "always inspired me to enjoy my work," notes Funderburgh's mentee Yiqin Du, Pitt associate professor of ophthalmology and developmental biology.

A self-described "born scientist," Funderburgh was a professor of ophthalmology and the founder of Pitt's Corneal Cell Biology Lab. He shared his passion for corneal research with his wife and lifelong lab and research partner, Martha Funderburgh. They developed a groundbreaking treatment for corneal scarring: the injection of adult stem cells directly into the cornea. The treatment has brought healing to patients in India.

The discovery led to other landmark ophthalmologic procedures, including one affectionately termed "eye teeth"—the use of stem

cells extracted from teeth to heal corneas. "Jim was very good at thinking outside of the box," remembers his co-"eye teeth" researcher Fatima Syed-Picard, assistant professor in Pitt's School of Dental Medicine. That work is featured on the "Cornea-copia" episode of this magazine's podcast, Pitt Medcast, from 2016.

The Department of Ophthalmology has established the Funderburgh Corneal Regeneration Project, which, says Kinchington, "will continue in his name with the goal to use stem cells to restore corneal transparency in patients."

—Rachel Mennies



Funderburgh

## W. CORY M. JOHNSTON III

FEB. 25, 1973–FEB. 25, 2020

Cory Johnston's life was defined by his loved ones, his patients and the mountains. He grew up skiing in Colorado. After college at Yale, he joined a Utah ski patrol and witnessed a medical team treat an injured skier. In that moment, he decided to go to medical school.

At Pitt Med, Johnston (MD '06) was a top student. "He dazzled the surgeons," remembers neurologist and classmate Jordan Reichman (MD '06). Joan Harvey, retired associate dean for student affairs, says Johnston's evaluations highlighted his diligence, infectious enthusiasm and clinical judgment. Several said he was the best student they had ever worked with.

Cardiologist and classmate Kia Afshar (MD '06) remembers when they were third-year students and Johnston was asked to do a trauma survey. "You'd imagine [the surgeon] would go to the ER resident and attending on call, but he looked to Cory," says Afshar. "Cory did it so smoothly, as if that was his 50th one. And he was so humble."

At the University of Utah, where he did his general surgery residency, Johnston won the residency-wide teaching award. He completed a hepatobiliary and pancreatic surgery fellowship. Until his death from a skiing accident on his 47th birthday, he was a general surgeon at Providence Hood River Memorial Hospital in Oregon.

He was also husband to surgeon Pippa Newell and dad to Rocky, 6, and Bode, 4.

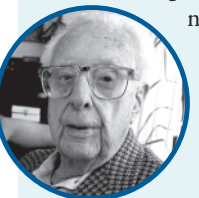
Afshar remembers him as a "phenomenal" researcher, educator, doctor, outdoorsman, family man and friend. —SPR



Johnston



Beering



Caplan