

# WITS UNIVERSITY MEDICAL SCHOOL GRADUATING CLASS OF 1960



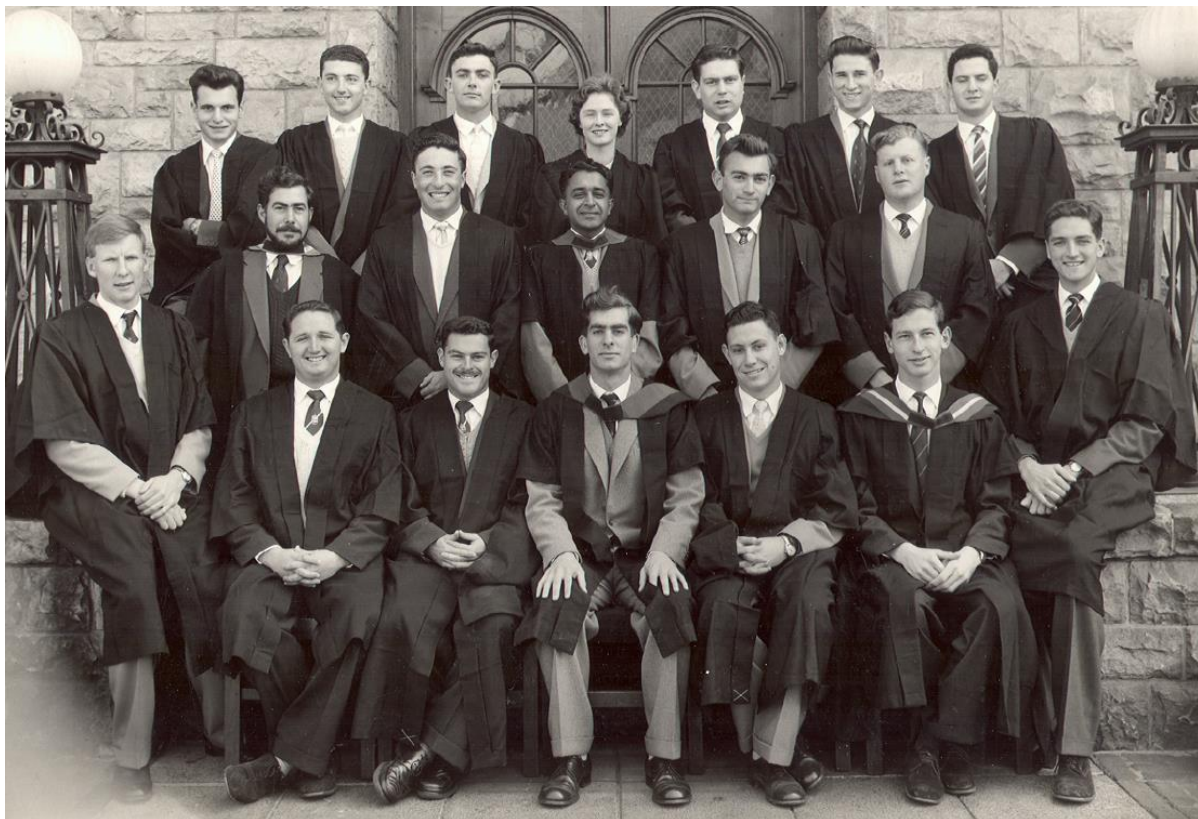
## Newsletter # 1, July 2020

Compiled by Chaim M Rosenberg, Chicago

Dear Friends and Colleagues

The Class of 1960 project has captured the imagination of many of our fellow students and has progressed faster than I could ever have imagined. I have sent or received nearly a thousand emails. I have already collected ten biographical stories with many pictures. Thanks to the tremendous help of the Alumni Office, we have a dedicated website for the stories of our classmates and of those who studied with us along the way. I am very happy to be sending you this, our first Newsletter, highlighting all the activity. We are honored to have the support of the present Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences, Professor Martin Veller. While celebrating and connecting our class of 1960, it thrills me to think that our donations will help a number of current Wits medical students achieve MB BCh and go out into the world to do good.

**In this Newsletter #1**, we start with the **Students Medical Council (SMC)** photograph of 1959. If ever a photograph could foretell the future of achievement, this is surely the one.



We celebrate the lives of some of those pictured here, who already showed such early commitment and drive. We plan, in time, to have biographical sketches of each one of them and of our class on our website.

We take a special look in this Newsletter, at two pioneering nephrologists **Anthony Meyers** in South Africa and **Geoff Boner** in Israel. We follow the remarkable career in human genetics of **Aubrey Milunsky** in Boston (in the picture, front row second from left). We recognize two fellow students who stood up against injustice and suffered personally for their beliefs. **Essop Jasset** (in the picture, middle row center) and **Costa Gazidis**. Both spent years under surveillance, banned or in prison. You can read about all these in this Newsletter, and see their full biographical sketches by clicking the links in this Newsletter (and from the 'who's who' page on our website): I hope you enjoy reading it and seeing the website here

[https://wits\\_medical\\_alumni\\_1960.mailchimpsites.com/whos-who--the-class-of-1960](https://wits_medical_alumni_1960.mailchimpsites.com/whos-who--the-class-of-1960)

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## Students Medical Council of 1959

The Wits Students Medical Council (SMC) is the official representative of candidates for the MB BCh degrees. Twelve members of the 1955 entry class were members of the SMC committee for 1959 and seven the year before in 1958. In the picture above, which was taken at the front door of the Medical School on Hospital Hill, we see in the **Back Row**: M Burnstein, AM Levin, D Israelstam, Miss MA Howie, I Lissoos, G Katz, B Knoll. **Middle Row**: AK Leask, M Bobrow, (BSc Hons) E Gottlieb, E Jassat (BSc), B Kuming, G Lampert, MJ Maisels. **Front Row**: AA Fanaroff, (Treas) A Milunsky (Correspondence Sec), P Arnold (BSc) (President), AH Rubenstein (Vice President) Clive Rosendorff (Minutes Sec) Our class was also well represented on the Students Medical Council the previous year (1958) by Clive Rosendorff, Laurence Geffen, Jeffrey Maisels, Gerald Lampert, Aubrey Milunsky, Gary Katz and Arthur Rubenstein.

Subsequently **Arthur Rubenstein** and **Clive Rosendorff** served as Deans of Medical Schools; **Martin Bobrow** and **Aubrey Milunsky** became world-renowned Geneticists, **Jeffrey Maisels** and **Avroy Fanaroff** are Professors of Pediatrics, **Gary Katz** is a retired Consultant Paediatrician in London; **Peter Arnold** in Sydney was recently awarded the Order of Australia for "achievement and meritorious service"; **Essop Jasset**, a leading fighter against injustice, was awarded one of South Africa's highest accolades, the Order of Lithuli in Silver. Sadly, urologist **Irving Lissoos**, ophthalmic surgeon **Basil Kuming** and general practitioner **Gerald Lampert** who served on this committee have passed on. We look forward to celebrating and commemorating all of them in due course.

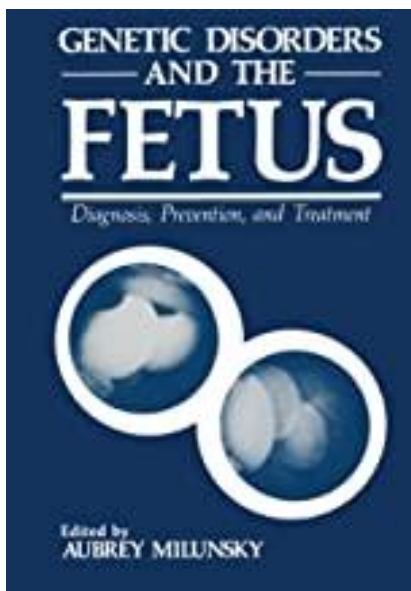
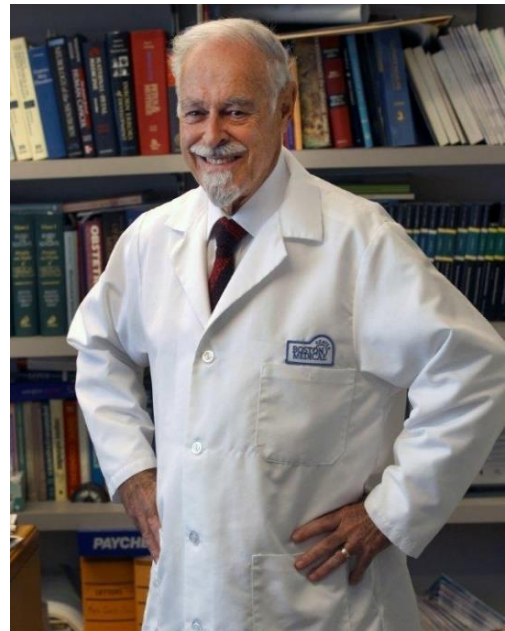
## Aubrey Milunsky Geneticist

Aubrey Milunsky (pictured) who served on the Wits Students Medical Council in 1958 and 1959, became Professor of Human Genetics, Pediatrics, Obstetrics and Gynecology, and Pathology at Boston University School of Medicine. On his retirement, Boston University named the Chair in Human Genetics the 'Aubrey Milunsky Chair'.

Previously he had served as a medical geneticist at Harvard Medical School and the Massachusetts General Hospital for 12 years. He is now, in his 80s, an adjunct Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology at Tufts University School of Medicine.

Aubrey is also the founder of the **Center for Human Genetics**, now in its 38<sup>th</sup> year. He has been joined as a Co-Director there by his son Jeff, who has followed the same speciality as his dad – possibly quite a unique situation from generation to generation.

Aubrey has written or co-edited hundreds of papers and 26 books. These include his major reference work, *Genetic Disorders and the Fetus: Diagnosis, Prevention, and Treatment*, now written and co-edited with his son, Jeff, who was Professor of Pediatrics and Genetics and Genomics at Boston University School of Medicine.



Aubrey has also written seminal books about medical negligence. He originated a postgraduate Continuing Medical and Legal Education Course now planning for its 37<sup>th</sup> year at Boston. He has testified as an expert witness in over 100 trials in the USA.

In 1982, Aubrey Milunsky was honored by his election as a Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians of England. In that year also, his alma mater, the University of the Witwatersrand School of Medicine, conferred the D Sc. degree for his work on the prenatal detection of genetic disorders. Read his story on our dedicated website here [Milunsky, Aubrey](#)

## Colleagues with a Conscience:

### Essop Jassat and Costa Gazidis

We studied and graduated in a time of turbulence on campus. It was a time when academic freedom was an issue. The Nationalist Government wanted to remove all non-white students from our University. This brought the injustices of our society to the forefront. Many students were concerned. Several were active on the Student Representative Council. Most put their noses into their books and busied themselves with their studies and social life.

However, two members of our class stood out. **Essop Jassat** and **Costa Gazidis** were prepared to stand up for their deeply held principles. It was also a time when it was dangerous to do so. There were heavy penalties and spies on campus to report behaviour that the government felt was threatening. Yet Essop and Costa were prepared to risk the consequences. For their troubles both were banned and imprisoned. This seriously affected their emotional health and medical careers.

### Essop Jasset

**Essop Jassat** (pictured here with his wife Shireen Patel) was a lifelong worker for democracy in South Africa. He followed his father into the Transvaal Indian Congress and served as president of the Youth Congress. This led to his first 5-year banning in 1955. He was sentenced in 1964 for failing to comply with his next banning order. Though he appealed that he was unable to report to the police while attending a medical emergency, he lost the appeal and served time in prison.



This was just the beginning. Jassat remained active in the fight against injustice. As president of the Transvaal Indian Congress and a prominent member of the **United Democratic Front (UDF)**, set up in 1983, to coordinate all the opposition to the new constitution – which entrenched the Apartheid system. It was then that with fifteen other members of the UDF, including Albertina Sisulu, he was arrested on the serious charge of treason. The plight of these prisoners was recorded in a resolution of the United Nations Security Council in 1985

**Jassat's** steadfast work culminated in him being invited to serve as a delegate at the Convention for a Democratic South Africa, set up to negotiate the end of apartheid. In the 1994 elections, he was elected a Member of Parliament, serving until 2004. He then returned to his medical practice on Bree Street in Fordsburg. Jasset was also awarded one of the county's highest accolades, the **Order of Lithuli in Silver**, 'for his excellent contribution to the struggle for liberation and advancing democracy in South Africa'. Read his story on our website here [Jassat, Essop Essak \(BSc\)](#)

## **Costa Gazidis**

**Costa Gazidis**, a member of our anatomy class in 1956, was incensed at the start of our anatomy year at learning that black students were forbidden to dissect white cadavers, while white students were permitted to dissect both white and black.

When he graduated in 1962, Costa was under the surveillance of the police special branch for his political views and activities. He was not allowed to complete house jobs at Queen Victoria Maternity Hospital in Johannesburg and King Edward VII hospital in Durban. He was not permitted to work at the Baragwanath Hospital.

Costa eventually found a job in the medical department of the West Rand Consolidated Mines. In 1962, he joined the Communist Party and was the health secretary of the Pan-African Congress (PAC). He remembered: 'People were astonished that the PAC had a white member.' Costa was arrested in 1964 and imprisoned for two years, serving time in solitary confinement. Following his release in 1966, he was promptly banned. He said: 'I became very isolated and was not allowed to further my studies.'

**Gazidis**, who later spent 22 years continuing the struggle in exile in the UK, returned to South Africa in 1990. Determined to serve the people, after failing to be elected to Parliament in 1994, he took a position running community clinics. He was soon at loggerheads with the ANC government over his determination to use the drug AZT in treating AIDS-affected pregnant patients. Fined for insubordination, Costa took his case to the Pretoria High Court and, after a long-drawn-out trial, he won. You can read a fuller story about Costa on our dedicated Wits Class of 60 Website here: [Gazidis, Costa \(BSc\)](#)

## **I wonder if you remember this familiar landmark on the way to Medical School?**

**Clarendon Circle** built in 1931, directed traffic into and out of Hillbrow, where the medical school was located. Here we see this iconic landmark in 1938, close to the **time when most of us were born**. It was where East Avenue intersected with Empire Road and Bruce, Twist and Klein Streets. The island contained palm trees and shrubs. It was named in honour of George Herbert Hyde Villiers, 6<sup>th</sup> Earl of Clarendon who served as Governor General of the Union from 1931 to 1937. The large and elegant building on the left was Majestic Mansions, demolished in 1971. In time, Clarendon Circle was abandoned, and replaced by a direct intersection with traffic lights.



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## **Two Pioneering Nephrologists**

### **Anthony Meyers in South Africa and Geoffrey Boner in Israel.**

When we qualified in 1960, Nephrology was not yet known as a separate speciality. Kidney disease was usually dealt with either in 'internal medicine' or in urology. But owing to the development of renal biopsy, dialysis, and kidney transplantation, it became obvious that specialist expertise was needed.

**Tony Meyers** in South Africa and **Geoff Boner** in Israel were both pioneers of this new speciality in their respective countries. Both were involved with early kidney transplantation and in setting up and running renal units with dialysis centers. Both spent some time in the USA to learn the latest thinking and technology. They both wrote many articles and books on the subject and lectured and taught around the world. They were both active on national and international bodies concerned with the speciality. Both became some of the earliest professors of Nephrology – Tony Meyers at Wits and Geoff Boner at the Faculty of Medicine at Tel Aviv University.

**In South Africa, Tony Meyers** (pictured right) took an early interest in the subject and after his house jobs, went straight into renal units, rising up the ladder until he was the chief in his speciality and Director of renal services at the Johannesburg General Hospital. In 1989, he was made **Professor of Nephrology at Wits.**



**In Israel, the trajectory of Geoff Boner MB BCh.**

(pictured left) had perhaps a more circuitous route.

After his internship at **Tel Hashomer Hospital** (then a barrack hospital like Baragwanath and now the stunning new Sheba Medical Center) and a few other medical jobs there, he served two years compulsory army service and then signed up for the permanent army. Thereafter he worked in renal departments.

Nephrology was only recognised as a speciality in 1970. As there were few specifically qualified people in Israel, Geoffrey Boner, as someone active in the field, was registered as a specialist in Nephrology.

In 1977, Boner joined a large department of nephrology at the **Beilinson Hospital** in Petah Tikva, near Tel Aviv, now part of the large and distinguished **Rabin Medical Center** (pictured). While here, he was appointed **Associate Professor, Faculty of Medicine, Tel Aviv.**



You can read Tony Meyers' South African bio on the Class of 60 website here: [Meyers, Anthony Molyneux](#) and read the full story that Geoff Boner has written to us about his life in medicine in Israel and also his description of the healthcare system, in Israel here: [Boner, Geoffrey](#)

## Obituaries

It is always sad to lose colleagues and friends. We are grateful to the family and associates of the deceased for sending us information on the lives and careers of classmates who have passed on. We will include these and those provided by the Alumni Office on the website under their names as links from the 'Who's Who' list.

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**In our next Newsletter # 2**, coming soon, we will highlight:

Some of the boys from Highlands North School who entered medical school together in 1955: **Leonard Kahn, Gary Katz, Gerald Lampert** (1937-1998) and **Gerald Schnieder** (1937-2011). We also celebrate the career of **Peter C Arnold** who was the president of the Students Medical Council in 1959, (seated in the middle of the front row of the picture on page 1) who joined us for the anatomy class of 1956 and has been inspirational in medical politics across the English-speaking world. We will also feature articles about **our teaching hospitals** by me and also by, **Avroy Fanaroff** and **Jeffrey Maisels**.

We welcome all your **biographical sketches** for publication on the website and for highlighting in our Newsletters. For those not inclined to write their life story, please send your curriculum vitae and perhaps some snippets of your memories of your time at Medical School and highlights of your medical career. We can help to compile your story. **Anecdotes** of amusing things that happened during our time at Medical School will be especially welcome too.

It is good to remember that in connecting and celebrating ourselves, **we are also supporting the Phillip V. Tobias Bursary Fund** to help current Wits medical students. Professor Tobias spent over 60 years of his life at Wits, where his greatest loves were the study of anatomy and the training of students. It is fitting that his Trust provides bursaries and scholarships for students in financial need. (NB, it is very easy to do this via the 'donate' button on the website.)

We hope you are keeping well and safe in this pandemic with its unprecedented disruption to the way we used to live. Best wishes to you and your families,

Mike (Chaim M Rosenberg)

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**Class of 1960** is a project initiated by Chaim M Rosenberg, Chicago

**Newsletter #1, July 2020**, is compiled by Chaim M Rosenberg and

Edited by Geraldine Auerbach MBE, London, from contributions received and further research.

Keep sending your contributions to [chaimrosenberg@aol.com](mailto:chaimrosenberg@aol.com)