

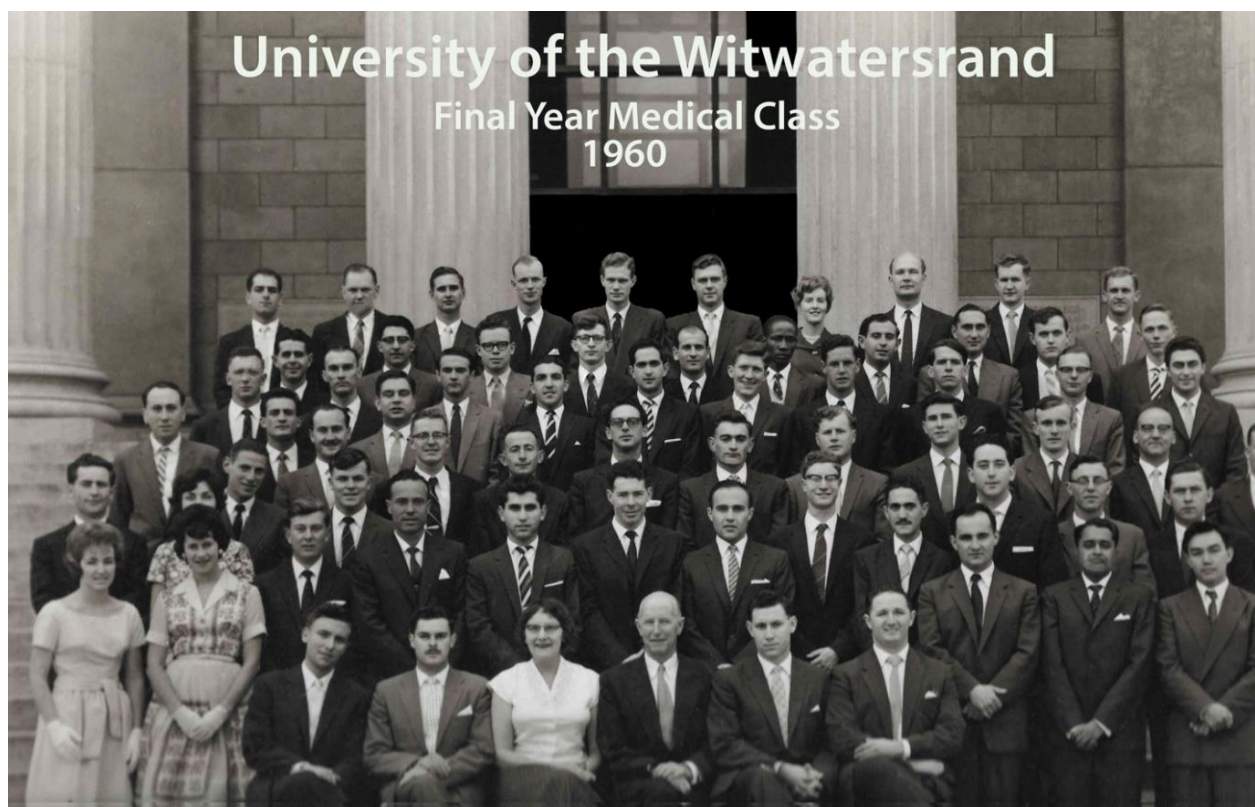
WITS UNIVERSITY MEDICAL SCHOOL

GRADUATING CLASS OF 1960

Newsletter #9 – Reflections and Reunions

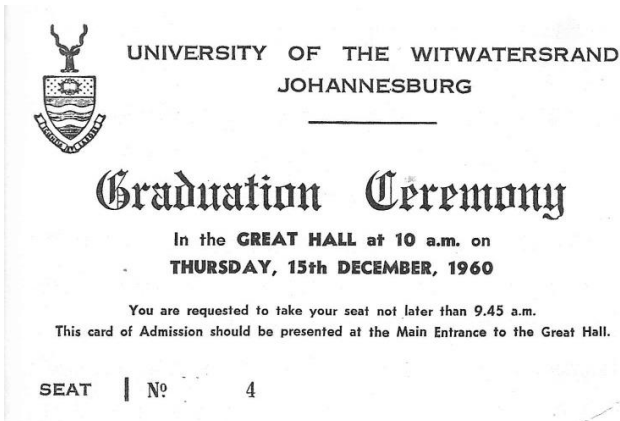
Compiled by **Chaim M Rosenberg, Chicago**

November 2020



Our Graduation – 15 December 1960 – Reflections on our Journey

Our graduation ceremony was held in the Great Hall of the University of the Witwatersrand at 10 am on Thursday, 15 December 1960. In March 2020, when I dug out this old picture of the final year medical class of 1960, I asked myself: **'Who are all these people?'** And an idea popped into my head. Would it not be interesting to try to find them, communicate with them and see what life has had in store for them? We had all earned our qualifications, enabling us to go out into the wide world and heal the sick. Having worked very closely together over six years, day and weary night in our last three clinical years with our firm mates, suddenly the bubble burst and we were flung out in many different directions. And we had no idea where others had landed up or what fields they had ploughed or what they might have achieved. It seemed to me that others might also like to know this. So, my idea, to re-engage in 2020, was fuelled.



Above is Arthur Rubenstein's graduation guest ticket and a lovely snapshot of him with his proud parents

I realised that it might be difficult to find and collect us all together again. I contacted my friends from the class and mooted the idea that I wanted to send round a Newsletter to our classmates. The response was positive. **Gary Katz** and the **Auerbachs** in London, **Avroy Fanaroff** in Cleveland, and others were intrigued and ready to join in the endeavour. They contacted and cajoled their friends and brought more email addresses to the pot. Many were still going strong.



Above is Gary Katz at graduation December 1960, with members of his firm clutching their new degree certificates: Back, **Leonard Kahn**, **Gerald Lampert**, **Gary**, and in front **Aubrey Milunsky** and **Farrol Sims**.

I set about looking on the internet for the hospitals we worked at, familiar landmarks we passed every day, some of our great teachers and many colleagues who had made the news. I soon had so much information I did not know how best to deal with it.

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG



The Wits Alumni Foundation

Classmate **Ronnie Auerbach** and his wife Geraldine (née Kretzmar, BA Wits 1960) suggested we approach the Wits Alumni Foundation. That was a turning point as they welcomed our endeavour and put their technology and contacts at our disposal offering to circulate the Newsletter and to create a special website for the Class of 60. On the Homepage our class graduation picture is bright and clear, and **our aims** are set out.

1. To celebrate the class of 1960 with autobiographical sketches and newsletters
2. To remember those who have passed on
3. To support current Wits medical students financially,

(You can see the website here: [Home](#)). It seemed very fitting for us to donate to help current MB BCh candidates through the Phillip V Tobias Bursary Fund. The memory of his vital anatomy lectures to us, would spur us on. We set a goal of R400,000 (approximately USD \$20,000, or GBP £18,000). So far, we are pleased to see that fourteen members of our class have already donated, and we are more than halfway. But clearly, we still have some way to go, so if you have not yet made your donation. Click this button **DONATE NOW**

The stories started to come in ...

Miraculously, between us we have not only found so many of our classmates, but we have somehow motivated them to send us their life stories. We have received 50 stories of incredible lives, written with love and tenderness by families of those who have passed away or with humility and gratitude by the living – and often still practicing doctors. The pictures that illustrate these stories show how graciously we have aged, where we have been and our wide range of interests. Still more stories are coming in and being processed. And we have the Auerbachs in London to thank for scooping up all this material, editing and formatting it and dressing these stories and Newsletters so beautifully that they are a pleasure to read and do us all proud.

These brief sketches show that many of us continued in medical practice well beyond the customary retirement age of sixty-five years. Those who have retired from medical practice have developed interesting activities such as music appreciation, world-wide travel, sailing, birdwatching, learning a new language, mountain climbing, gardening, golf, wine-tasting, involvement in religion, as well as experiencing the manifold blessings as parents, grandparents and even great-grandparents.

Was our class exceptional?

Most members of the Class of 1960 were born in the year 1937. Was there something in the water at that time? Were the planets favourably aligned? What we do know is that the Great Depression was still raging in Europe and the United States. The City of Guernica was bombed, with hundreds killed during the Spanish Civil War. The pilot Amelia Gerhardt disappeared, and the Disney Studio released *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. We grew up during World War II and were largely shielded from its brutality. At the close of the 1940s we started high school to begin the test of our abilities and intellect. Yet we can't help wondering if we were special when the stories started rolling in of so many meaningful lives so well lived. We have highlighted the careers of many of our class members in our previous Newsletters.

Most of our class made their careers in South Africa. About a third emigrated, at various stages of their careers, mainly to the USA and the British Commonwealth. They were all dedicated, some innovative and entrepreneurial in developing new specialities and facilities and many carrying out ground-breaking research. Several of us later received higher degrees from our alma mater and from medical bodies at home and abroad. We found our professional purpose as general practitioners, specialists, researchers, academics and administrators. We raised our families and settled in communities large or small.



Picture taken when Avroy Fanaroff (Cleveland) visited classmates based in London in 2002.

Specialists, Professors and Teachers

The majority of our class undertook specialist training in a wide variety of fields. And a great number gave back their knowledge by teaching students and young doctors. Many were active at the beginning of burgeoning specialties like nephrology, allergy and human genetics.

It was a revelation to me to discover that so many of us had risen to chairs and heads of departments and to professorial status. **Anthony Meyers** in Johannesburg and **Geoff Boner** in Tel Aviv were pioneer Professors of Nephrology. **Farrol Sims** in Milwaukee, taught Family Medicine and Geriatrics. **Martin Bobrow** in Cambridge UK and **Aubrey Milunsky** in Boston USA were Professors of Human Genetics. **Arthur Vinik** in Virginia, and **Arthur Rubenstein** in Chicago were Professors of Endocrinology. **Wolfe Rakusin** taught Ophthalmology at Wits, **Avroy Fanaroff** in Cleveland and **Jeff Maisels** in Detroit were Professors of Neonatal Paediatrics, and **Max Shaff** was Associate Professor of Radiology in Nashville Tennessee. **Anthon Heyns** was Professor and Head of the Department of Haematology at the University of the Orange Free State and CEO of the South African National Blood Transfusion Service (SANBS). (See Anton below with his wife Mara at the 75th anniversary of SANBS). The list goes on and on.



I myself (**Chaim Rosenberg**) was Associate Professor of Psychiatry at Boston University School of Medicine. **Laurence Geffen** is still Professor of Psychiatry at Brisbane University, Australia. Laurence was one of the three graduates from our class that became Deans of medical schools. Laurie of two medical schools in Adelaide, and then Brisbane, **Arthur Rubenstein** in New York and then Philadelphia,

and **Clive Rosendorff** at Wits.

Many without titles, nevertheless taught students and junior doctors. These include **Gloria Davis** in Allergy to young anaesthetists at Baragwanath Hospital, **Naomi Livni** and **Stan Zail** in pathology at Wits, **Andre van As** and **Mike Plit** in Johannesburg in pulmonology.

Those who went into General Practice like **Harry Glazer** in Sydney, and those who were private paediatricians like **Jack Kussel** in Johannesburg and **Hilton Silver** in Port Washington, New York, have had glowing tributes from their patients expressing what dedicated and empathetic doctors they were.

Wits and other Universities conferred well-earned higher degrees such as MDs and PhDs for outstanding research. Many seminal books have been published by members of our class.

Our Mentors and those who taught us

Not only have we documented ourselves with stories that we can be proud of, to show to our children and grandchildren, but we have also paid tribute to our mentors and teachers who inspired us and instilled in us a great work ethic. We have written personal tributes to clinicians, **Mosie Suzman, Solly Levin, Professor Guy Elliot**, and to anatomy lecturers **Toby Arnold** and **Phillip Tobias**. Laurie Geffen's tribute to **Raymond Dart** is in preparation.

You can read about all our cohort of students and also our tributes to our teachers here:

[Who's Who - The Class of 1960](#)

Our Class of '60 Newsletters

The Newsletters have proliferated and are now being read and possibly emulated by other graduate classes. You can read them all here:

Click here to access [Newsletter #8 - Phillip Tobias](#)

Click here to access [Newsletter #7 - South Africa](#)

Click here to access [Newsletter #6 - Old Edwardians October 2020](#)

Click here to access [Newsletter #5 - Clinical Training](#)

Click here to access [Newsletter #4 - Deans and Professors](#)

Click here to access [Newsletter #3 - Highlands North](#)

Click here to access [Newsletter #2 – Baragwanath](#)

Click here to access [Newsletter #1, July 2020](#)

Click here to access [Announcement Email, June 2020](#)

A higher purpose

Although we celebrate a group of exceptional people who have made lasting contributions to healthcare and to family and friends, I want to stress again that this exercise that is remembering and documenting the class of 60, is not about self-congratulations – although much of that is due. It is rather about our coming together to help a new generation of young men and women become doctors and go out into the world to make a difference today.

Our little enterprise has sprouted wings! Receiving all these wonderful biosketches makes me feel like a little boy collecting the autographs of gifted people. It is truly wonderful to acknowledge our classmates. We are becoming a family.

We have been shown in these stories, incredible, abundant richness. I have to say, what an astonishing group of people! I leave you to ponder over whether our class was special.

Reunions and Anniversaries

25th Class Reunion (1985)

Over the years there have been class reunions

25 years after graduating, twenty-four of our classmates met for a reunion at the King Edwards Old Boys' Club in Johannesburg. Ephraim Dove helped to organize the event. So far, we have identified nearly all in the picture – but nobody seems to remember very much about the event.



Back row: Kenneth (Roger) Edge, Ray Palmer?, W (Bill) Wilson, Ivan McCusker

Third row: Leon Kahn, Gerald Lampert, Mike Plit, Tony Meyers, Irving Lissoos

Second row: Stan Zail, Theo Kretzmar, Mervyn Hurwitz, Anthony Crosley, Basil Kuming, Robert Otten, David Bengani, Dennis Roussow, David Paton

Front row: Ephraim Dove, Naomi Livni, Jack Kussell, Lawrence Willies, Jane Otten, Gloria Davis-Meyers, Michael Nissenbaum

40th Class Reunion (2000)

Arthur Rubinstein who received an invitation but was not able to join, reports: The 40th reunion of the Wits Class of 1960 was held in July 2000. The Office of Alumni Affairs sent out invitations to all known members of our class. The celebration began on a Saturday morning at the Wits Club, West Campus University with a talk at 9:00am on *A Philatelic History of Bio-Ethics* by Professor Asher Dubb (whom many have listed as one of their most favourite teachers). His hobby was stamp collecting and he illustrated many of his scientific papers with stamps. He was physician

and head of the department of medicine at the Chris Hani-Baragwanath Hospital from 1964 to 2004. His talk was followed by morning tea in the garden of the club.

At 10:30am Professor Udo Schuklenk, head of Bio-Ethics, Faculty of Health Sciences spoke on the *Ethics of the Doctor/Patient Relationship*. At 11:30am the group was invited to take a bus tour of the Wits campus.

The highlight of the Reunion was a gala dinner held that evening in the elegant ballroom of the Hilton Hotel, Sandton. The guest speaker was Professor **Phillip Vallentine Tobias** an alumnus of the class of 1950 – a man of international reputation for his exceptional scientific achievements. Tobias is also renowned for his vitality as a speaker and remembered fondly by us as a riveting anatomy lecturer.



45th Class Reunion (2005)

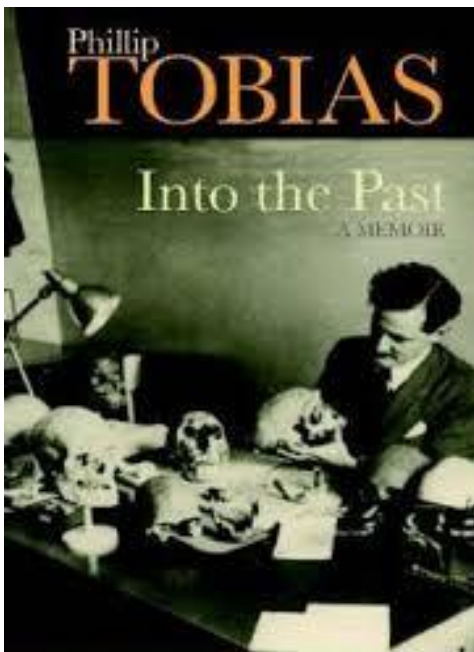
Geoffrey Boner who was present at the 45th reunion in 2005, writes: Three expats, **Faroll Sims**, **John Lee** and I (**Geoffrey Boner**) joined our South African-based class members to celebrate the 45th anniversary of our graduation. The festivities started at a restaurant with an African theme in the grounds of the Zoo Lake.



Back Row (L to R): Gloria Davis, John Lee and Mike Plit Front Row: Farrol Sims, Geoffrey Boner, Irving Lissoos, Jack Kussel, Ephraim Dove. Seated: David Paton, at the 45th Class Reunion

Right: Pam Boner, Lilian and Farrol Sims.

The leading lecturer of the day was future Nobel prize-winner Sydney Brenner. Other lectures detailed the asbestos and HIV problems in South Africa. South Africa had continued to mine and use asbestos for several years after most countries stopped its use. Asbestos was used in the construction of roads and playgrounds for children, especially in remote areas. Most of the workers in the mines came from outside of South Africa. If they developed pulmonary illnesses, only those who reported back to South Africa for examination were offered compensation.



Following the lectures and the visit to Baragwanath Hospital, we toured Soweto and had lunch in a local restaurant. In the afternoon we visited the Apartheid Museum, the Bernard Price Institute of Palaeontology, and the Museum of the History of Medicine, where **Phillip Tobias** was on hand to sign his latest book, *Into the Past: A Memoir*.

The festivities ended with an elegant dinner at a restaurant in Sandton. The people I remember attending the dinner were we three expats, **Geoff Boner, Farrol Sims** and **John Lee**, with **Irving Lissoos, Ephraim Dove, Jack Kussel, Gloria Myers (Davis) and David Paton. Mike Plit, Stan Zail** and **Essop Jassat** were present only at the morning

gathering.

60th Reunion – November, December 2020

I am so glad that now we all know 'who these people are'. In fact, we know so much more about each other than we ever knew at medical school. This has led to a strong wish to get-together again and meet each other for a more social experience. Of course, Covid-19 and the almost universal lockdowns have put paid to our travelling and meeting in person. (The coronavirus has sadly already claimed some of our cohort of students and teachers as its victims).

However, technology has come to the rescue. Through the magic of Zoom, undreamed of in our graduation year, we have been able to gather in the same space, look at each other and talk to

each other. We can enjoy reminiscences and hopes for the future, without packing suitcases, queueing at airports or in fact leaving the comfort of our own homes.

I was privileged to make a Webinar for Wits via Zoom about the Class of 60 and our project, and you can view it on our website here: [Our Videos](#).

Eleven of us had a comfortable and enjoyable Zoom get-together on 11 November 2020. We look forward to meeting again and with others on Wednesday 25 November and Sunday 13 December at 6.00pm London time. Here are some 'snapshots' from this first meeting.



Top row: Geoff Boner in Israel, Ronnie Auerbach in London, Chaim Rosenberg in Chicago,

Second Row: Jack Kussel in Johannesburg, Gary Katz in London, Andre van As in Florida.

Third row: Rodwin Jackson in London, Jeff Maisels in Detroit, Arthur Rubenstein in Philadelphia

Fourth row: Avroy Fanaroff in Cleveland, Geraldine Auerbach in London.

Wits Medical Graduates 1960 and 2019

1960 In the year 1955, we entered medical school as the systemic apartheid policies further entrenched the privileges of the white minority at the expense of the majority of South Africans. Our 1960 graduation picture (on page one) taken at the steps of the Great Hall of Wits University, shows we were predominately white males, in our early twenties. There were very few women, Black, Indian or Chinese students.

2019 The coming to South Africa of democratic rule in 1994 opened opportunities for all the citizens of the nation. How has it changed? I asked Poovy Govender, [Strategic Projects Coordinator, Dean's Office, Faculty of Health Sciences, University of the Witwatersrand] to send us a photograph of the most recent Wits medical school graduating class. Here it is. The 2019 picture, taken on the same steps leading into the Great Hall, shows the tremendous changes in the number and composition of the medical class and displays the great promise of the Rainbow Nation. We are proud to be supporting the class of 2020 – on our 60th anniversary!



Wits Medical Graduates 2019 on the steps of Wits Great Hall

We are now in the ninth decade of our lives and still delight in sharing a common bond as members of the Wits Class of 1960. We know that we were very privileged to have had this opportunity and I am humbled to have learned how seriously we took our responsibility to do good.

It is now, a privilege for the Class of 1960 to help the medical students of today attain their MB BCs, in the hope and expectation that their medical careers will be as fulfilling as ours.

Newsletter #9 – The Class of '60: Reflections and Reunions

Compiled by Chaim M Rosenberg Chicago with Geraldine Auerbach MBE London, from stories and pictures received

November 2020