



Greetings Fellow Futrell Society Alumni!

Much is going on in the last quarter that is newsworthy for all of us. After 19 years of incredible commitment to the program, Mike Gimbel, an outstanding resident teacher and amazing clinician performing challenging and complicated surgeries, will be leaving us and joining Futrell Society alum Negin (Noorchashm) Griffith (Class of 2006), in Red Bank, NJ. Mike, the consummate educator, led by example, walked the walk, and talked the talk. He will be missed.

With Mike's departure, Andrea Moreira will take over as the Chief of Plastic Surgery at UPMC Magee-Womens Hospital. She is an amazing surgical innovator, a world authority on neurotization of the nipple in breast cancer reconstruction, and an ambassador for Pitt Plastic Surgery. Congratulations Andrea!

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Our own Alex Davit has been appointed Vice Chair for Pediatric Plastic Surgery, and Head of the Pediatric Brachial Plexus Service Line at UPMC Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh. Congratulations Alex!

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Carolyn De La Cruz, who has spent her multifaceted career as a skilled microsurgeon with specialty interest in breast reconstruction and lymphatic surgery, has been given the distinction of being Chair of Professional Development Mentorship Program. She is enthusiastic about developing of young surgeons, creating opportunities for them and advancing their careers. The services will be offered to all members of Department of Pitt Plastic Surgery. She will also oversee the Community Outreach Program. What a blessing to have her as part of our faculty. Congratulations Carolyn!

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We had an outstanding match for categorical residents. We successfully recruited some of the best of the best. Our future is right for the next generation of Pitt-trained plastic surgeons. See details in our *Resident's Corner*.

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The educational Wednesday morning Grand Rounds lectures continue to educate us, challenge us, and stimulate us. I would love for you all to be a part of it.

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Some exciting news on the alumni front; Ed Lee (Class of 2008), Residency Program Director, Division of Plastic Surgery, at Rutgers New Jersey Medical School, performed the first successful robotic breast reconstruction in the state of New Jersey. Congratulations Ed!

Jonathon Keith (Class of 2013), who is featured in this quarter's *Spotlight on Alumni*, has been named President-Elect of Society of Gender Surgeons. Congratulations, Jonathon!

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*Spotlight on Alumni!* In this quarter we feature Jonathon Keith, Class of 2013.

### **1. What am I doing now?**

Living in New Jersey. Probably the last thing I would have imagined starting residency at Pitt in 2006. And I am overcome with joy and fortune for my family and career!

After residency, I moved to NYC and joined fellow Pitt alums Mark Granick and Ed Lee in the Division of Plastic Surgery at Rutgers New Jersey Medical School. We shared a vision to model our integrated program on the Pitt tradition. I established a busy academic microsurgery practice and worked my way through the ranks eventually being promoted to Associate Professor and Program Director. Very soon after starting, Ed encouraged me to follow my passion for gender affirming surgery. I developed relationships with the community, university and colleagues and founded the Rutgers Center for Transgender Health. From there we performed the first robotic vaginoplasty and phalloplasty in the state and built a robust program for gender diverse patients to receive holistic care.

About 6 years ago I moved to private practice. I was recruited by wonderful, supportive colleagues, all microsurgeons, to join East Coast Advanced Plastic Surgery. My entire practice is gender affirming surgery with the occasional DIEP flap harvest to assist my partners. I am proud to say two of my partners are residents I trained. We operate in NYC and NJ.

Over the last few years I have also become an ABPS Board Examiner and now serve as President-Elect of the newly formed Society of Gender Surgeons. Along with Loren Schechter and another Pitt alum, Bill Kuzon, we founded this society for surgeons in this field to bridge the gap between best evidence and clinical practice. I am truly honored to serve my colleagues in this capacity.

### **2. What are some of your hobbies? How do you spend your free time?**

Those first few years at Rutgers were a blur of boards, babies and building a practice! I remember falling asleep in the Holland Tunnel driving back after a replant at 2 AM. My daughter, Isla, was born 2 weeks after taking the Oral Boards. We had my son, Sam, 2 years later.

In private practice, I have protected more time to be a present father. As such, my hobbies have become that of my children, and I learn from them. Our family went to Taylor Swift's Eras Tour last Fall which, as a family of Swifties, was monumental!

And I love to run. I run almost every morning before work at 5 AM. In the past year, I started competitive trail running. Recently, I finished a 20 mile trail race in March. Dr. Futrell called me a couple of miles into the race, and I answered on my Apple Watch—out of breath—and I am sure the other racers were quite surprised when I answered, “Hello Dr. Futrell!” out on the racecourse!

### **3. Can you tell us about a memorable Residency story that would amuse us?**

You know, I have been watching “The PITT” on MAX lately and it has been bringing up a lot of buried memories from residency. As surgeons we keep focused on the horizon—the only way forward is through—and it can be difficult to unpack the past.

I watched the show with my wife one night and I accurately predicted what they would do next, and she asked, “How did you know that?” and I replied I had seen it as a resident at Pitt.

This story may not amuse but it is one that I will always remember because it was both extraordinary and yet just another day as a Pitt Plastic Surgery Resident.

As a junior resident I was assigned to Dr. Russavage's clinic once per week to see follow ups. Honestly, I did not love it and was always yearning to be back in the OR. These were pre-EMR days, and everything was hand-scrawled on those yellow follow-up notes. I entered the exam room to see a young man in his 30's who had undergone a skin graft to his knee the week before following trauma on the basketball court. He was doing well though his thigh donor site had accumulated blood under the Tegaderm dressing.

As I began to slowly peel back the dressing, the patient became lightheaded at the sight of blood and looked ashen. I asked if he was ok, and his eyes rolled back. He lost consciousness and crumpled backward onto the exam table. At first, I thought he had a vagal response, and I gently tried to awaken him. Next a sternal rub failed to revive him, and I checked for a pulse—nothing. The medical assistant in the room screamed and I told her to call a code.

The nurses in the clinic brought our meager supplies to the room. I started chest compressions, put in an IV, and started fluid.

At this point in residency, I had been part of many codes and knew the drill. At that time, the clinic was in a separate office building, connected to UPMC Presbyterian but through a series of sky bridges and not actually a part of the hospital. After a minute or two it dawned on all of us that no help was coming. So we transferred him to a gurney, I straddled the patient to continue compressions, and we began the journey to push the patient through the hallways of the office building, across the skybridge, down the elevator to the ER.

Once in the ER, we confirmed he was in asystole. The trauma team and CT surgeons convened. He had bled out completely through a ruptured Aortic graft and died in the trauma bay.

I had not known his whole history upon entering his room, but he was Marfan's patient who had undergone total aortic root replacement. He was fully anticoagulated which is why he had needed a skin graft following a basketball injury in the first place. And why he had accumulated a clot under his donor site Tegaderm. The post-mortem revealed dissection and rupture of his graft.

The kicker, his girlfriend was a nurse in that ER and saw me roll in on the gurney performing chest compressions.

When I returned to the clinic, I sat down to tell Dr. Russavage. He asked, "Did you do your best?" and I answered yes. And he said, "That's all you can do."

We went on to finish clinic and operate that afternoon late into the night. We never spoke of that event again.

#### **4. What did the Pitt Residency mean to you? How well did it prepare you for practicing plastic surgery?**

Every night on call, I would wander the halls of Scaife and stare at the faces of previous residents—wondering about their stories. On occasion, you will meet some of these people at a meeting and share experiences from Pittsburgh. In that instant, you are both transported back to ORs of Presby and Monte, sharing a fever dream ranging from triumph to sorrow and everything in between.

Pitt plastic surgery training is a crucible. It demands excellence and resilience. It gives nothing. All must be earned.

But in that act, you will have the skills to be a pioneer. To help others heal. To help your colleagues. And, on occasion, to help yourself.

**5. If you can have dinner with anyone passed, or present. Who would it be and why?**

People often ask why I got into the field of gender affirmation. I share my experience of working with Dr. Futrell as a medical student. That first vaginoplasty I scrubbed was a blood, smoke and mirrors moment at the end of which, poof, there is a vagina! It was miraculous. True creation. I have been enamored with that since. The idea that we can blend our knowledge of science, medicine, anatomy and art to create something wholly new and heal someone in the process.

I would love to sit down to dinner with Leonardo DaVinci. To see through his eyes the natural world and our place in it. But, it would have to be in Italy because the food is amazing!



~Keith Family~

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You can see that things are full speed ahead here a Pitt Plastic Surgery. One thing to perhaps consider, that I did for 20+ years, is to pledge to the Department as little as \$50-100 per month. You could put it on a credit card, never miss it, and for the price of a good bottle of wine you can participate with us! Please use the link below:

<https://www.giveto.pitt.edu/givetothefutrellsociety>

As always, I hope this note finds you well! Keep us posted on your accomplishments. We would love to hear from you! Lastly, become involved!



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