

ZELIG (“ZECK”) HERBERT LIEBERMAN, MD: a conversation with the editor

Zeck Lieberman (*Figure 1*) was born in Floresville, Texas, on June 7, 1928. When he was 8, his family moved to San Antonio, where he graduated from high school at age 16. After 2 years at the University of Texas in Austin, he entered Tulane University School of Medicine, where he graduated second in his class at age 22. His internship and residency in general surgery were at Barnes Hospital in St. Louis, associated with the Washington University School of Medicine. His residency was interrupted for 2 years while he served as a surgeon in the US Air Force. After completing his residency training in 1957, he moved to Dallas and joined the staff of Baylor University Medical Center (BUMC) (then called Baylor Hospital), where he has been ever since.



Figure 1. Zeck Lieberman, MD, during the interview.

Zeck Lieberman has been one of Baylor’s finest leaders during these past 45 years. He has been president of the medical staff of BUMC (1990) and chairman of its medical board (1991). He is one of 3 physician representatives on the board of trustees of BUMC. Dr. Lieberman is also assistant chief of the department of surgery at BUMC and previous chief of surgical oncology at the Sammons Cancer Center of BUMC. In addition to his extremely active surgical practice, Dr. Lieberman has been clinical professor of surgery at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas for many years. He has been president of the Dallas County Unit of the American Cancer Society and the Dallas Society of General Surgeons.

For his many accomplishments, Zeck has received a number of awards, including having a Baylor building named in his honor, the Zelig H. Lieberman Research Building, which was dedicated in 1998. He received the 50-year lifetime achievement award in 2000 from his alma mater, Tulane University School of Medicine, and he was named “Father of the Year” in Dallas–Fort Worth in 2000. Zeck Lieberman and his lovely wife, Marilyn Ely, have been married for 47 years, and they have 3 very successful offspring. Zeck Lieberman is simply a wonderful human being and a splendid surgeon and physician, and he brings much honor to his beloved BUMC.



Figure 2. With sons Steve (left) and Randy (right) in Floresville.

William Clifford Roberts, MD (hereafter, WCR): *I am in my home with Dr. Lieberman on November 1, 2002. Dr. Lieberman, I appreciate your willingness to talk to me and therefore to the readers of BUMC Proceedings. Could we start by my asking you to discuss your birthplace, your parents, your siblings, and some of your early memories?*

Zelig Herbert Lieberman (hereafter, ZHL): I was born in Floresville, Texas (population 1500), about 30 miles south of San Antonio. My sons and I revisited Floresville recently, and it now has a population of 3000 (*Figure 2*). Floresville was a very enjoyable place to be raised. I have 1 older sister and 2 older brothers. My father was an unbelievable fellow. He was born in an area of Europe that was alternately controlled by Poland and Russia. He was the second oldest in his family. In that environment, the oldest son was allowed to remain home with his parents; however, at that time when boys reached the age of 14, they were inducted into the military service, and they frequently never returned home. My father worked and saved money and then

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Figure 3. Parents Alex and Naomi Lieberman.

traveled to the United States by himself when he was about 14 years old. Initially, he went to Philadelphia to stay with relatives, and then he moved to Floresville, Texas. He opened a grocery store there and later joined the army during World War I.

WCR: *How old was he when he came to Texas?*

ZHL: Approximately 16 or 17. It was routine in those days to help bring relatives over from Europe. They would stay in your home and then would leave to begin a life of their own. Most of our relatives subsequently moved to various towns in South Texas. As they became financially solvent, instead of spending money only to meet their own needs, they would help bring over other family members. In South Texas we have a large group of very close-knit relatives.

My mother was also a unique person. She was born in Brooklyn, New York. She had an older sister and a younger brother. Her mother died shortly after the birth of her brother, and they initially lived with relatives in Brooklyn. My mother helped raise both her older sister and younger brother even though she was the middle sibling. Her sister married and moved to Yorktown, Texas. At the age of 18 or 19, my mother met my father when she was visiting her sister in Yorktown, and they subsequently married.

WCR: *How far is Yorktown from Floresville?*

ZHL: Approximately 40 miles. My father opened a dry goods store in Floresville. My parents' greatest desire was to have their children become well educated. They believed the schools in San Antonio were more advanced than those in Floresville, and so we moved. I was about 8 years old at that time. My father developed a wholesale dress business in San Antonio.

WCR: *When was your father born, and when did he die?*

ZHL: He was born in 1893, and he died at age 63 of carcinoma of the colon.

WCR: *And your mother?*

ZHL: She was born in 1900 and died at age 84 of lymphoma.

WCR: *What was your father like?*

ZHL: He was of the old school and he was unbelievably stoic and had only basic personal needs. He was very devoted to his

family and to people. He had no desire for finances beyond raising his children. He was an honest businessman and a very moral and ethical human being. He was a great influence on all of us in the family, especially me.

WCR: *You were close?*

ZHL: I was very close to both him and my mother (Figure 3). He was a quiet and honorable person. He believed in us. He would tell me, "Whatever you do is right." He would never question anything we children did. He just assumed that we would act appropriately. He had a strong influence in determining our value system and behavior.

WCR: *That gave you a lot of confidence early on?*

ZHL: Confidence to do right? Yes.

WCR: *What was your mother like?*

ZHL: She was very family oriented and also community oriented. She was very strong willed, and she worked side by side with my father in the dry goods business. Neither of my parents had any formal education, but they had great insight into taking care of people. During World War II, my father ran the business in San Antonio, and during the week my mother rode the bus daily to Floresville, where she ran the store. She also continued to meet her other family responsibilities in our home.

WCR: *When you moved to San Antonio, you retained the store in Floresville?*

ZHL: Yes, my dad retained the store, and later my older brother took it over.

WCR: *What did your brothers and sisters eventually do?*

ZHL: My sister graduated from the University of Texas. My father insisted that she not marry until she obtained her college degree. After graduation, she married an optometrist, who later went into the jewelry business. They lived in several communities, including Tulsa and Temple, before settling in San Antonio.

My oldest brother attended Louisiana State University and was in the military as a helicopter pilot during World War II. Afterwards, he returned and finished his college education. I was at Tulane at the time, and we had the opportunity to visit frequently. We would travel together back and forth from school to San Antonio. He subsequently married and moved to San Antonio. He then maintained the store in Floresville and opened several other stores in small towns in South Texas. Later a highway was built around Floresville so that cars began to detour around the center of town. Wal-Mart also built a store on these highways, and that attracted most of the customers from the smaller communities. This situation was very detrimental to the small-town businesses. My brother closed the stores. He is now retired.

My other brother, who is 18 months older than I, always wanted to be a doctor. He was very studious and conscientious. We both went to the University of Texas in Austin. He joined the V-12 navy program and subsequently attended Vanderbilt Medical School. After graduation, he completed his internal medicine residency at Barnes Hospital in St. Louis. He remained on the attending staff at Barnes Hospital until his recent retirement (Figure 4).

WCR: *Did your parents finish high school or what would be the equivalent of high school?*

ZHL: I don't think so. My father started working at age 14. I am not sure how much formal education my mother had. Nev-



Figure 4. Siblings (left to right): Ira, Zeck, David, and Sara Maryn Golding.

ertheless, they were very oriented to education. Their goal was to keep our family close and to help us become educated.

WCR: *It was a very close-knit family?*

ZHL: Absolutely.

WCR: *What was your home like in Floresville before you moved to San Antonio?*

ZHL: It was a very comfortable home and had a screened-in porch, where we slept. A kind elderly person named Tucker, who was not part of our nuclear family, was like a grandmother to us. She lived in our home and took care of us while both of our parents were working. Floresville was a small community, so we could easily walk to school and to the town square.

WCR: *Did you work in the store when you were out of school?*

ZHL: My folks never required us to work; however, we were given the opportunity to work when we desired. When I was in the store, my job was to be certain that people were not taking things off the shelves. My mother would frequently say, "Two, ten." That meant to keep 2 eyes on 10 fingers as people would walk through the store. After moving to San Antonio, I would frequently help pack clothes in boxes at my father's wholesale business. My parents primarily wanted us to have a relaxed and productive life. When we had free time, they wanted our days to be available to play with friends, read, or follow any of our interests.

WCR: *It sounds like all 4 of you studied hard in school.*

ZHL: We were all interested in education. My brother graduated first in his class at Vanderbilt Medical School. My sister and brothers were also very conscientious and good students.

WCR: *Did grades come easy for you? Were you excited about learning new things?*

ZHL: Yes. I still am. It was never a chore. We always had books around the house. In the summer when we were out of school, we had specified rest time in the afternoon. We read, but it was not pressured. We were encouraged to read what we were interested in. Education was not pushed; however, we all enjoyed school.

WCR: *Did your parents read?*

ZHL: Yes, they did. We had a radio in our home, but those were the days before television. Our activities were primarily within the home and the neighborhood.

WCR: *Was the dinner meal at night a big deal?*



Figure 5. In high school.

ZHL: Yes. We always ate our evening meal together.

WCR: *Do you remember what you talked about at those dinners?*

ZHL: Dinner conversation was always pleasant. It concerned the activities everyone was involved in. There always seemed to be plenty to discuss, and it was a very relaxed tone, not rigid at all.

WCR: *You grew up a happy kid?*

ZHL: Yes.

WCR: *You went to Thomas Jefferson High School in San Antonio? You graduated from high school at a young age?*

ZHL: In those days you could begin school earlier. I graduated from high school at the age of 16.

WCR: *Were you an athlete in high school?*

ZHL: I never played competitive sports, but I always enjoyed physical activity and participated in baseball and basketball. My father had 2 unique restrictions. He did not want us to play football or own a bicycle. In retrospect, it was probably good advice. I would tell my friends and coach, "I would play football but my dad won't let me." When my sons attended high school, I told them that they could play if they wished but otherwise just say, "Dad won't let me play." The football coach asked me once, "Why don't you let your sons play football?" I told him, "I don't believe in it." Our family is sports oriented and involved in swimming, jogging, tennis, and biking, but we have not participated significantly in competitive contact sports.

WCR: *Were you involved in a lot of activities in high school?*

ZHL: My main extracurricular activity was the Reserve Officers' Training Corps plus school and social functions (Figure 5).

WCR: *Was your family religious when you grew up?*

ZHL: Yes, absolutely. When we lived in Floresville, my family would drive to San Antonio every Sunday for Sunday school because there was not a temple or synagogue in Floresville. We attended temple and Sunday school regularly, and the concepts of religion were a deep part of our lives. We have always lived in a non-Jewish world, so religion and the religious concepts of Judaism are important to us but not in variation to other religions.

WCR: *When you were in Floresville, were there other Jewish families there?*

ZHL: There was one other Jewish family in the community.

WCR: *Did you feel any difference by being Jewish when growing up?*

ZHL: We always recognized that we were Jewish. We were aware that there had been prejudice and persecution of many Jewish people. My father came from Poland and Russia and my mother was raised in Brooklyn, so I am certain that they were exposed to many prejudices in their early environments. I have always thought that I grew up in the most unbelievable time. I was aware of those barriers and prejudices; however, as I became older, most prejudices had disappeared, including those limiting admission to medical school and restrictions concerning obtaining training in surgery. My parents were very well respected in both Floresville and San Antonio. I've heard about the anti-Jewish prejudices, but it has always seemed to work in my favor, not the reverse. People have been very kind and fair to me. I believe that I have been extremely fortunate to live during a time when most everybody has become very open minded.

WCR: *How did you decide to go to the University of Texas in Austin?*

ZHL: It wasn't difficult. It was close to home. The tuition was \$25 a semester. Room and board was also very cheap. In those days, education at the University of Texas was ideal.

WCR: *You entered the University of Texas at age 16?*

ZHL: I went to San Antonio Junior College the summer after high school graduation and then entered the University of Texas.

WCR: *How did you end up in high school? Were you top in your class?*

ZHL: I am unsure of my ranking, but high school was very enjoyable for me.

WCR: *Were there any teachers in high school or junior high who had an impact on you?*

ZHL: No. I enjoyed most of my courses, but no particular teacher influenced me disproportionately at that time. The most important impact of my education came from my parents, sister, and brothers. A lesson that my father constantly stressed was "MYOB"—mind your own business. My mother was a strong motivational influence, and her advice was always to approach life with the concept "I can and I will!"

WCR: *Other European members of your extended family gradually came to the USA. One or 2 lived in your home for a while?*

ZHL: Correct.

WCR: *How big was your extended family in the San Antonio/Floresville area?*

ZHL: I used to say that if my car ran out of gasoline anywhere in South Texas, I could easily find a relative in a nearby community. Both my mother and father were very family oriented. If you married into our family, then everyone in your family also was considered a part of our family. My father was the president of the "cousins club," and my mother's younger brother lived in our home in Floresville for many years before he was married. We have many relatives throughout South Texas, in Lockhart, Robstown, Austin, and Seguin.

WCR: *Was Floresville mainly a farming community?*

ZHL: Yes. It has a yearly Peanut Festival to celebrate the importance of farming to the community.

WCR: *How did the University of Texas work out?*

ZHL: It was a great experience. The University of Texas had approximately 6000 students at that time. I enjoyed the classes and also joined a fraternity.

WCR: *Which one?*

ZHL: Phi Sigma Delta.

WCR: *You entered the University of Texas during World War II in 1944?*

ZHL: Yes. It was a low-pressure school. My academic and social experience was excellent. I have maintained many friendships throughout my life that began in Austin.

WCR: *What was your major in college?*

ZHL: When I entered college, I declared a premed major, but I wasn't really committed to medicine. My father always believed that I was going to go into business with him and my brother. I would have enjoyed that because I had a great relationship with both my father and my older brother. However, I thought, "I don't want to go back and go to work. I'll just go to school and explore other educational opportunities and then decide what I want to do." I took a premed program because I obviously must have considered going to medical school. In those days, you could get into many medical schools without a college degree. I applied and was accepted at Tulane Medical School after 2 years in college, which included summer school during my freshman and sophomore years.

WCR: *Your brother was already in medical school?*

ZHL: Yes, at Vanderbilt Medical School.

WCR: *Were there physicians in your extended family?*

ZHL: No.

WCR: *What do you think made you and your brother decide to be physicians?*

ZHL: My brother always wanted to be a physician. We always knew he was going to become a doctor. I admired my brother very much, and I liked the doctors I knew. Our family's closest friend in Floresville was Dr. Blake. He delivered us and remained our family physician. Medicine was always held in high esteem, as it is in most Jewish families. I grew up in an environment that considered medicine to be a great profession. I still believe that way.

WCR: *You must have made awfully good grades those first 2 years at the University of Texas.*

ZHL: Grades always came easy for me. When I applied to medical school I was asked why I wanted to be a doctor. I told them I wasn't sure I wanted to be a doctor, but it seemed interesting. I knew I could always fall back into the family business, but I wanted to do something on my own that was more challenging to me.

WCR: *When you took science courses, did they appeal to you?*

ZHL: Most everything in school did. I liked science, but I did not enjoy foreign languages.

WCR: *Did your father speak Russian?*

ZHL: He spoke Russian and Yiddish. In our home, however, everyone spoke English. We didn't have any overriding Russian or European influence in our family at all.

WCR: *Did you have an automobile in college?*

ZHL: No way. The first automobile I had was during my surgical training in St. Louis.

WCR: *Where did you live in Austin?*

ZHL: The first year I lived with another friend on campus, and the second year I moved to the fraternity house.

WCR: *Did you date much in college?*

ZHL: Yes. I was young, so I didn't know very much about girls. I dated, but not seriously.

WCR: *There weren't many medical schools in 1945 when you applied. You started medical school in 1946. Tulane was probably the best medical school in the South at that time.*

ZHL: I thought so. And you could be accepted without a degree. The University of Texas at Galveston was also an excellent school. I did not really apply with a lot of fervor, but I was accepted at Tulane and believed it was a great opportunity.

WCR: *Did you apply to Galveston?*

ZHL: I'm sure I did. My father always said, "Just go and do whatever your body says to do." Medical school at Tulane was a marvelous experience. The teachers were very interested in teaching, and New Orleans was great for me.

WCR: *You started medical school at age 18 and finished at age 22?*

ZHL: Right.

WCR: *How did medical school strike you? New Orleans was a good bit bigger than either San Antonio or Austin at that time.*

ZHL: I've always been able to make big towns into little towns. I did not get very involved in the activities in the French Quarter. Luckily, I met Randy Rutledge the first year and we became roommates. Randy was from Floydada, Texas, a town of 1500 people outside of Lubbock. His parents were similar to my parents—very quiet, nice people. We could have been brothers from the day we met. He was not Jewish, and I do not believe that he had ever met a Jewish person in his life. We became very good friends and developed close friendships with 2 other members in our class—one was a Baptist and the other a Catholic. We frequently attended each other's church services, and I learned a great deal about the concepts and principles of other religions. Judaism has always been accepted beautifully by my non-Jewish friends. I am fortunate to equally enjoy relationships with persons in my own religion as well as people of other faiths.

WCR: *How many were in your medical school class?*

ZHL: Between 110 and 120.

WCR: *Did you have to study a lot more in medical school than in college? Was medical school a step up from a challenge standpoint?*

ZHL: I always assumed that most other people were more intelligent than I because I had received my education in Floresville and San Antonio, Texas. But as I went day by day, it did not seem like my fellow classmates had any more valuable previous experience than I. Tulane Medical School was very supportive. Most all of the teachers were interested in teaching us the principles of medical care. Both Randy and I enjoyed studying. We would play racquetball or some sport in the afternoon after school. We would then eat dinner and study until 10:00 PM most every night. At that time we would go to the local tavern and drink a few beers prior to going to sleep. We never stayed up late and we never studied late, even before examinations. This worked unbelievably for us. We would study separately but would then discuss what we learned before class and tests. The educational challenges in medical school were very motivating and rewarding (Figure 6).

WCR: *Was there alcohol in your home growing up?*



Figure 6. The "bull pen" at Tulane University Medical School.

ZHL: We'd have wine for religious celebrations, but there was minimal alcohol in my home.

WCR: *When your father came home he wouldn't have a drink at night?*

ZHL: No. He would eat, visit with us, and then go to sleep early. We had a very quiet life.

WCR: *Did any professors or faculty have a particular influence on you in college or medical school?*

ZHL: Yes. At Tulane Dr. Oschner was probably the most influential person. He was an outstanding teacher. He had an unbelievable memory for people's names. He was chief of surgery and yet he identified with medical students. Dr. Oschner was interested in teaching students the principles and indications for surgery. He believed that learning technical surgery was a resident's responsibility. The other members of the surgical staff included Drs. Champ Lyons, Mims Gage, and Oscar Creech, who were also very strong and valuable mentors. As medical students, we were not allowed to scrub in for the operation but observed the techniques and concepts of the procedure while being quizzed extensively by the staff surgeons.

I initially planned to become an internist. However, between my junior and senior years, my brother learned that Massachusetts General Hospital offered a surgical program where a medical student could take the Harvard senior surgery course. My line of reasoning was that I was going to go into internal medicine, so I might need additional experience in surgery. Those were the days when straight internships were rare. I went to Boston for the summer, and that was a great experience. At Massachusetts General, students were allowed to scrub in for surgery and to administer anesthetics. I returned to New Orleans for my senior year and committed myself to becoming a surgeon. Up until then I had not really anticipated going into surgery.

WCR: *Which surgeons did you have contact with at Massachusetts General?*

ZHL: Dr. Churchill and Dr. Cope were there. That was when Massachusetts General was the epitome of surgery. Peter Bent Brigham Hospital was also in Boston.

WCR: *You went over there too?*

ZHL: I visited there, but my primary experience was at Massachusetts General Hospital for 6 weeks.

WCR: *Those 6 weeks really had a major impact on your whole career?*

ZHL: That plus the background at Tulane.

WCR: *Was Mike DeBakey back at Tulane when you were in medical school?*

ZHL: Dr. DeBakey was on the surgical faculty when I arrived at Tulane, but during my last 2 years, he had moved to Houston. Initially there was a great deal of political turmoil in Houston, and Dr. Ochsner traveled to Houston to support Dr. DeBakey. Eventually, Dr. DeBakey established an extremely strong program in Houston. Unfortunately, I did not have any personal contact with him.

WCR: *You must have done extremely well in medical school to obtain an internship at the Barnes Hospital. How did you come out? You said your brother was number 1 in his medical school class.*

ZHL: I was second in my class.

WCR: *Who was first?*

ZHL: Richard Smith, who subsequently became chairman of the Department of Pediatrics at the University of Florida in Gainesville.

WCR: *Why did you decide to go to Barnes? Was it because your brother was there?*

ZHL: When I was at Massachusetts General, I thought that I wanted to go to Boston for my internship. I told Dr. Oschner, and he said, "You'll never get into Boston. They do not support me up there." I had found out when I was there that if I mentioned Dr. Oschner's name I received little response. I told him that nevertheless I wanted to apply. He said, "Go there and apply, but you should also send applications to Minnesota, Michigan, and Barnes Hospital." I went to Boston for interviews and examinations at Peter Bent Brigham and Massachusetts General. Peter Bent Brigham had a written exam in which they asked questions concerning the history of medicine. I did not pass the examination, and fortunately I was not interested in obtaining an internship at Peter Bent Brigham. They also had a written examination at Massachusetts General Hospital, but it was not very difficult. I then went through the oral interview process, which was in stages. During the final group of interviews, I was shown an x-ray by Dr. Cope, who was the premier expert in the surgical management of parathyroid disease. "What is that?" I was asked. It was an x-ray of a pelvis riddled with bony defects. I said, "This is a typical finding in hyperparathyroidism." He responded, "Would you want to know the age of the patient?" "Yes, sir," I said. The patient was a 36-year-old woman with advanced breast cancer. That was my first experience with oral examinations by surgeons. It taught me several lessons. One was to not make rapid assumptions without considering the other options. Another lesson was to not try to outwit the person asking the questions.

In those days the matching programs were different. You would apply to a hospital and then they would announce their selections in April. We were advised to be available when they contacted us. We stationed ourselves by the telephone. My roommate, Randy, had a job at one of the other hospitals. He and I were separated that evening. We had both decided to go into surgery, but we hadn't made any plans to continue our training with each other. We assumed that wouldn't happen. At 12:01 AM I received a telephone call from Dr. Eugene Bricker from Barnes Hospital. Dr. Bricker was one of the finest surgeons in the

country. He had developed the jejunal segment technique for urinary diversion following pelvic exoneration procedures. He was a very radical surgeon but a very compassionate person. "Zeck, this is Gene." That was the first call of the evening. I accepted. I don't remember if anybody else called. The next morning I found out that Randy had been accepted at St. Louis University. Our lives continued together. My brother, David, was also training at Barnes Hospital, so I was excited. During the previous summer I had visited several university hospitals, and I was delighted to be accepted at Barnes. Dr. Everts Graham was chief of surgery, and it was a unique and great place.

WCR: *Why did Dr. Bricker call you?*

ZHL: He was a young surgeon in charge of the teaching staff at Barnes Hospital.

WCR: *Did your family have enough money to send you to Tulane without a great deal of discomfort?*

ZHL: My parents would not have told me. Their hope was for me to attend the school where I could receive the best education. My brother was attending Vanderbilt Medical School with the V-12 program. Tulane was not as expensive as it is now, but I did not give it too much thought. I knew it would be a bit of a strain, but it was a kind of strain my parents wanted to endure.

WCR: *How did Barnes work out?*

ZHL: I loved every service. I rotated through general surgery and all of the specialized services. In every specialty, they had outstanding surgeons and teachers. One reason I went to Barnes was that they did not have the pyramid system as many institutions such as Johns Hopkins did. Barnes Hospital recruited 6 straight interns, and all of us had the opportunity to complete the residency program. There was no competition among the housestaff. This type of environment had a great deal of appeal for me.

WCR: *One of my kids went to Barnes in surgery and loved it. After 3 years at Barnes, you went into the Air Force?*

ZHL: This was during the Korean War. Many of my friends were stationed in the mobile army surgical hospitals, and that was when the specialty of vascular surgery was being developed. I volunteered to go into the army and flew to Washington, DC, to obtain an assignment in a mobile army surgical hospital. I was initially stationed in San Antonio in the army; however, President Eisenhower signed the armistice prior to my embarking to Korea. I was fortunate to be transferred to the Air Force and served 2 years at Sheppard Air Force Base in Wichita Falls, Texas (Figure 7).

WCR: *What did you do there?*

ZHL: Luckily they had a full training program at Sheppard Field. I initially was on the obstetrical/gynecological service, but subsequently I rotated on both the general surgery and orthopaedic/hand surgery services. The staff was composed of board-certified surgeons, and my surgical experience in the Air Force was very valuable. I also had a great deal of spare time. I worked during the week but had every weekend free to travel.

WCR: *What would you do on the weekend?*

ZHL: I would drive to Austin, San Antonio, or Dallas. The socializing was great, and I subsequently met and married Marilyn Ely.

WCR: *When did you get married?*



Figure 7. In the US Air Force, 1953 to 1955.

ZHL: We married in August 1955 at the termination of my Air Force tour of duty (Figure 8). I returned to St. Louis to complete my surgical training after our honeymoon.

WCR: *How did you meet your future wife?*

ZHL: We met when Marilyn came to Wichita Falls for a wedding, and we were both in the wedding party. Thereafter, I traveled back and forth to Dallas each weekend.

WCR: *She grew up in Dallas?*

ZHL: Yes.

WCR: *What attracted you to her?*

ZHL: From the day we met, it was obvious that our interests and hopes for the future were identical. She was outgoing, vivacious, and friendly. Marilyn was excited about life and had a caring personality. We decided to get married on our second date! I also developed a close relationship with her family. It was a very exciting and harmonious experience from the beginning.

WCR: *What was the interval from the time you first met at Wichita Falls to the time you got married?*

ZHL: Approximately 6 months.

WCR: *Where did you live in St. Louis?*

ZHL: We lived in an apartment building near the hospital.

WCR: *You had 2 more years of surgery training to do?*

ZHL: Yes. When you were accepted for training at Barnes Hospital, you were encouraged to enter academic medicine. That was certainly what I had anticipated doing in the future. Dr. Moyer believed strongly that if you were going to continue in academic medicine, you would be unhappy unless you enjoyed performing research projects. Fortunately, I obtained a job as a research fellow in the burn unit at Washington University.

WCR: *Your first year back at Barnes?*

ZHL: Yes.

WCR: *How did you enjoy the research laboratory?*

ZHL: It was a great experience. I had no previous experience in the laboratory, and I anticipated joining one of Dr. Moyer's research activities. The surgery department was located on the ninth floor and overlooked Forest Park, which had a beautiful view. Dr. Moyer told me that it was my year to do whatever re-



Figure 8. Marilyn Ely Lieberman on her wedding day, August 1955. Photo: Gittings.

search I wanted to investigate. He said, "You can either look out the window or just look at your belly button all year," but he hoped the year would prove to be creative and of interest to me.

The previous metabolic studies in his laboratory concerning thermal injuries in rats had included a technique of producing a burn of a specific percentage of the body surface. The mechanism of weight loss seen in the burned patients had not been identified, and a potential concept was that the patient metabolized proteins preferentially following thermal injury.

After unsuccessfully attempting to build a metabolic chamber, I contacted Eli Lilly, where the original Benedict multi-chamber rat apparatus had been constructed (Figure 9). The experiments at Eli Lilly were responsible for the original development of the basal metabolic rate machine. The company had preserved the original machine, which could test 4 rats at a time. The machine was a closed-circulation system and was able to measure the oxygen uptake and carbon dioxide output. The respiratory quotient could be calculated from this determination. As air circulated through the machine, the water vapor was extracted by soda lime crystals placed within the circuit. The water would turn the white crystals blue. No one had ever placed a burned rat in the Benedict machine.

The rats were anesthetized and a thermal injury was produced on their backs. The rats were placed in the machine daily, and their metabolic rate was determined. An unanticipated finding was that 2 days after the burn injury, the rats' metabolic rate increased and the soda lime crystals turned blue sooner compared with results in the unburned rats. Both the rate of this color change and the metabolic rate continued to increase as the burn eschar developed. They dramatically increased when the eschar

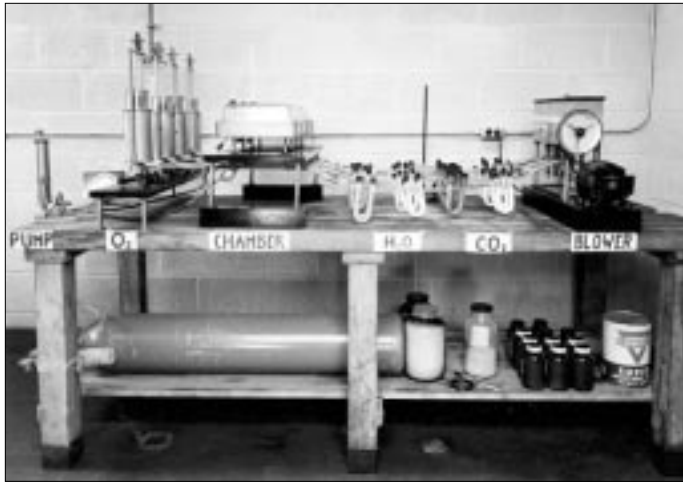


Figure 9. The Benedict multichamber rat apparatus used to conduct experiments on metabolism after thermal injury.

separated from the burned wound and then returned to the original level when the burn healed.

The water loss could not be seen but could be weighed and measured. It was a very exciting finding, and it was obvious that water vapor escaped through the burned eschar and the open wound of the rat. This water vaporization increased the heat loss from the animal, elevating the caloric requirements and the metabolic rate. This explained the weight loss following burn injury. Another experiment involved excising 35% of the skin surface of the rat. When these rats were placed in the Benedict machine, their water vapor loss and metabolic rate were excessive. The water loss quickly returned to normal by replacing the skin or covering the wound with Saran Wrap. We then became aware of the importance of the skin's function as a semipermeable surface, allowing water vapor to escape and influencing the caloric/heat loss from the body. These experiments were exciting, and the results were presented in San Francisco at a meeting of the American College of Surgeons.

These observations also have influenced how I view the interaction between ourselves and the environment. Many critical events occur daily that are not seen, such as electrical impulses—similar to the invisible loss of water vaporization and heat from our skin surface. The research project required a total commitment of my time and interest, and I realized that it would be very difficult for me to share my time between research and taking care of patients. At the end of the year, I became chief resident in surgery. I decided that I enjoyed the clinical work even more than research and committed myself to a clinical practice.

The research year was a great experience and probably the most educational year I've ever had. I have admired and respected researchers ever since that year in the laboratory.

WCR: *Moyer must have been incredibly proud of you for what you did there.*

ZHL: He took the information and went off to meetings with it. You know how professors do!

WCR: *Of the various faculty at Barnes, who had the biggest impact on you?*

ZHL: Many of them, but Drs. Eugene Bricker, Evarts Graham, Lauren Ackerman, and Dr. Moyer had the greatest impact (Figure 10).



Figure 10. Mentors at Barnes Hospital: Drs. Eugene Bricker and Evarts Graham (top); Drs. Lauren Ackerman and Carl Moyer (bottom).

WCR: *Ackerman was a surgical pathologist?*

ZHL: Yes. He was an unbelievable friend and teacher. He really excited me. Dr. Ackerman, Dr. Eugene Bricker, and Dr. Juan Delgado, a radiotherapist, designed the Ellis-Fischel Hospital as a multidisciplinary cancer hospital in Columbia, Missouri. This multidisciplinary concept has guided my thoughts and actions throughout my surgical career, and this approach has been invaluable to me.

WCR: *Was Moyer a good surgeon technically?*

ZHL: Dr. Moyer rarely performed surgery. He associated, however, with very good surgical technicians. He stimulated everyone to think clearly and questioned many dogmatic concepts of surgery and medicine. He was very principled and politically controversial. He resigned from the surgical department at the peak of his career and went into private practice in Michigan.

WCR: *You felt well trained when you left Barnes?*

ZHL: Yes. I considered my surgical training to be high quality, and I was fortunate to be exposed to the surgical staff at Barnes Hospital.

WCR: *How did you decide to come to Dallas?*

ZHL: I decided to commit myself to private surgical practice. At that time San Antonio and Fort Worth did not have a medical school, and I wanted to be associated with a teaching residency program. My wife was from Dallas, and I have always enjoyed close relationships with her family. Dr. Moyer had told me that if I desired to combine teaching and private practice, I should consider Dallas, as it had the ideal town/gown relationship, excellent hospitals, and an outstanding medical school faculty. I received an appointment to Parkland Hospital, and I was fortunate to become a member of the surgical staff at BUMC.



Figure 11. Key early influences at Baylor Hospital: Drs. Billie Aronoff, Warner Duckett, Robert Sparkman, Jesse Thompson, and Harold Cheek.



Figure 12. First partner at BUMC, Dr. John O'Brien.

Boone Powell, Sr., was the chief administrator at Baylor Hospital. He was a guiding figure to all of the members of the medical staff. He had developed an environment that enhanced the competence of the physicians. The hospital was firmly established on the Christian principles of care and compassion and attracted many physicians who shared in those beliefs.

I was offered a position with Dr. Billie Aronoff and subsequently was also exposed to this philosophy by such surgeons as Drs. J. Warner

Duckett, Robert Sparkman, Jesse Thompson, Harold Cheek, and many others (Figure 11). All demonstrated extreme clinical competence along with compassion for their patients. They believed that the establishment of an intimate personal contact with patients was an important factor in having a successful experience for both the surgeon and the patient. These physicians served as outstanding mentors for me.

WCR: How did your association with Billie Aronoff work out?

ZHL: Dr. Aronoff had trained at Memorial Hospital in New York. He was the premier surgical oncologist in Dallas. I was very fortunate to have the opportunity to work with him. We practiced together for 5 years, and it was a marvelous experience. I learned a tremendous amount about head and neck and surgical oncology and have remained lifelong friends with Dr. Aronoff.

WCR: You went on your own in 1962. What operations were you doing back then?

ZHL: Primarily abdominal and breast surgery. I continued my interest in head and neck surgery and management of patients with skin and soft tissue tumors.

WCR: When did you start taking in partners?

ZHL: I had been in solo practice for approximately 13 years when I was joined by Dr. John O'Brien (Figure 12). Dr. O'Brien completed his surgical residency at Baylor Hospital and then trained at M. D. Anderson Hospital in Houston before returning to Dallas. Dr. O'Brien and I practiced together for over 20 years. Unfortunately, he developed back trouble and temporarily retired from surgical practice. He has since returned to practice, and though we are not in the same office, we continue to work closely together.



Figure 13. Current partners (left to right): Drs. Howard Derrick, John Preskitt, Zeck Lieberman, Stacy Stratmann, and Jeffrey Stephens.

I am presently in practice with Drs. Howard Derrick III, John Preskitt, and Jeff Stephens, and we were recently joined by Dr. Stacy Stratmann (Figure 13). A common theme of our association has been to recruit outstanding surgeons with whom we have had close contact during their training at BUMC. I am proud of our association, and we have maintained a very harmonious relationship working together.

WCR: How many operations do you figure you've done in your life?

ZHL: I have never counted the number of operations, and I consider my responsibility to be to take care of patients and not to measure success by the number of operations performed.

WCR: In your heyday, how many operations were you doing a week?

ZHL: It depends on the length of the procedure. I have usually operated about 4 days a week.

WCR: Are you as good now technically at age 74 as you were when you were 45?

ZHL: I have discussed this issue with my associates frequently. Surgery is a combination of diagnosis, planning, and decision making, as well as the operative performance. Your question is a critical personal one that I ask myself often. Technically, as far as my reflexes are concerned, I am very comfortable. I frequently consult and participate with other surgeons, and I continually try to appraise my skills with the challenges of the procedure. I have been fortunate to work with surgeons such as



Figure 14. The young Lieberman family: Zeck, Steve (age 1), and Marilyn.

Dr. Robert McClelland in the development of liver surgery as well as coordinate activities with other surgeons in specialty fields such as working with the plastic and reconstructive surgeons, oral surgeons, and vascular and thoracic surgeons. By combining our knowledge and experience, which we group under the concept of integrated management, we believe we can give optimum care to our patients rather than do everything by ourselves.

WCR: *What has your life been like on a day-to-day basis? For example, on a usual day, what time do you wake up in the morning? What time do you leave home? What time do you get to the hospital? What time do you leave the hospital at night? What time do you get home? What time do you go to bed?*

ZHL: In establishing the cancer center, we instituted many multidisciplinary conferences, and these usually start at 6:30 AM. We also have surgical chief's conference with Dr. Ronald Jones on Wednesday mornings; thus, I am at the hospital at 6:30 AM 3 to 4 times weekly.

WCR: *What time do you get up?*

ZHL: 5:00 or 5:30 AM.

WCR: *You usually start your first case at 7:30 AM. You usually finish operating about what time?*

ZHL: It depends on the type of operation. I routinely have breakfast with my sons on Tuesday morning after a 6:30 meeting and do not perform elective surgery on that day.

WCR: *Do you operate on Saturday?*

ZHL: No. I never have except in emergency situations.

WCR: *What time do you generally get home at night?*

ZHL: Anywhere from 8:00 to 8:30 PM, sometimes later, sometimes earlier. It depends on the day.

WCR: *You work 12-hour days ("half days").*

ZHL: I try to leave the hospital as soon as my work is done.

WCR: *What time do you go to bed? How much sleep do you need to feel good?*

ZHL: Six or 7 hours.

WCR: *You get home at 8:30 and then what happens? Do you eat dinner?*



Figure 15. Boone Powell, Sr. Photo: Gittings.

ZHL: I visit with Marilyn, and we always have dinner together.

WCR: *When your kids were young were you home much?*

ZHL: I had many emergencies that would disrupt my home life and weekend life. I did not routinely have breakfast but always took carpool once a week to help maintain a relationship with my children and their friends. During the week I would work hard but was able to develop a close relationship with my children, mainly on the weekends when we shared many activities. Marilyn and I have always devoted most all of our free time to raising our children (Figure 14).

WCR: *If you could do just 1 or 2 operations, which are your favorites?*

ZHL: That has varied through the years. I have always enjoyed head and neck surgery and continue to perform thyroid and parathyroid operations. Hernia surgery, abdominal surgery, and breast surgery have also been an important part of my practice, and I try to share this experience with my associates.

WCR: *I understand that you had a very close relationship with Boone Powell, Sr.*

ZHL: He had a tremendous influence on me (Figure 15). He was a kind and thoughtful person who welcomed Marilyn and me to Dallas. He offered us many opportunities, including asking Marilyn to serve on the initial Baylor Foundation board. Boone Powell, Jr., followed in the same manner. There is no way to express our relationship to BUMC without identifying the unbelievably deep respect we have for both Powell families. When Boone, Jr., first came to Baylor he invited John Fordtran, John Binion, and me with our wives to attend an Estes Park Institute at Sun Valley, Idaho (Figure 16). Attendees at this meeting included hospital administrators, board of trustee members, and physicians. That was approximately 20 years ago, and we have traveled to meetings and gone on vacations many times since. We have all maintained a close relationship, and these friendships have been extremely enjoyable for Marilyn and me.

WCR: *You said Boone Powell, Sr., initially had such great influence on you. What does that mean?*

ZHL: It was his personal qualities. I have always been attracted to people who have great values in life. He devoted his



Figure 16. At the Estes Park Meeting in Sun Valley (left to right): Zeck Lieberman with wife Marilyn, Boone Powell with wife Peggy, John Fordtran with wife Jewel, and John Binion with wife Martha.

life to developing a hospital and creating a special environment for doctors to work in. Everything was designed to make doctors' lives better and to make taking care of patients as effective as possible. Dr. Roberts, the environment he created is also probably what attracted you to Baylor. This approach was continued by Boone, Jr., and is still being perpetuated. The values of this Baptist institution have been totally consistent with my own personal beliefs. I have always been inspired by religious principles. It is one of the things that attracted me to Baylor. To be able to practice in this environment is very special.

WCR: *Are you active in the synagogue now?*

ZHL: Yes. My concepts are totally consistent with those expressed in our services. The Jewish faith has been very important to everyone in our family. We are members of Temple Emanu-El. The congregation has been very fortunate to have outstanding rabbinical leadership. Rabbi Levi Olan, Rabbi Gerald Klein, and presently Rabbi David Stern have inspired us to live our lives in a religious context. As Martin Buber expressed, "Interhuman relationships are a critical way in which we relate to God." It has also been a harmonious way for me to practice at BUMC because the interhuman relationships have always been paramount.

WCR: *I notice that you were named "Father of the Year" in 2000. What does that mean?*

ZHL: That is just an unbelievable honor that I never expected. I have frequently expressed the "grits story" to my kids to try to explain the unexpected joy and privilege of receiving this honor. The story discusses a couple from New York who visited New Orleans. They sat down to have breakfast. The waitress asked, "What do you want to eat?" They both said, "Two eggs, bacon, and toast." The waitress brought that to them and she also brought grits on the side of the plate. The husband asked, "What's that white stuff?" She said, "Grits." He asked, "What in the hell is grits?" She said, "Grits is what you get for free when visiting New Orleans."

Marilyn and I have been blessed with the opportunity to raise 3 children. Our intention has always been to help them identify and develop their own talents and passions, and we have always spent a tremendous amount of time together.



Figure 17. Running with children Steve (left) and Susan (right) at a YMCA "Turkey Trot."

In our family, we have used physical activity as one of the cornerstones of our involvement, with the opportunity to spend time together at many swim meets and to enjoy visiting while exercising and jogging (*Figure 17*). It took me a long time to understand why my kids like to jog with me. I finally realized that while they were talking, I was busy just trying to breathe in order to keep up with them. That way I had no choice but to listen and not respond. We also made use of every available opportunity to get together by ourselves so that we could have in-depth discussions. When they attended college, I had the good fortune to visit with them driving back and forth from school. That allowed us a day or a day and a half to spend time together, share many of our experiences, and develop a common vision of life. Those college trips became a tradition for us, and we all valued that experience. Throughout the years, our relationship with our children has remained strong. It is important to us and luckily important to them. I have never felt that my professional activities interfered with my being married or raising a family.

WCR: *Which organization picks "Father of the Year"?*

ZHL: The Father of the Year organization sponsors a luncheon to raise contributions to support many children-related charities in the Dallas-Fort Worth area. The organization is composed of business professionals in the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex.

WCR: *There is only one "Father of the Year" per year in Dallas?*

ZHL: No. Usually 3 persons are selected. It was truly an honor for me and my family to be identified with this important charitable effort.

WCR: *Tell me about your 3 children.*



Figure 18. Children (left to right): Julie Lieberman (Randy's wife), Randy Lieberman, Steve Lieberman, Susan Dell, Michael Dell (Susan's husband), and Lisa Lieberman (Steve's wife).

ZHL: My oldest son, Steve, is 41 years old. He graduated from Tulane University and then obtained his master's degree in business administration from the University of Texas in Austin. He is married, has 2 boys aged 8½ and 7, and lives in Dallas. He is president of the Weitzman Real Estate Group. He is very community oriented and has a close relationship to his business associates and friends. He and his wife, Lisa, spend most of their time encouraging and supporting their children in their school and many physical activities, such as soccer, baseball, and basketball.

My daughter, Susan, is 38 years old. She studied fashion design and graduated from Arizona State University. She is married, has 4 children, and lives in Austin, Texas. She has always been unique and fun loving. She, like Steve and Randy, loves to exercise and enjoys entering triathlons and running/biking events. She loves designing clothes and has a dress boutique in Austin. Susan and Michael have a very busy schedule but always prioritize their commitments to spend quality time with their children.

My youngest son, Randy, is 36 years old and was named after my medical school roommate. Randy graduated from Tulane University and then received his master's degree in business administration from the University of Texas in Austin. He worked for 8 years in corporate and investment banking with Chase Bank. He has recently become a venture capitalist and an entrepreneur. Randy is married and lives in Dallas. He and Julie have a 1-year-old daughter. They have experienced the excitement of raising a family and are expecting their second child in April of 2003 (Figure 18).

One of the most important rewards of being a parent is to see your children achieve their ambitions and life goals. Another significant reward is when your children still enjoy your company when they are grown. One of the high points of my week is to have breakfast together with Steve and Randy every Tuesday morning.

WCR: *All of you get together a good bit?*

ZHL: Yes. Marilyn and I are thrilled to be included in a multitude of activities with our children and grandchildren, and we cherish our relationships with our family.

WCR: *How much time do you take off a year?*

ZHL: I take off weekends. Each of the last several years we've taken trips for 3 to 4 weeks. We enjoy traveling together, and

our favorite vacations have included cruises. We also go to medical meetings and then extend the trip for several days.

WCR: *You are gone about 6 weeks a year?*

ZHL: Probably.

WCR: *What cruises have you gone on?*

ZHL: We have taken cruises to Alaska, the Panama Canal, the Caribbean, the Baltics (our favorite), and around Spain to the United Kingdom. Marilyn has had both of her knees replaced, so the cruises are ideal vacations for us.

WCR: *You must be quite proud to have the Baylor research building named in your honor.*

ZHL: Yes, I am unbelievably proud.

WCR: *How did that come about?*

ZHL: It was similar to the Father of the Year Award. It is the "grits story" again, which is an example of grace—an honor that you obtain that is a true gift. I was the most surprised person in the world that evening when told at the Adolphus Hotel that the research building was to be named in my honor. Marilyn had kept this secret for months, and I did not have any insight into that at all.

I have always appreciated and promoted the value of research at Baylor, knowing that improvement in patient care depends first and foremost on progress in medical research. The field of immunology is closely related to oncology as well as many other medical disciplines. One of the major goals of the Baylor Institute for Immunology Research is to find better methods to treat cancer. I am also very interested in integrating research and the practice of medicine at Baylor. I have a great admiration and deep respect for persons who devote their lives to research, and it is an honor for me to be associated with such an important and significant endeavor.

WCR: *You are a loved man, not only at Baylor, but also in this much larger community. Do you have much time for social activities outside your extended family?*

ZHL: We have many friends, and we often get together on weekends.

WCR: *Do you entertain a good bit?*

ZHL: We are members of the Columbian Club, where we entertain and enjoy visiting with family and friends.

WCR: *Do you still run?*

ZHL: I began jogging when Steve was born over 40 years ago; however, I have become more interested in cross-training during the past several years.

WCR: *What kind of exercise do you do now?*

ZHL: I entered the master swimming program at the Landry Center when it first opened. The program was excellent, but I was unable to maintain the schedule. I now try to use the rowing machine, bike, lift light weights, and swim when time permits.

WCR: *Do you do it every day?*

ZHL: No. I talk about it and think about it frequently. I probably have exercised an average of 2 to 3 times a week as long as I can remember. When Steve was born, I thought, "Gosh. If I start exercising, I'll enjoy raising him more." That was probably one of the best decisions I ever made. By the time he was 10 years old, I had been exercising 10 years, and I have been exercising together with my children ever since. I am certainly not in the physical shape nor do I have the endurance I used to, but I enjoy it as much as ever.



Figure 19. Grandchildren. (a) Ryan and Blake, Steve and Lisa's children (photo: Debra O'Brien); (b) Kira and Alexa (top), Juliette and Zachary (bottom), Susan and Michael's children; (c) Haley, Randy and Julie's daughter.

WCR: *The Jewish community is extremely well represented in medicine. The number of physicians in the Jewish community who are surgeons, however, is relatively small. Is that an accurate observation?*

ZHL: Yes. When I first entertained the idea of going into surgery, I was even advised by many friends that "Jewish people weren't allowed into that specialty." That's like a lot of false advice one gets through the years. That didn't deter me, and maybe that was an additional motivation for me to apply for a surgical internship. My Jewish background has never interfered at all. Jewish people are accepted in surgery, but a surgical career has not been a dominant desire of most Jewish physicians.

The Jewish religion is primarily concerned with human interactions, and I believe surgery is an ideal profession to combine performance with personal relationships. Many people misunderstand surgery in believing that it is only a technical field. For me, it is much more than that. The human interaction initiates the involvement with the patient and the surgeon, and the surgical procedure is certainly an important part of that relationship. This is what attracted me into surgical oncology. I follow the clinical course of my patients throughout their lives, which allows me to maintain a lifelong relationship with them. As years pass, I may decrease my time in the operating room but I anticipate maintaining the human relationship part of my practice, which I call the "pastoral part" of medicine. That is what has great appeal to me, and many people do not realize that opportunity as a surgeon. It is not required, but the possibility is there.

WCR: *Do you have hobbies that you have time to pursue?*

ZHL: My main hobby is exercise. That's always been an avenue of relaxation for me. I enjoy cross-training, and I try to exercise at the Landry Center once or twice during the week, and then I exercise around my home on the weekends.

WCR: *Do you read much nonmedical work?*

ZHL: Yes. I read most every evening. I primarily read books that focus on human values, behavior, and performance. Mind and body relationships have always intrigued me. Martin Buber's philosophy of interhuman relationships and Abraham Maslow's concepts of human motivation have had a significant influence on my approach to life. I recently finished an interesting book by Dr. George Vaillant entitled *Aging Well*.

WCR: *You've been a wonderful spokesperson for physicians at BUMC. You are one of the 3 physician representatives on the board*

of trustees at BUMC. You've been president of the BUMC medical staff and chairman of its medical board. These must have brought you a great deal of satisfaction through the years.

ZHL: Yes. I have been very fortunate. Again, these are all interhuman involvements and are consistent with my enjoyment of life. My experience at Baylor has been unbelievable. It is a religious institution and I have always been accepted at the hospital. Innumerable rewards have come my way due to my activities at Baylor, and I have appreciated the opportunity that Baylor has afforded me. I also deeply enjoy working with residents and participating in their growth as surgeons.

WCR: *You are and have been a wonderful role model and mentor to the houseofficers, particularly in surgery, through the years. You are vice chairman of the department of surgery. You spend a good deal of time teaching, I presume.*

ZHL: My main teaching responsibilities center around the operating room and hospital care. The resident staff continues to stimulate and motivate me. I enjoy formal lectures, but I limit my personal involvement in that. Teaching and mentoring residents is one of the many values of being a member of the surgical staff at BUMC.

WCR: *What do you look for in these young men and women who apply for the surgical residency program at BUMC? What are you trying to find in them so that you can count on their developing into superb surgeons?*

ZHL: The desire to take care of people and to learn the technical skills that go along with that is mandatory. We attempt to determine the person's ambitions and motivations during an interview and by evaluating their previous performance. I am most interested in their human values. I prefer trainees who really want to take care of other people and who are stimulated by the challenges presented by surgery. The human integrity part and the moral and ethical structure have to be there. In our office, that's paramount. Drs. Preskitt, Derrick, Stephens, and Stratmann are highly skilled surgeons and are extremely ethical in their desire to take care of patients. For a surgeon, that is critically important, as it influences their decision making and actions in the operating room and throughout the illness of the patient.

WCR: *Is your physician brother as positive a human being as you are?*

ZHL: Yes. We were lucky to be reared by wonderful parents who instilled in us trust and faith in the design of the world.



Figure 20. With wife Marilyn.

WCR: *What are your plans from here on?*

ZHL: I am not sure. Life continues to offer many challenges, and I'm trying to work out a plan with Marilyn. I am fortunately healthy, unbelievably blessed with a good marriage, have a marvelous relationship with my children, and now have 7, going on 8, grandchildren (Figure 19). I am trying to design more available time to be with all of them, even though they are busy with their own lives. I am also fortunate in my relationships at my of-

fice and the hospital. I have 4 extremely capable partners with whom I enjoy working, and I also cherish the relationship I have with our office staff. My professional life remains extremely pleasant. I anticipate that I shall plan less time in the operating room in the future. Most surgeons have designed their lives where they either operate or retire. I have always hoped to continue being involved with patient care beyond my scheduled activities in surgery.

I want to travel with Marilyn and have more free time with my children and grandchildren. We are in an interesting stage of our lives, attempting to work out these challenges. I have no burning desire to retire because I enjoy what I do as much as I ever did, and maybe more. That's the dilemma. I enjoy physicians and patients, and I like to be involved with both. Practicing surgery is a marvelous environment for me.

If we can remain healthy, there are many exciting adventures for us. I have had a charmed life. My family gives me a lot of joy. I have never understood when people talk about the negatives of a medical practice. There may be some economic and time issues, but to become a physician is a unique opportunity. I still have no idea how I became a physician, but it was one of the luckiest things that has ever happened to me.

My primary devotion is to Marilyn, who has been a marvelous wife and mother (Figure 20). She has been very open and allowed me to have a professional life that has been very time consuming and a life with my children and grandchildren that is very enjoyable. My professional activities have certainly restricted a lot of personal time with her, but she has allowed that without complaint. Life has been very kind to us, and we are anticipating an interesting and exciting future.

WCR: *On behalf of BUMC Proceedings, I want to thank you, Dr. Lieberman, for your openness in sharing your life with all of us.*

ZHL: Thank you. I enjoyed talking to you.