

## E. LEON BARNES JR.

APRIL 28, 1941—FEB. 24, 2023

**E**. Leon Barnes Jr. (Res '72) was a Pitt pathologist who demonstrated how biomarkers could be used to classify cancer. After earning his MD at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences in 1966, Barnes came to Pitt Med for a residency in anatomic and clinical pathology. He became an assistant professor of pathology, and except for one year in private practice, remained at Pitt Med until his retirement in 2010 as a professor of pathology emeritus.



Barnes

The University established an endowed chair in the Department of Pathology in his name.

Barnes wrote seven pathology textbooks and more than 200 peer-reviewed manuscripts. He received the Distinguished Alumni Award from the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences in 1995 and was awarded the European Society of Pathology Honorary Diploma. In 2012, he received the Fred Waldorf Stewart Award from Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center Department of Pathology.

“Leon was one of only two or three in the world who helped define head and neck pathology,” says Jonas T. Johnson, an MD and Distinguished Service Professor of Otolaryngology, and former chair of that department.

George K. Michalopoulos, an MD, PhD and Maud L. Menten Professor of Pathology and former chair of pathology, says Barnes’ classifications of head and neck tumors are standards in the field and can be directly linked to therapies for those cancers.

“The whole field of pathology, from here to Alaska to Australia, relating to what are the classifications of head and neck cancers and how the therapies work” stems from Barnes’ research, Michalopoulos says.

Robert Ferris, an MD, PhD, the Hillman Professor of Oncology and director of the UPMC Hillman Cancer Center, says of Barnes’ contributions: “Leon defined the concept of biomarkers before we really even knew what those were and how important they could be for patient selection to optimize outcomes and guide treatment intensity. Many of the pathologic features of risk that he identified in the 1980s have been validated and are now integrated into the American Joint Committee on Cancer staging system across the world for head and neck cancer.”

Johnson talked to Barnes’ widow and their two daughters a few days after his death and learned that he was the consummate family man who doted on his wife, kids and grandchildren.

His daughter notes that his legacy lives on through his family and the graduates of his program who are distributed all over the world and are “the future of head and neck pathology.” —*MA*

## MARTICA “TICA” HALL

MARCH 14, 1959—MARCH 18, 2023



Hall

**“Y**ou know how people say, ‘Oh, they’d give you the shirt off their back?’” asked Samantha Moatz, founder and executive director of the breast cancer nonprofit 412Thrive. “Well, Tica once literally gave someone the pants off her [back-end]!”

Just weeks before her death, Martica “Tica” Hall (PhD '96) acquired auction items, invited sponsors and participated in a photo-shoot to promote a 412Thrive fundraiser. During that shoot, two fellow “thrivers” didn’t have jeans that fit them because of their treatment-related weight fluctuations. This presented an issue as jeans were the designated uniform for the shoot. Hall promptly removed her own so that the women could take turns wearing them for their photos.

Hall, a University of Pittsburgh professor of psychiatry, of psychology, and of clinical and translational science, was born in San Tomé, Venezuela. She traveled extensively, visiting every continent except Antarctica.

Hall was a world-renowned expert in sleep and circadian science but according to an interview she gave in 2021 for the American Psychosomatic Society, discovering her research focus was a “total accident.” While in graduate school, a classmate told her he was conducting an experiment on REM sleep deprivation and long-term strengthening of effective neuronal connections in the brain. This piqued her interest in slumber, and Hall searched for an article that proved sleep is a mediator of the relationship between stress and the immune system to present at her department’s next journal club meeting.

She found only five articles. Excited at the possibility of filling that research void, Hall declared, “I found my muse. You have to have your eyes open and an open heart to be able to see that this accident isn’t just something to forget about.”

It was with that open heart that Hall came to Pitt, notes David Lewis, an MD, Distinguished Professor of Psychiatry and chair of that department. “Tica was a superb scientist, dedicated mentor and excellent teacher. She was a consummate colleague to those who had the opportunity to work with her.”

Hall is honored through the Academy of Behavioral Medicine Research’s Tica Hall Mentorship Award and the American Psychosomatic Society’s Dr. Martica Hall Award in Sleep Medicine.

When asked in that 2021 interview what she considered her single greatest accomplishment, Hall said, “It’s not going to be any one thing I wrote. It’s going to be the people who, because of the things I wrote and said, developed and integrated sleep and rhythms into their research.”

—*Nicole Matthews*

## IN MEMORIAM

### '50s

STANLEY HIRSCH, MD '57  
FEB. 26, 2023

ROBERT WHITMAN, MD '54  
MAY 21, 2023

### '60s

GEORGE MEINDL, MD '60  
APRIL 22, 2023

JACK ROZEN, MD '62  
FEB. 21, 2023

MICHAEL WARHOL, MD '69  
FEB. 14, 2023

### '70s

JAMES STEPHEN CARTER, RES '73  
MARCH 10, 2023

CARROLL P. OSGOOD, FEL '73  
MAY 7, 2023

LEONARD SELEDNIK, MD '78,  
RES '82  
APRIL 3, 2023

### '80s

GEORGE CARVELL, PHD '86  
MARCH 5, 2023

MICHAEL D. MINTON, MD '81, RES '84  
JUNE 3, 2023

VALERIE PRICENER-SLAVIC, MD '87  
MAY 2, 2023

WILBERT RUMP, MD '82  
APRIL 20, 2023

ERIC R. WOLF, RES '82  
FEB. 19, 2023

## ALUMNI PROFILE

### LEAVING VIROLOGY, FINDING ARCHAEOLOGY: GAIL WERTZ

By Roberta Zeff

**G**ail Williams Wertz (PhD '70) has really had her hands full this spring. “This happens to be calving season,” she explains in an April call. “I was [just] holding a bottle for a newborn calf that was having a little trouble adjusting to the world.”

She and her husband, L. Andrew Ball, a biochemist, have 425 acres of farmland along the Rappahannock River in Virginia, where they maintain two breeding herds of Black Angus—about 40 to 50 total head of cattle.

Accidentally finding Native American artifacts on the land led Wertz, a trailblazer in RNA virus research, to go back to school in her 70s to pursue an entirely different field: historical archaeology.

Wertz received her PhD in microbiology in 1970 from Pitt Med and went on to a career as a researcher and professor at the University of North Carolina and the University of Virginia. Her laboratory has advanced scientists' understanding of respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) and developed a method for genetically engineering RNA-based viruses—work that is credited as the platform for the Ebola vaccine.

“Gail Wertz made enormous contributions to an understanding of how viruses replicate in cells and trained many students and post-



Wertz unearthed a second career on the family farm.

doctoral fellows who proudly carry her legacy forward,” says Terence S. Dermody, an MD, the Vira I. Heinz Distinguished Professor of Pediatrics, chair of pediatrics and professor of microbiology and molecular genetics at Pitt Med. “Her mentoring extended to junior colleagues as well and helped shape an entire field.”

After she left Pitt, Wertz stayed close to her mentor, the virologist Julius S. Youngner, who died in 2017 and was known for his contributions to the development of the polio vaccine with Jonas Salk, for advances leading to vaccines for equine influenza (with Patricia Dowling) and type A influenza, and for infectious disease and cancer treatments. He was also known for getting things right.

She says of the weekly meetings she had with Youngner, “He’d be supportive of the research and the interpretation, but he had a subtle way of asking questions that let you know that you really could have designed that experiment just a little bit better, really might have gotten a little bit more information. So, it was a wonderful experience in learning, ‘Don’t be satisfied with what you’ve done.’”

Wertz received 38 years of National Institutes of Health funding, including two MERIT awards. Among other honors, she served as president of the American Society for Virology and was a member of the advisory council to the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases.

When her parents were having health issues, Wertz wanted to be closer to them and moved to the farm in 2005.

“Whenever I set out to plant anything, I’d stick a shovel in the ground, start digging in, and in almost no time I would find a Native American artifact,” she says. Some were 5,000 or 10,000 years old, and she wanted to learn about them.

She applied to a graduate program at William & Mary, where she’d attended college, and received her master’s degree in anthropology, specializing in archaeology. To focus her studies, she asked tribal leaders what they wanted to learn from the artifacts she was unearthing. The leaders were particularly interested in where their ancestors had lived, and when and why they’d moved.

Had it not been for the COVID pandemic, Wertz would have pursued another PhD.

She was eager to be vaccinated against SARS-CoV-2 and took the first dose available to her in March 2021. Eight days later she mounted a severe inflammatory response: chills by day, sweats at night and muscle inflammation that left her unable to walk for days. It took months to recover, and she says she still cannot walk with freedom. She and her doctor decided it would be dangerous to take additional doses of the vaccine.

Being an RNA researcher who cannot take an mRNA vaccine is a cruel paradox, yet: “The beauty of archaeology is that it can be done outside and can be distanced,” she says. “And we have the farm. We raise most of our own vegetables. So COVID gave us a reason to legitimately become pioneers, isolated pioneers, without people thinking we’d totally lost it.” ■

Please send  
In Memoriam notices  
to [mia97@pitt.edu](mailto:mia97@pitt.edu).

## '00s

LORETTA KATHLEEN BERGER, MD '07  
MAY 4, 2022

## FACULTY

JOAN EHLEH AMMER, MD '58, RES '60  
MAY 19, 2023

ROBERT ATWELL, MD '54  
MARCH 19, 2023

BARRY KAPLAN, PHD  
APRIL 15, 2023