

A Gift to Remember

Three years ago, Jules Setnor, MD '35, and his late wife, Rose (Honey, to her husband), gave Upstate Medical University \$3 million toward the creation of a state-of-the-art teaching facility for medical students. Today, the Rose and Jules R. Setnor, MD '35, and Stanford S. Setnor, MD '42, Academic Building, is open and in use. We sat down with Dr. Setnor on the day of the ribbon cutting to reflect on his medical school years and his beneficence.

How did you happen to attend Syracuse University?

I came from a small town in New Jersey. My best friend had a relative who was graduating from the medical school who believed that if we enrolled in the seven-year combined pre-med/medical school course, we would have a good chance of getting in. Medical School admission then, as now, was very difficult. That was how I decided to come to Syracuse.

While interning on a weekend off in September, my wife and I went home to Boston. When I asked my brother-in-law, Stanford, where he was going to college, he told us he never applied. Honey and I returned immediately to Syracuse and late that Sunday afternoon we called unannounced at the home of the Director of Admissions. After hearing our story—because we were both alumni—he said, “bring him along.” The next weekend we dropped Stanford off at Sims Hall, which was the men’s dormitory, and he was on his way.

Stanford eventually became a very successful surgeon in the Florida Keys. He founded and built the Community Hospital in Tavernier. He was an excellent musician and sportsman: he flew his own airplane and loved fishing and boating. He died tragically at 55.

How did you and your wife meet?

As an arrogant and conceited sophomore, I crashed the freshman get-together dance on the first day of that semester. There I met my Honey. Although she seemed

small and wispy, she stood out as the most attractive, sensible and reserved girl of all those around her. As we were leaving, I told her if she called we could plan a date. She reared back to her full height of 5 feet, 1 inch and said, “Sir, where I come from in Boston, gentlemen call ladies. Ladies don’t call gentlemen.” And that set the pattern of respect and decorum for a lifetime.

We courted for four years. After the second year of medical school, when I was sure of becoming a physician, we got married.

Where did you live?

During my third year, we lived in a one-room apartment on Walnut Avenue. During my fourth year, we lived with the family of a friend of Honey’s from up on the Hill. Her father, who was a professor of architecture, died, leaving a big, almost empty house, so we were invited to stay with them. It was the time of the Great Depression. So between our rent to them and the convenience of a big house for us, the arrangement worked out well.

What do you remember most about medical school?

I will never forget the fear of “busting out,” which was pervasive during our first two years. They also said that marriage would interfere with my studies, but actually my grades improved and I graduated *magna cum laude*. Honey saw to it that I would not fail.

She was a wonderful person. She taught herself to paint in oils and had several exhibitions at the local museum. Her garden was a symphony of color every year from spring to fall. She also had a shrewd business acumen, which made possible the success of most of our investments.

Tell us about your professional career.

I started in general practice because I couldn’t afford a residency. But after 10 years and the delivery of 2,000 babies, Honey said it was time to step up. I took the boards and became an internist. My practice in Springfield, Massachusetts, exploded and I was seeing 50 to 60 patients a day; but I loved every day and practiced for almost 60 years.

How did you decide to fund the Setnor Academic Building?

Dr. Eastwood and his wife came to visit us. Both Honey and I were so impressed we developed a close relationship. Previously, we had intended for a part of our estate to go for scholarships, but Dr. Eastwood gave us another plan.

Honey and I talked it over. We hoped to make the College of Medicine one of the best so students would be well prepared for their lifetimes. I am saddened that Honey is no longer with us, but I am happy and proud to see the accomplishments of a lifetime enhance our alma mater in this way.

ROBERT MESSANAGE PHOTOGRAPHY



Dr. Jules Setnor, MD '35.

Thank you to the Corinthian Club for graciously allowing us to photograph Dr. Setnor in such a lovely setting.