



Orkan George Stasior, MD 1930-2020

Representing the past Stasior fellows, I shuffled forward with the other pallbearers into the church in Loudenville, New York. We bore the casket of Orkan George Stasior, MD for his funeral Mass on February 25, 2020. Forty years of personal memories and emotions flooded in. With a heavy heart, I am writing this memorial to honor Orkan George Stasior, MD — a co-founder of ASOPRS — who passed on February 19, 2020.

Orkan was invited in 2019 to write a foreword for editor David Reifler's ASOPRS 50th Anniversary book. David cajoled him to "get Lemke to help," showing that an ASOPRS fellow's work is never done! This opportunity to review a remarkable professional life with him led to many telephone conversations. Material regarding the early days of ASOPRS was produced and fragments of the stories that I heard through the years were assembled into storylines. Seven hard copy versions were sent to Albany before Dr. Stasior was finally satisfied. He then exclaimed, "We finally got the story out! My heart is bursting with pride, to see our ASOPRS develop from a few scattered ophthalmologists performing plastic surgery to a large national organization. We are the internationally-recognized leader of our specialty." Orkan's energy waxed and waned during the project, as he battled an aggressive form of squamous cell carcinoma. But his brilliant memory, and that characteristic positivity and enthusiasm remained. As we pared down the information to fit the format, he exhorted me to "save those other comments for my obituary."

Born in 1930 in Toronto to a family of Polish immigrant educators, Orkan graduated with a medical degree from the University of Toronto at the age of 21. While attending medical school, he researched prevention of combat snow-blindness (U.V. keratitis) for the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF). After graduation he served as a Captain in the RCAF. He interned at St. Vincent's Hospital in Greenwich Village, trained for three years in general surgery at Bellevue Hospital in New York, and completed three years of ophthalmology residency at the New York Eye and Ear Infirmary (NYEEI). Orkan then did two fellowships in eye plastic surgery under Dr. Byron Smith at the Manhattan Eye and Ear Hospital, and then under Dr. Wendell Hughes.

Dr. Wendell Hughes — the "father" of ASOPRS — practiced at NYEEI during Orkan's ophthalmology residency, and he invited Orkan to assist with many ophthalmic plastic surgical cases. Dr. Hughes moved his practice to Hempstead, NY and Orkan continued his eye plastic surgery training with a 4:00 am commute from Albany to Hempstead, where they would begin seeing patients at 7:00 am and finish surgery at 9:00 pm.

(continued)



Dr. Hughes presents Dr. Stasior the ASOPRS Medal for Chairing the 1st Scientific Meeting in Las Vegas.

ASOPRS was originating at the time of Orkan's training with Dr. Hughes. The American Academy of Ophthalmology and Otolaryngology (AAOO) divided into two in 1979. The otolaryngologists invited Wendell Hughes and other leading ophthalmic plastic surgeons to join them. At the same time, a group of Byron Smith's fellows (led by Margaret Obear, and including Charles Beyer, George Buerger, Thomas Cherubini, Robert Wilkins and William Pidde) met in New York City and conceived of the formation of an ophthalmology plastic surgery subspecialty. This founding group approached Drs. Hughes, Smith, Callahan and others with the idea of forming what would become ASOPRS. Dr. Hughes gave ASOPRS his full support and served as President for its first 2 years.

Dr. Stasior's professional passion became the development of eye plastic surgery into a field of medicine. He worked with Dr. Hughes to frame the visionary principles of ASOPRS. He served as the first Program Chair at the ASOPRS Las Vegas meeting, and as the second President. Orkan was an eloquent speaker, extemporaneously guiding the audience to consider many ideas from a single slide. He coordinated ASOPRS international activities and served as the ASOPRS emissary to 13 countries, inviting international guests to present at the meetings and supporting the formation of OPRS societies around the world. Deservedly, an ASOPRS Leadership Award bearing his name is given annually.

In 1960, Orkan opened his practice in Albany, the first ophthalmic plastic surgery practice in upstate New York. Reflecting his progressive approach, his practice emphasized proper nutrition, immune system support, and holistic/alternative medicine. He trained many fellows in his busy practice and supported his fellows long after their training.

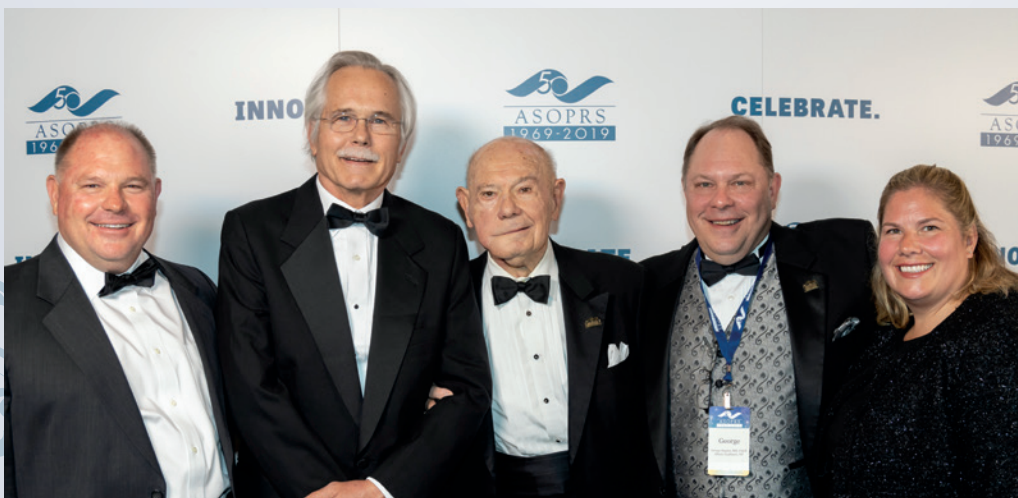
I shared a special relationship with Orkan. Our families developed a close personal relationship over the years, which included attending family celebrations. Orkan and I would always share a lunch or dinner at the Fall ASOPRS Meetings. He had the gift of being totally present in conversation, and was a gracious and kind man. Attending the ASOPRS 50th Anniversary Meeting in San Francisco in 2019 was a highlight of Orkan's life, and we are grateful we had that time with him.

Orkan enjoyed a devoted, loving family. The Stasior family is very close knit; they reflect Orkan's infectious positivity and tremendous energies. He is survived by his beautiful wife of 62 years, Gloria, and their four children and seven grandchildren.

The family has requested that gifts in memory of Dr. Stasior be made to the ASOPRS Foundation.

Orkan's energies continue to illuminate us all, and his beloved ASOPRS.

Bradley N. Lemke
Madison, WI



(L to R):
Matthew Stasior,
Bradley Lemke,
Orkan George Stasior,
George Orkan Stasior,
and Lynn Stasior at
the ASOPRS 50th
Anniversary Gala,
October 11, 2019,
in San Francisco.