

## A Brief History of Orlo H. Clark

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Orlo Herrick Clark was born on August 7, 1941, in Brooklyn, New York. His father, Orlo Holly Clark, was a surgeon in private practice and his mother, Elizabeth Herrick Clark, was a nurse. While the bulk of his childhood was spent on the East Coast, Orlo spent 2 years in San Francisco (1944–1946) while his father was serving as a naval surgeon in the Pacific theater of World War II. The Clark family lived in the Park Merced neighborhood during this time, an area of San Francisco that is not too far from UCSF, where Orlo would eventually spend the entirety of his career in endocrine surgery. Although Orlo was quite young during this brief San Francisco sojourn, he believes that the seeds for his lifetime love for the city were planted during this time.

In 1946 the Clarks moved to Nutley, New Jersey, into a charming house that had been previously owned by the famous sharpshooter Annie Oakley. Orlo would spend the remainder of his childhood in Nutley. Young Orlo Clark had many interests and pursued them all with great enthusiasm. Music was an early passion: Orlo took piano lessons, played the trumpet in the Nutley High School marching band, and was a talented boy soprano in his church choir. His ninth-grade growth spurt cut short his soprano career but paid tremendous dividends on the basketball court. Orlo would become the star center for the Nutley High School basketball team and was well-known throughout the New Jersey prep leagues for his offensive prowess and defensive tenacity. He was selected to be on the first All-Essex County and the second All-State teams. Off the court, Orlo parlayed his love for athletics into a job as a sports reporter for *The Nutley Sun* and traveled

throughout New Jersey covering various local high school teams. Summers were spent fishing and tending to the animals and vegetables on his grandparents' farm. It should be no surprise that Orlo Clark was an excellent student. He earned high marks in all his classes (except perhaps penmanship) and was elected to become a member of the National Honor Society in his senior year.

High school was also the period during which Orlo would form the most important relationship of his life. In his senior year he met a young woman named Carol Zeller at a church supper; two years his junior, Carol was gracious enough to serve Orlo an extra helping of spaghetti (foreshadowing the countless future Italian meals they would share) and from there a lifetime bond was born. This year Orlo and Carol will celebrate 44 years of marriage.

After high school Orlo headed north to Cornell University, where he was a zoology major and pre-med. He played basketball all four years, facing off several times against future New York Knick and U.S. Senator Bill Bradley when Bradley was at Princeton. He was also secretary-treasurer of the Chi Phi fraternity and elected to the exclusive Red Key and Quill and Dagger honor societies. Despite these numerous academic and extracurricular commitments, Orlo paid for his room and board for all 4 years of college by holding down a variety of jobs on campus. These included washing dishes at a fraternity house, serving as a dorm counselor, and summer jobs as a postal worker and landscaper/lawn mower. He also spent a memorable summer working as a scrub tech at his local hospital, gaining familiarity with the tools of his future trade as well as a valuable understanding of the importance of teamwork and good communication in the operating room.

As one can probably infer from his wide range of activities and interests, Orlo Clark shunned stereotypes and cliques during his youth, and didn't run with a defined

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crowd; his social circle was a broad and multifaceted one. He was known for his iconoclastic fashion sense, often sporting Mexican guayabera-type shirts instead of the traditional upstate New York collegiate garb. He usually went for the more unusual food choices at restaurants, and listened to an eclectic mix of music that ranged from classical and jazz to the up-and-coming genre of rock and roll. He and Carol loved to cut loose on the dance floor at any opportunity, favoring big band but quite capable at the jitterbug and twist as well.

Orlo graduated from college in 1963 and that fall he moved to New York City to start medical school at Cornell. He loved the intellectual environment at Cornell Med and thrived in his classes and rotations. His classmates elected him class president for all 4 years of medical school. In his spare time he enjoyed playing basketball with his fellow students. New York City offered a cultural buffet of opera, plays, art galleries, and restaurants that he and Carol happily devoured. Despite his busy schedule, Orlo continued to work for his room and board for all 4 years of medical school: he performed research on amino nucleoside nephrosis in a pediatrics laboratory and also spent time as a night receptionist at the Payne Whitney Psychiatric Hospital (an experience that would serve him well in his later dealings with residents and fellows). He and Carol were married during the summer between his first and second year of medical school and honeymooned in New Hampshire, where they have continued to spend summers for the past 40-plus years.

When considering his career choice, Orlo briefly thought about pediatrics because of his fondness for children; his professors in internal medicine and pediatrics leaned hard on him to choose their respective fields, but in the end he chose to pursue general surgery. Cornell surgical residents and faculty spoke highly of the UCSF surgery program under J. Engelbert Dunphy's leadership. In addition, Orlo's mother had always fondly recalled the family's wartime years in San Francisco. Orlo applied to multiple programs around the country, but he ranked UCSF as his top choice and was accepted. After more than 20 years away, he returned to San Francisco, this time for good.

The UCSF Department of Surgery in 1967 boasted an impressive lineup of leaders in American surgery. Besides Dunphy, the other luminaries who would profoundly influence Orlo Clark's career were Leon Goldman, Maurice Galante, Horace McCorkle, Orville Grimes, William Blaisdell, Albert Hall, and Lawrence Way. Orlo had a keen interest in endocrine surgery and learned a great deal from Goldman and Galante about the scientific and technical aspects of the field. However, his love for endocrine surgery truly flourished during his 1-year fellowship at the Hammersmith Hospital in West London under the tutelage of Professor Richard Welbourn and Mr. Selwyn Taylor.

This year-long immersion in the care of patients with thyroid, parathyroid, adrenal, and endocrine pancreas disorders marked the beginning of a lifelong pursuit of clinical and scientific knowledge in the field for Orlo. Upon the completion of his residency in 1973, Orlo began his academic career at the San Francisco Veterans' Administration Medical Center; his clinical practice and scientific research were dedicated towards the understanding and treatment of endocrine surgical disorders, especially thyroid cancer.

Orlo recalls his early years at the San Francisco VA with great fondness. He performed a broad range of operations in general and endocrine surgery, and built a powerful research program that performed basic science and clinical investigation in thyroid and parathyroid disease. Within a few years of joining the faculty at the VA, Orlo branched out to the main campus at UCSF, where he began a thriving endocrine surgery practice; he also held consultant positions at David Grant Hospital of Travis Air Force Base and the Letterman Hospital in San Francisco. In 1985 he was appointed Professor of Surgery at UCSF. When UCSF opened a new campus at the Mount Zion Hospital in 1991, Orlo was appointed the Chief of Surgery. In the past 15 years he has built the UCSF/Mt. Zion Medical Center into one of the premier clinical and research institutions for endocrine surgery in the world.

A complete list of Orlo's awards and honors would exceed the page limits of this periodical; suffice it to say that his career has been studded with accolades from institutions and organizations both here and abroad. Highlights include receiving an honorary doctorate in 1998 from the Université de Poitiers, proposed by his good friend and former fellow, Jean-Louis Kraimps; serving as President of the Northern California Chapter of the American College of Surgeons (1986), the San Francisco Surgical Society (1987), the American Association of Endocrine Surgeons (1994), the International Association of Endocrine Surgeons (1996), the American Thyroid Association (1999), and the Pacific Coast Surgical Association (2009); being elected as an honorary member of the German Surgical Society (2000); and receiving the Oliver Cope Award for distinguished career achievements from the American Association of Endocrine Surgeons (2006).

Of all his illustrious career achievements, however, Orlo is perhaps proudest of his extended family of more than 100 endocrine surgeons worldwide whom he has trained throughout the past 35 years. Many of these former fellows are now chiefs of endocrine surgery divisions and leaders in the American and International Associations of Endocrine Surgeons. Orlo's "come one, come all" policy of welcoming any and all interested trainees and students to his laboratory and clinic in San Francisco has resulted in an entire generation of new endocrine surgeons who proudly

refer to themselves as members of the “Orlo Clark Fellows Club.” Orlo’s generosity at home has translated into countless trips abroad as an invited speaker and guest faculty at institutions around the world.

Orlo and Carol Clark have three children (Catharine, Emilie, and Andrew) and five grandchildren (Lilah, Max, Cosmo, Luca, and Madeleine). Although the Clark children have all pursued nonmedical careers in the arts and humanities, they give credit to their father for instilling in

them a passion for learning and an interest in the connections between art and science. Orlo maintains a busy schedule of operating and research at UCSF/Mt. Zion Medical Center. He and Carol continue to travel extensively and enjoy a multitude of cultural activities in the Bay Area. During the past 4 years they have enjoyed collaborating on a research and writing project on endocrine abnormalities in Western art, which they hope to complete during the first year of Orlo’s upcoming semiretirement.