

"Interviews with S. Kendrick Eshleman, III, M.D. and John Bowman, M.D. concerning ROMEO and GRUMPS: May 20, 2023

by Alan S. Peterson, M.D

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ROMEO

Recently when I was visiting Dr. Kendrick Eshleman to get his autobiography (elsewhere in the Publications section) at his home in Paradise, PA., he mentioned a group he used to be a member of in Lancaster of the St. Joseph's Hospital physicians. The group was called the ROMEO's. It stood for Retired Old Men Eating Out. The physicians in it would eat out at Valentino's Restaurant in Lancaster each Tuesday for lunch (if they were available).

Dr. Eshleman (now in his mid-nineties) remembered the following (all physicians except for one): Clark McSparren, Fred Young, Al and Gus Shultz, dentist Tom Diehl, Bob Skinner, Paul Roland, Gene Kegel, Harold or Howie Robbins, and Norman Cornfield. I'm sure many are unfortunately left out.

GRUMPS

What brought this up was my mentioning to Kendrick that I had recently been at a GRUMPS breakfast at Oregon Dairy. We meet there once a month. It is a Lancaster General physician's group. John Bowman, M.D. was one of the earlier members and remembers back 20-30 years ago some members that are no longer among us. They were: G. Gary Kirchner, Al Cooke, Jack Shertzer, Allister Grant, John May, Jack Pontz, Bill McCann, Andy Koch, and many others presumably. A non-physician attending was Leon Martin.

Dr. Bowman says, "Sometimes there is just no history, no written records, some folks don't recall places to meet for breakfast, who was there, and some of the meeting areas are just not a restaurant anymore, and their names are lost. We can't even produce an accurate date of the GRUMPS initial breakfast and where it was held."

A recent article mentioning the GRUMPS by Jack Brubaker in the LNP of March 6, 2023, is included below:

GRUMPS and the best family medicine residency program in US [The Scribbler]

JACK BRUBAKER | The Scribbler, Mar 6, 2023



Retired doctors, Alan Peterson, John Bowman and Stephen Olin, chat with a reporter before their monthly gathering for breakfast on Thursday, Feb. 23, 2023.

The Scribbler shared breakfast at Oregon Dairy with 16 GRUMPS and learned something: Penn Medicine Lancaster General Health conducts one of the largest family medicine residency programs in the country. And that program is ranked No. 1 by physicians nationwide.

Doctors know this. So should their patients.

But first, about the GRUMPS. GRUMPS is an acronym for Gratefully Retired Unemployed Medical Physicians and Surgeons. The late Dr. G. Gary Kirchner organized the group about 25 years ago, according to Dr. John Bowman, who also was there at the beginning.

The GRUMPS meet at Oregon Dairy once a month and talk about the good old days of medicine while ingesting fruit cups and fried eggs. They look forward to the camaraderie.

There were five family medicine physicians among 16 GRUMPS at breakfast the other day. The other 11, including Bowman, a retired ophthalmologist, are specialists. The Scribbler sat surrounded by family medicine doctors, so he got an earful.

Let's get this out of the way. Don't call a family medicine doctor a "GP" (general practitioner). Bad form.

Lancaster County's family medicine GRUMPS take pride in being part of one of the first such residency programs in the country. They take greater pride in the program's continuing excellence: Doctors nationally have selected the Penn Medicine Lancaster General Health family medicine program the best in the country several years running.

Dr. Nik Zervanos, a GRUMP, began the family medicine program at Lancaster General Hospital in 1969. The three-year residency program was the first in the country to establish both urban and rural operations. (The rural unit is the Walter L. Aument Family Health Center in Quarryville.)

Lancaster's program, the largest in the state with 39 residents, has more than 500 graduates. Forty percent of them have stayed here to practice. Some of those graduates have been taught by GRUMPS, including retired family medicine practitioners Drs. Steve Olin, Alan Peterson and Randy Kochel.

"Anyone interested in family medicine looks at Lancaster," said Kochel, who retired last year. "We get the cream of the crop."

Following the food, the Scribbler asked the doctors to supply medical anecdotes. What's a Scribbler column without anecdotes?

One of the original instructors in the family medicine program, Peterson began his practice in West Virginia in 1975. He made a house call to an older woman who lived on a mountain.

“After I was finished with her,” Peterson recalled, “she told me not to make a house call after dark, as they had sentries on the road that would shoot at those they did not know. They were moonshiners.”

Olin, who taught family practice here while doctoring his own patients, said a “hysterical” woman many years ago called him from one of those old pay phone booths at 3 a.m. She asked what she should do about her wet shoes.

“Go home and put on some dry shoes and you’ll be fine,” Olin said, and went back to sleep.

Dr. Bill Bakken recalled an incident during his 43 years with Abbeyville Family Medicine that is only humorous in retrospect.

A 10-year-old boy adored his family’s pet chicken and kissed him good night. “Not having any lips, the chicken did what chickens do and pecked the 10-year-old in the eye,” Bakken said. “Thankfully he had no more than a corneal abrasion. I don’t think anyone tried to kiss the chicken after that.”

Jack Brubaker, retired from the LNP staff, writes “The Scribbler” column every Sunday. He welcomes comments and contributions at scribblerlnp@gmail.com.

2023 GRUMPS members include:

Dr. Matt Bacharach, Dr. Bill Bakken, Dr. Frederick Beyer, Dr. Bill Boben, Dr. John Bowman, Dr. Joe Breslin, Dr. Brian Condrón, Dr. Noel Connaughton, Dr. Albert Cooke, Dr. Lynn Dolan, Dr. Jerry Fahs, Dr. Pat Feehan, Dr. John Gareis, Dr. John Garofola, Dr. Jim Goddard, Dr. Bill Grosh, Dr. Barton Halpern, Dr. David Hughes, Dr. Bill Hunt, Dr. Joseph Irwin, Dr. Robert Johnson, Dr. Terry Jones, Dr. Bob Krissinger, Dr. Ed Maley, Dr. Harold Mohler, Dr. Stephen Olin, Dr. Alan Peterson, Dr. Roger Peterson, Dr. Mike Rommel, Dr. Charles Rost, Dr. Jerry Rothacker, Dr. Fred Saunders, Dr. John Schubert, Dr. Paul Sherban, Dr. William Spitler, Dr. Tim Tymon, Dr. Jon Walker, Dr. David Weston, Dr. James Wilson, Dr. Nikitas Zervanos