

## Obituary

### Marc A. Asher 1936-2019

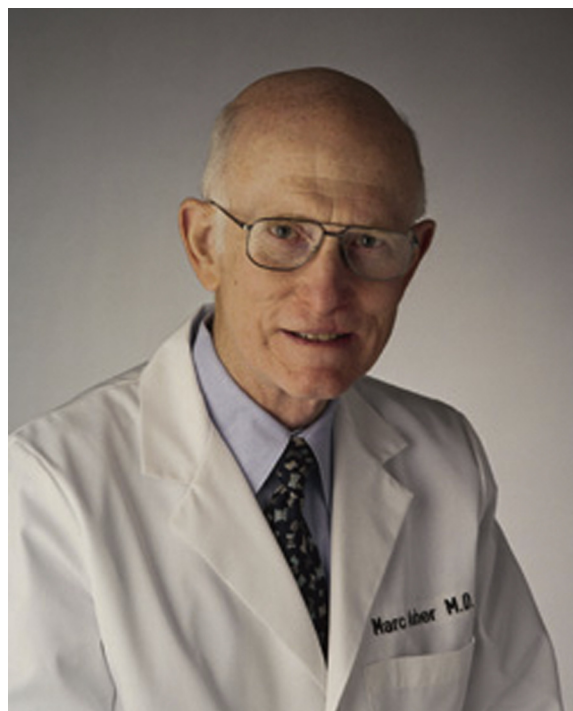
Marc Addason Asher, M.D. died February 1, 2019 of heart failure. He was born on August 15, 1936 to St. John, KS farmer James Manley Asher and Pratt, KS native and high school mathematics teacher Lucile Turner Asher.

He graduated from Kansas State University BS 58 and Kansas University, MD 62. He completed a rotating Internship at the University of Oregon and then served the United States Public Health Service as the General Medical Officer in Leavenworth, KS. He then worked as an Assistant Resident in Surgery at Baltimore City Hospital before completing the Harvard Combined Orthopaedic Surgery Residency. His first post in Orthopedics was as an Assistant Professor of Orthopedic Surgery and Residency Training Coordinator at the University of Texas Medical School at San Antonio in 1970.

In 1972 he returned to alma mater and there he remained, rising from Assistant Professor to University Distinguished Professor in 2003, the first full-time clinician to receive this award in the school's history. As was common among his generation of orthopedic surgeons, Dr. Asher began as a generalist, but quickly sub-specialized in pediatric orthopedics and eventually in spine deformity. He established and staffed a network of clinics across the state, bringing specialized orthopedic care to children with serious musculoskeletal conditions in the far rural areas of Kansas.

His devotion and care of his patients was legendary at the University of Kansas Hospital and Medical Center. He demanded much of the staff around him, but never as much as he demanded of himself. He set the standard for the moral and ethical treatment of patients for four decades of students, residents, fellows, and colleagues.

As his clinical practice evolved, so did his engagement with national and international orthopedic societies. He was the Editor in Chief of the First Edition of the Orthopedic Knowledge Update for the America Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons. As his career veered towards pediatrics, he served the Pediatric Orthopedic Society (later the Pediatric Orthopedic Society of North America (POSNA)) as a Program and Bylaws chair, member of the Board of Directors and as Treasurer. He would ultimately receive their Distinguished Achievement Award in 2004.



Marc Addason Asher, MD

The Scoliosis Research Society (SRS) was the organization that he loved dearly. Its mission to foster the care of all patients with spinal deformities was co-linear with his own clinical and research interests. He served on Society committees over four decades, received the Hibbs, Moe, and Goldstein research awards, the Blount Humanitarian award and was honored to serve as the 28<sup>th</sup> president in 1997. This was a trying time for the Society as it was under attack as a defendant in the Multi-District Pedicle Screw Litigation out of Philadelphia. His steady hand and leadership were critical as the Society weathered this storm. He received the Lifetime Achievement Award from the SRS in 2009.

While Dr. Asher was still in San Antonio in 1971, he met Paul Harrington. This introduction, and their subsequent relationship, would remain a guiding influence on his career. Harrington, a native of Kansas City and a University of Kansas graduate, would visit his sister in Kansas City

every summer and he and Dr. Asher would spend time together discussing scoliosis, spine instrumentation and spinal research until Harrington's death in 1980. This relationship certainly guided him as he led a team of colleagues to develop the Isola Spinal Instrumentation System. Available from 1989 to 2011, it was, at one time, one of the world's leading spine implant systems.

The Harrington influence did not end there. Dr. Harrington willed his archives to the Clendening Library at the University of Kansas Department of the History and Philosophy of Medicine. Dr. Asher, with the aid of the Library archivists, collated and chronicled Harrington's achievements in a moving display that has now been visited by hundreds of visitors from all over the world. In fact, the ultimate approval by the FDA for the use of pedicle screws resulted, in no small part, from the review of drawings of pedicle screws Dr. Harrington made in the late 1960's and

found in the Archives. Ultimately, Dr. Asher's passion to honor the genius of Harrington, led him to publish his biography in 2015, "Dogged Persistence: Harrington, Postpolio Scoliosis, and the Origin of Spine Instrumentation".

Dr. Asher published nearly 200 scientific articles and gave over 80 invited lectures on six continents. He was the Kansas University Medical Alumnus of the Year, Life Trustee of the Kansas University Endowment Association and the Distinguished Kansan of the Year in 2008. But most who worked with him knew none of this, his humility kept these accolades from nearly everyone around him. Those of us who did know him, who learned from him, worked with him and grew because of him are all so grateful for that opportunity. Our hearts go out to his wife Ellie, his daughter Janet, and to all his family for their loss. Marc Asher will be dearly missed by all who knew him.

Douglas Burton.