

The Deans

Portraits of the Medical

In 1991 Gail Rector, who had headed the University Musical Society from 1957 to 1987, was walking down 57th Street in Manhattan when he passed the window of the famed Grand Central Gallery and saw a portrait he liked. He knew that the Musical Society wanted him to have his portrait done so that it could be displayed permanently in Hill Auditorium, and he thought that perhaps the painter of the portrait in the window was the person to do the job.

The painter, Rector discovered, was Kevin Gordon of New Rochelle, New York, and Gordon was commissioned to paint his portrait, which does indeed now hang in Hill Auditorium. At the unveiling of Rector's portrait, one of those present was Sid Gilman, M.D., the William J. Herdman Professor of Neurology and chair of the Department of Neurology in the U-M Medical School. Gilman liked what he saw and commissioned Gordon to paint a posthumous portrait of Russell DeJong for the DeJong Library in the Department of Neurology. (DeJong, a 1932 graduate of the U-M Medical School, had been chairman of the Department of Neurology from 1950 to 1977).

The DeJong portrait turned out to be only the first in a long line of portraits for the Medical School that Gordon would do. Today they include those of Deans Hugh Cabot, Albert Furstenberg, William Hubbard, John Gronvall, Joseph Johnson, Giles Bole and Allen Lichter. Lichter's portrait was done when he was the chair of the Department of Radiation Oncology. And Gordon has also done portraits of Isadore Lampe, founder of the Department of



Portrait artist **Kevin Gordon** in his studio in New Rochelle, New York, with his nearly finished portrait of **Dean Albert Furstenberg**

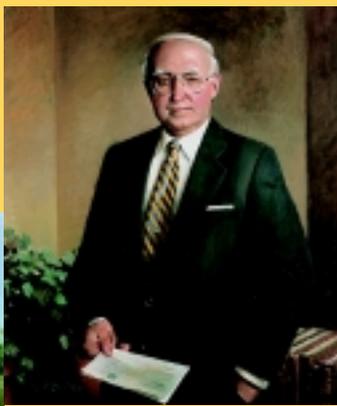
Radiology, Sid Gilman, and Michael Aldrich, a pioneer in sleep medicine and founder of the U-M Sleep Disorders Laboratory who died in July at the age of 51 of osteosarcoma.

Kevin Gordon's father, Stanley Gordon, now in his 80s, is a portrait painter himself. "I grew up with it," Gordon says. "My father's studio was in our house, so I was around the palettes and easels from an early age."

While he does landscapes and other kinds of paintings, Gordon says it's the portraits he finds the "most satisfying, the most intense. A portrait painting is an interpretation," he says. "The artist filters the person

on Canvas:

School's Leadership



Portraits clockwise from left: **Hugh Cabot**, **Giles Bole**, **Joseph Johnson III**, **John Gronvall**, **Allen Lichter** and **William Hubbard**

through his heart and soul, develops a 'feel' for his subject." Each portrait takes about 80 hours to paint, and includes at least two sittings in his studio. During the sittings he also takes photographs to help him with details after the subject has returned home.

Gordon achieved his biggest audience when he appeared on Oprah Winfrey's show in 1995 for a Valentine's Day feature. "I proposed to my wife, Noreen, by giving her a portrait I had secretly painted of her in which she had a diamond engagement ring on her finger," he relates. "An editor at *Reader's Digest*, after hearing Noreen tell the story at a cocktail party in Manhattan a couple of years after we had married, printed it in a feature on 'Ways to Say I Love You,' and Oprah's people spotted it there."

All the new deans' portraits will be unveiled at a reception at the U-M Museum of Art the evening of October 12. After the unveiling they will be hung in the Office of the Dean in the Medical School. [m](#)

