

A. Alfred Taubman: The Vision, the Legacy

Taubman's extraordinary \$100 million commitment vastly expands transformative medical research at Michigan and ranks Taubman as the U-M's most generous benefactor. BY JANE MYERS

IN THE 1940S, EVERY FELLOW taking a gal to the J-Hop needed a corsage. And every young woman needed a nice pair of shoes to match her ensemble. Most students at Michigan back then would have been thinking of where to buy those things. A. Alfred Taubman, a young U-M student himself, had different thoughts. How about being the one who *sells* the corsages and the shoes to the students?

Get the flowers, fresh and beautiful, at the Eastern Market in Detroit. Find a good shoe retailer and get sorority house mothers to let you display the shoes outside their dining rooms. Make sure the shoes are the shoes the young women want.

For Taubman, a native of Pontiac, Michigan, who had watched his father's business struggles through the Depression, such thinking was second nature, even at age 18. The beginnings of the career of one of the world's

20th century retailing pioneers might not have been totally obvious, but the signs were there.

Throughout the decades of his entrepreneurial success, Taubman has maintained an insatiable and abiding curiosity about life and how to improve it. "I always wonder what it could be," he says. Medical science in particular has intrigued Taubman: If you gave very bright minds the money they needed to chase their wildest, smartest ideas, he wondered, what would happen? What discoveries might they make that would save people's lives? "The highest reward of success," Taubman says, "is the opportunity to make a difference for other people."

At the University of Michigan, which he first grew to love as an architecture student in the 1940s, Taubman has made his vision real — and lasting. With the latest component of his \$100 million commitment to create

and endow the A. Alfred Taubman Medical Research Institute, Taubman has created in perpetuity a resource for discovery-seeking of the kind that is possible these days only with private funding. His commitment to the institute brings his total giving to his alma mater to \$141.6 million and makes him the largest donor in the 194-year history of the University of Michigan.

In recognition of Taubman's landmark commitment, the Medical School's Biomedical Science Research Building, within which the Taubman Institute is housed, will be named the A. Alfred Taubman Biomedical Science Research Building. At more than 470,000 square feet, it is the largest research facility on campus, planned around scientific themes rather than traditional academic disciplines.

The institute embodies the powerful vision that Taubman has for the future of human health, a vision not



A. Alfred Taubman

unlike that which honed his business acumen and guided his long and successful career. “I’m funding risk,” he says about his gift, succinctly reflecting his own core values of hard work, respect for knowledge and a desire, always, to look into the future and see it.

The Taubman Scholars at Michigan, past and future, are those physician-scientists whose scientific vision is modeled on the kind of knowledge-driven risk that helped Alfred Taubman become one of the great success stories of his generation in retail and real estate development.

“As one of the University’s great friends and visionaries who for so long has shared his leadership, his resources and ideas, Alfred Taubman will always be an important part of U-M’s history and, more important, its future,” said President Mary Sue Coleman in acknowledging Taubman’s gift.

Ora Pescovitz, M.D., U-M executive vice president for medical affairs and CEO of the Health System, who, like President Coleman, came to her leadership role via a research career in biomedical science, called the Taubman gift “an extraordinary contribution to the future of medical science, here at Michigan and around the world. This gift will affect our lives and those of our families in ways that we cannot yet imagine, but which will undoubtedly offer great promise and outcomes. What an absolutely perfect example of the enduring commitment and generosity of Alfred and the entire Taubman family.”

For Taubman, 87 — whose company, now publicly traded, is located

in Bloomfield Hills not far from his childhood roots — classic Midwestern modesty is an enduring part of his personality. By way of describing the reasons for his success, he will only say, with the quiet laughter that punctuates many of his conversations, “I was very careful in selecting my parents. A lot has to do with the way you’re brought up.”

These days, when Taubman reflects on his long and happy life, his mind often goes back to the Depression years when his builder-father struggled to pay debts and to start a fruit farm. He remembers what a model both his father and mother were for

ment rarely support in very early stages, but which can produce transformative leaps in understanding and treatments for a wide array of diseases, from cancer and stroke to diabetes and ALS. The Taubman funding can be considered the medical research equivalent of a “genius grant,” allowing them to pursue their hunches.

This “high risk, high reward” approach has paid off handsomely at the Taubman Institute in its first three years. With the aid of institute funding, Eva Feldman (Ph.D. 1979, M.D. 1983), director of the Taubman Institute and the Russell N. DeJong Professor of Neurology, has begun

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industriousness and fortitude. “If parents work hard, their children want to be accomplished,” he says.

What Taubman’s modesty and success have compelled him to do is to use his considerable resources to make a difference for all those who study or care about art, architecture, history, public policy, the vitality of local communities, and now — perhaps more than anything — medical science. The institute supports a corps of Taubman Scholars, who are both laboratory investigators and clinical doctors. Their work is the kind of science that more conservative sources of funding like the federal govern-



A young Alfred with his parents, Fanny and Philip



Left Top: Eva Feldman, William Taubman, Mary Sue Coleman, Alfred Taubman, Ora Pescovitz and Robert Taubman
 Left Bottom: William Taubman, Gayle Taubman Kalisman, Alfred Taubman, Mary Sue Coleman and Robert Taubman
 Right: Alfred Taubman and his wife, Judy

the first human clinical stem cell trial for the debilitating and deadly nerve disease ALS; and Max Wicha, M.D., a Taubman Scholar and director of the Comprehensive Cancer Center, is leading the world's first three clinical trials targeting cancer stem cells to destroy them.

"Great scientists are great entrepreneurs," Taubman says. "We have

these wonderful scientists at Michigan who are using their knowledge and creativity to take risks that will lead to winning new treatments."

His children, friends and colleagues counterbalance his modesty. "He's a genius," says his daughter, Gayle Taubman Kalisman, co-chair of the Taubman Institute and a U-M alumna. Son William, COO of the Taub-

man Company and a member of the institute's leadership advisory board, adds, "That the Taubman Company is still so well-respected reflects much of his personality and his values." Taubman's son Robert, president, chairman and CEO of the Taubman Company and also a member of the institute's leadership advisory board, sums it up: "He's a remarkable man. He has

High Risk, High Reward

NOW IN ITS FOURTH YEAR, the A. Alfred Taubman Medical Research Institute is “dedicated to fundamental discovery and advancing our knowledge of the causes, treatments and prevention of diseases and conditions that affect mankind.” Poised to achieve this mission, the institute provides the U-M’s finest physician-scientists the freedom, resources and collaborative environment they need to truly push the boundaries of medical discovery, to produce innovative breakthroughs in cures and treatment

of disease and, ultimately, to alleviate human suffering.

Transformative research often involves critical new concepts and unproven avenues of scientific inquiry — the kind of high risk, high reward science increasingly unsupported by traditional sources of funding. The work of the Taubman Institute, enabled by the historic generosity and far-reaching vision of A. Alfred Taubman and under the leadership of world-renowned neurologist and Taubman Institute Director Eva Feld-

man, addresses that gap, allowing the pursuit of ideas that otherwise might remain forever unexplored.

With a focus on translational research — which propels laboratory discoveries into clinical treatments for the benefit of patients as quickly and effectively as possible — the Taubman Institute supports the research of physicians with active clinical practices, who treat patients afflicted by disease and therefore are highly motivated to find ways of treating and curing.

The institute has established three programs to support U-M clinician-researchers and their collaborators.

TAUBMAN SCHOLARS

The Taubman Scholars form the institute’s core program, which provides unrestricted funding for leading faculty members and collaborators to pursue transformative medical research in their areas of research interest (in parentheses).

Nicholas Boulis, M.D. (Residencies 1995 and 2001), associate professor of neurosurgery at Emory University (in collaboration with Eva Feldman) (neurosurgical treatments of neurodegenerative disease)

Frank Brosius III, M.D. (Residency 1983), professor of internal medicine and of molecular and inte-



Alfred Taubman and Eva Feldman

grative physiology (nephrology)

Charles Burant, M.D., Ph.D., Robert C. and Veronica Atkins Professor of Metabolism (obesity and type 2 diabetes)

Arul Chinnaiyan (M.D. and Ph.D. 1999), S.P. Hicks Endowed Professor of Pathology (cancer genomics)

David Ginsburg, M.D., James V. Neel Distinguished University Professor of Internal Medicine and Human Genetics (blood clotting disorders)

Theodore Lawrence, M.D., Ph.D., Isadore Lampe Collegiate Professor of Radiation Oncology (liver and pancreatic cancer)

Kenneth Pienta, M.D., professor of urology and of internal medicine (prostate cancer)

SENIOR TAUBMAN SCHOLARS

Through their research and their public stewardship of medical science, these former Taubman Scholars have earned renewed funding.

Valerie Castle, M.D. (Fellowship 1990), Ravitz Foundation Professor of Pediatrics and Communicable Diseases (pediatric oncology, neuroblastoma, DNA repair)

Eva Feldman (Ph.D. 1979, M.D. 1983), Russell N. DeJong Professor of Neurology (stem cell therapy and neurologic disease)

David Pinsky, M.D., J. Griswold Ruth, M.D., and Margery Hopkins

Ruth Professor of Internal Medicine (blood vessel defenses)

Max Wicha, M.D., Distinguished Professor of Oncology (oncology and cancer stem cells)

EMERGING SCHOLARS

This program provides funding for early-career clinician-scientists who show great promise to become leaders in medical science. Additional generous donors have joined Alfred Taubman by contributing to the research of these promising investigators.

Ronald Buckanovich, M.D., Ph.D., assistant professor of internal medicine and of obstetrics and gynecology, with institute support from the Marvin and Betty Danto Family Foundation (breast and ovarian cancers)

James Dowling, M.D., Ph.D., assistant professor of pediatrics and communicable diseases and of neurology, with institute support from Frances and Kenneth Eisenberg (childhood muscle diseases)

Johann Gudjonsson, M.D., Ph.D. (Residency 2006), assistant professor of dermatology, with institute support from Frances and Kenneth Eisenberg (inflammatory skin diseases)

Erika Newman, M.D., assistant professor of pediatric surgery, with institute support from Edith Briskin (pediatric oncology and neuroblastoma) —JM

a charisma and confidence that's contagious."

"Every year over the last decade or so my father seems younger and younger to me," says Kalisman. "He's energized by his philanthropy. And he still has this amazing ability to understand the future — to be in the present but to strategically see the future. I remember when I was growing up people thinking he was crazy. It was because he saw so much, because he could see so far ahead."

His friend Joel Tauber, who serves on the Taubman Institute's leadership advisory board and holds three Michigan degrees, credits Taubman with stepping in at a crucial moment to protect stem cell research in the state of Michigan. Taubman was the leading force behind the 2008 campaign that won voter approval for a constitutional amendment easing restrictions on embryonic stem cell research in Michigan. It made possible the institute's Consortium for Stem Cell Therapies, the first center for creating embryonic stem cell lines in the state. "His private money made it possible for stem cell researchers at Michigan to be allowed the full expression of their ingenuity and creativity," Tauber says.

Karen Davidson, another member of the institute's leadership advisory board and supporter of health care both in the U.S. and in Israel, says, "The Taubman Scholars I've talked to are inspired by his philanthropy. They want to reward the faith he has shown in them. When you support the Taubman Institute, you're putting your money into young minds



Abigail Wexner



Karen Davidson



Joel Tauber

and into the minds of great established scientists like Eva Feldman and so many others. It's so validating for them to know that we believe in their work."

"You just want to get in line and follow him. You want to hook your wagon to his star."

—Karen Davidson

While Gayle Taubman Kalisman calls the Taubman Institute "the crowning achievement of my father's life," Taubman's pivotal role as a University volunteer, advisor and philanthropist began in the late 1970s, when then-Governor William Milliken asked him to serve on the advisory board for the new University Hospital in the early stages of planning. Taubman has always loved repeating the story of confidently telling the governor that no new hospital was needed, that the current hospital was just fine. It provides him with another opportunity to describe his vulnerabilities and his ability, in a long career of wins, to occasionally get things wrong. What he did, of

course, was to eventually get things incredibly right, recognizing the need and taking a leadership role in building the replacement hospital.

"He really helped to change the

way hospitals and clinics related to one another," Robert Taubman says. "He helped to create a new model. His giving has always been transformational. For him, it's not just about making a gift. It's about helping to change the world, to get others involved, to make the community a much richer place, to make it better."

Finding your genius wherever it lies might be one way of describing Taubman's expanding happiness, almost nine decades into a fine experience on the planet. Even here, his self-effacement weighs large. He attributes his ability to visualize space and the way humans move through space — a vision that is widely acknowledged as extraordinary and

exceedingly rare — as a lucky attribute of his dyslexia, accompanied by stuttering, which presented him as a young boy in the public schools of Pontiac with reading challenges at a time when the condition was not well understood or even named.

"What impresses me most about watching Al is how engaged he is," says Abigail Wexner, a leading philanthropist in her own right, with her husband Les, and a member of the Taubman Institute's leadership advisory board. "He's created a rare model for philanthropy, one that's full of emotion and thoughtful commitment. He's able to translate his talent and creativity into his philanthropy. Not a lot of people are able to do that.

"And, of course, he's always conscious of what he himself is gaining," Wexner adds. "He's stimulated by being around these brilliant people. It doesn't surprise me that medical science became such a focus for Al. It provides such a great way for him to be part of a grand effort that offers the hope of changing so many people's lives."

His legacy of changing many people's lives so much for the better may be the ultimate testament to Alfred Taubman's accomplishments. That, and being a model of compassionate creativity for others to emulate.

Says Karen Davidson, "You just want to get in line and follow him. You want to hook your wagon to his star. He's just never stopped thinking, imagining how things can be better. I want to be around for his next great idea." [M]

Professorships Recently Inaugurated



On September 30, 2010, the **Robert P. Kelch, M.D., Research Professorship in Pediatrics and Communicable Diseases** was in-

augurated to honor a man who has had an extraordinary impact on the University of Michigan and its health system. From 1981-94, Robert Kelch (M.D. 1967, Residency 1970) served as chair of the Department of Pediatrics and Communicable Diseases and physician-in-chief of C.S. Mott Children's Hospital. In 2003, he was named the second U-M executive vice president for medical affairs and CEO of the Health System. He retired in 2009, earning EVPMA and professor emeritus status. Janet R. Gilsdorf, M.D., a professor of pediatrics and communicable diseases, was named the first Kelch Professor.



The **Helmut F. Stern Career Development Professorship in Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences** was inaugurated No-

vember 3, 2010. Established through the generosity of Helmut Stern — a lifelong benefactor of the University of Michigan, including the W.K. Kellogg Eye Center — the Stern Professorship will advance the work of junior faculty. Stern, who was bestowed an honorary J.D. by the U-M in 2004, was recognized with the David B. Hermelin Award

for Fundraising Volunteer Leadership in 2006. The first Stern Professor is Alon Kahana, M.D., Ph.D., an assistant professor of ophthalmology and visual sciences.



A faculty member who served as the Health System's top executive for five years was honored December 2, 2010, with the inauguration

of the **Gilbert S. Omenn Collegiate Professorship in Human Genetics**. Gil Omenn, M.D., Ph.D., is a professor of internal medicine, of human genetics and of public health, and director of the U-M Center for Computational Medicine and Bioinformatics. He served as the University's first executive vice president for medical affairs and CEO of the Health System from 1997-2002. A gift from Omenn and the Omenn Darling Family Advised Fund helped establish the professorship, held by Professor of Human Genetics and of Internal Medicine John V. Moran, Ph.D.



The **Laurence A. Boxer, M.D., Research Professorship in Pediatrics and Communicable Diseases** was inaugurated January 20. Es-

tablished in 2009 by the Department of Pediatrics and Communicable Diseases, the professorship is named for one of the Health System's most lauded

physician-researchers and recognizes his numerous contributions to the U-M and to the specialty of pediatrics. Boxer is the Henry and Mala Dorfman Family Professor of Pediatric Hematology/Oncology and a professor of pediatrics and communicable diseases. The first Boxer Professor is Steven W. Pipe, M.D. (Fellowship 1996), an associate professor of pediatrics and communicable diseases and of pathology.



When Patti Bugas Harris lost her husband, Charles G. "Bucky" Harris, to Alzheimer's disease in 1997, she joined the search for a cure for this devastating disease by endowing a research fund in the Medical School to support scientists on the frontlines. In 2009, the Harris family took its commitment to a new level; they made additional gifts that transformed the research fund into the **Bucky and Patti Harris Career Development Professorship in Neurology**. Inaugurated January 26, the Harris Professorship supports a junior-level faculty member in the Department of Neurology whose research shows unusual promise in the field of Alzheimer's disease and related disorders. Assistant Professor of Neurology Peter K. Todd, M.D., Ph.D., was installed as the first Harris Professor. —KB