

The motto for the Houghton College Class of 1975 was “Attempt great things for God; expect great things from God.” While it is impossible to remark on the expectations of Doctors Jonathan and Lois Morgan Sastic, both from the Class of 1975, it’s evident that together and as individuals they have attempted many great things for God. And not only have they attempted, they’ve succeeded.

Upon graduation from Houghton in May of 1975, Jonathan and Lois, both Biology majors, headed to medical school – Jonathan to Jefferson Medical College at Thomas Jefferson University and Lois to Albany Medical College. Lois eventually transferred to Jefferson Medical College, and together they graduated with their MDs in 1979. Together, they completed their internships and residencies in the department of surgery at the Medical Center of Delaware in 1984, before joining Oneonta Surgical Associates in Oneonta, NY, where they worked side by side from 1984 until they retired in 2018.

Many young alumni expect when they graduate that the Houghton chapter of their stories is over. Often, however, this isn’t what happens. It certainly wasn’t the case for Jonathan and Lois. Oneonta Surgical Associates was a medical practice established by two Houghton alumni: Dr. Virgil Polley, Class of 1943, and Dr. Byron Sheesley, Class of 1948. The Sastics had the privilege of also working alongside 1965 graduate Dr. Robert Davidson, and his son, Dr. Mark Davidson, Class of 1992. Their own daughter, Laura, is a member of the Class of 2009. Right up until 2018, the Sastics continued to bring Houghton student interns into their practice, including 2020 pre-med graduate Ronald Lott, now a medical student at Lake Erie College of Osteopathic Medicine.

Ronnie shared with us that he admires their dedication to medicine, the knowledge and skill that they demonstrated day after day as physicians, their commitment to their family and their faith, and their dedication to inspiring and helping the next generation of doctors. “The Sastics embody the mission of Houghton College,” states Ronnie, “in that they are talented, kind, and caring scholar servants.”

Throughout their careers, Jonathan and Lois made it their priority to run not just an exceptional surgical practice, but a medical practice firmly rooted in their Christian faith. Each member of the practice signs a Statement of Faith, and is encouraged to participate in medical missions. The Sastics and their colleagues so deeply value the work of medical missions, that the physicians are provided with salary and benefits throughout the duration of their short-term mission trips. Together, Jonathan and Lois participated in five medical mission trips, each trip lasting a number of weeks, and always taking their children along. Between 1986 and 1999 they served at Logefiel Memorial Hospital in Taiwan, Kijabe Medical Center in Kenya, and three different stints at Manorom Christian Hospital in Thailand.

Long-time colleague, friend and fellow alumnus, Dr. Robert Davidson, tells us “They shared their surgical skills with less fortunate people even when it put them or their children at risk. One memorable episode happened when their young daughter Laura was found face-to-face with an upright cobra trying to spit venom into her eyes. Fortunately, she was

rescued unharmed but it illustrates well the risks they were willing to assume on behalf of others.”

Both Jonathan and Lois were Clinical Assistant Professors of Surgery at Columbia University’s College of Physicians and Surgeons, and they hold memberships in such organizations as the Medical Society of the State of New York, Otsego County Medical Society, American College of Surgeons, and Christian Medical and Dental Society. They have been active members of Main Street Baptist Church in Oneonta for over 20 years, where Jonathan serves as organist and pianist.

The Sastics have given back to Houghton in many ways over the years. In addition to guiding pre-med students through internships at their practice, they served on President Mullen’s Science Council Task Force. Their generosity has annually supported Houghton students since 1981. They are charter members of the 1883 Society and members of the James S. Luckey Society. Their gifts have supported the Student Scholarship Fund, significant renovations within the Paine Center for Science, Highlander Athletics and, most recently, leading their 40th reunion class to create the Class of 1975 Scholarship, an endowed scholarship fund.

Lois has been recognized for her work both as a recipient of the Alpha Omega Alpha Honor Medical Society of Jefferson Medical College (1979) and the Oneonta Rotary Distinguished Service Award (1994). Jonathan was recognized alongside Lois as a recipient of the Oneonta Rotary Distinguished Service Award in 1994, and in 2019 was awarded the Sid Levine Award by the AO Fox Hospital Foundation for outstanding citizenship defined by high standards and exceptional leadership.

Of his classmate Jonathan, Dr. Jeff Prinsell ’75 asserts, “Jonathan is an academic scholar, accomplished general surgeon, talented musician, sportsman, devoted husband and father, and a devout Christian. He is a role model and inspiration to so many. His career achievements and professional lifetime of altruistic humanitarianism and Christian service in caring for and helping others makes this award so richly deserved.”

Of her classmate, Lois, Valerie (Morgan ’75) Horn shares, “Lois is an example of one who does little ‘out of selfish ambition...who in humility values others above herself.’ Her scholarly diligence, life-long pursuit of medicine, caring manner, integrity and skill caused her to become a much sought-after surgeon, especially in the area of women's health. She has been able to integrate her medicine with her deep faith in Jesus Christ both locally and in several locations globally. Lois is a unique blend of professional woman, loving wife, mother and faithful friend, who seeks wisdom from above when those roles have gotten out of balance. She has a quiet strength that has allowed her to learn, grow and flourish, using her abilities to encourage others and rejoice in their accomplishments rather than her own.”

In recognition of Doctors Jonathan and Lois Sastic’s demonstration of their firm commitment to Christ and the advancement of His Kingdom through years of tireless medical ministry both at home and abroad, in appreciative recognition of their most noteworthy service to society and

contribution to the medical profession, and with deep gratitude for their longstanding generosity to Houghton College, it is our privilege to present them with the 2020 Alumnus and Alumna of the Year Award.