



We Celebrate a Man and His Microscope

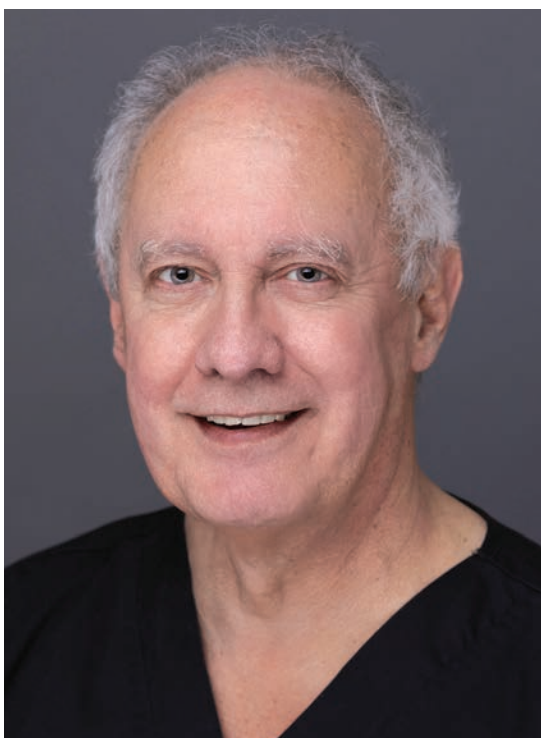
Steve McClain, MD—Hall of Fame inductee.

BY KIM RHATIGAN

All boys want toys—some want trains and some want cars. Dr. McClain was seven years old when he got his first microscope. Dr. McClain has impacted the lives of many people—from his employees to thousands of patients. He has spent his life looking through the microscope lens to diagnose and treat patients. The main theme is his compassion and commitment to taking care of others. Dr. McClain's passion has led us to a journey through the lens of the microscope from one man's dream to the reality of McClain Laboratories.

Let's turn the microscope lens around and take a look at Dr. McClain. Dr. McClain was born and raised in St. Louis, Missouri. He began his journey at Missouri State University when he achieved his bachelor's degree in Biology in 1976, *Summa cum Laude*. Dr. McClain continued his journey to medical school at the University of Missouri. He received his medical degree in May of 1982.

Dr. McClain did his pathology residency in Clinical and Anatomic Pathology at the Medical Center in Burlington, Vermont from 1982-1986. Dr. McClain spent time on the West Coast and was a staff pathologist in Bellingham, Washington in 1986-1992. Dr. McClain remained on the west coast until he went east to New York. He often refers to these years as the "lost years" where he



Dr. McClain

worked and paid off his medical school debts.

He came to New York University in 1992 to specialize in dermatopathology and did a fellowship with Dr. Bernie Ackerman, one of the world's leading experts in dermatopathology.

I met Dr. McClain in 1994 when he came on staff at Stony Brook University Hospital. I was the supervisor of the pathology laboratory. It was a very intense job, as we had 10 pathologists and 10 residents all specializing in different areas of Pathology. He was the Director of the Dermopathology Section in the Department of Dermatology at SUNY

Stony Brook from April 1994—November 1999.

Dr. McClain is a perfectionist and this is one of his best and worst traits. I didn't know it at the time, but his attention to detail would be the one thing that would separate him from the average pathologist. He would ask us to cut slides over and over again—a task that is quite maddening, actually. I remember vividly him coming into the Stony Brook lab and thinking—here he is—this is going to be another recut! This is the cornerstone of McClain Labs—trying to achieve perfection on every slide so he can properly diagnose the patient.

My first thought was, oh boy, who is this country doctor? We hit it off like peas and carrots. Dr. McClain was demanding, but encouraging. He worked with me on my first presentation ever that

I presented at the National Society for Histotechnology. He said if I did the poster, I could attend the conference with his financial support. It was a poster on Lyme disease. Dr. McClain and I worked together on images of ticks and spirochetes—long before we had cell phones and the Internet. I presented it at the National Society for Histotechnology convention and won the poster competition!

Dr. McClain continued his journey as he left Stony Brook to become the Director of Dermatopathology at Montefiore Medical Center in the Bronx from 1999-2004. We remained in contact professionally and at this

Continued on page 66

Dr. McClain (from page 65)

point, I was working in the Quality Management Department at Stony Brook University Hospital.

In 2003, Dr. McClain told me he was thinking about opening his own laboratory. I said good luck and wished him well. He was persistent and wanted me to come on this journey with him. I thought he is a madman and how can I leave my job at a top rated tertiary academic medical center to follow this man to an empty building? At this point, I was also a mom to a two-year old daughter so I was not ready to jump onto a new ship.

I wanted to be part of his dream, but I was afraid. My mother always said to climb out on the tree branch to grab a low hanging fruit. If the branch breaks, you can always climb up another tree and try again. You need to get up, dust yourself off, and find a new tree. Sometimes the branch does not break and you can get your fruit. But reaching outside of our comfort zone is hard to do. Fear holds us back. Faith comes before fear in the dictionary and that is what McClain Labs was built on. I decided to give it a try and met with Dr. McClain. What is the worst that could happen? I thought, if the lab fails, I would go back to the hospital job.

Dr. McClain is an academic pathologist. His true passion is to teach. Most pathologists are happy to spend their time behind the microscope lens and not interact. Not Dr. McClain—his true joy comes from teaching students, residents and doctors about pathology. His first speaking engagement for podiatry was a request from one of our first clients—Dr. Elliot Udell. He asked Dr. McClain to lecture at the former Cherry Blossom meeting in 2011. I was overwhelmed with gratitude and Dr. McClain has not looked back since! He continues to be a national and local speaker for the podiatry profession.

Dr. McClain has authored over 100 publications. He donates his time to helping others and giving back to the profession; and his fierce dedication to the podiatry profession and his commitment to excellence have been the driving forces of McClain Laboratories. We will celebrate our 20th year in 2024 and I am so proud! From

his humble beginnings as a “country doctor”, as he calls himself, to being a leader in the podiatry profession—it truly a dream come true. He teaches us all to put others before ourselves.

Dr. McClain is an avid reader, coin collector, and lifelong baseball fan—a huge fan of the New York Mets and St. Louis Cardinals. He enjoys teaching students and residents. Dr. McClain spends time with his wife Shelley (Dr. Shelley Tepper—fo-

Steven Kravitz, DPM, President, Academy of Physicians in Wound Healing

Congratulations to Dr. McClain for this award. There's no one more deserving of receiving this prestigious honor. He is indeed a terrific educator and continues to educate endless numbers of physicians, podiatrists, and other providers in wound healing, biopsy technique, etc. I also want to thank Dr. McClain very much for his support of the APWH. We

Dr. McClain's fierce dedication to the podiatry profession and his commitment to excellence has been the driving force of McClain Laboratories.

rensic pathologist), their five children, and two grandchildren. His wife is the co-Medical Director. All of his children have worked at McClain Laboratories throughout the years—a family business by definition! His sister Carol McClain joined us in 2020 as the Midwest Sales representative.

I have an attitude of gratitude to be part of Dr. McClain's dream and part of his family!

Tributes

Andrew Shapiro, DPM, Past President, NYSPMA

Congratulations to Dr. Steve McClain on his receiving *PM's* Lifetime Achievement Award and his election into the Podiatric Hall of Fame! This award is well deserved. I have known Steve on a personal and professional level for over 15 years. His support of the podiatry profession is unsurpassed. He has educated countless numbers of podiatrists on dermatopathology of the foot and leg through his scientific lectures and workshops. He has also supported the profession, including students and residents, with numerous grants. His great teachings on the use of dermatoscopy and his knowledge of wound healing has elevated the skills of the entire podiatric profession. Congratulations to his family, and his work family, especially Kim Rhatigan and Paul Langer on this achievement.

look forward to continuing to work with him. Congratulations on this well-deserved recognition.

Allen M. Jacobs, DPM, St. Louis, MO

Dr. McClain has proven himself to be an enthusiastic supporter of podiatric education through his grants and time dedicated to preparing and presenting lectures at scientific sessions throughout the country. He has pioneered investigations into the complexities and challenges of commonly encountered pathologies such as ulceration, and offered potential solutions to these problems. He has adopted podiatry as his second profession and energizes those in his presence with his scientific inquiries and personality. Additionally, his selection of candies and sweet treats which he is constantly providing deserves him the title of Candyman. We are fortunate to have an accomplished pathologist as a patron and thought leader of our profession. Congratulations for a well-deserved recognition of your efforts on behalf of our profession Dr. McClain. And keep the sweet treats coming!

Ron Guberman, DPM

Congratulations to Dr. Steve McClain for his well-deserved induction into the *PM* Podiatry Hall of Fame. Dr. McClain has been a great friend to me, our profession, and the podiatry residents. He has lectured and

Continued on page 68



Dr. McClain (from page 66)

provided biopsy workshops for many local and national podiatry groups, national conferences, and has spent a great deal of time with my residents every year, coming to my hospital and our clinics. He provides professional and candid insights and pearls concerning all aspects of dermatopathology that are invaluable to our practice and ongoing education.

Nicholas D'Angelo, DPM, NYSPMA Vice President

Dr. McClain has been and continues to be one of the biggest supporters of our profession. As an individual he is not only well versed in pathology, but is also a true professional. It is not unusual for him to personally get on the phone with the ordering podiatrist if there are any questions or concerns about a specimen. He also initiates phone calls when he feels there is a need to speak about a patient and other symptoms that may not have been reported on the intake form.

With respect to financial support, his generosity seems endless. He has largely supported a great number of our activities, meetings, etc., that we

bounds. It has been my pleasure to have the opportunity to work with him on patient care, and his deep knowledge and selflessness have profoundly benefited multiple patients. I am constantly inspired by his energy and dedication to the podiatric medical community. I wish to extend my best wishes to this wonderful doctor who exemplifies what quality truly is.

Sandro Frasca, DPM, NYSPMA, President

On behalf of NYSPMA and all its divisional components, I would like to congratulate Dr. McClain on receiving *PM's* Podiatry Lifetime

large, anonymous corporate entity. That is peace of mind that can't be quantified but that I sure would not want to be without. Congratulations to Dr. Steve McClain—this is a recognition that is very well-deserved!

Elliot Udell, DPM, Hicksville, NY

Congratulations to Dr. McClain on getting this very prestigious honor. It is my honor to have worked with Dr. McClain for the past ten or more years. Dr. McClain started his career as a dermatopathologist serving the needs of dermatologists. When introduced to podiatry, he had to learn how to address all of our needs and focus on the

“Dr. McClain is not just a person who reads pathology slides but is a real “*mensch*” (good person).”—Udell

Achievement Award. Dr. McClain has been a longtime strong supporter of our association and profession of podiatry. He also understands the importance of being a part of a national organization like the APMA. It is my honor to represent our New York members in sending him our best

cases that we would present to him. Some were mundane such as onychomycosis and others were more serious such as skin cancer. He rose to this challenge. He spent countless hours in the offices of podiatrists and communicated with us at podiatry seminars. He now lectures all over the United States at podiatry conferences and seminars and has keenly focused on our profession's needs.

Dr. McClain is not just a person who reads pathology slides but is a real “*mensch*” (good person).

“His lectures are always top notch, informative, and relevant.”—D'Angelo

have come to expect him in attendance all the time. His lectures are always top notch, informative, and relevant. They are always specifically geared toward our needs. I am sure I speak for everyone when I say he is more than a supporter of our profession, he is an intimate friend. Dr. McClain's election into *PM's* Podiatry Hall of Fame is well deserved! Congratulations Dr. McClain!

Karen A. Langone, DPM

Congratulations to Dr. McClain, the ultimate podiatry partner, on his election to the *PM* Podiatry Hall of Fame and receiving the Lifetime Achievement Award! It is incredibly well-deserved. A gifted clinician, pathologist, researcher, educator, supporter of podiatry, and friend, his intellect and call to service know no

wishes. Thank you, Dr. McClain, for all you have done and continue to do for the profession of podiatry.

James R. Hanna, DPM, Past President-New York State Podiatric Medical Association

Steve McClain and his lab have been a great boon to the profession of podiatry. From the quick and comprehensive reports that I receive (which give me a great deal of confidence when they form the foundation of my treatment plan) to the generous educational support that bolsters our collective knowledge of pathology, McClain Labs has been an absolutely invaluable asset. Another wonderful characteristic is that I feel as though I'm conversing with a trusted colleague rather than dealing with a

Patricia Nicholas, DPM, Past President, NYSPMA

Congratulations to Dr. McClain for receiving the *PM* Podiatry Lifetime Achievement Award. His embrace of the podiatry Profession is to be commended. His passion to educate and bring awareness to the many dermatological pathologies affecting the foot can be felt every time he lectures. His support of the profession is evident by his willingness to conduct hands-on workshops. He can only continue to elevate the profession. This recognition is well deserved.

Beth Klawitter, DPM

I met Dr. McClain a few years ago at a FAPA meeting. At the time, I was using a different lab and wasn't happy

Continued on page 70



Dr. McClain (from page 68)

with the reports. I was impressed with his lab reports as they were actually the patient's pathology and not a picture from a book. My patients also enjoy the reports because they are in color and very thorough. He calls when there

the past 12 years, I have been amazed at the pain-staking efforts both he and his staff put forth in reviewing and documenting specimens submitted and communicating with the practitioners. Dr. McClain is a "gem" in the medical profession as a person and as a top-notch dermatopathologist.

profession. He adds a personal touch to patient care and his support for podiatry as a whole is invaluable. He has allowed me to treat my patients better in a more effective and efficient manner and also has supported the profession in an above and beyond way. This award is well deserved. Congratulations. **PM**

"Podiatry has a true friend, advocate, and educator in Dr. McClain."—Stones

is something unusual about the specimens, which is unique because no other lab has ever done that. Dr. McClain is a powerful ally for podiatry!

Gary Stones, DPM, Past President, NYSPMA

I can think of no one better qualified to receive this award than Dr. Steve McClain. Having known Dr. McClain, and utilized McClain labs for

His dedication and support to the podiatric profession and commitment to education are unparalleled and more than worthy of this accolade. Podiatry has a true friend, advocate, and educator in Dr. McClain. Congratulations, Steve.

Jackie Prevete, DPM

I would like to thank Dr. McClain for all of his years of service to this



Kim Rhatigan is a certified histotechnologist with the American Society of Clinical Pathology. In 2004, she became McClain Laboratories' first employee when Dr. McClain opened the lab. Kim was the histology laboratory supervisor and is still responsible for the New York State Department of Health Inspections every two years. In 2009, she was promoted to the Marketing Director to grow the laboratory. Kim is a certified Professional in Health Care Quality (NAWQ) and recently obtained her Laboratory Safety Qualification with ASCP (2021).