

## Obituary

### In Memoriam: Noel Cohen



Dr. Noel Cohen passed away on 19 February 2019. He was a friend, mentor, exacting surgeon, educator, husband, innovator and leader. I was fortunate enough to have been in his residency program and then to have been the Neurotology Fellow at NYU/Bellevue. I remember very clearly the day when he asked that I stay on as Faculty. His words to me, "you could make more money in private practice but you belong here with us. It will be very hard work, it will affect your family life, but in the end you will be very satisfied," ring true to this day. With Dr. Cohen's guidance, I made the right decision and I am forever grateful. Dr. Cohen served as Department Chairman of the NYU Medical Center's Department of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck surgery from 1980 to 2002. Prior to this time, he was on the faculty under Dr. John Daley and was acting chair on Dr. Daley's departure.

A native New Yorker, Dr. Cohen completed his BA in 1951 at the University Heights College in the Bronx and went on to study medicine in Utrecht, Holland until 1957 when he obtained a doctorate of medicine. It was also in the Netherlands that he met his wife, Baukje. His son Mark, daughter-in-law Sheila and two grandchildren live in Denver, Colorado.

His time as a civilian was interrupted by a period of activity as an officer in the US navy from 1957 to 1959. ENT residency followed until 1962 at the NYU School of Medicine and Bellevue Hospital.

Dr. Cohen held many academic and clinical positions in the following years, including Professor of Otolaryngology, Chairman of the NYU Otolaryngology

Department, Acting Dean of the New York University School of Medicine from 1998 to 2000, and President of the New York University Hospital Center.

He not only served as our department chair, but was notably one of the earliest pioneers of cochlear implants and auditory brainstem implants, and was recognized as one of America's leading experts of acoustic neuroma management and cochlear implantation. He received many awards during his career and was an invited lecturer all over the world. The Europeans were particularly fond of him. In 2003 he received the prestigious Honorary Doctorate from Albert-Ludwigs University in Freiberg (pictured above).

Dr. Cohen's distinguished medical career and research in the field of Otolaryngology/Neurotology have helped pave the way for our department and Otolaryngologists across the globe. He started the NYU Langone Cochlear Implant Center in 1983 with Dr. Susan Waltzman, which today hosts one of the largest clinical and research teams in the world. He made seminal contributions to hearing preservation acoustic neuroma surgery. Most do not know that Dr. Cohen was also a superb pituitary and head and neck surgeon. The clampless/tieless thyroidectomy technique taught us much about hemostasis and soft tissue handling.

Noel also loved classical music, skiing and gardening. We could always reach him on weekends in his country home in Ashley Falls, Massachusetts. Rumor has it that he built a temporal bone drilling station at his country home where he taught himself complex lateral skull base surgical technique. He had a number of health related "near misses" toward the end of his surgical career, but always seemed to recover well and get back in the saddle, exhibiting tremendous fortitude and stamina.

Dr. Cohen will be greatly missed and his contributions to medicine and science will live on in those who were fortunate to have worked and trained with him. Because of Noel's legacy, the NYU team has built on a strong foundation.

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