

AMERICAN GASTROENTEROLOGICAL ASSOCIATION INSTITUTE

Our New President—Mark Donowitz, MD



Mark Donowitz, MD

Mark Donowitz will be taking the helm as the 101st President of the AGA. It is a great pleasure to introduce the membership to its dynamic new leader. Mark is a sincere and direct individual whose enthusiasm, passion, drive, and energy will continue to propel the AGA forward. He is a man who likes to get things done and will work tirelessly with others to define and then reach shared goals. Mark works intensely and will have high expectations for himself. Where did this passion come from? The best place to answer this question is to start at the beginning and develop an understanding of the values and drive behind our new President.

The Early Years

Mark is a first-generation American. His parents, Saul and Francis Donowitz, emigrated from Russia to New Jersey, where they started a chicken farm. There is

no doubt that Mark's early ambitions were kindled by his mother's firm belief in her children, coupled with a passion for education as the ticket to a better life. Much of that belief in education came from the success of her brother, who persevered against anti-Semitism in Montreal to gain access to medical school and ultimately to become an internationally renowned surgeon in reconstructive hand surgery. When it came to her children, Francis Donowitz was a force to be reckoned with. Rather than have Mark attend the local one-room country elementary school, she marched him to the school board that governed admission to the stronger schools in the district and told the administrators that she would do them a favor: if they accepted Mark into their school, their scores would rise and the school's reputation would improve. Mark's energy and focus manifested early. In

the fourth grade, he finished all the workbooks for the grade level early in the year so he was moved to the fifth grade. Mark, along with his brother Jerry and his sister Arlene, soon shared their mother's vision that they could move beyond the chicken farm. All three siblings are now successful physicians.

Fueled by Francis Donowitz's inability to believe that failure was possible for her children, Mark was convinced that anything was possible if he kept his eye on his goals and worked hard. Mark attended Brandeis University where he was a chemistry major and graduated in 1964 magna cum laude and Phi Beta Kappa. Mark took part in an honors research project in biochemistry, experiencing vigorous application of the scientific method.

Mark formed a less positive opinion about research when he joined the Johns Hopkins University Medical School. He was turned off by required research projects that were little more than conventional laboratory exercises, and he felt that to do research projects without being taught the basics of biochemistry and microbiology did not make sense. As a result, Mark assumed he would enter clinical practice. Even during the first year of his gastrointestinal (GI) fellowship, he discussed these plans with his uncle, who had served as a role model. By a convergence of events, this plan was scheduled to change dramatically.

Jackie, Michael, and Paul

During the summer vacation following Mark's first year in medical school, he went to Washington DC, to attend a classmate's wedding. When his hotel plan fell through, he ended up sleeping on the floor of a classmate who set Mark up on a blind date with his sister, Jackie Marx. Apparently Jackie's parents were asking her brother to find a "normal" date for their daughter who had been gravitating toward the type of 1960s activist college students that worried parents. Jackie and Mark were wed in 1967, and Mark says that this is what he is most grateful to Johns Hopkins for!

Before returning to the timeline of Mark's career, it is important to understand the wonderful family dynamics that are part of Mark's life. Jackie's concerns for the underserved and disadvantaged have permeated her activities and career. Trained as an educator, Jackie has followed the administrative route heading schools for children with learning and emotional disabilities. Jackie and Mark are incredibly proud of their two children, Michael and Paul, both as outstanding people and professionals. Michael practices security law in Boston. Mi-



Figure 2. Jackie and Mark in the Berskshires in 2002 celebrating their 35th wedding anniversary.

chael and Tina have given Mark and Jackie three wonderful grandchildren (Jacob, Emma, and Clara). Paul practices law related to human rights and labor issues. Mark is convinced that years of conversations around the Donowitz dinner table were among the most influential events that shaped their son's values and perspectives.

Mark's love for his wife and family is a pillar that supports all his other endeavors.

Jackie has supported Mark at all levels, allowing him to devote himself to his medical and scientific activities and offering counsel on all aspects of life and work. Mark still does not understand how Jackie managed to nurture and strengthen ties among all of their family while he was so preoccupied with his work. Part of the mystery is solved when Jackie explains that, "To love your work so much is a rare gift. Both of us share this love of our work and respect it in each other. There are also times when Mark immerses himself in family and recharges his batteries." The high point of the family year is their summer vacation in Wellfleet in Cape Cod, MA, where the entire family gathers. Their home is on a tidal island, which is connected to the mainland by a small road that floods twice daily at high tide, ensuring a clean break from the rest of the world (Figure 2).

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/3297648>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/3297648>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)