

Walter J. Pories

Wesleyan '59

Oxford Cup Roll No. 083

August 2, 2018 | Oklahoma, Okla.

Walter J. Pories, *Wesleyan '52*, was initiated into the Mu Epsilon Chapter on February 19, 1949, as Roll No. 822. He is a professor of surgery, biochemistry and kinesiology at East Carolina University, as well as a retired colonel of the U.S. Armed Forces.

A Holocaust survivor who fled Germany with his family in 1939, Dr. Walter J. Pories, MD, FACS, earned his Bachelor of Arts degree at Wesleyan University in Middletown, Connecticut. He received his MD with honors at the University of Rochester where he also completed his surgical training in general and cardio-thoracic surgery. Following his appointments at the University of Rochester and Case Western Reserve, he became the founding chairman of surgery at ECU (1977–1990), where he currently serves as the director of the Metabolic Surgery Research Group.

Dr. Pories' research interests in nutrition, pediatric and bariatric surgery produced the first report that zinc is not only an essential element for plants but also animals. This discovery, made as a second year medical student, was a part of the green revolution. The addition of two cents worth of zinc to a ton of feed accelerated poultry egg laying by 45 days, finished broilers in six weeks instead of 10 and increased feed efficiency in swine by 20 percent.

On graduation from medical school, he joined the U.S. Air Force for 12 years, rendering primary care and obstetrics in France and serving as a part-time fellow in head and neck surgery at the University of Nancy. Following his internship, he returned to Rochester to complete his surgical training and serve a year as a biochemist in the Manhattan Project. Following his residency and certification, he was named chief of surgery at Wright Patterson AFB for five years of the Vietnam War.

In 1967, after 12 years as a career military officer, he returned to Rochester to found and direct the university's cancer center – a venture he repeated two years later for the Cleveland Metropolitan General Hospital.

In 1977, he became the founding chair of the department of surgery at East Carolina University, where he maintained a busy surgical practice with a focus on pediatric, thoracic and bariatric surgery.

In 1978, he joined the Army Reserve and served as the commander of the 3274th U.S. Army Hospital. He retired with the rank of colonel after 24 years of service with the Legion of Merit, and received a Presidential Citation for the performance of the regiment under his command in the first Gulf War.

In 1980, he developed the current version of the gastric bypass operation and was first to document it produced durable weight loss and the full remission of Type 2 diabetes in 83 percent of patients. To improve national outcomes from bariatric surgery, he founded the Surgical Review Corporation. He was also the first to develop a postgraduate curriculum for graduate surgical education, published through four editions.

His current research interest is the molecular explanation for why Type 2 diabetes clears within a matter of days following bariatric surgery. His group has had uninterrupted funding from the NIH for over three decades.

He served as president of the Society for Environmental Health and Geochemistry, the Association of Program Directors in Surgery, and the American Society for Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery; as vice president of the American College of Surgeons and the Southern Surgical Association; and as editor-in-chief and associate editor of several journals.

Dr. Pories is married to Dr. Mary Ann Rose, professor at the ECU College of Nursing. They have six children. The couple lives on a farm with cattle, goats, soybeans, deer, dogs, cats and even a small family of bears in the "low grounds" next to the Tar River. His hobbies include cooking, cartooning and watercolors.