

THOMAS BROWN II FEELS TRULY BLESSED

CATARACT SURGERY HAS GIVEN HIM A NEW LEASE ON LIFE

Several years ago, while driving at night, Thomas Brown II noticed that his vision seemed blurry. “I started to wipe my eyes,” recalled Thomas, 53, a lifelong musician and organist for a church in Philadelphia for the past 30 years. When he couldn’t see his sheet music or the choir director, he knew he had to get his eyes checked.

Thomas and his wife, Charlotte, went to an optical shop where he hoped that an updated prescription would sharpen his vision. “They adjusted my prescription, but I was also instructed to have a retina test,” remembered Thomas, who visited a health center for the exam. “There was bleeding behind my eyes, a sign of high blood pressure and diabetes. There were also cataracts.” Thomas was directed to Wills Eye Hospital.

In September 2021, when he visited cataract surgeon Robert S. Bailey Jr., MD, he learned that the bleeding was called diabetic retinopathy. “Diabetics often develop cataracts at an earlier age than other people,” explained Dr. Bailey. “Before I could perform surgery, Thomas needed to be assessed by a retinal specialist to determine if he needed treatment for the diabetic retinopathy.”

Admittedly, Thomas was nervous about the prospect of surgery. He was also determined to change his diet following a confirmed diagnosis of Type 2 diabetes. “I stopped drinking soda, cut out fatty foods, fried foods, sugary foods,” he said. “I changed everything. My blood sugar went from over 380 to the 130s.”

This past March, a very apprehensive Thomas went to Wills Eye to have the cataracts removed from his right eye, the first of two surgeries (he had the second procedure to his left eye several weeks later).

Thomas was put under conscious sedation with an intravenous (IV) drip. Dr. Bailey explained that this enables patients to be in a relaxed, yet conscious state.

Thomas recalled the moments just before surgery as the team of nurses and medical staff were prepping him.



Thomas Brown II, musician and church organist, at The Head Quarters Church in Philadelphia. (Right): With his wife, Charlotte.

“It’s like I have high beams. I can even read my Bible without glasses.”

– Thomas Brown II

“Everyone was so nice and friendly,” he said. “I was talking with them about New Orleans where I grew up: the seafood, red beans and rice, Mardi Gras. They made me feel so comfortable.”

As Thomas was lying on the gurney, Dr. Bailey approached him, and they started talking. “I wasn’t expecting that,” remembered Thomas. “He was telling me—step by step—what he was doing. He was putting numbing drops in my eyes and kept talking to me while I was wheeled into surgery. When he said ‘Tom, I took your cataract out,’ I couldn’t believe it.

“Dr. Bailey is awesome, his pleasant demeanor, bedside manner. And he has a lovely staff.”

Just one day after surgery, Thomas’ vision was clearer than he ever expected: “I looked at my wife and said, ‘Oh wow, honey, you’re so beautiful.’ It’s like I have high beams. I can even read my Bible without glasses.”

The surgeries have proven so life changing that Thomas is spreading the word to church members. “A lot of people are suffering and don’t realize that diabetes and cataracts can impact vision,” he said. ■■■

CONGRATS TO OUR GRADS!

Wills Eye Residency Program at Jefferson Wills Eye Hospital Fellowships



On Friday, June 24, the Class of 2022 Graduation Ceremony took place at Wills Eye Hospital.

Wills Eye celebrates the eight residents and 29 fellows for their unparalleled contributions and achievements. We wish them well and a world of success as each of these accomplished physicians embarks on the next chapter of their careers. ■■■



Residents (Front row, from left): Marisa Schoen, MD; Dilru Amarasekera, MD; William Tasman, MD Outstanding Fellow awardee Connie M. Wu, MD; Rakhi Melvani, MD; Olyya Fromal, MD. (Back row, from left): Matthew Pieters, MD; Louis Cai, MD; Anand Gopal, MD. Not pictured: Vikram A. Shankar, MD, MPH.



Retina Fellows and Attending Physicians (From left): John W. Hinkle, MD; Samir N. Patel, MD; Rebecca Russ Soares, MD, MPH; Arunan Sivalingam, MD, Director of Retina Fellowship; Carl D. Regillo, MD, Chief of Retina Service; Julia A. Haller, MD, Ophthalmologist-in-Chief.

MARNIX HEERSINK, MD, TO GIVE JAEGER LECTURE

Wills alumnus Marnix E. Heersink, MD, will address *Innovation and Entrepreneurship: Lessons Learned* at the annual **Edward A. Jaeger, MD Endowed Lectureship** on Thursday, November 10.

A cataract and laser refractive surgeon, Dr. Heersink is co-founder of Eye Center South in Dothan, Alabama.

The **Jaeger Lectureship** is named for the late, longtime director of undergraduate medical education and features leading scholars in various ophthalmic subspecialties.

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