

## Other Than Editing

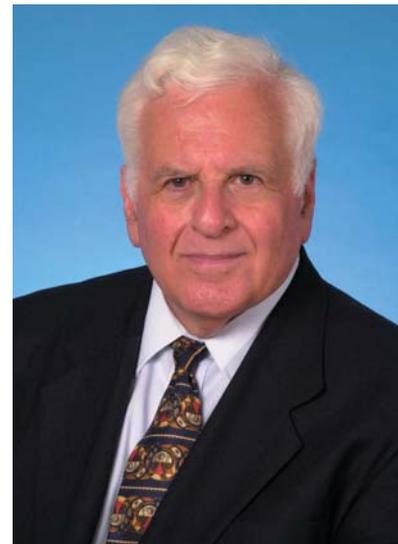
by Rita M Washko

### Lowell Goldsmith: Editor and Silversmith

For Lowell Goldsmith, the history was in place—a family in which his father and grandfather were both in the jewelry business—and so was a fundamental technical training from Brooklyn Technical High School, Brooklyn, New York. So it was no surprise when he, too, gravitated to the art of jewelry-making and metalsmithing. Goldsmith is a 67-year-old professor of dermatology and epidemiology at the University of North Carolina, editor of the *Journal of Investigative Dermatology*, and past president of the Society for Investigative Dermatology. He has a career encompassing basic science, clinical medicine, university administrative positions . . . and outside interests that embrace a quest to learn about new things and hone his artistic skills.

Goldsmith grew up in Brooklyn, where his grandfather had a jewelry and watch store and his father was a watchmaker who later became a dentist. After getting a humanities degree at Columbia College and a medical degree at State University of New York Downstate Medical Center in Brooklyn, Goldsmith trained in internal medicine at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). He then served a 2-year stint with the Public Health Service in Bethesda, Maryland, where he worked on cytogenetics and the biochemical genetics of alkaline phosphatase isoenzymes.

At that point, he decided he could best bring his interests and experience together in a research-oriented dermatology program. He then completed a dermatology residency at Harvard and ultimately worked in epidermal biochemistry and molecular biology at Duke Medical School in North Carolina from 1973 through 1981. During that period, Goldsmith had several research grants from the National Institutes of Health and discovered an inherited disease of liver metabolism (tyrosemia type II) that was correctable by diet. He spent a year at Oxford University working in one of the first laboratories dating monoclonal antibodies, returned to Duke University for a short period, and then headed north to the University of Rochester School



of Medicine and Dentistry. While in Rochester, Goldsmith was head of the internal-medicine department for 2 years and then dean of the medical school for 5 years.

Before returning to the South in 2002, Goldsmith completed a master's degree in public health at the University of Rochester. Once back in North Carolina, having changed his affiliation to the University of North Carolina, 10 miles from Duke, he became editor of the *Journal of Investigative Dermatology*, a basic-science journal that focuses on cutaneous biology and the mechanisms of skin diseases. The journal, which began in 1938, is published monthly and “has a number 1 impact factor”, said Goldsmith.

It was after his return to North Carolina that his metalsmithing hobby materialized. When Goldsmith initially looked around his community, he noted that “all these people had neat hobbies”, and so he decided to do something about this. He found a course in metalworking at a small museum in Chapel Hill and then participated in a 3-day metalsmithing and jewelry workshop at the Campbell School in Brasstown, North Carolina. And then he made his first piece of jewelry.

“He made himself a ring that he wore to the office, a silver ring with a black stone”, said the journal's managing edi-

tor, Elizabeth Blalock. It was “stunning”, and all the office staff noticed it, Blalock recalled.

The ring was made of silver and adorned with onyx and silver rope, Goldsmith said. His next project was a silver fibular pin for his wife. Then he took more classes—this time a 10-week evening course in jewelry-making and metalsmithing at Duke University. With his interest in the hobby continually increasing, Goldsmith the silversmith decided it was time to build a hobby room in his home, so he created a work area where he could cut, solder, grind, and polish his creations in a 200-square-foot upstairs room, firewall and all.

Goldsmith prefers to work with silver although he uses NuGold, a brass product, for his prototypes. Recently, he has started working with dichroic glass, a material made of thin layers of metal oxides that both reflects and refracts light. Another material he has taken a liking to is precious-metal clay, a combination of finely ground silver and clay-like material that, when heated, produces a product that is malleable like clay but is 99% silver. “Because of my science background, I’m interested in new materials”, Goldsmith said.

While developing his artistic skills, Goldsmith created his personal “signature”, what he calls his “nature symbol”. The symbol appears on many of his art pieces and consists of horns on the upper side, fronds of a plant on the bottom portion, and the Hebrew letter shin ש which is part of the word for “name” and refers to G-d (these pieces can be viewed at [www.goldsmiths-silversmith.com](http://www.goldsmiths-silversmith.com)). The symbol thus includes “animal, vegetable, and spiritual elements”, Goldsmith said.

Blalock commented that her boss “works in big concepts, both in his research interests and in the way he looks at life, and he can connect these things with something tangible”. For example, Goldsmith chose a picture of an Inuit direction marker (inukshuk) to accompany an article on research milestones, having been moved by its meaning as a compass in life, Blalock said.

Symbols that capture a larger picture, such as that of a culture or a spirituality, are important to Goldsmith. He professes to “love Jewish art and Jewish calligraphy”. One art piece that reflects his admiration of Jewish spirituality is a spice box that he created. In a ceremony at the end of the Jewish sabbath, a spice box is passed from person to person, Goldsmith explained. The box has a lid so that various spices can be placed inside; it has openings so that the aromas can escape; and it typically has a flag on it to note the fact that spices came from countries around the world. His spice box, a 3-inch by 2-inch creation made of silver, has cutouts—openings—that are the Hebrew letters for *spice* and representations of nutmegs and cloves.

For Goldsmith, the world around him serves as a never-ending source of possibilities for his art work. “I look for designs around me”, he said. “The hardest part of the art is the design”, he said, although “the technical part is challenging.” And when he comes up against a challenge, he has many books, catalogs, and Google images that he can consult. Also, there are instructors and other courses he can turn to for answers. But, when it comes to a “reality check”, the best source is his wife, said Goldsmith.

While working through some ideas for unique candlesticks, he ran a particular possibility by his wife. She then put it into perspective. “But the candles will drip all over them”, she told him. “Who is going to clean them?” At that point, Goldsmith knew that it was time to get back to the drawing board.

Goldsmith’s jewelry creations have thus far been given as gifts. Just before Christmas, he presented two editorial assistants from his office with a silver pin in the form of his “nature symbol” and a NuGold cup that serves as a paper clip container. The managing editor received a silver pendant that had his nature symbol. He has also made jewelry for his wife and his family. And Goldsmith has made a piece as a special request—a pendant for a friend who wanted a special gift for his wife on Valentine’s Day.

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The pendant was oval with silver on top and NuGold on the bottom. Two hearts—one that was a cutout and the other a pasted-on NuGold heart—adorned the center of the piece. The gift was so well received that Goldsmith's friend insisted on payment. Goldsmith declined, accepting instead a photograph that his photobuff friend had taken and had framed.

Goldsmith sees both similarities and differences between his jewelry-making and metalsmithing and his professional role as editor. Both are challenging, and design is very important—on the one hand for an inspirational piece, for example, and on the other, for a good article. Both are held to high standards, Goldsmith added, and precision and measurement play crucial roles. For metalworking, he often works on a project in which fractions of a millimeter are involved; with scientific articles, accuracy and clarity are a must. A major difference, however, is that metalworking is a solitary process whereas working for a scientific journal involves lots of interactions with reviewers and those with a stake in the article and thus is very social.

Goldsmith views his professional activities and his metalworking hobby as “complementary” parts of his life although he quipped that “my journal and my day job interfere with my hobby”.

Blalock would agree. With a warm laugh, she noted that Goldsmith and his wife are “continual learners, they are very dynamic people”. She added, “It's hard to keep track of his work schedule, let alone his outside schedule.”

Goldsmith's long-term goal with his jewelry-making is to create a “small number of pieces of museum-quality art with a Jewish theme”. In particular, he would like to create ceremonial Jewish art for the home whose quality is such that “if I donate it, it won't end up in the attic”. For now, he takes great pleasure in making pieces of jewelry for family and friends. “I love it when people wear my things”, he said.

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