Bernie Kershner ‘64

Hometown: Avon, Connecticut
Education: Bachelor’s degree from Bethany College; master’s degree in public administration from the Sloan Program
Career: Kershner began his career in hospital management and ultimately became a pioneer in the field of ambulatory surgery. He was a founding organizer and the first non-physician member of the Federated Ambulatory Surgery Association, and past president of the Accreditation Association for Ambulatory Health Care, the nationally recognized accreditation organization for all types of ambulatory health care.

Bernie Kershner was first exposed to the health care system as a young boy in Brooklyn, New York, where his father was a prominent surgeon. Kershner would often accompany his father to the hospital on weekends and on post-op visits to patients’ homes. “I had the chance to observe him and listen to patients express gratitude and awe for the care they received,” he said. “That made an indelible impression on me as a youngster and clearly was part of the inspiration for my career.

“Hospitals and operating rooms were much less restrictive back then,” he said. “My father took me to watch my first abdominal surgical procedure when I was 10 or 11 years old. He was removing a tumor the size of a grapefruit. I will never forget that—it was quite an experience.”

Kershner was attracted to the Sloan Program, then part of the Graduate School of Business and Public Administration, because of its broad academic offerings and highly charged classes.

“What I liked about Sloan was its ability to provide an academic framework for almost any career in health care,” he said. “And it was a comfortable environment in which to grow, experiment, and find out more about yourself.”

For the first decade of his career, Kershner followed a fairly traditional path in hospital management. He rose to the position of CEO of the Albert Einstein College Hospital in New York by age 31. In that position and because of personal and professional curiosity, he had the opportunity to visit the first free-standing out-patient surgery center located in Phoenix, Arizona.

“I came back from the trip inspired by what I had seen,” he said. He went on to found several companies—the most recent of which was the ASC Network Corporation—that owned and operated ambulatory surgery centers across the country. Kershner was also instrumental in creating an environment that shed positive light on the emergence of the ASC industry.

Today he serves as chairman of Health Resources International, LLC, a consulting company in Farmington, Connecticut, and chair of the Board of Trustees of the AAAHC Institute for Quality Improvement in Skokie, Illinois.

“There was a spirit of focus and passion at Sloan. ‘Passion’ is a word I try to live my life by. That had a basis in the experiences I had in Ithaca.”