

DR. MORTON I. BERSON

Plastic Surgeon • Humanitarian • Artist

1896-1973



Doctor • Humanitarian • Artist

A 16-page commemorative booklet

Statement by Professor Asher J. Matathias

Board Member, Richard M. Brodsky Foundation

President, Five Towns B'nai B'rith

I commend Richard Brodsky for preserving the extraordinary legacy of his great-uncle, Dr. Morton I. Berson. As a Holocaust survivor and advocate for Jewish history in Greece, I deeply appreciate stories that honor compassion and courage. After World War II, Dr. Berson restored the faces of Greek children with disabilities through free reconstructive surgery while earning recognition as an accomplished artist. Richard has carried that humanitarian spirit to Kenya by providing free medical care, bringing together American and Kenyan medical professionals, and supporting local artists. Their shared commitment to healing children with special needs demonstrates that kindness, dignity, and hope transcend generations and borders.

A commemorative booklet honoring Dr. Berson through both his medical and artistic works as well as his perpetual compassion for those in need.



By Richard Brodsky Foundation in collaboration with Ethan Julius

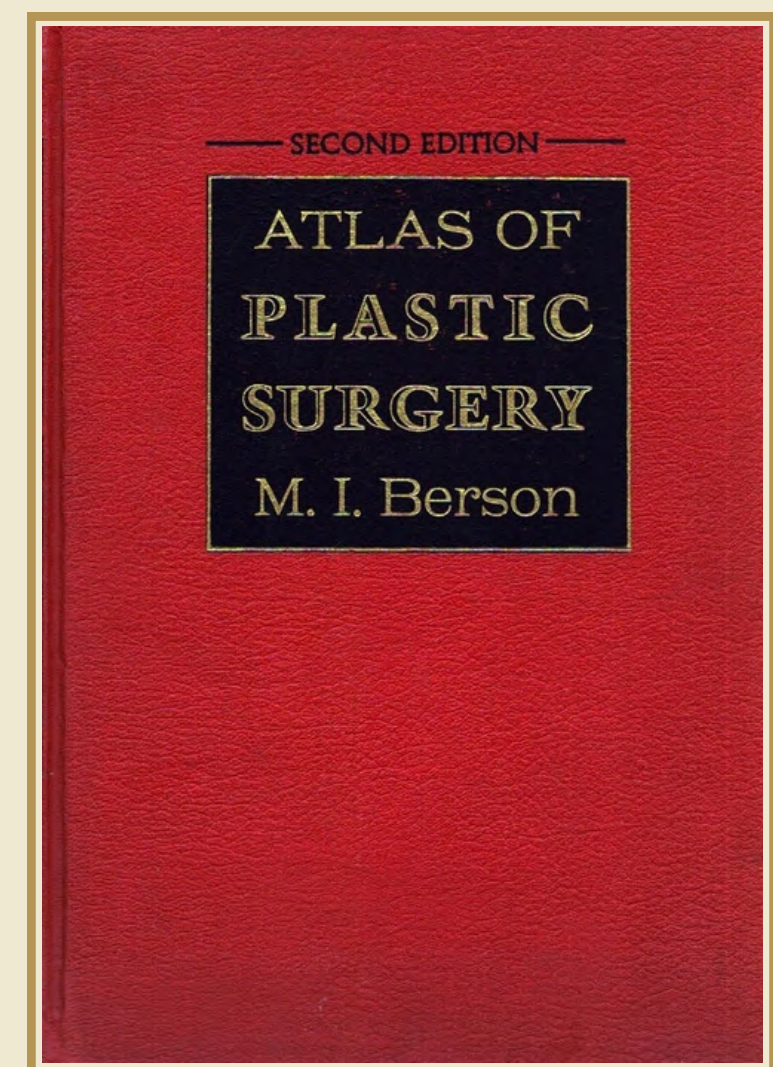
Scan for digital booklet

A Pioneering Surgeon

Morton I. Berson was a New York plastic and reconstructive surgeon whose work joined clinical practice, teaching, and humanitarian service. He led the plastic surgery department at Wickersham Hospital and also served on the staffs of Lenox Hill, Downtown, and Manhattan General hospitals.

Medical and teaching record

- Chief of plastic surgery at Wickersham Hospital
- Staff affiliations included Lenox Hill, Downtown, and Manhattan General hospitals
- Author of Atlas of Plastic Surgery



Atlas of Plastic Surgery, second edition

The research materials emphasize that Berson shared knowledge as deliberately as he practiced surgery. His record included 23 journal monographs and 9 teaching films illustrating innovative techniques in reconstructive and cosmetic surgery. Those films, lectures, and written materials helped transform individual operations into instruction other physicians could study.

Surgical identity

A reconstructive surgeon who was remembered for precision, teaching, and service.

Teaching identity

A published author and lecturer who worked to make technique visible and transferable.

Greece, Turkey, and Reconstruction



Harbor scene associated with Berson's time in Piraeus, Greece

In 1950-51, Dr. Berson traveled to Greece at the invitation of officials connected with the Greek government and the Greek Embassy. He performed reconstructive operations on war veterans and children injured during World War II and the Greek Civil War, while also demonstrating techniques to local physicians. Multiple sources also place him in Turkey, where he lectured at the University of Ankara and performed similar reconstructive work at the request of the Minister of Defense.

New York

practice

Athens

clinics and surgery

Ankara

lecture and instruction

What He Restored

The research repeatedly returns to function as well as appearance: closing eyes, moving lips, grafting skin, and giving patients a path back to ordinary life.

What He Taught

His clinics and lectures were meant to leave skills behind. Demonstration, writing, and surgical films made the work portable.

Four Documented Children

Newspaper accounts preserve the human side of Dr. Berson's work. Several Greek children came to the United States for treatment, with support from Queen Frederika and the Foundation for Orphans in Greece.

Martha Stamatiadou

A Star Ledger account summarized in the research notes says Martha suffered facial burns and scarring after a shell set her family's home on fire. A later newspaper story reported that surgery allowed her lips to open and close normally again.

Yanoula Mentzas

Yanoula was injured by fragments from a hand grenade found on the street. Reports described the injury as preventing her from closing her eyes, even during sleep, before surgery.

Etaminondas Darlayanis

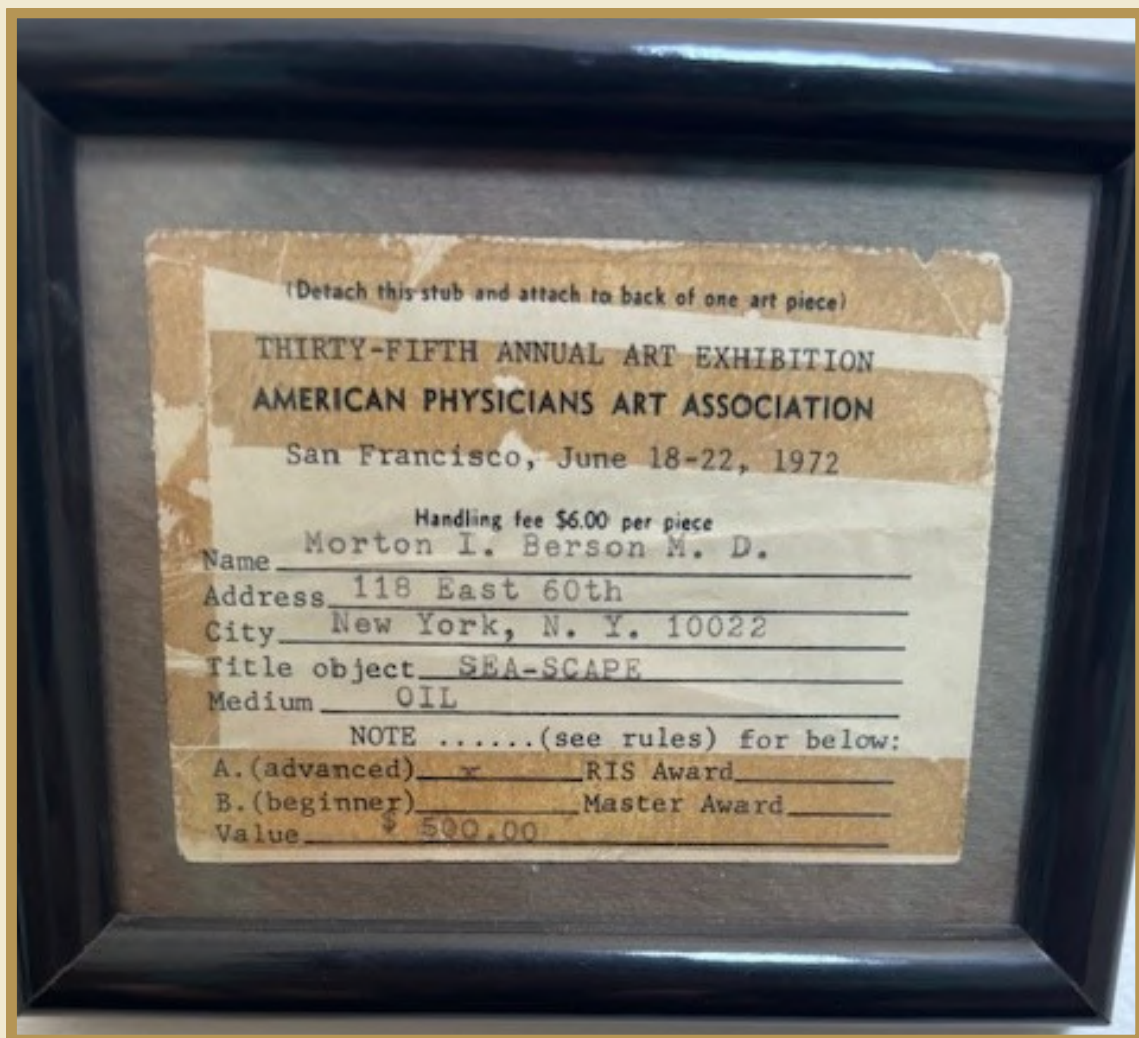
The research identifies Etaminondas as arriving on the same Nea Hellas ship as Martha and Yanoula. He was wounded when a shell burst, and he was also treated at Wickersham Hospital.

Vassiliki "Vasso" Zanou

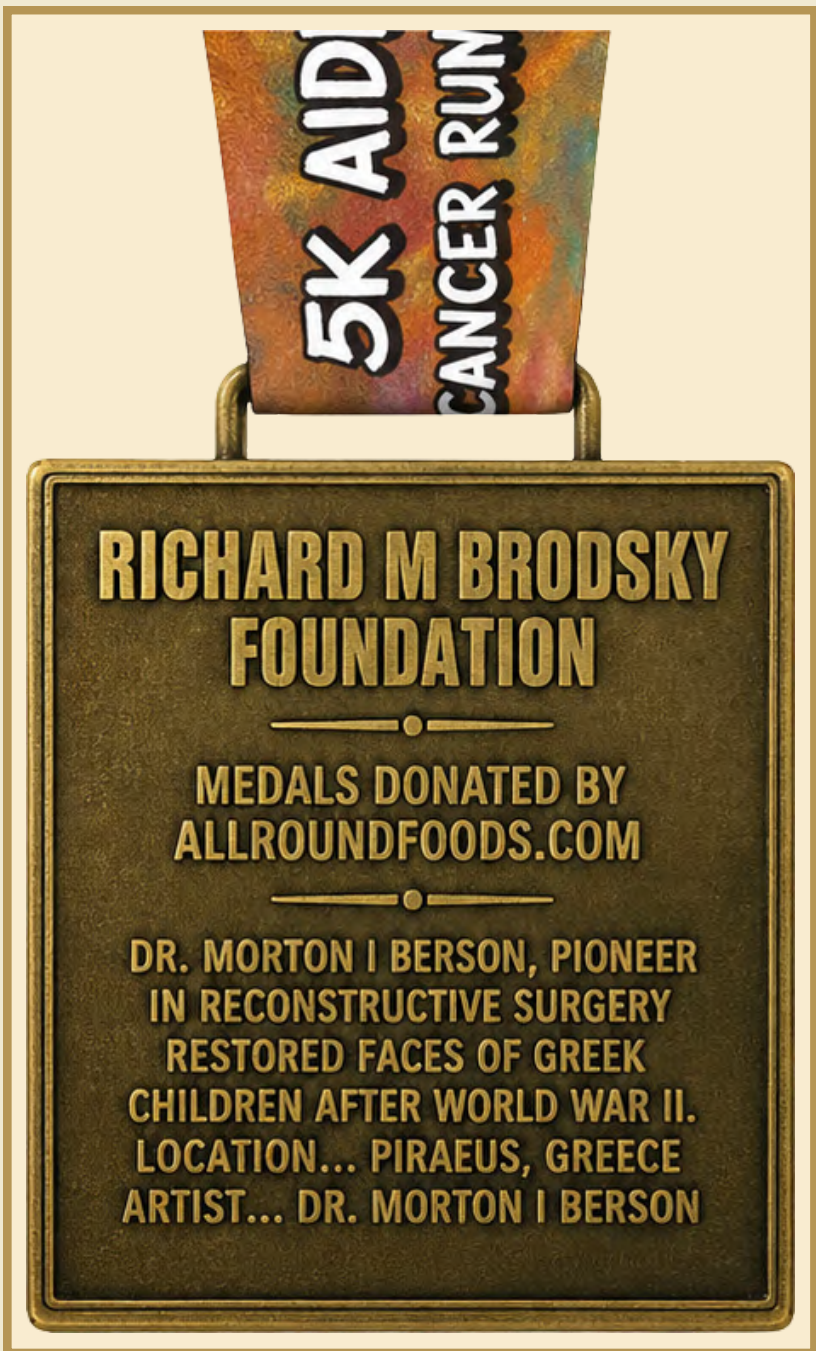
Vasso was injured as a baby by a guerrilla grenade thrown into her crib. Newspaper accounts described five operations by Dr. Berson and her return to Greece with gratitude to America and Queen Frederika.

Dr. Berson's treatment enabled speech, sleep, expression, and dignity.

Honors and Recognition



1972 American Physicians Art Association Certificate



Medal summarizing Berson's service

Berson's recognition came from both medical and humanitarian settings. His obituary notes a 1940 first award at the Scientific Exhibit of the International College of Surgeons. The research notes also report Greek honors connected to his work with war-injured children and servicemen, and his art received recognition in 1972.

1940 First award at the Scientific Exhibit of the International College of Surgeons

1950-51 Decorations from the Greek government for reconstructive work

1952 Gold Cross of George I, Medal of Distinguished Service, and Gold Cross of Phoenicia reported in research notes

1972 Award and certificate for painting at the American Physicians Art Association

The Artist Behind the Image

The same surgeon remembered for operating rooms and lecture halls also left a visual record. This harbor scene was painted in Piraeus, Greece, during the period when Berson was connected with reconstructive work there. The image now carries a second life as a representation of the global impact that the foundation seeks to achieve.

The mosaic bull broadens the story. It shows that Berson was not simply a surgeon who made a single picture; he returned to art through different materials and styles. The research file identifies the bull mosaic as a New York Academy of Medicine charity art exhibit piece, signed lower right and dated 1973.



Framed harbor painting, Piraeus, Greece



Courageous Bull mosaic, signed M. Berson

Importance of Art

Placed beside his medical accomplishments, Dr. Berson used artwork as a creative outlet through which he could express his empathy and care.

Travel, Teaching, and International Lectures

Independent records show that Dr. Berson's work extended far beyond New York. A Brazilian newspaper reported in 1954 that he arrived in Rio after traveling through several South American countries, would lecture at the Policlinica do Rio de Janeiro, show films of his work, and then visit hospitals to select surgical cases.

Rio de Janeiro, 1954

lecture and hospital visits

JAMA notice, 1955

medical research

Singapore, 1956

introduced techniques

Moscow, 1956

medical-school lecture

London, 1959

international congress

What He Taught

Berson demonstrated reconstructive techniques, showed films of his work, and used lectures to transfer his surgical knowledge.

Impact

Dr. Berson's travels demonstrate his influence as he moved through clinics, congresses, and lecture halls on several continents.

From New York, his teaching reached an international audience.

Evelyn Sarah Cooper Berson



Family photograph - Dr. Berson is 3rd from the right, first row

Dr. Berson's loving wife was Evelyn Sarah Cooper Berson. She was “Miss Kentucky” in the Miss America pageant. Mrs. Berson fueled Dr. Berson’s passion for art and accompanied him to many of his worldwide lectures.

Family remembrance

Both magazines and family records remember Mrs. Berson as "Miss Kentucky." The title points to her public presence, preserving the elegance and recognition associated with her name.

Importance

This commemorative booklet honors not only Dr. Berson's public work, but also the family life and support that surrounded it.

Family Roots and Lasting Memory



Dr. Morton Berson and Evelyn Sarah Cooper Berson at Herbert and Gladys Brodsky's 1945 wedding



Evelyn Cooper as Miss Kentucky, 1938

Morton came from a large family shaped by both closeness and loss. He had four brothers—Eli, Sam, Joey, and another brother who died after the family came to America—and three sisters: Esther, Eva, and Beverly. Five other children in the extended family never made it to America and died in Russia.

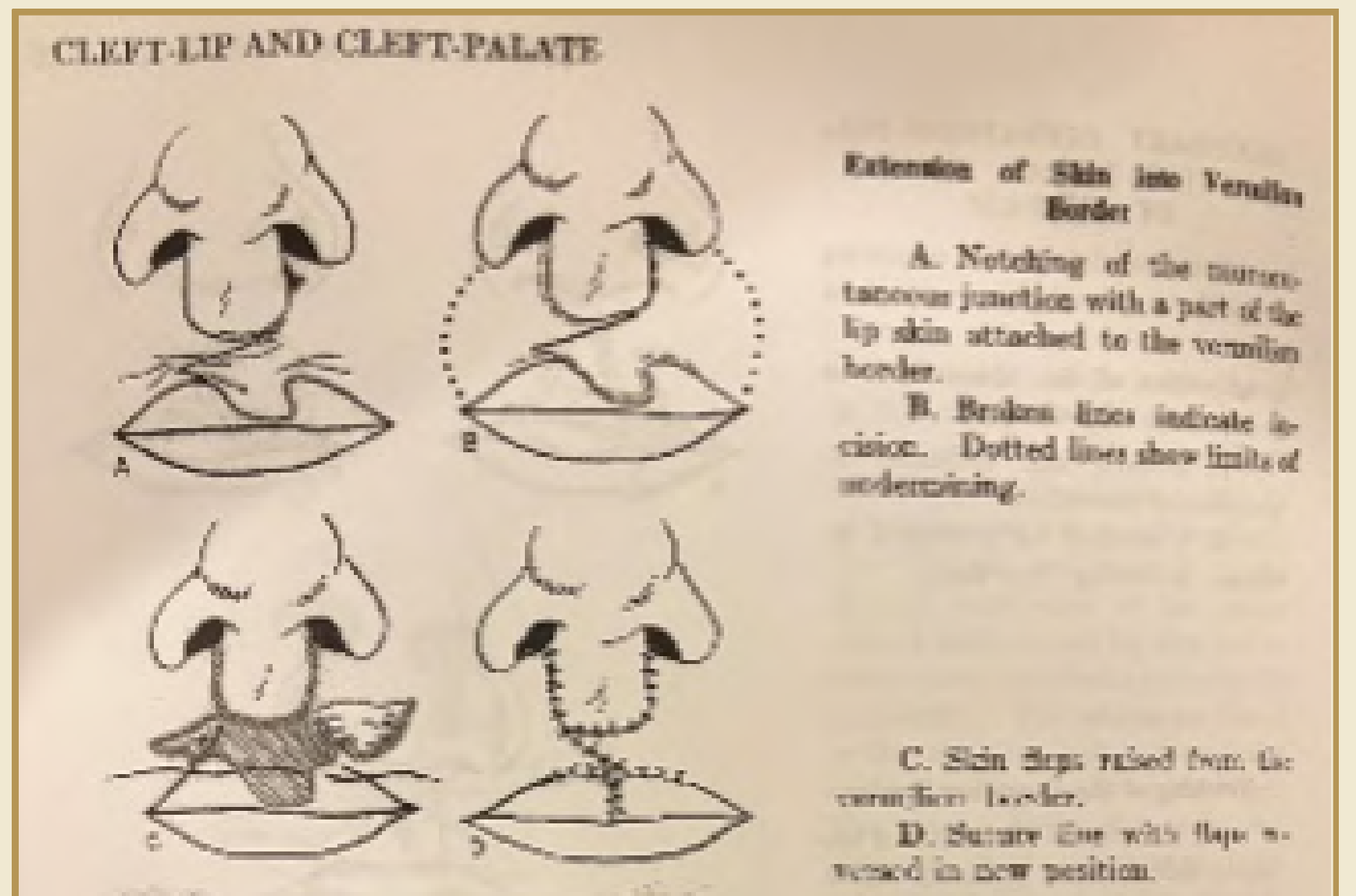
Richard Brodsky's mother, Gladys, is the only surviving cousin. Her recollections preserve a sense of how tightly connected the family once was. Reflecting on that earlier generation, the 99-year-old matriarch Gladys said, "I never knew how my grandparents were able to raise all these children and still find the money to send my Uncle Morton to college. Life was different back then, and everyone stayed close and did not move far from their parents."

Family Remembrance

- A large immigrant family bound by closeness, despite loss and hardship.
- Sacrifice and determination made it possible for Morton to pursue higher education.
- Gladys Brodsky, the last living cousin, preserves and shares the memories of a family that shaped his life and values.

A Partnership of Art and Medicine

These are sketches—and there are hundreds more—from Dr. Morton Berson’s *Atlas of Plastic Surgery*. Dr. Berson and Evelyn traveled the world together. They also hosted weekend reunions in Fishkill, NY with all the cousins.



Portrait of a Seated Woman, Evelyn Berson, Oil on Board

“I tried to find Evelyn when I was writing the book ‘Jodi, the Greatest Love Story Ever Told’ in 2002. A few years later I did find her and she told me she taught Uncle Morton how to paint. Recently, I tried researching when Morton and Evelyn were married but no records show up except in an obituary stating they were married. Best research says somewhere between 1938 and 1942 they wed. Uncle Morton’s book was first published in 1949. I can only imagine she had some input with the sketches for the book, ‘Atlas of Plastic Surgery.’ His book was a teaching manual for surgeons and I just find it amazing how he could develop and chronicle these surgical techniques. And if Evelyn really did help him, what an amazing loving partnership. They never had children so that permitted them to travel the world without worrying about kids.”

— Richard Brodsky

Miss Kentucky and Uncle Morton’s three sisters came from very different background, one a southern beauty queen and the three sisters from orthodox Jewish parents. Remarkably they got along quite well.

Evelyn was very involved with family, her art, and Uncle Morton’s work. He was also a pioneer in reconstructive surgery, and it is very likely that Evelyn Berson played a significant role in his book.

Evelyn’s Study of Art and Anatomy

According to Stephanie Cassidy, Head of Research & Archives at the Art Students League of New York:

“Evelyn Berson was a Life Member of the Art Students League in Manhattan. Records confirm that Evelyn (Cooper) Berson maintained a long association with the League. Our records document her enrollment in classes between 1947 and 1990, spanning more than forty years.

During that time, she studied life painting, painting composition, portrait painting, anatomy drawing, figure drawing, and color theory with a number of prominent League instructors, including Frank Reilly, Robert Brackman, Edwin Dickinson, Thomas Fogarty, David Leffel, Ray Goodbred, Julien E. Levi, Joseph Stapleton, John Dobbs, Terence Coyle, Daniel Dickerson, Xavier Gonzalez, Peter Homitzky, Ken McIndoe, Leatrice Rose, and Dale Meyers.”

Practice, Hospitals, and Professional Record

Directory and journal records place Dr. Berson within the New York plastic and reconstructive surgery profession over many years.

Selected milestones

- 1920 — Medical directories record "Ecl. Cinn., 1920"
- 1938 — Office listed at 941 Park Avenue
- 1939 — Office listed at 100 Central Park South
- 1941 — JAMA lists Downtown Hospital, New York:
Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery
- 1941–44 — Journal footnotes identify him as Director of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery at The Downtown Hospital and the Pan-American Clinic
- 1949 — British Journal of Surgery review refers to him as formerly Director
- 1952 — Honored with Gold Cross from Greece's King Paul and a medal of distinguished service from the Greek Minister of Defense

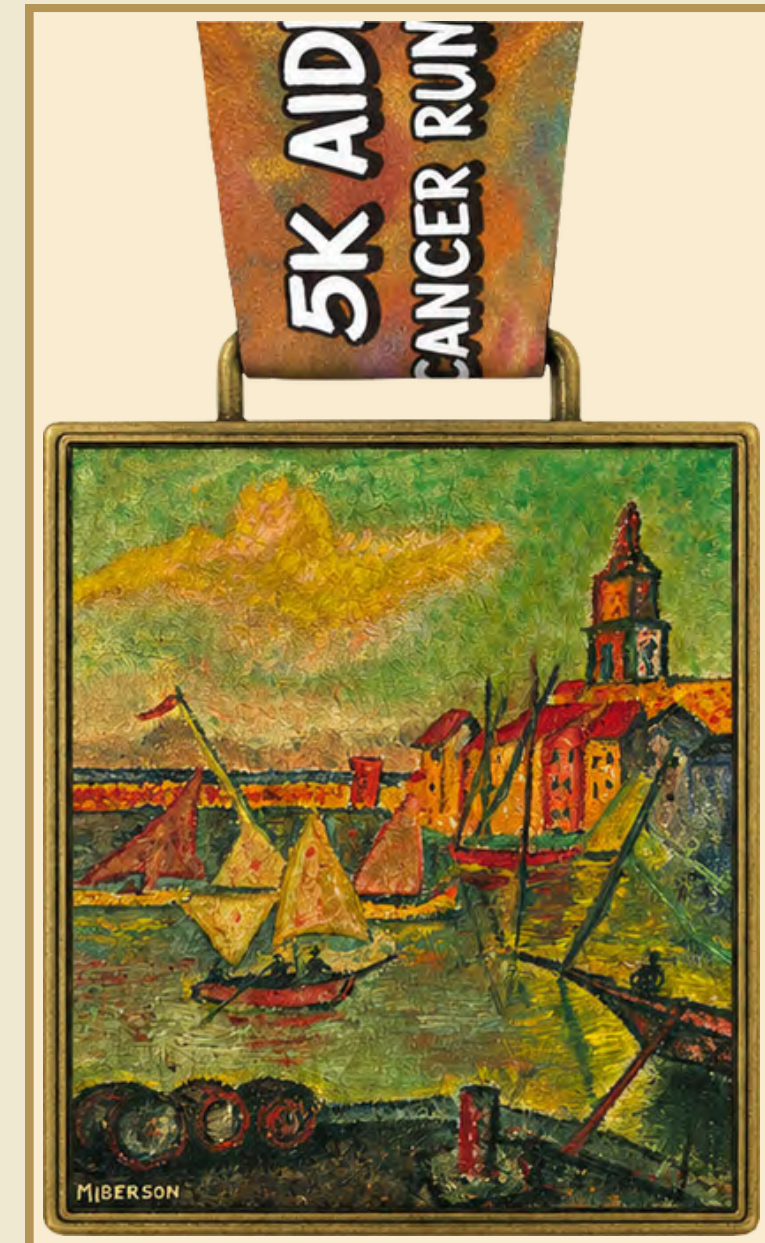
Education

The notation "Ecl. Cinn., 1920" most plausibly points to Cincinnati's Eclectic Medical Institute, though the original diploma has not yet surfaced.

A Living Foundation Legacy



Event shirts carrying the harbor image



Medal front

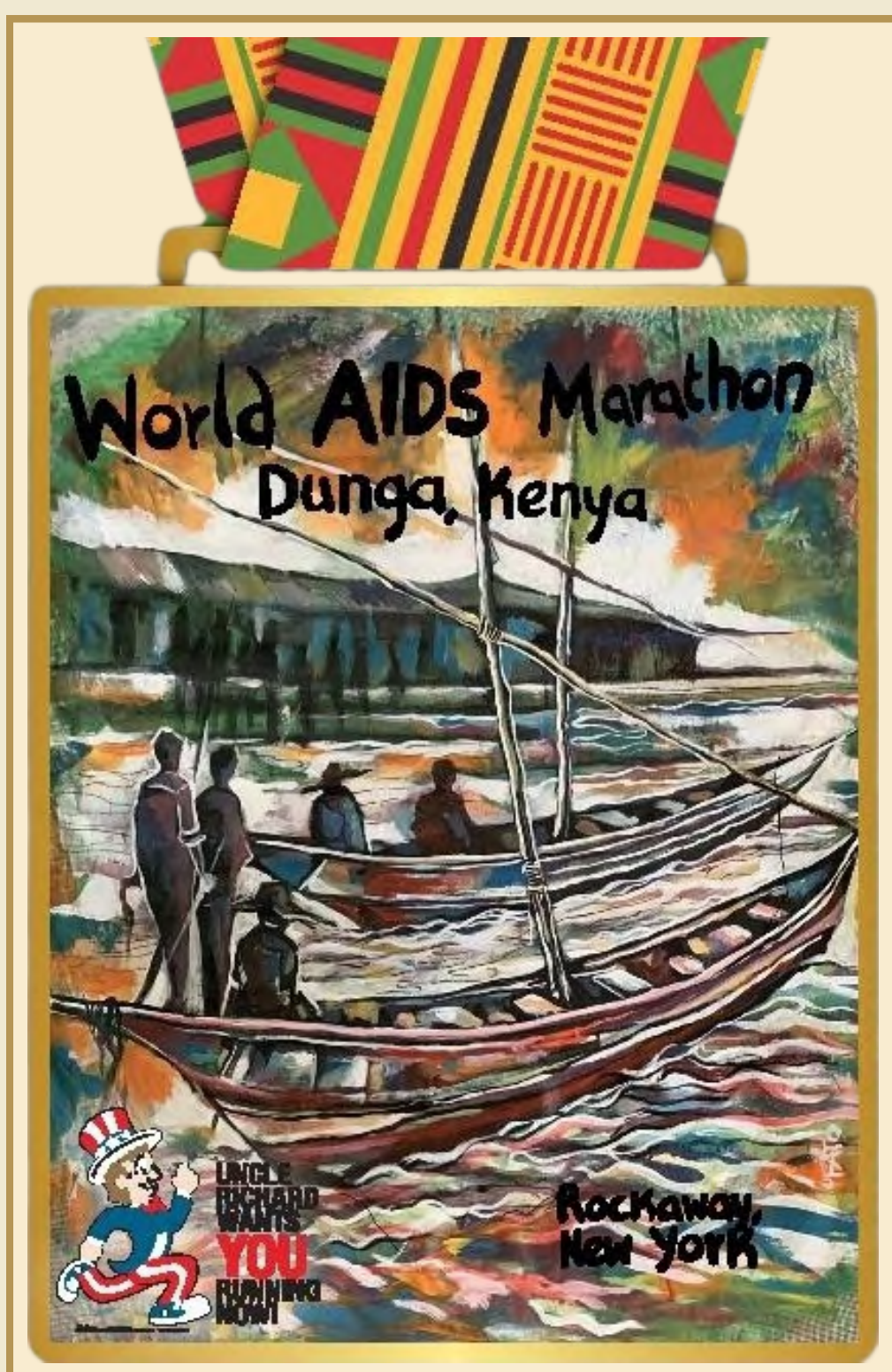
The Richard M. Brodsky Foundation keeps the image public by placing Dr. Berson's harbor painting on event shirts, medals, and race materials for the 5K AIDS + Cancer Run/Walk. Richard founded the organization after discovering the strength and purpose that running gave him while living with HIV and brain cancer. He has completed 95 marathons, while his wife and partner in the Foundation's work, Jodi, has completed 113. Together, they use their endurance, experience, and commitment to help eliminate the stigma surrounding HIV/AIDS and offer hope to people living with HIV and cancer. In this way, the painting becomes both a family memory and a public symbol of resilience, service, and lives carried forward together.

*"I know I'll be pretty like
the rest of them"*

*Martha Stamatiadou following surgery,
patient of Dr. Morton I. Berson*

Dr. Berson's Influence on the Foundation

Richard M. Brodsky often imagined what it would mean for his Uncle Morton to see the Foundation's work in Kenya. The same ideals that shaped Dr. Morton I. Berson's life—healing, dignity, and art in service to others—continue to guide the Richard M. Brodsky Foundation today.



*World AIDS Marathon medal using
2023 artwork by Edward Orato*



World AIDS Marathon shirts featuring 2024 artwork by Maurice Opiyo

Free medical care

Dr. Berson never charged for the surgeries he performed in Greece. In that same spirit, the Richard M. Brodsky Foundation brings free medical care to people in need in Kenya through a volunteer team of doctors and nurses led by Dr. Richard Sartori, who also donates the medicine used on the trip.

Dignity for special-needs children

Dr. Berson restored the face of Martha Stamatiadou, a Greek child who had been unable to smile. The Foundation carries forward that compassion carries sponsoring concerts and art lessons for special-needs children in Kenya, creating opportunities for joy, expression, and inclusion.

Art in public service

Dr. Morton Berson was also an artist. The Foundation honors that artistic legacy by inviting Kenyan artists to create the annual World AIDS Marathon shirt and matching medal designs, each centered on the theme of Dunga, Kisumu, Kenya and used to celebrate local creativity.

A Dream of Dr. Berson in Kenya

This commemorative image imagines Dr. Morton I. Berson joining the Richard M. Brodsky Foundation on its 20th trip to Kenya. In the dream, the 130-year-old Dr. Berson appears in Dunga gently pinching the face of Martha Stamatiadou, linking his memory to the Foundation's continuing humanitarian work.

"I dreamed that Dr. Morton I. Berson was joining us in Kenya for our 20th trip to Kenya."



Commemorative dream image: Dr. Morton I. Berson with Martha Stamatiadou, Dunga, Kenya.

Context

This scene is a symbolic dream image. By imagining Dr. Berson present in Kenya, it connects the Foundation's modern service work with the compassion and medical legacy for which he is remembered.

Why It Matters

The image places Dr. Berson's legacy within the Foundation's mission in Kenya, suggesting that acts of care, teaching, and healing continue across generations. Even in imagination, his presence reinforces the lasting impact he had.

Honoring Dr. Berson *at the 19th Annual* 5K Aids Cancer Run Walk



Commemorative poster presentation at 19th annual 5K AIDS Cancer Run Walk

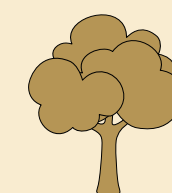
On May 31, 2026, at Baldwin Park, Richard Brodsky's 99-year-old mother was presented with a commemorative poster honoring Dr. Morton I. Berson. The tribute took place during the 19th annual 5K Aids Cancer Run walk, sponsored by the Richard M. Brodsky Foundation.

The ceremony celebrated Dr. Berson's remarkable legacy as a pioneer, humanitarian, and artist, while reflecting the values that continue to guide the Foundation's work. Through this moment of remembrance, his vision of service and compassion was carried forward, uniting family, friends, and community in support of those in need.

Event Highlights



May 31, 2026



Baldwin Park



Richard M. Brodsky
Foundation



\$8,300 donated to local
and global charities

Remembering Dr. Morton I. Berson

Selected milestones

- 1896 — Born
- 1940 — First award, International College of Surgeons scientific exhibit
- 1949 — Atlas of Plastic Surgery published/refereenced
- 1950s — Surgical work, clinics, and lectures in Greece and Turkey
- 1954 — Lectures and clinics across Latin America
- 1956 — International lecture tour under World Medical Association auspices
- 1972 — Physicians' art award/certificate in San Francisco
- 1973 — Passed on

Sources used

Family research notes; news release; obituary summaries; newspaper accounts about Greek children treated by Berson; references to medical publications, teaching films, awards, and surviving artworks. Image sources come from newspapers, museums, and other works published by Dr. Morton I. Berson.



Thank you Glen Wolther of All Round Foods for your generous donation to provide medals and print 200 books about Dr. Morton I. Berson and his humanitarian story.