



TEXAS HEART<sup>®</sup> INSTITUTE

*at St. Luke's Episcopal Hospital*

# Project Heart

Activities for the Classroom

# Spotlight on...

**Dr. William  
"Billy"  
Cohn**



**Dr. Billy Cohn** always knew he wanted to be a heart surgeon, even back in elementary school. He grew up in Houston, Texas, home of two of the most famous heart surgeons in the world—Dr. Michael E. DeBakey and Dr. Denton A. Cooley. Whenever there was an article in the newspaper about them, Dr. Cohn’s mom would cut it out for him to read over his breakfast cereal.



**Dr. Cohn with his wife, Mishaun, and son, Benjamin.**

# His desire was to be a heart surgeon,

but Dr. Cohn was not very studious at first. He always put things off to the last minute and liked to goof off. However, his brother was a science genius. Dr. Cohn eventually decided to follow in his big brother's footsteps, taking all the science classes he possibly could. He even entered science fairs focusing on heart surgery topics.



**Dr. Cohn and  
his brother, John.**

## While in college,

Dr. Cohn almost gave up on his dream to become a heart surgeon. How could a kid with crazy hair who played in a punk rock band possibly achieve something so big? Fortunately, Dr. Cohn had a summer job that gave him the opportunity to meet several surgeons. He realized they were

just like him—regular people that simply took the right steps to start a medical career.



**Dr. Cohn with his  
70s cover band,  
Disco Expressions.**

# Dr. Cohn achieved his dream

of becoming a heart surgeon...and an inventor! He is most proud of the inventions he's created that help surgeons do their jobs better. To remind himself of how far he's come, he displays his first invention on the wall: a spoon-like device that makes heart surgery less invasive. His latest invention helps prevent blood clots from forming in the hearts of certain kinds of patients. It's called the Lariat, and it looks a little like a fishing pole combined with a cowboy rope.



**Dr. Cohn & Dr. Geng  
(one of the first doctors  
to use the Lariat  
on a patient.)**

**Today,** Dr. Cohn is Director of Minimally Invasive Surgical Technology and Associate Director for Laboratory Surgery Research at the Texas Heart Institute. Don't think it's all work all the time though. Dr. Cohn plays trombone in two bands, has been on an ABC reality show called "Miracle Workers," and has five children. And if you ever meet Dr. Cohn, just ask him to do his dollar bill magic trick. It's pretty impressive.



**Dr. Cohn with his  
extended family.**