

## Sam Seifter: An Appreciation

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In 1968, I entered Robin Briehl's laboratory at Albert Einstein College of Medicine for additional training in biochemistry. While there, I had the good fortune of getting to know two of the department's luminaries, Sam Seifter and Paul Gallop. From the time they began to do science, Sam and Paul remained close, almost inseparable, friends. Each of them served as mentors and role models for a generation of fledgling biochemists. Together they exuded intellect, dynamism, warm collegiality, and a passion for scientific inquiry. They were both remarkably concerned with the development of young scientists. Their enthusiasm encompassed not only their own pioneering work on collagen but also whatever their colleagues were doing. Sam and Paul talked with trainees and junior faculty as though we were their equals. Each of them took the time to ask me what I was doing in the lab, and demanded to know details. Why had I chosen a particular experiment rather than a logical alternative? How would I interpret my results? Sam was quieter than Paul, a little gentler but equally generous with advice on which new experiments I might consider. On the rare occasion when I could show Sam promising or positive results, his eyes lit up with fatherly pride and encouragement.

I returned to Boston in 1970, and a couple of years later Paul Gallop accepted a chairmanship in biochemistry at Harvard Medical School. Over the next five years, Paul and I worked together on non-enzymatic glycation of hemoglobin and other proteins. Happily, our collaboration enabled me to maintain my friendship with Sam. For one reason or another, I had opportunities to return to Einstein every few years. No matter how busy he was, Sam went to great lengths to meet with me and to ask about my research. As I gradually branched out into new endeavors, he maintained a keen interest in whatever I was doing and continued to give me wise counsel.

Two years ago I had the great pleasure of attending and participating in a symposium at Einstein in Sam's honor. Even though I thought I knew him well, this event gave me a chance to learn of additional dimensions to Sam's persona. I had no idea he was an accomplished poet. I also saw first-hand that his imprint on young people extended way beyond his guidance of research fellows and younger faculty members. It was clear that he had a uniquely positive influence on a couple of generations of medical students who were lucky enough to learn biochemistry from him.

Albert Einstein, like Harvard, boasts a large cadre of distinguished scientists and brilliant physicians. However, there are few at either institution who understand the full responsibilities and privileges of being a professor. Sam's intellectual curiosity and zest for rigorous scientific pursuit have been infectious, spreading not only among his fellow biochemists but also to his many students. The academic climate at Einstein is so much richer for his long tenure there. Remarkably, the same can be said for his son, Julian, who has had a similar impact on colleagues and students at Harvard Medical School. I currently have the good fortune of working closely with Julian in developing a curriculum that introduces a group of bright and motivated PhD students to human biology and pathogenesis of disease. Julian looks a lot like his dad and shares his razor-sharp intellect, his quiet demeanor, and his passion for communicating with students.

There are many reasons why Albert Einstein is one of the nation's premier medical schools. Sam Seifter is surely one of them.