

Honoring Sam Seifter

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1947 was not the best time to seek admission to medical school. World War II had created a backlog of applicants, and my academic record, although good, did not suggest a long interest in medicine. In those days, admission committees sought candidates who desired to become physicians virtually from birth, or so it seemed. I had taken courses in almost every arts and science department at Harvard, and following graduation, decided on medicine after becoming disillusioned with a career in psychology. Several schools put me on their waiting list. During an interview at the Long Island College of Medicine, I met Sam Seifter, who gave generously of his time to an obviously drifting young man, provided encouragement and advice, and then shared excitement when I was admitted to medical school the following year. A year in graduate school had introduced me to protein chemistry, and I decided to become a physician and study the biochemical basis of schizophrenia. Over the following four years, Sam was my unassigned advisor, provided strength and encouragement, and guided my decision to spend the last 18 months of medical school at Harvard. Sam spontaneously offered time, interest, patience, advice and friendship, which were exactly what this struggling medical student sought. Sam was and remains a superb teacher of biochemistry; I have saved his lecture notes (long before DNA) and exams! At the time, I was not aware that I was also learning the art of mentorship from a master mentor.

In 1957, after having switched from psychiatry to medicine with particular interest in bridging advances in biochemistry with liver disease, I completed clinical and research training at Harvard and came to Einstein as an instructor to work with Irving London, who had just been appointed Chairman of the Department of Medicine. Soon after arrival at Einstein, I was overjoyed

to learn that Sam was also a faculty member. Once again, he became my advisor, mentor, colleague, and friend. We collaborated on several research projects, and with Sasha England, Sam wrote a landmark chapter on Energy Metabolism for a book I edited titled *The Biology and Pathobiology of the Liver*. With other colleagues in biochemistry, Sam became an active member of our newly formed Liver Research Center and stimulated exciting research linking hepatic fibrosis with collagen biochemistry. Sam knew the value of bridge building between basic science and clinical medicine long before the current enthusiasm for "translational research". In 1983, I left Einstein to become Chairman of Physiology at Tufts Medical School. Once again, Sam generously guided me through this challenging transition whereby a physician-hepatologist became Chair of a basic science department.

Throughout my 18 years at Tufts and in my current position at the National Institutes of Health, visits with Sam are events to look forward to. No topic of interest is set aside. Discussions include "big" science to molecular medicines, changes in education, research ideas prompted by advances in molecular, cellular and structural biology; politics, philosophy, poetry, family and personal issues. Sam's wife, Eleanor, taught music to my children in their New Rochelle school. To this day, they remember her impact on their lives. Both Seifters thrive in being sensitive, caring, knowledgeable and loving teachers, mentors and friends.

I am honored to have been asked to write these words for a special issue of the Einstein journal which Sam pioneered. All of us are fortunate to learn from a master role model, mentor and friend.