

In Appreciation of Dom Purpura I Will Never Forget Dom Purpura! A Paen to Dominic Purpura!

Ernst R. Jaffé

Distinguished University Professor of Medicine Emeritus
Albert Einstein College of Medicine
Bronx, New York 10461

I first became aware of Dom Purpura 53 years ago upon my return to Presbyterian Hospital in New York after two years in the United States Air Force. We were both on the house staff, he in neurology, ostensibly training in neurosurgery, and I in medicine. He was already very active in research, working with Dr. William Kemp Clark, a neurosurgeon with whom I had been stationed at the Carswell Air Force Base in Fort Worth, Texas. Dr. Clark was the charismatic physician who had to advise Jackie Kennedy of her husband's death on that fateful November day in 1963.

As a junior faculty member in the Department of Medicine, I next saw Dom in action as Professor and Chairman of Anatomy at Albert Einstein College of Medicine (AECOM). He had been recruited by the College's first Dean, Marcus D. Kogel, M.D., in 1967. He was immediately an outstanding investigator and most dynamic teacher for the medical and graduate students.

When the College initiated a three-year curriculum to facilitate the first wave of increasing this country's physician supply, Dom chaired the Committee on Curriculum Revision between 1968 and 1970. He volunteered to have the entire anatomy course taught over a summer!

As a hematologist, I once pointed out to Dr. Purpura, that with his name, he should have chosen that specialty. He answered that the Dean for Admissions at the Harvard Medical School had promised him immediate acceptance, if he would promise to become one. Obviously, he did not, but he still went to Harvard. However, if you look up Purpura in Medline, you get a very long list of papers about that disorder.

During my first tenure as Acting Dean, I had the privilege of consummating his appointment as Director of the Rose F. Kennedy Center for Research in Mental Retardation and Human Development in 1972. He became the successor to the founding director, Dr. Harry Gordon. In 1974, with the creation of the Department of Neuroscience, I was able to recommend him for the Chairmanship of that department to the University President, Dr. Samuel Belkin.

Despite his boundless energy and talents for teaching, he apparently wanted to run a medical school. He became

Dean of the School of Medicine and Associate Vice President for Medical Affairs at Stanford University in 1982. The administrative structure at Stanford and the distance of California from New York and his children were not to his and Penny's liking. Thus, when I became Chairman of the thirty-plus member Search Committee for the AECOM Deanship upon Dr. Ephraim Friedman's resignation in 1982 and my reincarnation as Acting Dean, he expressed his keen interest in returning to New York and the College. We spoke many times on the telephone during that period. I consulted with a good friend and colleague at Stanford who advised me that Dom was no longer shooting himself in the foot quite as often. He was perfect for the job, charming the Search Committee with his eloquence, including singing an aria for the group!

When he became Dean of the College in 1984, it was the third position in his remarkable career for which I had had some responsibility!

Dom did not want to find himself in the same position of having somebody looking over his shoulder and between him and the president or provost as he had endured at Stanford. Thus, he prevailed on the university to make him Vice President for Medical Affairs in 1987.

Despite his many duties as Dean, Dom managed to continue to edit *Brain Research*, *Brain Research Reviews*, *Developmental Brain Research*, *Molecular Brain Research*, and *Cognitive Brain Research* and *Computational Neuroscience* until 2000 in the office next to mine with one assistant. A phenomenal accomplishment!

Upon his return to AECOM, I reverted to my position as Senior Associate Dean until retiring from the full-time faculty in 1992. I appreciated the great privilege of working with him for eight years. I participated in the weekly Problems Meetings with the other Associate Deans and watched his consummate skill in treading the fine line of academic leadership, teacher, and biomedical politician. His service in his current posts for *nearly 22* years has made him the Dean with the longest tenure in the United States.

Dom is an unique individual who has certainly made his mark on American academic medicine that will be long remembered.