

In Memoriam: Dr. Abraham Lilienfeld
Sep 24 1984

LILIENFELD - 9-24-84

In 1890, Daniel Coit Gilman wrote: "Whatever gains we may make in our material condition, whatever limitations are still obvious, let us not forget, my friends, that men and methods make universities, not halls, nor books, nor instruments, important as these are." These words were a credo for the man we remember today - and often quoted by him. He uniquely gave substance to their meaning.

~~But~~ ^{Only} a very few of his host of friends, students and colleagues today have the honor to remember with you a man of uncommon qualities - first and foremost a man deeply concerned about public health and Johns Hopkins, a scientist, a teacher, an historian and a concerned human being.

~~He meant a great deal to me personally for~~
~~It was Abe, the scientist, who attracted me to Johns Hopkins as his~~ ^{epidemiologist}
~~student in 1959 and it was Abe, the colleague, who persuaded me to alter~~
~~my professional plans and return to Johns Hopkins 18 years later. My~~
~~student days, were governing in setting the directions of my own career~~ ^{with Abe}
~~as they will be recalled by others. However, none~~ ^{were for so many of my students these days}
~~today had the uncommon opportunity of working with Abe in his unofficial~~ ^{today} ^{as} ^{but} ^{they will be recalled by others. However, none} ^{who will reflect upon today}
~~capacity as counselor to the Dean and often to the President.~~ ^{One of the first}
~~lessons I was to learn~~ ^{becoming}
~~became apparent after I became Dean was that the importance of each~~
~~School and University event was subtly but explicitly conveyed by Abe.~~ ^{appraised}
~~Abe, in his shirt sleeves, attended pedestrian committee meetings. A~~
~~committee meeting of substance brought an Abe with a jacket. And,~~ ^{expected}
~~occasionally, but rarely, Abe appeared with both a jacket and a tie.~~
~~Such events were few, but clearly distinguished above all others in~~
~~substance and importance.~~

Little escaped Abe's attention and there were few problems for which he didn't have interesting solutions or innovative approaches to offer. Rarely did a week go by without the appearance of a memo ^{expressing} ~~offering~~ ^{after} pungent ^{suggestions} ~~thoughts~~ about the curriculum, public health policies or how the Dean was performing his duties. The topics ranged widely from the course of study for the MPH program, to problems of tenure policies, to how the elevators functioned. ^{Biographer of} ~~It was said of~~ Sir Winston Churchill ^{said} that he had 100 new ideas a day, of which perhaps one was workable. Abe's batting average was far higher and, as time passed, I began to realize that, indeed, many of the more improbable had sense and substance which were simply beyond the immediate appreciation of pedantic minds. Thus, there remains with us a legacy of ideas as to the future of public health, the role and values of the School of Hygiene and just what a Dean should or should not do.

Our history has been subtly - and often not so subtly - guided by the fertile mind of Abe Lilienfeld. By no means have all or even a substantial portion of his thoughts and concepts ^{been} ~~become~~ translated into substantive action - ^{Then,} ~~this~~ much in our future, no less than the past, belongs to Abe.