

## MEMORIAL RESOLUTION

### LEO ABRAHAM SAPIRSTEIN (1919 – 1969)

Leo Sapirstein was born in New York City on October 6, 1919. The outstanding mental capacity which was to characterize his professional career was already evident during his childhood. He completed his primary and secondary education in the public schools of New York and entered City College at the age of 13. He became the college's youngest graduate, and at the age of 17 he came to Berkeley as a graduate student in Physiology.

At the University of California he received a Master's degree in 1940, a Ph.D. in 1943, and an M.D. in 1946. Shortly after the receipt of his medical degree Dr. Sapirstein joined the Public Health Corps and served as Senior Assistant Surgeon at the National Cancer Institute until his appointment as Assistant Professor of Physiology at the University of Southern California in 1950. He left the University of Southern California in 1951 to join the Physiology Department at Ohio State University where he rapidly advanced to the rank of full Professor in 1955. He held visiting professorships at New York University in 1959 and at Stanford in 1962, and for a time in 1963 he was Chief of Research at Napa State Hospital. In 1963 he became Professor of Physiology in the Radiology Department at Stanford, a post that he held at the time of his death on November 16, 1969.

His preceptors at Berkeley quickly realized that this somewhat shy youngster from New York had the potential of becoming a leader in cardiovascular physiology. This was seen not only from the character of the ingenious experimental work that he was then doing on the renin-hypertensin system but also from the degree of sophistication and range of knowledge which he soon developed about the circulation. It is a tribute to his stature in cardiovascular physiology that the work which he did as a graduate student, some thirty years ago, to show that renin was a hormone, is now regarded as a classical feature of cardiovascular-renal physiology. His findings stimulated much activity in this field, not only in this country, but also in Latin America.

Although he contributed richly to his field as a scholar - some eighty original papers and a text book now in press - Leo Sapirstein would best like to be remembered as a teacher, for teaching was truly meat and drink to him. Though he received many awards and honors for his elegant experimental work and mathematical analysis of cardiovascular problems, none was as dear to him as those he received for his teaching at Ohio State, at New York University, and at Stanford given for his ability to present, organize, and challenge. In his teaching he was both the master of the grand design in exposition as well as of the subtle and scurrilous, and he was well known for his Rabelaisian wit, and for his subtle and piercing riposte in argumentation.

Apart from Physiology his abiding interest was in the beauty of the English language in which he was an accomplished stylist, parodist, and unpublished poet. In private, he never overcame the loss of his wife, Elizabeth and he devoted himself to the upbringing of his two sons, Julian and Jonathan, both of whom are undergraduates at Stanford.

He revered the university as the supreme creation of the human intellect. He believed in ivory towers of the mind, where scholarship could endure for its own sake, and he fought against the transformation of universities from intellectual forums to sordid market places.

This remarkable man leaves a legacy of warmth and wit and devotion to his family and friends; of brilliant scholarship to his colleagues; and to his students the credo of the devoted teacher, epitomized in the words of Rabbi Akiba to his pupil Simeon ben Yochai:

*"My son, more than the calf wishes to suck does the cow yearn to suckle."*

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