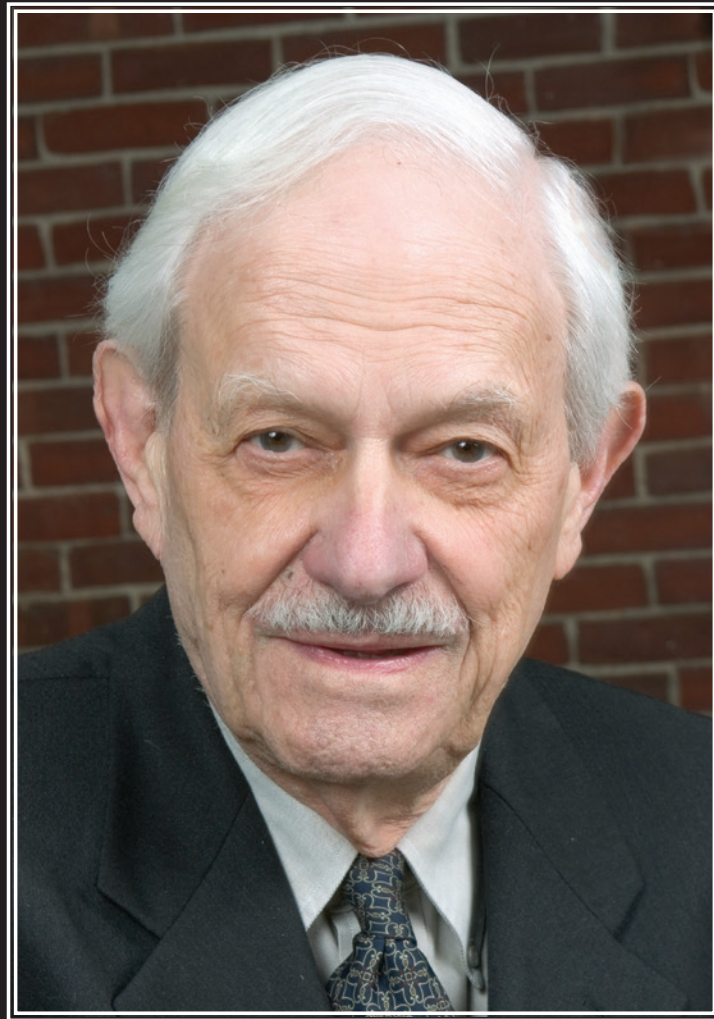


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MEDICAL JOURNAL

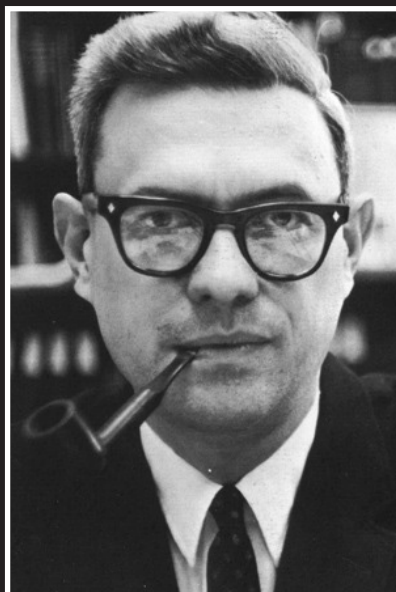
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IN MEMORIAM



STANLEY M. ARONSON, MD  
MAY 28, 1922—JANUARY 28, 2015

Dr. Stanley M. Aronson, a distinguished neuropathologist, had been director of laboratories at Kings County Hospital Center in Brooklyn before relocating to Rhode Island in 1970.



Dr. Aronson, shown here at a Brown graduation, was founding Dean of Brown Medical School, 1972–1981.



Dr. Stanley and Gale Aronson attended RIMS Bicentennial Gala, April 2012



Dr. Aronson was Editor-in-Chief of the *Rhode Island Medical Journal*, 1989–1999, and continued to contribute commentaries, lexicons, and occasionally paintings, until this month.



With Dean Jack Elias and Chancellor Thomas J. Tisch upon the founding of the Alpert Medical School Dean Stanley M. Aronson Fund for Research and Innovation, May 2014.



Brown medical school graduate Dr. Sarah Aronson spoke at the celebration honoring her father.

(Left) Dean Aronson presides over Match Day ceremonies for the first MD graduating class of 1975.



With Joseph H. Friedman, MD, first recipient of the Stanley Aronson Chair in Neurodegenerative Disorders, Butler Hospital, April 2014.



Dr. Aronson received RIMS' Dr. Herbert Rakantansky Award for exemplary professionalism and humanitarian service in the field of medicine, September 2013.



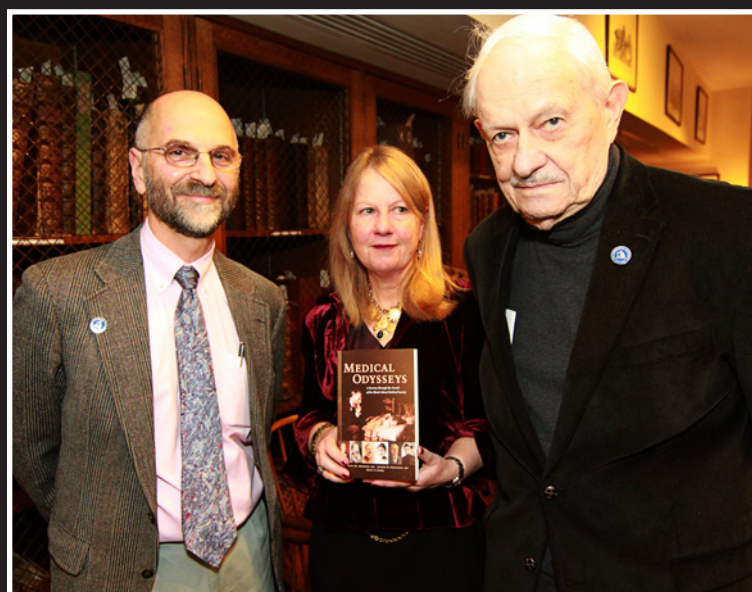
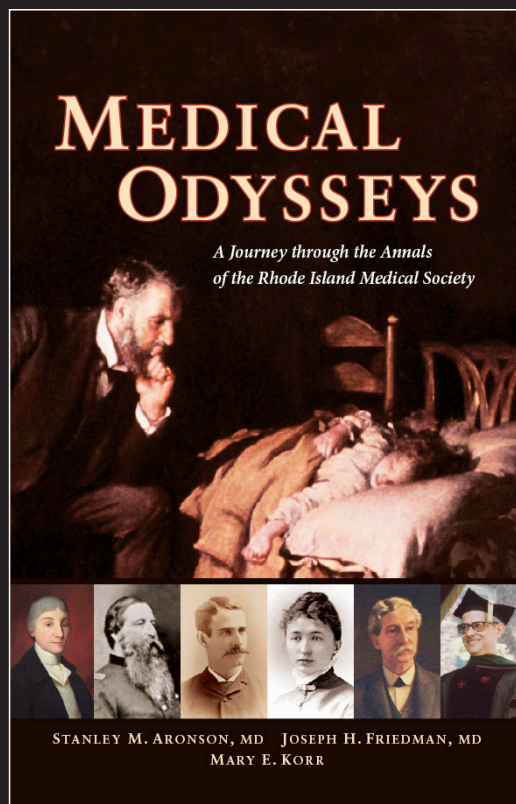
Dr. Aronson received an honorary Doctor of Medical Science degree from Brown in 2007.

In 2012, in celebration of the Rhode Island Medical Society (RIMS) Bicentennial, the Society published *Medical Odysseys*, a compilation of essays by Dr. Aronson and the *Rhode Island Medical Journal's* (RIMJ) editors. An author's reception was held at the John Hay Library at Brown, which houses RIMS' historic manuscripts and vintage medical collections in its archives.

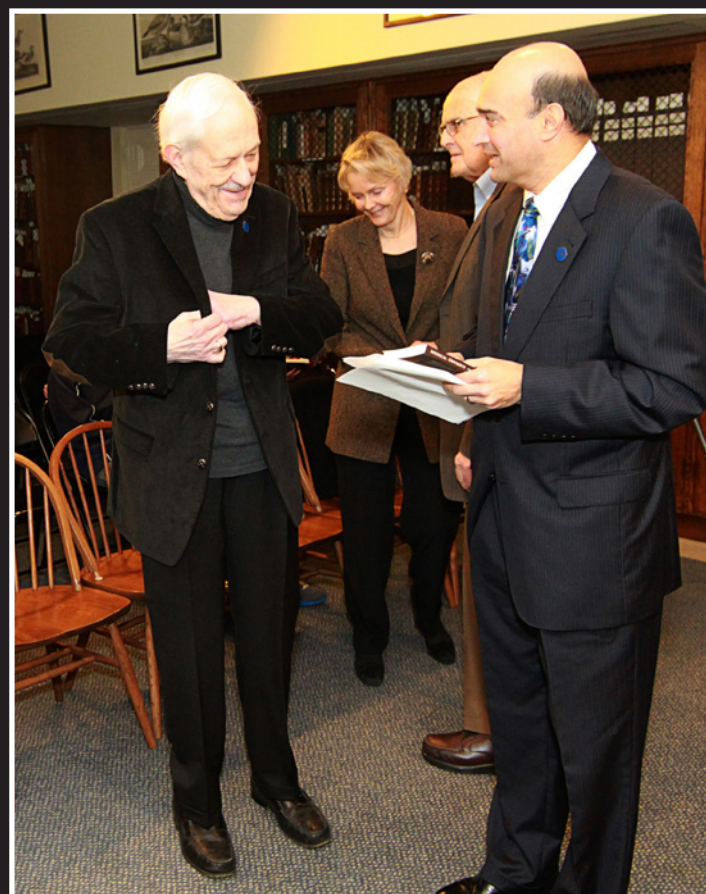
Dr. Aronson served as executive editor of RIMJ for a decade, from 1989 to 1999. Upon passing the pen to Dr. Joseph H. Friedman, he continued to contribute to the Journal's pages with his medical commentaries, lexicons, and illustrations, shown on these pages.



View a video of Dr. Aronson's remarks at the author's reception at <http://www.rimed.org/video-2011-1215-Aronson.asp>

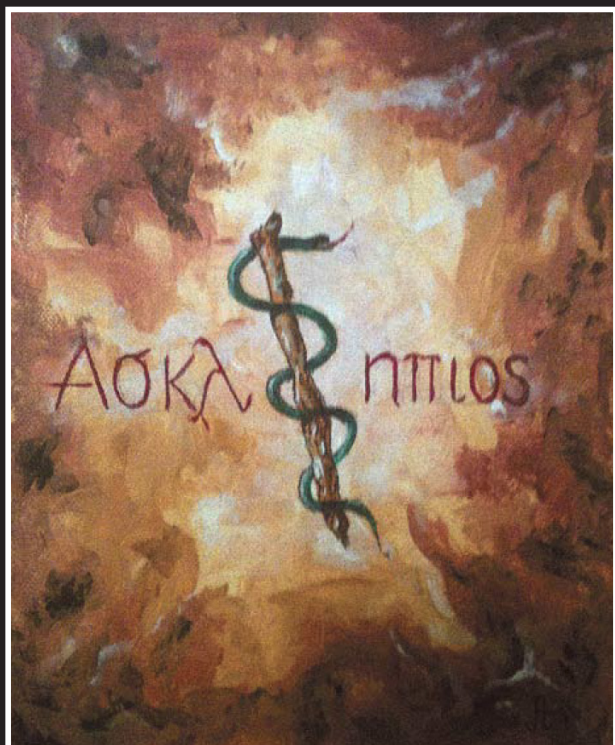


With Dr. Aronson are RIMJ editors Dr. Joseph H. Friedman and Mary Korr.

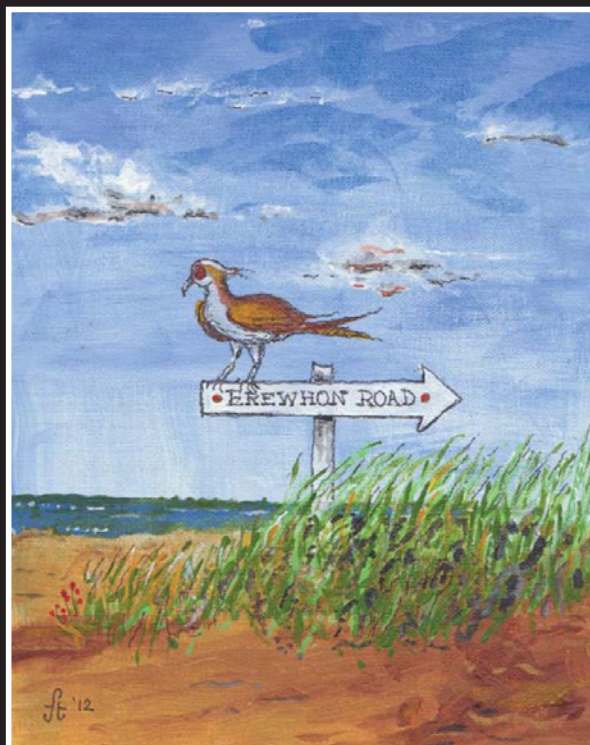


Dr. Aronson inscribing a copy of *Medical Odysseys* for Dr. Nitin S. Damle, RIMS president at that time.

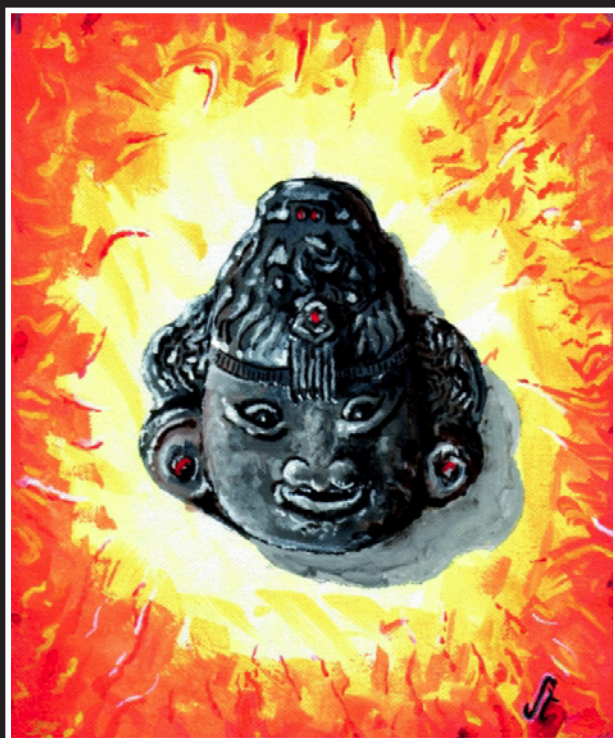
FROM THE ARONSON PAINTBRUSH...



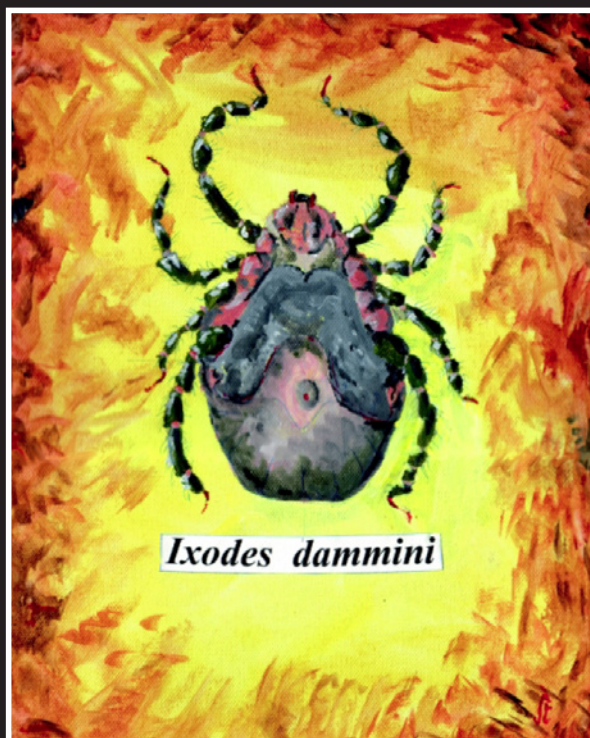
"Asklepios," acrylic on canvas, was featured on the January 2102 *Medicine & Health Rhode Island* and the March 2014 *Rhode Island Medical Journal*.



"Erewhon Road," acrylic on canvas, was featured on the December 2102 *Medicine & Health Rhode Island*.



"Aztec God", oil, was featured on the December 2008 *Medicine & Health Rhode Island* with the following credit: [A] painting by an octogenarian physician based upon a relic uncovered in Sochimilco, Mexico.



"What Makes Lyme Disease Tick", oil, was featured on the July 2008 *Medicine & Health Rhode Island* with the following credit:  
The artist is an itinerant New England physician.

## A Tribute to Stan Aronson

### 'Sublime genius, renaissance mensch'

NEWELL E. WARDE, PhD

RIMS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, RIMJ PUBLISHER

One day in 1989, Stanley Aronson came to the Medical Society's headquarters to visit its new executive director, a young man who had been in the position for about a year. Stan was the most genuinely distinguished and revered éminence grise I had ever sat with one on one (for I was that young man), but I already knew him well enough that I was looking forward to the appointment with only slight trepidation.

We had recently persuaded Stan to take on the *Rhode Island Medical Journal* as its editor-in-chief, succeeding the talented and energetic Dr. Seebert Goldowsky, who had done the job very capably for 29 years before he finally begged to be relieved. Now Stan wanted to tell me his plans for the Journal and get assurance of my support, since the Journal's finances were chronically shaky and its future had been in question.

Suffice it to say we had an easy meeting of the minds that day, which freed our conversation to wander. He was intrigued by my background in German literature, a quirk of my youth that he never forgot. We spoke of Freud and Jung. He described the physician's calling as something nearly sacred, "akin almost to a priesthood," he said. I have often reflected upon the truth of another striking thing he said that day, in whatever context: "We're so stupid when we're in our twenties."

In the years that followed, Stan's stature in the world of medicine, combined with the power of his own pen, elevated the quality, visibility and solvency of the *Rhode Island Medical Journal*. In particular, Stan's own monthly commentaries were such gems of wit and erudition that they began to attract notice. They soon caught the eye of Bob Whitcomb, who was then the editor of the *Providence Journal's* editorial pages. Bob began republishing Stan's columns on Mondays, a tradition that has now lasted 24 years and encompasses an astonishing 1200 columns. For the Medical Society, Stan's regular appearance on the op-ed page of Rhode Island's newspaper of record, where he was identified as the editor-in-chief (and after 1999 as editor emeritus) of the journal of the Rhode Island Medical Society, was a weekly windfall. Stan's growing audience of devoted readers generated many grateful letters to the newspaper over the years.

Stan's commentaries seemed to be at once a playground for his boundless curiosity, an outlet for his delight in language, and a showcase for his immense fund of varied knowledge. And they never failed to surprise. Even when he treated familiar topics like penicillin, Jonas Salk or the Hippocratic Oath, Stan always plumbed historical depths and brought poignant ironies to light.

But who knew until a few months ago that Stan was also a hockey fan who playfully pondered the messages of mayhem hidden within the franchise names of the NHL ("ruin" in Bruins, "anger" in Rangers, "lame" in Flames, "evil" in Devils, "liar" in Flyers)? His riff on collective terms for doctors and scientists

will always be another favorite of mine (a rash of dermatologists, a clone of geneticists, a wince of dentists, an eruption of pediatricians, a pulse of cardiologists, a pile of proctologists, a graft of plastic surgeons, a run of gastroenterologists, a cluster of biostatisticians, etc.). One measure of the magnitude of Stan's fan base was his recognition last year in the *Providence Phoenix*, where the popular column "Philippe & Jorge's Cool, Cool World" celebrated him as "a sublime genius."

After ten years at the helm, Stan passed the editorship of the RIMS journal to Joe Friedman, but he remained an active supporter and contributor – and not only to the content between the covers. It has been a well-kept secret that certain anonymous artwork on the front cover, sometimes attributed to "an itinerant New England physician," was Stan's.

Several years ago, as the Medical Society's bicentennial year approached, I asked Stan if he would consider writing a new history of the Society. He and I knew that if there were to be such a history, everyone would want him to write it. After some months, he declined, citing his age and the magnitude of the project. But he agreed to serve on our bicentennial planning committee and to work with Joe Friedman and Mary Korr on a new anthology of essays to be published for the occasion. The result was *Medical Odysseys, A Journey through the Annals of the Rhode Island Medical Society*, published in 2011. When the bicentennial year 2012 arrived, Stan spoke memorably at the inaugural event of our year-long series of observances. (See and hear him at <http://www.rimed.org/video-2011-1215-Aronson.asp>. I also highly recommend listening again to Stan's contribution to "This I believe – Rhode Island" dated October 14, 2010, which is archived on the website of WRNI, Rhode Island Public Radio.)

The Medical Society has thanked and honored Stan in every way we know how, just as every other organization in the community has fittingly done. He was a recipient of both RIMS' Hill Award for service and the Rakatansky Award for professionalism. But I think Fred Schiffman's tribute to Stan as "a renaissance mensch" may be the best of all.

Stan and I last shook hands at each of two events to which he lent his good name last fall in support of the candidacy of Jorge Elorza for mayor of Providence. On the first of those occasions, he was invited to address the crowd. Though he was unprepared, I had to marvel at his thoughtful eloquence and at the hope, optimism and caring that he projected for his adopted home town. Civic engagement too belongs on the long list of Stan's exemplary virtues.

I count myself fortunate to have so often been close enough to grasp the hand and sense the heart of a great doer and healer. I shall always remember his ever-timely admonition that "The ultimate enemy is not death, but bigotry and willful ignorance."

# Remembering Stan Aronson

JOSEPH H. FRIEDMAN, MD  
RIMJ EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

I moved to Rhode Island in 1982. I had not heard of Stanley Aronson. He had recently retired as dean of the medical school at Brown, the "Program in Medicine," as it was then called, and I knew the name of the current dean, not the former one. I certainly didn't know that he was the first dean. I vividly recall the first time I spoke with him. I was doing a neurology consult on the wards of Roger Williams Hospital (before it became a Medical Center) and was paged to an outside number. Dr. Stanley Aronson, in his usual slow, distinguished, low frequency voice, told me that he was the neurology consultant for the Brown student health service, and that he had heard of me, the only full-time neurologist in the Brown medical school not working at the Veterans Hospital. He wondered if I'd be interested in taking over his responsibilities. I did, and, he shortly thereafter asked me to teach in his introduction to clinical neuroscience course at the medical school. This was after he retired. From time to time, we had occasional interactions.

Over the years I got to know Stan and we became friends. I learned that although he had been the neurology consultant at the student health service, he was not, in fact, an officially trained neurologist. He was a very distinguished neuropathologist. So, how did Stan come to be a neurology consultant? Because of his interest in the neurodegenerative disorders of children, he attended the pediatric neurology clinic at Columbia University, during his fellowship and early attending days. He practiced pediatric neurology to better understand the pathology he was studying. When he later became neuropathologist and chair of neuropathology at Downstate Medical Center, in New York, he actually ran a large in-patient ward for children with Tay Sachs and other degenerative disorders, as he followed these unfortunate children from end-stage disease to their autopsies. He was the doctor in charge. He was a pioneer in Tay Sachs disease, a disorder that is now almost extinguished in the western world. Stan was a "do-er." He didn't simply talk the talk, he practiced what he thought and taught.

Stan, who had served on the boards of numerous distinguished pathology journals, took over editorial leadership of

the *Rhode Island Medical Journal*, then called *Medicine and Health, Rhode Island*, after his retirement from the deanship, to keep it from foundering. It was through this position that I got to know him, as I liked to write and get published, and the journal was a great venue for me to advertise myself and then the neurology department, as it developed. He asked me to take over from him, after ten years, after no one applied for the job. While reluctant to take on more work, how could anyone turn down a request from Dr. Aronson? I've been editor since January 1999, a long time. He has cautioned me several times to be sure to find someone to take over from me, although, at 66, he considered me a young man, just getting started.

When he retired from the deanship, he started the MPH program at Harvard. He continued writing, and never missed a week of his *Providence Journal* columns that have gone on for over 20 years. He was active on hospital and medical support group boards. He helped establish the Rhode Island branch of the American Parkinson's Disease Society, although Parkinson's was never one of his research interests.

When he turned 80, or thereabouts, he told me that he was looking for a "third career." Although this third career, running a hospital in a resource-poor country, never came to pass, it certainly could have. It was not an idle speculation. Stan's accomplishments, which are legion, and could be spread among several individuals and make each one of them proud, are covered in other tributes in this issue of the medical journal. His defining characteristics were his humility, sense of responsibility for his fellows, intelligence, extraordinary knowledge base, and unquenchable zeal for learning, teaching and helping.

Stan died before I could surprise him with the galleys for a book I've edited, but not yet published:

This book is dedicated to Stanley M. Aronson, MD, MPH, distinguished neuropathologist, founding dean of the Program in Medicine at Brown University, dean emeritus of the Warren Alpert School of Medicine of Brown University, mentor and role model to several generations.

# Farewell to the Boy from Brooklyn

MARY KORR  
RIMJ MANAGING EDITOR

Stanley M. Aronson, MD, departed this world in the midst of a blizzard named Juno. The etymologist in him would have been inspired by the storm's name to write his next *Lexicon* for the *Rhode Island Medical Journal*, of which he was editor emeritus.

Like the storm, Dr. Aronson was a man of great strength; he had an immense intellect equaled by his humility, which was bred in the streets and a tenement in Brownsville, Brooklyn, where he grew up.

My friendship with him began a dozen years ago, when I started editing his commentaries, followed by two of his books, *Perilous Encounters* and *Medical Odysseys*.

We met to discuss editorial matters in his home library, stacked floor to ceiling with thousands of books. His easel stood in the corner. One particular portrait I admired of his was that of his immigrant grandmother from Eastern Europe.

Over time, I took to calling him the Boy from Brooklyn during these visits. He was working on a memoir of growing up there. Although Stan did not like to talk about himself, over the years he has surprised me with anecdotes. Two weeks ago, he related how he was expelled from the fifth grade. As he told it, the teachers in his public school selected students to be on the Student Council. He felt that was unfair and sent around a petition, which called for a student vote on candidates. In short order he was summoned to the principal's office and expelled for insubordination. He was sent to a tech school.

His wife Gale said that was the best thing that could have happened; she pointed to the majestic wood cabinet he had built as a result of his carpentry skills learned there. Indeed, in an early interview with Stan, he said the only future he envisioned as a boy growing up during the Great Depression was that of a skilled manual laborer.

Fate intervened and he found himself at City College of New York. Though just over the Brooklyn Bridge, it was a world away from the tenements and he remained forever grateful for the opportunity to attend, and develop his innate intellectual abilities and be in the company of brilliant classmates, as he described them.

Recently, he told me of his serendipitous entry into a medical career during World War II. He was in Army training when

he was injured and sent to rehab. During that time, the Army offered him the choice of working as an elevator operator – or applying to a new medical school program for enlisted military personnel. He opted for the latter, and was accepted to New York University College of Medicine. Before classes started each day, he had to lead reveille and teach students how to march and salute, up and down the medical school halls. “And I was paid for that,” he said with a laugh.

Stan first came to Rhode Island in 1970 with his first wife, the late Betty Aronson, MD, and their daughters, to work at The Miriam Hospital. The hospital “didn’t have its own police force with guns in the halls,” he said, unlike the sprawling Kings County Hospital Center in Brooklyn, where he had been director of laboratories. “Coming to Rhode Island was such a joy. It was quiet and peaceful. We bought a farm in Rehoboth.”

His arrival in 1970 coincided with Brown University's plans to extend its six-year master of medical science program to form a four-year program leading to the MD degree within its division of biology and medicine. It wasn't long after he arrived that Brown invited him to discuss leading the medical school effort. Stan frequently reminisced about the early intense years of the medical school, and particularly its students, whom he has remained in contact with over the years, frequently inviting them to his home.

Recently, my husband Ken, who knew Stan professionally, and I visited with him and Gale. He talked about his decision to use hospice care, and of the two workers who came to his house every day and how appreciative he was of them.

He spoke of how lucky and blessed he was to have his wife, Gale, at his side. They reminisced about their wedding more than a decade ago and how beautiful it was, held in their home and Zen garden. Brown-trained physicians held a special place in his heart – and with fatherly pride he noted his daughter, Dr. Sarah Aronson, was among these.

With his passing, this community has lost a physician leader, writer, counselor, scholar, humanitarian – and by his quiet dignity – a role model for future generations. Stan was a rare gift. Thank you for sharing those gifts with us all, Boy from Brooklyn.