Eulogy

SAUL ROY KOREY

1918-1963

We are here today, the family, friends, colleagues and patients of Saul Korey, all of us united by grief, all of us bound together by love for him and gratitude to him.

I do not dare to speak of what his loss means to his wife, Doris, or to his children, Cathy, Suzie and Barrie. To them he has been the essence of love and strength, of emotional security and intellectual excitement. Nor do I dare to speak of the sorrow of his mother, mourning the loss of her husband only two months ago and now of her only child, whose remarkable devotion did honor to his parents and sustained his father through years of illness. Their grief is too personal and too profound, and words are too meager, too poor to provide a true reflection of what his loss means to them. But perhaps I may speak of Saul Korey as I knew him, as a very close friend and as a colleague.

Saul was a wonderful and harmonious composition of qualities. He was a man, a courageous, vigorous, virile man. His courage was manifested in many ways and in many different situations, whether in the face of physical danger, intellectual challenge or the demands of major professional responsibility. But though we knew him to be courageous, those of us who were with him in his illness were genuinely inspired by his fearlessness in the face of death and by the vigor and intensity of his fight for life.

His courage was always joined to an outspoken and uncompromising honesty. These qualities were essential elements in a personal credo which he expressed in an extraordinary essay delivered four months ago to the students at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine of Yeshiva University. In an essay entitled "The Myth and the Passion," he spoke of the human condition shorn of its fantasies and its delusions, seen in stark reality. Man, like Sisyphus in the myth, is fated to push a huge rock up a hill and, on reaching the summit, to have it escape his grasp and roll down again. Life consists in the continued resumption of this ordeal. For Saul, men are divided into those who push the rock and those who stand by to watch, those who work and struggle and those who amble along, unconcerned and uncommitted. He wrote that one does and one dies, or one does not and one is killed. And he preferred to do.

Editor's Note: Dr. Saul R. Korey, an Active Member of the Association since 1952, died on September 27, 1963. This eulogy, delivered by his long-time friend and associate, Dr. Irving London, is reproduced in its entirety since its spirit and content exemplifies Saul Korey as we knew him. We are indebted to Dr. London for allowing us to publish this in the Transactions of the American Neurological Association 1964; 89:278-80. PubMed PMID: 5318398.
Saul's life was a life of commitment, of total engagement, of identification. He was positive, constructive and active. And he was decisive, clear thinking and bold in action. These qualities made him a leader of men, eager to join and to follow him.

He knew what he wanted to do and he knew how to do it. This sure sense of purpose and his creative intellect and imagination forged a whole new movement in neurologic research. He built not only a great Department of Neurology in the short span of eight years, but also fashioned an interdisciplinary program of research on the nervous system which has excited and commanded the admiration of the world's medical scientific community. His own classic work on Tay-Sachs disease is a prime example of the fruits of such a program.

He bubbled with energy. While building and running an exemplary department, providing intellectual and administrative leadership of the interdisciplinary program, serving on numerous national committees and editorial boards, working himself at the laboratory bench, he somehow found time to take on single-handedly the planning and programming of a major new research facility at Albert Einstein, the Ullman Research Center. For us this will always be Saul's building.

His accomplishments reflect an appreciation of excellence and a selflessness and generosity of spirit which pervade the atmosphere which he generated. The Department of Neurology has been a happy department because in the course of accomplishing so much, Saul always maintained a warmth, gentleness and sensitivity which endeared him to his colleagues and to his patients.

As a physician he combined a love and understanding of people with precise and rigorous medical science. But in addition he had a real flair for clinical medicine and as a result he was truly a brilliant clinician. It was characteristic of him that as a physician and as a scientist he held that "the study of man is of central importance, that his life and death, his biologic cycle, his works and thoughts are the central issues." As a physician he was committed, passionately committed, to man. This passion and compassion were equally evident at the bedside and in the laboratory.

As a teacher he struck sparks and kindled the imagination. His teaching was always informed and incisive but it was also delightfully gay and witty.

He had a scintillating and penetrating wit which enlivened conversation, but which he also used to puncture the pompous and to stir the complacent. He had an insatiable appetite for reading. He devoured books until three or four o'clock in the morning and he thought, and thought deeply, about what he read. He ranged from the Bible to Camus, from Shakespeare to Kafka, from politics to poetry—always curious, thoughtful and perceptive. Saul had an enormous zest for life and he lived every moment to the full.

His life was extraordinarily successful and happy. The tragedy for him and for us is that his life was so short. But in that short time he built and created so much and so well at home and at work that his influence and spirit will live on. Let us then be grateful that we have been graced by the love and friendship and extraordinary achievements of this great man and let us draw comfort by continuing to cherish all that for which the name Saul Korey stands.

IRVING M. LONDON