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Reflections on Dr. Arthur M. Sackler

We have lost a good friend — my university and I and countless other individuals and institutions around the world with whom Arthur Sackler shared his understanding of medical science and his vision of health and life.

Dr. Sackler was an important pioneer in the study of the biological basis of psychiatry and its translation into psychopharmacology. He was in the forefront of mass communication for physicians and extended his love of communication and of the quest for knowledge to his far-sighted patronage of the arts and humanities as well as the sciences. His name is on schools and museums in many lands: the wing housing the Temple of Dendur at New York's Metropolitan; the Harvard museum next to the Fogg, which contains works of Asian, Middle Eastern and Mediterranean artists; the new Arthur M. Sackler Museum at Beijing University; the Gallery at the Smithsonian, which will open this September; the Sciences Center at Clark University; the Sackler School of Graduate Biomedical Sciences at Tufts; an institute of biomedical sciences at New York University and the Sackler School of Medicine in Tel Aviv.

In the last years, Dr. Sackler had become deeply interested in a new project: encouraging innovative applications of rehabilitative medicine. He was working closely with his friend, Itzhak Perlman, toward the creation of a new "Society for Special Skills."

He had a number of times defined his life as consisting of three great adventures: in the arts, the sciences and the humanities. I would add a fourth: affection and liking for other human beings and the need to share with them his intellectual and artistic enthusiasm. I use the plural advisedly, for Arthur Sackler was never single-minded, nor for that matter did he ever do anything in a small



Dr. Arthur M. Sackler

way. If his collections had superb quality, they also had monumental size. His desire to synthesize and communicate the latest in medical information encompassed not just his own patients and professional colleagues, but all the patients and physicians his great network could reach. It is typical of Dr. Sackler that the Arthur M. Sackler Center for Health Communications that he funded on Tufts' Boston campus will use the latest communications technology to bring worldwide knowledge to health sciences classrooms and patient care, and to link medical research efforts throughout the world.

Dr. Sackler's three adventures were undertaken together. In college, the Heights Col-

lege of New York University in Brooklyn, he majored in art history and English drama, minored in biology and edited student publications. At night at Cooper Union, he studied figure drawing and sculpture. At the same time, he began his business career, working his way through college and medical school at New York University.

His collections, begun shortly after he graduated from medical school, were generated by love of a few beautiful objects, but grew because, as he said later, he looked on collecting as a biologist: "To really understand a civilization, a society, you must have a large enough corpus of data." He was careful to give his collection to those institutions that could make the best use of them in generating new understanding from the exquisite "corpus of data" he provided them.

Dr. Sackler's research began, too, shortly after graduation from medical school. As a resident in psychiatry at Creedmor State Hospital, he published the first of over 140 groundbreaking papers in neuroendocrinology, psychiatry and experimental medicine. Here, as research director of the Institute for Psychobiologic Studies, he moved to scientific editing, as editor of the *Journal of Clinical and Experimental Psychobiology*. Then, in 1960, he established the *Medical Tribune*, which quite rapidly grew into a major international organization with over one million readers in 20 countries. The *Medical Tribune* became the capstone of a business empire that included successful pharmaceutical as well as publishing enterprises.

Even with his increasing international eminence in the arts and his growing involvement in the larger concerns of society, Arthur Sackler never surrendered his commitment to science and to laboratory research. In 1958, he

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established the Laboratory for Therapeutic Research at Long Island University College of Pharmacy. He directed the laboratory until 1983, and continued to work there. He said last year in an interview for the *Tufts Medical Alumni Bulletin*, "For forty years I agreed with Claude Bernard, who wrote, 'L'art, c'est moi; la science, c'est nous'. I no longer believe that. . . What I believe today is that art and science are two sides of the same coin. Art is a passion pursued with discipline; science is a discipline pursued with passion. I believe that the important work for the years ahead is to bring together art, science and humanities."

We at Tufts University are grateful to Arthur Sackler for his generosity as a benefactor, for the intellectual stimulations that our exchanges with him always generated, but most of all for his example as an individual, a kind, enthusiastic Renaissance man, whose interests encompassed the past and present, but whose mind dwelt in the future, rather than resting on past achievements. It is up to us as survivors to carry on Dr. Sackler's innovative work.

— Jean Mayer

Dr. Sackler died May 26 at Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center in New York City. He was 73.