

MEMORIAL

SHELDON EDWARD GREISMAN, M.D.
1928–2008



Sheldon Edward Greisman, the son of Dr. Harry Greisman and Betty Lichtenstein Greisman, was a native of New York City. He received his initial formal education at P.S. 61 Elementary School in the Bronx and the Bronx High School of Science. After just 3 years as an undergraduate at New York University, he matriculated at the NYU Medical College, graduating in 1949, third in his class at the tender age of 21. He completed his internship and residency at the 3rd

NYU division of Bellevue Hospital in Manhattan, during which time he produced the first of 52 papers, which were to become classics among studies of bacterial pathogenesis (Greisman SE. The reactivity of the capillary bed of the nailfold to circulating epinephrine and norepinephrine in patients with normal blood pressure and with essential hypertension. *J Clin Invest* 1952; 31: 782).

In 1952, Shelly volunteered for service in the army. Following basic training at the Brook Army Hospital, he was assigned to Japan as a ward officer in the Neuropsychiatric Service. Fortunately for science and the University of Maryland, a chance encounter with an enlightened and influential colonel resulted in his transfer to the 48th MASH unit in Korea to do research on small capillary blood vessels in soldiers with Korean hemorrhagic fever. Shortly thereafter he met Dr. Theodore E. Woodward, who offered him a position in the Department of Medicine at the University of Maryland School of Medicine as the department's first full-time basic science investigator.

Shelly remained in Baltimore, working in Dr. Woodward's Department for 32 years, during which time he established himself as one of its most accomplished scientists. Former students remember him as one of the institution's most beloved teachers and role models. His studies, which focused on mechanisms by which bacterial toxins are involved in infectious diseases, set the standard for endotoxin research throughout the world for nearly 3 decades. In recognition of these accomplishments, he was elected to the American Society of Clinical Investigation, the Association of American Physicians, the Clinical and Climatological Association, the Inter-Urban Clinical Club, the Baltimore Monthly Medical Reunion, and the International Endotoxin Society (lifetime honorary member).

Shelly reluctantly retired as professor of Medicine and Physiology at the age of 56 due to one of many depressive episodes that plagued his retirement years. In 1990, the University of Maryland School of Medicine named the yearly award given to the outstanding student in physiology in his honor. On December 7, 2007 colleagues from around the world honored Shelly further with a day-long symposium, entitled "Building a Foundation of Modern Sepsis Research: A Tribute to the Work of Dr. Sheldon E. Greisman."

Shelly was as warm, kind and generous as he was brilliant. He enjoyed playing hits from the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s on a Martin acoustic guitar given to him by his parents when he was 13. He also played light classics on the violin and took great pleasure in entertaining his grandchildren and friends as an amateur magician. Throughout his long retirement he worked on a myriad of projects on the family

farm, and assisted with building and with buying adjoining properties to create a family compound to accommodate all of his five children and twelve grandchildren.

Shelly died of chronic lymphocytic leukemia complicated by pneumonia on July 19, 2008. He is survived by his wife of 51 years, Janet Matthias, five children, Gregory, Kathy, Valerie, Timothy and Lisa, and twelve grandchildren. His passing has left a great emptiness in the hearts of the many who knew him, admired him and delighted in his company.

Philip A. Mackowiak