



JOSEPH LARNER

January 9, 1921 – January 28, 2014

Joseph Lerner died at age 93 on Jan. 28, 2014 at his Charlottesville home of 45 years in the company of his wife of 66 years, Frances Lerner, and their three sons Andrew, James and Paul Lerner. He suffered from metastatic melanoma.

Joe had two overwhelming passions in life: science and his family.

Born in Poland, Joe arrived in this country through Ellis Island at the age of 9 months by ship with his parents George and Ida Likovsky. He learned work the hard way as the eldest child of immigrant parents, assisting in opening his parents' small businesses in New Jersey before going off to school. He pursued the American dream through his education at the University of Michigan (BA), Columbia Medical School (MD), University of Illinois (MS), and Washington University (PhD). His passion was science, in particular biochemistry and pharmacology, and he devoted most of his scientific career to understanding the mechanisms of action of insulin with the objective of developing better treatments for diabetes.

Joe led a distinguished career, garnering numerous scientific awards including the Banting Medal for Scientific Achievement in Diabetes Research, and the Virginia lifetime achievement award in science. He was also a member of the Institute of Medicine.

In 1969 Joe came to the University of Virginia where he served as Chairman of the Pharmacology Department until 1990, when he resigned as Chairman but remained as an Emeritus Professor until his death. During his tenure he led the Pharmacology Department to great prominence, using his passion for science and his commitment to others to recruit a group of talented young scientists who achieved international renown. Two of these recruits, Al Gilman and Fred Murad, later were awarded Nobel Prizes as a result of their work at UVA. In 2011, Messrs Gilman and Murad co-led a symposium in Charlottesville to honor Joe's 90th birthday – an occasion at which Joe delivered a lecture with the same mental acuity and sense of humor as in his younger years. Joe's passion for and love of his work never ceased as he worked full-time in his laboratory until one month before he passed away.

Joe will be remembered not only by the scientists with whom he worked, but by all who had the opportunity to know him. To all he met. To these individuals he was an inspiration, known for his enthusiasm, compassion, creativity, sense of humor, high standards and refusal to give up

against any odds. He enthusiastically encouraged his colleagues and his family to work hard and pursue their passions. Joe was the patriarch of a family he loved more than life, devoted to his wife and three sons, their spouses (Peggy, Roxane and Rosita) and eight grandchildren: Aaron, Elizabeth, Abigail, Phoebe, Lucy, Daniel, and Peter Larner and Richard Smith. He is also survived by his sister, Harriet Rosenthal, her husband, William, and his sister-in-law Frances Larner. He is predeceased by his brother, Bernard Larner.

The family vacationed in Wellfleet on Cape Cod together for 54 consecutive years with their very close friends, the Benes Family. Joe was an avid swimmer who rose early in the morning and cajoled his children and grandchildren to join him for a "little swim". If he wasn't swimming, you could find him on the couch, his nose in a crossword puzzle, or at the kitchen table playing solitaire. When family and friends gathered around a fire at the beach, Joe would lead the group in a lively rendition of the Michigan fight song. Summers at Wellfleet and elsewhere without Joe seem unimaginable to his family.

On March 23, 2014, there will be a public remembrance of Joe at 2pm in the University Chapel, University of Virginia. In lieu of flowers, the family requests that donations be made to Department of Pharmacology to support graduate students. Please note on the memo line "In memory of Joseph Larner." Contributions may be mailed to Department of Pharmacology, Box 800735, University of Virginia, VA, 22908.