Remarks on the acceptance of the Friedenwald Memorial Award

Just as Jonas Friedenwald, even before his distressingly early death, became a legendary figure in American ophthalmology—exemplifying the best possible blend of experienced clinician, gifted scientist, original thinker, inventive genius, stimulating teacher, and the gentle friend of many—so this award that bears his name has already achieved a unique place among the many coveted honors that are given so generously by American Ophthalmic societies.

I suspect that I am not the first recipient who has been so stunned by the honor and humiliated by the sense of inadequacy that he has even considered declining the award. I say this in all sincerity, for upon receipt of information that I had been selected, I could not help but think back upon the previous recipients and how much more deserving they were than I. Moreover, several of the previous recipients had known Jonas Friedenwald well or had been students of his, while I, unfortunately, did not enter the ophthalmic field from general pathology until shortly before Dr. Friedenwald left us. In that short period, I did not have the privilege of becoming either a close friend or a stimulated student of his.

Jonas Friedenwald was many things to many people, and he is best remembered by various groups for different reasons. Previous recipients of the award have cited his manifold contributions and the profound influence that he, his work, and his students have had. There would seem to be little left to be said. Yet there is perhaps one additional phase of his influence that has not been mentioned—one that has been particularly important to me personally and, less directly, to all ophthalmologists and pathologists. I am referring now to Dr. Friedenwald's role in shaping the destiny of the Registry of Ophthalmic Pathology.

While Jonas Friedenwald's later contributions in ophthalmic pathology were mainly experimental or histochemical, his early work in histopathology was descriptive. Perhaps a few persons in this audience will recall that one of Friedenwald's earliest contributions was a 346 page textbook on pathology of the eye published in 1929. This well-illustrated book was the forerunner of the several atlases of ophthalmic pathology, and, like the latter, it drew heavily from the collected material and photographic files of the Registry. Friedenwald served as the senior author of the first edition of our current Atlas and Textbook. He was the ophthalmic pathologist of the Johns Hopkins Hospital until his death, and he was a charter member of the original Ophthalmic Pathology Club, now renamed the Verhoeff Society.

It was, therefore, fitting and fortunate that Friedenwald succeeded Verhoeff as principal consultant to the Registry of Ophthalmic Pathology of the old Army Medical Museum. Elsewhere, I have given a much more detailed account of Friedenwald's contributions to the Registry. Here I would like to acknowledge only my own personal indebtedness to him, for what I inherited when I became Registrar and Chief of the
Ophthalmic Pathology Branch of the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology was much more than it might have been had he not devoted part of his time, energy, influence, and prestige to the Registry.

In 1949 Friedenwald made an exceptionally thorough analysis of the functions and problems of the Registry, considering its diagnostic service, educational activities, and its research. His report, which naturally included criticisms as well as kudos, provided perceptive suggestions for future development. This document proved to be exceedingly helpful to those of us at the Institute who have been involved with the Registry. But what I should like to point out here is that the time and effort that Friedenwald had to spend in making his study and preparing his report required his unselfish devotion to an effort he considered worthy. We know he would have preferred to confine himself to his own laboratory, his own research, and his own students, but we are ever so much better off for his having shared with us his experience and his wisdom.

And so, Mr. President, I accept this Jonas Friedenwald Award, not so much in the spirit of personal recognition as with the knowledge that the Registry of Ophthalmic Pathology is the real recipient, and we thank you sincerely.

Lorenz E. Zimmerman, M.D.

REFERENCES

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