

**In Memoriam
Peter Browning Hoffman
(1937-1979)**

Be of good hope in the face of death. Believe in this truth for certain, that no evil can befall a good man either in life or death, and that his fate is not a matter of indifference to the gods.

— Socrates

Sadness and grief in the face of death are not strangers to physicians. Long association with death makes it no less painful, and though we walk hand in hand with the ultimate darkness, we are not its willing companions. Rationalization or philosophy sometimes makes death tolerable, but at the loss of a beloved, youthful, articulate, productive colleague, we are left with naught but melancholy, a fond memory, and a sense of emptiness for what might have been.

Browning Hoffman was a faithful physician, a psychiatrist who in a too brief career achieved in forensic psychiatry a remarkable eminence reached by few of his elders. He died early this year at the age of 42, stricken by a rare, incurable, and brief illness.

Browning was a physician for but fifteen years, graduating from Yale Medical School in 1963 after outstanding academic careers at Stanford University (undergraduate) and Yale. After an internship at University Hospitals in Cleveland, he returned to New Haven for psychiatric training and was Chief Resident in his final year. From 1967 to 1969 he was a Captain in the United States Air Force and was trained as a flight surgeon at the USAF School of Aerospace Medicine, where he became Chief of the Psychiatric Section.

After two years as assistant professor at Yale (1969-71), he moved on to the beautiful University of Virginia School of Medicine in Charlottesville, where, developing his interest in law and psychiatry, he rose rapidly to become Professor of Psychiatry at the Medical School and Professor of Law at the Law School. He also served as Director of the Liaison Program in Psychiatry and Law and was Director of the Forensic Psychiatry Clinic.

A former secretary of the American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law, he served as Chairman of the Psychiatry and Law Committee of the Group for the Advancement of Psychiatry. In his many positions and functions, he performed responsibly and reliably in the many areas where law and psychiatry interact. Soft-spoken, friendly, gentlemanly, considerate, he was deeply respected by his colleagues in law and psychiatry. His literary efforts had begun to flow on an increasing scale — with particular emphasis on civil rights issues of the mentally ill, cooperation between law and psychiatry, and legal-psychiatric education.

The Institute of Law, Psychiatry, and Public Policy which he founded at the University of Virginia will be named after Browning. For this we are grateful, for we care not to forget.

With respect and love, we memorialize our good friend Browning. But such an expression is inadequate to assuage our feelings of loss and regret for our fallen colleague. We silently cry at the promise of a verdant spring filled with soft breezes and comforting warmth – a spring that was never followed by the harvest of summer and the cool, reflective beauty of the autumn year.

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