

# Festschrift for Jonas Rappeport, MD

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Many touching memorial messages were shared in email exchanges following the death of Jonas Rappeport on September 8, 2020. Jeff Janofsky has done us all the service of publishing many of these reflections and memories in his Medical Director's Newsletter column this past winter.<sup>1</sup> The Editorial Board of *The Journal* began planning a festschrift in honor of Jonas at its annual meeting in October 2020, resulting in the special sections of this issue of *The Journal*.

The origin story of the American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law (AAPL) is the story of Jonas' vision, perseverance, skill, and personality. Jonas began corresponding to directors of forensic psychiatry fellowship programs in December 1967.<sup>2</sup> A meeting of the group on Mother's Day in 1968 followed in Boston. Planning continued in May 1969 in Miami, with Jonas chairing the group and being elected Acting President. Following that meeting, Jonas sent a letter to potential members in the first issue of what would become the AAPL Newsletter, in which he asked: "Do we really have a need to exist? On November 16, 1969, at the Friendship International Hotel the question will have to be answered by you. Are you coming?" Thus, the first AAPL meeting was held in November 1969 in Baltimore.<sup>2</sup> For more than 50 years now, we have been coming. Jonas' question about our need to exist is as potent now as it was then, as we continue to discuss and develop our organization's role and purpose, and the contributions it

wishes to make not only to the practice of forensic psychiatry but to society and its many needs.

Jonas served as President of AAPL from 1969 to 1971 and then as Medical Director from 1971 to 1995. He was also President of the American Board of Forensic Psychiatry from 1979 to 1981. The Rappeport Fellowship was established in 1985. Jeff Janofsky and Ken Hoge, who have both contributed to this festschrift (see below), were among the first class of fellows. I was fortunate to be counted among the second class of fellows and so attended my first AAPL meeting in 1986 in Philadelphia. We fellows were welcomed graciously and cared for by senior mentors, especially Richard Ciccone, MD, and Charles Steinberg, JD, then the directors of the review course. The photographer at the meeting was a kindly and spry gentleman in a flannel shirt, who always seemed to be near the fellows, engineering as many photo opportunities as he could. He performed his tasks in a way that was always fun and inviting, generating warmth as he went about his work. It was only after a couple days of these experiences that I finally learned that the photographer was actually Jonas, the founding father of the organization, its current Medical Director, and the person after whom the fellowship was named. But he had no need to be defined by titles. With his generous spirit, he made you feel like a friend from the moment you met him. Seven years later, Jonas and I happened to be in an elevator together at the AAPL meeting hotel in San Antonio, where I had a few hours earlier finished my oral examinations for the American Board of Forensic Psychiatry. He leaned over a little, and *sotto voce* (despite our being alone) said, "I'm probably not supposed to tell you this, but you passed." I still remember the margaritas and dinner I enjoyed

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on the Riverwalk in celebration that evening. As I aged and developed a certain tonsorial style, Jonas once noted to me reassuringly, “God made only so many perfect heads. He put hair on all the rest.”

Other reflections on Jonas’ life and career in this issue are grounded in the biography originally written by Jeffrey Janofsky and Christiane Tellefsen in 2007 for *The Journal*.<sup>3,4</sup> To complement that biography, Loren Roth, MD, has narrated his personal friendship and experiences with Jonas and Joan, as well as the professional visit Loren, Jonas, and others made to the U.S.S.R. in 1989 to assess the status of Soviet psychiatry in the wake of concerns about human rights violations.<sup>5</sup> Following that, Sally Rappoport, Jonas and Joan’s youngest daughter, provides a personal glimpse into the Rappoport family and their many adventures and interests.<sup>6</sup> Then, John Young offers a bit of a travelogue of the post-AAPL trips that Jonas and Joan led to various locations in the 1990s, which were then a staple of AAPL but are probably unknown to many younger members.<sup>7</sup>

In the Regular Articles department, Ken Hoge and Richard Bonnie have contributed an article that they conceived as fundamental to the spirit of Jonas’ interest in educating colleagues and advancing the practice of forensic psychiatry.<sup>8</sup> They propose a new methodology of expedited diversion of individuals with mental illness from the criminal justice system into the mental health treatment system, an effort that seems to fit well with Jonas’ many years of work with the Supreme Bench of Baltimore Medical Office.<sup>4</sup> Joseph Simpson expands the discussion of this form of expedited diversion in his commentary,

exploring the benefits and challenges of the proposal, as well as the urgent need for a better response to the problem of criminalization of mental illness in the United States.<sup>9</sup>

All of us in AAPL are deeply indebted to Jonas for his life’s work and the founding of AAPL. Many of us are personally indebted to him for his warmth, humor, mentorship, and friendship. Joan and Jonas were in many ways the mom and dad of AAPL’s early decades. It is important for us to remember them and their spirit of welcome and inclusion as we seek to enhance our approach to new and young members of diverse backgrounds. We at *The Journal* hope this *estschrift* will be valued in all these ways.

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