

Joseph D. Bloom, MD: A Man for All Seasons

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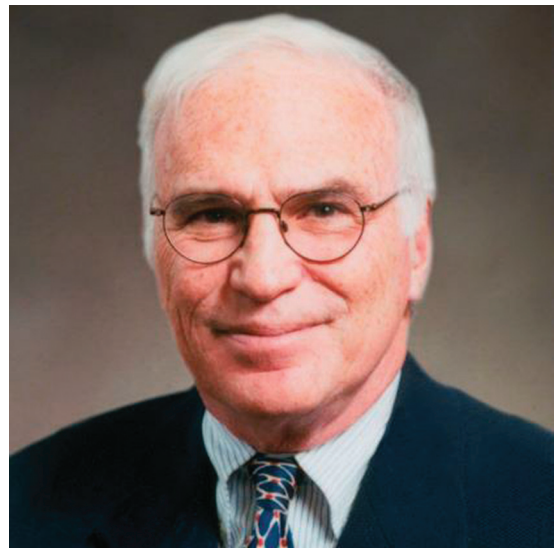
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“A Man for All Seasons” is the title of Robert Bolt’s award-winning play¹ on the life of Sir Thomas More, the 16th century Lord Chancellor of England who refused to collude with Henry VIII in his attempt to have his marriage to Catherine of Aragon annulled and who was subsequently beheaded. More recently, the phrase “a man for all seasons” refers to someone who is ready and able to deal with whatever comes their way and whose behavior is always appropriate and above reproach. I can think of no better description of Joseph D. Bloom, MD who, from 1989 to 1990, was the 16th President of the American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law (AAPL).

In recognition of Joe, I will do my best in this article to review his life history and achievements. Given the scope and depth of Joe’s impressive career, anyone attempting to summarize it faces a serious challenge, and that is certainly true for me. As context for this effort, it is important to point out that whatever I have been able to accomplish in my own career depends in no small measure on my relationship with Joe. Among other things, he recruited me to assume a faculty position at Oregon Health Sciences University (OHSU) in 1980, encouraged me to join AAPL in 1982, collaborated with me on many research projects and papers that formed the foundation of my own academic achievements, and supported and mentored me throughout my career.

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Joseph D. Bloom, MD

My special relationship with Joe hopefully provides me with insights that will help me document his achievements and convey the essence of his success in a manner that might serve as a guide for those interested in following a similar path in their own careers. Here I will summarize important elements of each season of Joe’s life, describe themes common to each season, and identify what I believe are the keys to his success.

Formative Years (1938–1969)

Joe was born in Brooklyn, NY on April 3, 1938. His father, Samuel, was a physician with a general practice in Brooklyn, and his mother, Alice, was a

homemaker. Joe's younger brother, Jacob, was born in 1942. Joe grew up in Brooklyn and graduated from Erasmus Hall High School in 1954 when he was 16. During summer vacations the family spent on a friend's farm, Samuel introduced his sons to his hobby of fossil hunting. Much to the amusement of family and friends, Joe has maintained a lifelong interest in rocks and fossils.

Joe attended Columbia College as a premedical student but took only the minimum required courses. He was a history major with a focus on European history and French, and his senior thesis combined the two areas. Joe was a member of Tau Epsilon Phi (TEP) fraternity and joined the Columbia fencing team as a freshman. His fencing specialty was the sabre, and he became a starter on the varsity team as a junior. During Joe's senior year, the Columbia sabre team were champions of the Ivy Fencing Association (IFA), and he was a member of the All-Ivy League Team.

While a counselor and waiter at a summer camp after his first year at Columbia, Joe had the good fortune to meet Jacqueline (Jackie) Lahn. The couple began to date during Joe's junior year at Columbia, and they married in 1959 when Joe was a first-year student at Albert Einstein College of Medicine. So started a loving partnership that would sustain Joe throughout his career. Jackie encouraged Joe to pursue his interests, helped him with his writing and spelling, and became his biggest supporter and advocate.

After graduating from medical school in 1962, Joe completed a rotating internship at Mt. Zion Hospital and Medical Center in San Francisco in 1963 and a psychiatry residency at Massachusetts Mental Health Center in Boston in 1966. During 1965 and 1966, Joe was the Chief Resident at the Southard Clinic Walk-in Service. Joe and Jackie's daughter, Nancy, was born in 1962 during his internship and their oldest son, Paul, was born in 1964 during his residency.

Since he trained during the Vietnam War, Joe was permitted to defer his military obligation for eventual service in the U.S. Public Health Service. With the help of faculty advisors, Joe thought a plan had been arranged for him to serve after residency as a Peace Corps psychiatrist in South America. During the application process, however, Joe learned about an Indian Health Service (IHS) opportunity in Alaska, and he said in passing, "That sounds interesting." When his appointment letter arrived, Joe discovered that he had indeed been assigned to this "interesting"

opportunity in the IHS. Joe became one of the first three psychiatrists in the IHS, and his home base was in Anchorage, AK. From 1966 to 1968, Joe provided psychiatric services across the state of Alaska often flying into remote towns that were the sites of IHS "bush" hospitals. Joe and Jackie's youngest son, Richard, was born in 1967 while they were living in Alaska.

Following his two-year IHS obligation, Joe returned to Boston in 1968 to complete a fellowship in community psychiatry at Harvard Medical School under Gerald Kaplan. Although Joe could have remained in the Northeast after his fellowship, he and Jackie believed that Alaska did indeed hold more interesting opportunities for Joe's career and for their young family as well. In 1969, Ray Langdon asked Joe to join him in private practice at the Langdon Clinic in Anchorage.

Private Practice in Alaska (1969–1977)

On returning to Alaska, Joe became the fourth psychiatrist to enter private practice in that state. It was Ray Langdon who first suggested that Joe get involved in forensic cases, and he began doing evaluations and testifying in court. In addition to clinical and forensic work, Joe lectured at the University of Alaska, supervised University of Washington medical students and psychiatry residents who rotated at the state hospital and the Langdon Clinic, and consulted to many state and local service programs on mental health and substance abuse questions. Joe was certified in Psychiatry by the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology (ABPN) in 1971, and he joined AAPL in 1975 after attending the first of many AAPL Annual Meetings.

It was here that Joe began his involvement in state and national professional organizations. In the Alaska State Medical Association, he served on its Mental Health Committee, Bush Medicine Committee, and Ad Hoc Committee on Medical Malpractice; chaired its Committee on Medical Care in the Correctional System; and was an Associate Editor of its journal, *Alaska Medicine*. Having joined the American Psychiatric Association (APA) as a psychiatry resident in 1966, Joe now served on the APA Task Force on Indian Mental Health Problems and was President of what was then known as the APA Alaska Chapter.

It was also in Alaska where Joe began to publish articles about his clinical and forensic experiences. Joe has said that academic writing did not come easily to him, and he credits Nathan Sidley and others at AAPL

for helping him prepare his earliest articles for the *Bulletin of AAPL*. During this period, Joe published 16 peer reviewed articles (12 as first author), two of which appeared in the *Bulletin of AAPL*. Joe's articles focused on the effects of population trends he observed in Alaska natives,² as well as cross-cultural, mental health, substance abuse, and violence concerns.

This was also a busy time for the Bloom family, as they took advantage of the special outdoor activities Alaska offered. Skiing, hiking, camping, fishing, and canoeing were favorite things they did together. The Bloom children all became excellent skiers, and Paul and Richard were very involved in ski racing. Their Maui condominium offered the Blooms a welcome respite from the harsh Alaskan winters.

Interested in academic psychiatry, in 1977 Joe decided to look for opportunities outside of Alaska but only in the Pacific Northwest. Jim Shore had recently become Chair of the OHSU Department of Psychiatry, had also served in the IHS, and was acquainted with Joe through their attendance at professional meetings. Jim offered Joe his old position in the Department of Psychiatry as Director of the Community Psychiatry Training Program. Believing that the OHSU position was ideally suited to his past experiences and future career interests, Joe readily accepted Jim's offer.

Academic Development (1977–2001)

Once at OHSU, Joe quickly established himself as a faculty leader in the Department of Psychiatry. He served as Acting Chair from 1979 to 1980, became Vice Chair in 1980, and was promoted to Professor of Psychiatry with tenure in 1981.

Under Joe's leadership, the OHSU Community Psychiatry Training Program became recognized as one of the strongest in the country. Residents rotated in community mental health centers throughout Oregon, and many went on to careers in community and rural psychiatry.

After Shore left OHSU to become Chair of the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Colorado Health Science Center in 1984, Joe again served as Acting Chair. Following a national search, he was appointed Chair of the OHSU Department of Psychiatry in 1985. As Chair, Joe strengthened clinical, educational, and research programs in the Department of Psychiatry and served on many important OHSU and School of Medicine committees.

The Dean of the OHSU School of Medicine stepped down in 1993. Due to Joe's success as Chair of the Department of Psychiatry and his extensive involvement in OHSU and School of Medicine committees, the OHSU President appointed him Interim Dean in 1993 and Dean in 1994.

Joe served as Dean of the OHSU School of Medicine during a time of fiscal restraint and institutional reorganization. He was a steadying influence during this difficult period, balancing the budget and merging disparate clinical departmental practice plans into a single entity under the control of a faculty governing board. During his tenure, Joe also expanded School of Medicine educational and research programs, and he recruited many new department chairs and senior faculty. In recognition of his leadership as Dean, Joe was inducted into the Alpha Omega Alpha Medical Honor Society in 1998, and he received an OHSU Mentor Award in 1999 and a Resolution of Commendation from the Oregon Medical Association in 2001.

In addition to his administrative roles at OHSU, Joe continued many professional activities he had started in Alaska. He saw patients, conducted forensic evaluations, taught at the Northwestern School of Law at Lewis and Clark College, and consulted to many national, state, and local service programs and academic departments on mental health, substance abuse, forensic, administrative, and educational matters. One of his most important and long-standing consultations was to the Oregon Mental Health Division (OMHD). For more than a decade, Joe advised the leaders of the OMHD on questions related to community, state hospital, and forensic services, including Oregon's Psychiatric Security Review Board (PSRB).

In Oregon, Joe expanded his involvement in state and national professional organizations. He was certified by the American Board of Forensic Psychiatry (ABFP) in 1979, served as a Director of the ABFP from 1983 to 1989, and was its President from 1986 to 1987. Joe became President of the Oregon Neuropsychiatric Association, President of the Oregon Psychiatric Association, a Member of the American College of Psychiatrists (ACP), and a Member of the American Association of Chairs of Departments of Psychiatry. In the APA, Joe served on the Council of Psychiatry and the Law, the Commission on Judicial Action, the Committee on the International Abuse of Psychiatry and Psychiatrists, and many other committees and task forces. After becoming Dean, Joe

became a member of the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) and served on its Council of Deans Leadership Committee.

It was AAPL, however, that received most of Joe's organizational interest and energy. He was committed to the development of AAPL into a premier organization supporting forensic psychiatry education and research. He believed that AAPL was crucial to the continued evolution of forensic psychiatry and its recognition as a subspecialty of medicine. Joe made many presentations at AAPL annual meetings, published much of his academic work in the *Journal of AAPL*, served on many AAPL committees, participated in AAPL governance, and, as noted above, became President of AAPL in 1989 and 1990. As AAPL President, Joe added to its annual meeting a report from the forensic components of the APA and a peer review of forensic testimonies that was open only to AAPL members. He also worked with Howard Zonana and others to convince the AAPL Executive Council that the ABFP should be discontinued in favor of forensic psychiatry becoming an ABPN subspecialty. In 1994, Joe was one of the first psychiatrists certified in forensic psychiatry by the ABPN, and he subsequently served on the ABPN Forensic Psychiatry Examination Committee.

During this period, Joe was the Principal Investigator on a NIMH Training Grant in Community Mental Health and three NIMH Research Grants on Civil Commitment of American Indians, Management and Treatment of Insanity Acquittes in Oregon, and The Right of Civilly Committed Patients to Refuse Treatment. He published 99 peer reviewed articles (34 as first author), 25 of which appeared in the *Bulletin or Journal of AAPL*. While the number of articles Joe published during this period is impressive, so is their scope. He and his colleagues authored articles on community psychiatry, hospital psychiatry, transcultural psychiatry, chronic mental illness, sexuality, suicide, dangerousness, administration, and forensic psychiatry. Forensic articles focused on the insanity defense,³ Oregon's PSRB program,⁴ civil commitment,⁵ right to refuse treatment,⁶ forensic evaluations and testimony,⁷ competency evaluations,⁸ cultural concerns in forensic psychiatry,⁹ and forensic education.¹⁰ As noted, Joe was the first author on many of these articles, but he also mentored and co-authored the writing of many junior faculty and trainees.

In Oregon, the Bloom family continued many of the outdoor activities they had started in Alaska,

especially hiking and skiing. Soccer gradually became more popular with the Bloom boys, and Joe was an assistant coach on Richard's team. It was also now that Joe became a diehard fan of the Portland Timbers. Like many in Portland, Joe and Jackie took up jogging and road racing with Jackie finishing at the top of her age group on several occasions. In his spare time, Joe made pottery and hunted for interesting rocks and fossils on the Oregon coast. As their children left for college, Joe and Jackie spent more of their vacations at their Maui condominium and took several month-long trips to Australia, New Zealand, and mainland Asia.

After serving in the Dean's office for almost eight stressful years, in 2001 Joe decided it was time to retire and return to the Department of Psychiatry as an unsalaried Dean and Professor Emeritus.

Senior Achievement (2001–Present)

Now free of administrative responsibilities, from 2001 to 2004 Joe continued his forensic practice; taught forensic psychiatry to residents and fellows; consulted to state and national organizations; and served on the AAPL Awards Committee, the APA Committee on Physician Health, Illness, and Impairment, the ACP Committee on Education, and the Advisory Board of the International Association of Forensic Mental Health Services. In 2002, Joe received the AAPL Seymour Pollack Award in recognition of his "distinguished contributions to the teaching and educational functions of forensic psychiatry."

In 2004, on the recommendation of the AAMC, Joe accepted a one-year appointment as Professor and Dean of Drexel University College of Medicine. He helped the new College of Medicine organize its policies and procedures, prepare for its Liaison Committee on Medical Education accreditation site visit, and recruit its new Dean.

After his term at Drexel University, from 2005 to 2015 Joe again returned to the OHSU Department of Psychiatry as Dean and Professor Emeritus. While at a reduced pace, he resumed his previous academic activities. Joe also then served on the Board of the AAPL Institute for Research and Education, the ABPN Committee on Professionalism, and the APA Committee on the Abuse and Misuse of Psychiatry.

During the period from 2001 to 2015, Joe published 24 peer reviewed articles (12 as first author), 19 of which appeared in the *Journal of AAPL*. By

this time, Joe had focused all his writing on forensic topics.

This was also a period when Joe was recognized for his career achievements. He received the Golden AAPL Award in 2010 in recognition of his contributions to forensic psychiatry; the Dominick P. Purpura Distinguished Alumnus Award in 2015 from the Albert Einstein College of Medicine; and a Lifetime Teaching Award in 2015 from the OHSU Department of Psychiatry Forensic Psychiatry Fellowship.

In 2015, Joe decided that the time was right for him to stop forensic practice and leave OHSU. Joe and Jackie decided to move to Scottsdale, AZ to be near their son Richard and his family. Shortly thereafter, their daughter Nancy and her family also moved to Scottsdale.

Joe and Jackie quickly adapted to the desert lifestyle and enjoyed being closer to members of their family. Joe explored the desert looking for interesting rocks, fossils, and animals; continued hiking and started biking; began growing a variety of desert plants; and kept in regular contact with seven grandchildren spread across the country.

By 2016, Joe was teaching forensic psychiatry at the University of Arizona College of Medicine-Phoenix and the Mayo Clinic Scottsdale, and it did not take long for him to resume writing. From 2018 to 2021, Joe published 10 forensic articles (8 as first author), all of which appeared in the *Journal of AAPL*. Many of Joe's articles during this period focused on forensic processes in Arizona.^{11,12}

In 2017, Joe received the Isaac Ray Award for Excellence in Forensic Psychiatry from the APA and AAPL.

Joe and Jackie had made a good life for themselves in Arizona. But nothing good lasts forever. In April of 2020, Jackie died suddenly in her sleep. Joe lost not just his love but his partner in life as well. Keeping himself busy with his teaching, writing, exercise, and hobbies and the support of children and friends helped Joe get through this very difficult time.

Looking back on his life now, Joe reports no regrets. He enjoyed each phase of his career and learned new things at every step along the way. Joe considers his biggest achievement to be simply staying alive to do the things he enjoys. In addition to his longevity, Joe credits his success to the support of his family, having great jobs he liked, and writing about his interests.

Common Career Themes

Despite the number and variety of Joe's achievements through the years, I believe there are common themes that span each "season" of his career.

Public Psychiatry Involvement

Joe has always been deeply involved in every facet of public psychiatry, including community, hospital, and transcultural services. Wherever he worked, Joe directed his energies toward improving the status of public programs and preparing trainees for careers in the public sector.

Forensic Psychiatry Focus

Forensic psychiatry has been a significant part of Joe's entire career. No matter how demanding his other positions or duties, Joe maintained his active interest in forensic practice, consultation, education, and research. In the process, he published over 100 peer reviewed articles across the scope of forensic psychiatry, 56 of which appeared in the *Bulletin or Journal of AAPL*.

Organizational Engagement

A major part of Joe's professional life has centered around participation in professional organizations. Not satisfied with being just a member, Joe immersed himself in organizational activities and programs. As has happened in AAPL, Joe's colleagues recognized his abilities and often turned to him for leadership.

Program Consultation

In his community psychiatry fellowship with Gerald Kaplan, Joe learned how to be a consultant, and he has used that knowledge to continually assist many public, forensic, and academic institutions. The breadth of Joe's professional experience and his supportive, nonthreatening style helped institutional leaders appreciate the wisdom of his recommendations and accept his advice.

Education and Mentorship

In every position he held, Joe has taught, supervised, and mentored trainees and colleagues. Those who worked with Joe quickly realized the breadth of his knowledge and ability. As in his role as a consultant, however, it was Joe's supportive and encouraging style that made others want to learn what he had to offer them.

Keys to Career Success

Looking across the span of Joe's career, I believe there are several important factors that have been the keys to his success.

Focus

As noted above, Joe has focused his thoughts, studies, and efforts on specific career themes. He not only practiced these themes, but he also consulted, taught, and wrote about them. In turn, this reinforcing approach made Joe an even better practitioner, consultant, teacher, and scholar.

Family

As noted by Joe, the support of Jackie and his children played a large part in his success. In turn, Joe was always very involved in what was going on in their lives. That level of interest and engagement continues with his seven grandchildren. The mutual love and respect between Joe and his family gave him much of the emotional energy needed to do his job.

Self-Care

Through the years, Joe has always participated in some form of physical exercise, including skiing, hiking, jogging, and biking. In addition to hunting for interesting rocks and fossils, he also tried his hand at pottery, gardening, and, more recently, cooking. As with the support of his family, these activities and hobbies helped Joe manage the stress of his demanding positions.

Change

As is clear from a review of his history, Joe has changed both positions and physical locations several times during his career. Even though he continued his common career themes, these changes not only renewed his interests, but also expanded his knowledge and skills.

Writing

As also reported by Joe, writing has played a very important part in his career from its beginning. He continued to write about his professional activities, even after he no longer needed publications for academic advancement. Writing helped Joe maintain his career interests and enabled him to better understand the complex matters he managed.

Personality

Joe is at heart a very humble and generous man. Even though he achieved a record of accomplishment equaled by very few in our field, a person would never hear that from Joe. He is more interested in hearing what others are doing and what is happening in their lives. No matter how busy he might have been, Joe has always been very generous with his time and energy. Joe's humility and generosity made colleagues and trainees respect him, want to work with him, and learn what he had to teach them. These personal characteristics are at the core of Joe's success as a practitioner, consultant, educator, mentor, and leader.

Conclusion

In reflecting on Joe's career, I believe it holds important lessons for younger colleagues who are early in their own professional journeys. Hard choices must be made to identify a few areas within the broad scope of psychiatry on which to focus one's interests. Once those choices have been made, they should become foremost in one's thinking, studying, and professional activities. Only with the support of loved ones and with strategies to maintain physical and emotional energy will one be able to manage the demands and stress of difficult positions. With careful planning, a change of position or location can rejuvenate one's interests and expand one's knowledge and skills. While engagement with professional organizations, colleagues, and trainees takes time and energy, the return one receives will often be far greater than what one gives. While colleagues and trainees might well recognize those with impressive accomplishments, they will more likely want to work with and learn from those they respect.

In summary, I believe that Joe Bloom has indeed been a man for all seasons. Not only has he dealt with whatever came his way, but he has done so in a manner that was exemplary and clearly above reproach. Joe's career focus, effective professional strategies, unique personality, and loving family have enabled him to achieve a record of success that can serve as a model for not only younger colleges but for the rest of us as well.

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