



Milton Helpern, M.D.

*Chief Medical Examiner, New York City
Professor and Chairman of the
Department of Forensic Medicine
New York University School of Medicine*

Milton Helpern, M.D.

Since the founding of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences in 1948, Dr. Milton Helpern has contributed continuously to its affairs. These contributions have included the time-consuming participation in its functioning as an organization which did not lessen following his term as President in 1962–63. Today, as always, he remains a source of solid advice and a calming influence in the Academy.

The vast efforts of Dr. and Mrs. Helpern in connection with arrangements for international meetings, especially the (now) International Meeting of Forensic Sciences, have done much to create awareness of the Academy and to enhance its stature in countries across the seas. Most importantly the Academy benefits from his scientific achievements in the discipline of forensic pathology and from his dedication and devotion to the teaching process which has led to so many of his former students attaining contemporary prominence in the field. These are notable exemplars of two of the ideals for which the Academy stands: the discovery and the transmission of knowledge.

The Journal of Forensic Sciences is greatly pleased to join various other publications and organizations in extending congratulations and special recognition to Dr. Milton Helpern upon the attainment of his seventieth birthday in April 1972.

Morton F. Mason, Ph.D.

Editor

Journal of Forensic Sciences

“A teacher affects eternity; he can never tell where his influence stops.” Henry Adams

The contributions that Milton Helpern has made to the forensic sciences during the past forty years will extend and multiply for countless generations. He has maintained an oasis for the development of forensic medicine as Chief Medical Examiner of New York City, as Professor and Chairman of the Department of Forensic Medicine of the New York University School of Medicine, as author of numerous books and articles, as an internationally respected lecturer, as editor of various professional journals, and as one of the founders, past president, and an always active member of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences. Many awards testify to the high esteem he commands of his colleagues.

At the entrance to the Medical Examiner’s Office in New York City is his credo: *Taceant Colloquia Effugiat Risus Hic Locus Est Ubi Mors Gaudet Succurrere Vitae* (Let Conversation Cease, Let Laughter Flee. This is the Place Where Death Delights in Helping the Living).

Milton Helpern has pioneered investigations into deaths due to narcotism, abortion, carbon monoxide, coronary arteriosclerosis, and traffic accidents; into deaths occurring

in the operating room and into the syndrome of sudden death of infants. He has contributed to the development of the subspecialties of forensic serology, forensic odontology, forensic pediatric pathology, and forensic toxicology. He has been a constant guardian of the public health and a strong voice for more effective functioning of the criminal justice system.

However, Milton Helpern's greatest satisfactions come when he is both teacher and student: always eager to search out and learn from something he has not seen before; infectiously enthusiastic as a teacher, carefully demonstrating by word and example that competence, independence, impartiality, and integrity are essential for the investigation of all deaths; and that the postmortem findings must be translated into terms that will contribute to the prevention of death.

This issue of the *Journal of Forensic Sciences* gives special recognition to Milton Helpern who attained his 70th birthday on April 17, 1972. Oliver Wendell Holmes has said:

"To be seventy years young is sometimes far more cheerful and hopeful than to be forty years old."

Michael M. Baden, M.D.

A Toast to Milton Helpern, M.D.

We have watched with awe, Dr. Helpern, your curriculum vitae veritably burst with kudos. We have viewed the very last cranny of the cluttered walls of your office crowded by more and still more scraps and mementos of honor.

Nevertheless, there is a certain amount of sterile unreality to all of that, those official greetings from public agents. Though they legitimize your deserved reputation in a field so grossly misunderstood by so many, both within the speciality and external to it, this evening represents much more. It celebrates especially, I think, the matter of four decades of personal growth and even-handed professionalism, both effected with exquisite grace. As has been stated recently in another context, time is a poor test for experience. There are physicians—like yourself—with 40 years of growth, and there are other physicians who repeat one year 40 times.

You have brought order to violence and integrity to an all too subjective discipline. You have taught us that there can be no truth if reality is anybody's guess and no justice without fact. You have put the lie to the old adage that "Dead men tell no tales."

On behalf of those few who have been privileged to have learned from your boundless experience first as apprentices and now as colleagues, I would like to acknowledge the priceless treasure of your wisdom and insight, *your most certain legacy*.

These gifts, tempered by your warmth, have truly shaped our lives. We, as much or more than anyone here, appreciate the greatness of the man we honor this evening.

Ladies and gentlemen, will you join me in a toast to the Chief.

James L. Luke, M.D.
Chief Medical Examiner
District of Columbia