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Commentary

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Dr. Ralph Brinster and Dr. Allam at the March of Dimes Awards Ceremony in 1996.

Mark Allam had been dean for about 10 years when I came to Penn as an intern, so we were about as far apart as two people could be on the academic totem pole. But Mark never forgot he was a surgeon, and he managed to find time to provide constructive criticism during his occasional visits to the surgical suite. One day that year, he sent word for me to come down to his office, and I had no idea what to expect. He shared his excitement about surgery with me, and he encouraged me to enlarge my horizons by giving me a human surgery text-book from the shelf in his office. It was an example of the wonderful way he had of reaching out to people. In retrospect, may be he was letting me know I needed some remedial instruction, but I accepted it as a gesture of encouragement! Many years later, I saw this willingness to share his enjoyment of life in a different way. Dr. Thomas Eriksen visited Penn as a research fellow in dentistry, and he brought his wife and young son Philip with him. The Eriksens found a place to live a couple of floors above Mark and Lila in the Strath Haven Apartments. Pretty soon, Mark and Lila were “adopted” by Philip as grandparents, to the point where Philip had the run of their apartment. I felt grateful that the Eriksens, who were here at my invitation, were able to enjoy their visit to Philadelphia in an unanticipated way thanks to Mark and Lila. I will always treasure my memories of Mark as a person and as a professional.

Dr. Colin Harvey
Professor of Surgery and Dentistry



Dr. Allam, Mrs. Charlotte Newton Sheppard and Mrs. Allam in the 1960s.

Reflections on Mark W. Allam....

My memories stretch back over 41 years, first as a student, then as a young faculty member followed by a closer interaction as Mark’s associate dean for curriculum until his retirement from the deanship. Over the years he taught me, by his own example, how to be a caring individual. As a surgery instructor, he delighted in guiding students. He cared enough to do demonstration surgeries for the spouses of students that they might better understand the challenges facing their loved ones. He kindly allowed me to share his own office as I embarked on my new administrative duties and from his side of the room, quietly but clearly, provided guidance on how to meet the demands encountered. And even after he left the deanship, he steadfastly continued to provide counsel and pensive advice. Always the gentleman, always the teacher, always the one who cared.

Donald A. Abt, V.M.D., '61
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We were the first class that Dr. Allam presented diplomas to, and for that reason, he adopted us and we adopted him. He often joined with us at our class reunion ceremonies — in fact we roasted him at our twenty-fifth reunion in 1977. He was easy to roast because of several of his characteristic traits in school.

Rather than sit here with long faces, we should all rejoice and thank God that Mark is now with his beloved Lila. I’ve always heard that heaven is a wonderful place — that there is no surgery there, but if there is any surgery I know that Dr. Allam will make sure it’s done “ah-septically.” That’s the way he would have said it!

We shall miss them.

Loy C. Awkerman V.M.D., '52