Stanley Maynard Aronson died on January 28, 2015, in Providence, Rhode Island. He was 92 years old. During his long career, he had been Professor of Pathology at Downstate Medical Center, Director of Laboratories at Kings County Hospital, Chief of Pathology at the Miriam Hospital, and Chairman of Pathology and Founding Dean of the Alpert School of Medicine at Brown University.

He was born and raised in Brooklyn, New York, and graduated from the City College of New York and New York University Medical School. He trained in neuropathology under Abner Wolf at Columbia and then did bench research on polio with Gregory Schwartzman at Mount Sinai. For a greater description of these early years, see his autobiography (1).

In 1954, he accepted a position at the State University of New York, Downstate Medical Center, where he established the Division of Neuropathology and had a National Institutes of Health–funded training program in neuropathology. He was also the Dean for Financial Aid at the Medical School. He trained a generation of neuropathologists, did pioneering work in Tay-Sachs disease, and, among other things, published the first case report of Lewy body dementia (2). He practiced neuropathology in a different era. The neuropathology service Aronson directed covered a very large city hospital, the medical examiner for both Brooklyn and Queens, and several other affiliated hospitals. It processed and diagnosed approximately 2,600 brains per year, and the training program filled 4 slots of neuropathology trainees per year. Many of his trainees went on to take leadership positions in the field.

In 1970, he moved to Rhode Island as Director of Laboratories at the Miriam Hospital and Professor and Chair of the Department of Pathology at the Brown University Medical School. In 1973, he was appointed Dean of the medical school, which was in the process of expanding from a 2-year preclinical experience to a full 4-year curriculum. He led the school through this major reorganization and accreditation. He stepped down as Dean in 1981. The following year, he took a sabbatical leave, during which he received an MPH in neuroepidemiology from the Harvard School of Public Health.

From 1989 until 1998, he served as the editor in chief of the Rhode Island Medical Journal. He strengthened the publication by including literary and artistic contributions. Aronson was an amateur artist, and many of the covers of the journal used his paintings, typically submitted under a pseudonym. He began writing a monthly column on a wide variety of medical topics. These columns came to the attention of the Editor of the Providence Journal. The Editor was struck by their literary quality and felt that they might interest the lay public. He asked Aronson to write a weekly column for the Op-Ed page. At first, the columns dealt with medicine and medical history, but soon their scope reflected the wide range of Stan’s knowledge and interests. They often dealt with historical issues and word derivations. Aronson’s contributions appeared each Monday for more than 20 years. In January 2011, on the occasion of his 1,000th column in the Providence Journal, Aronson joked that he had, “clung to this Monday morning site, much like herpes—tenacious but only rarely fatal.” Other newspapers in New England began to print his columns. This gave Stan a large audience to enlighten about a wide range of topics. The devotion of his readers became evident when the journal noticed that there was a dramatic increase in circulation each Monday.

In his eighties, Dr Aronson continued to be influential in Rhode Island medical circles. Among his many contributions was his role in the founding of the Home and Hospice Care of Rhode Island, the first facility dedicated to providing end-of-life hospice care in the state. He guided this
institution, served on its board, and it was where he died. Toward the end of his 70-year career in medicine, he received many honors, including honorary degrees from Brown University and the University of Rhode Island. In 2014, he was honored by the creation of an endowed chair in his name at the Butler Hospital.

It is not possible to encompass Stan Aronson’s wide range of interests and knowledge in this space. He also had a sly humorous streak. For many years, he lived on a farm just east of the Massachusetts border with Rhode Island. By judicious pruning, he created long straight intersecting paths in the woods and then placed wooden signs that he made himself, naming them after streets from his youth in Brooklyn (Flatbush Avenue, Bedford Avenue, Linden Boulevard, etc).

He was a remarkable man who made major contributions to neuropathology, medical education, and public health. His special legacy for the people of Rhode Island was unique and profound. He will be greatly missed. Remarkably, although ill with the disease that took his life and in his nineties, Stan wrote and stored away enough columns that, after his death, the Providence Journal will be able to print his weekly columns for many months to come. Describing someone as a ‘‘renaissance man’’ has become a cliché, but, with Stanley Aronson, it was accurate.

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REFERENCES