



# Martin Berezin



Dr. Martin Berezin, HMS Clinical Professor of Psychiatry at the Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, died November 18, 2002 at the age of 90. Born in Wrentham, Massachusetts on September 14, 1912, he received his undergraduate degree and medical degrees from Boston University; trained in psychiatry at Medfield State Hospital; and served in the United States army Medical Corps from 1940 to 1946, and was discharged at the rank of Colonel having headed Army Medical Services in Guadalcanal. He was enormously proud of his military service and kept a photograph of himself in uniform in his office.

Marty was a man of vision and energy, and a pioneer in the field of Geriatric Psychiatry. He anticipated the importance of geriatric psychiatry as life expectancy almost doubled since the turn of the century. In 1960 he led a group of psychoanalysts and social workers in the formation of the Boston Society for Gerontologic Psychiatry, the first group of its kind in America. He stimulated the founding of similar societies across the country by inviting colleagues to attend the meetings of the Boston Society and then return to their own cities and initiate similar programs. He was the first editor of the Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry, the

official organ of the Society.

From 1960 on, Dr. Berezin was a Training and Supervising Analyst at the Boston Psychoanalytic Society and Institute, positively influencing the professional lives of a generation of therapists and holding close, lifelong relationships with colleagues. He gave a very clear message that was fine to call him at home to share an idea or to ask for guidance with a clinical dilemma.

Marty was a President of the New England Psychiatric Association, a skilled musician, a gifted athlete playing golf well into his 80's.

One of his major interests was the inner life of older persons; how they experienced and responded to their own aging. He worked to increase interest among clinicians, researchers and administrators in mental health and aging, to dispel negative perceptions about the emotional needs and desires in this age group. He loved working with patients and his productivity continued in his later years despite lymphoma and strokes. He retired from teaching and became Emeritus in 1979 having served as HMS faculty for 33 years.

Marty received the Jack Weinberg Memorial Award from the American Psychiatric Association in recognition of his pivotal work in helping to establish geriatric psychiatry as a separate and distinct body of knowledge at a time when there was little understanding of the psychological aspects of late life. He helped clinicians move away from ageist misinterpretations that older persons were inflexible, beyond the possibility of change and doomed to ending life with increasing dependency, cognitive impairment and isolation. He was an early educator that the second half of life could be one of continued learning, productivity and accomplishment.

Dr. Berezin has left a significant legacy to those who provide care and to those who are the recipients of enlightened care. He leaves behind a large group of friends, which he might have said is “the real measure of a man.”

Ben Gurian, M.D.