

Email Exchange between Jay Amsterdam and Samuel Gershon
Regarding Amsterdam's 1977 Job Application

----- Original Message -----

From: enopath@aol.com <enopath@aol.com>
Sent: **Saturday, July 17, 2021 3:03 PM**
To: 'samuel gershon' <samuelgershon258@gmail.com>
Cc: 'J Amsterdam' <enopath@aol.com>
Subject: An interesting historical gem

Dear Sam:

I was having my computer read to me some historical gems from 1977, that I recently found in a storage box in my attic. At the time these letters were written to me, I was a post-doctoral fellow on the Depression Research Unit at Penn (working under the mentorship of Joe Mendels), and was apparently looking for another (kinder and gentler) research program to continue my post-doctoral studies and to launch my research career.

I was surprised to find the attached gem; and thought that it might also be of historical interest to you, as well.

As it happened, I remained at Penn and played the hand that I was dealt at the time, and as a result the rest is history (and now about to be revealed on the INHN web-site in the context of the 352 project)!

Kindest regards,
Jay

November 11, 1977

Jay D. Amsterdam, M.D.

Affective Disorders Research Unit (151-E)

c/o V.A. Hospital

University & Woodland Avenues

Philadelphia, Pa. 19104

Dear Doctor Amsterdam:

Thanks for your enquiry and we would be interested in having some letters of reference sent in. Then we could get back in contact with you.

Sincerely yours,

Samuel GERSHON, M. D.

Professor of Psychiatry, Director, Neuropsychopharmacology Research Unit

-----Original Message-----

From: samuel gershon <samuelgershon258@gmail.com>

Sent: **Monday, July 19, 2021 1:53 PM**

To: <enopath@aol.com> <enopath@aol.com>

Subject: your letter 1977

Dear Jay, I am sorry that the outcome of this letter never came to pass. I would hope that the outcome would have been different and hopefully more pleasant and peaceful.

I went to NYU from my stay with Max Fink in St Louis. Arnold Friedhoff asked me to join him in NY and I came up and met the Chairman. Dr. Sam Wortis. He was the cousin of Joseph Wortis who founded the Biological Psychiatry journal. Also, there was Eric Kandel, Nobelist, Spanish Biochemist, Nobelist David Wechsler, Bellevue test, etc etc.

Sam had a shamus, Dr Herman, he was actually the VC, but no body had much time for titles. Sam was also the Dean of the Medical School/Chairman of Neurology, Director of Bellevue, he ran everything, but was not mayor of NY; Sam never ran, never in a hurry and never spoke fast. It ran like a Jewish old men's home, but exceedingly successful and friendly. No Wars or fires because Sam never allowed it to happen. He and Joe Herman solved everything.

Bad end, Sam Died. After a while they appointed a new chair. He was not in any way like Sam. The Dept. disintegrated. I left well before then and went to Detroit, The Lafayette clinic and Wayne State.

Small story. After I was at NYU for about 3mths, my secy came to summon me to see the Chairman. Concerned, I came and invited to be seated and Sam asked, did I speak Yiddish. I passed.

I write this letter to fully answer your original letter — I would have loved you to come.
Also, History is a surprising thing. Regards SAM

----- Original Message -----

From: enopath@aol.com
Date: **July 23, 2021 at 10:34 PM**
To: 'samuel gershon' <samuelgershon258@gmail.com>
Cc: 'J Amsterdam' <enopath@aol.com>
Subject: An interesting historical gem

Dear Sam:

Thanks so much for your wonderful response to my email to you. It is a lovely historical and thoughtful commentary on your professional experience in psychiatry research during the Halcyon Days of its scholarly thought and heady discoveries.

It appears that most of the academic players that you encountered along the milestones of your academic development were gentlemen and scholars in the field, if not actual role models for you, as a young investigator. And, no doubt, they were also instrumental as role models for your subsequent nurturing and mentoring of the next generation of young research scholars.

Yes indeed, many of these individuals, known only to me as names on author bylines of seminal research articles, or as characters populating personal stories related to me by senior colleagues at research meetings, were giants in the field.

Again, I thank you for taking the time to write these memories (below).

I am taking the liberty of forwarding this short email link and attachment to Tom Ban, who I thought might also enjoy seeing these items.

You will no doubt find how prescient my maternal grandmother was when she would say to me (in her broken English-Yiddish): 'Zeendalah, the dradalach dratzach'; or, 'Little boy, the little wheel turns, and returns to where it began'; or, history repeats itself.

So, I'm glad you enjoyed reading the attached historical gem; and I also am sorry that our professional paths did not cross sooner (during those formative years of my research career).

With my kindest regards,
Jay

----- Original Message -----

From: Tom Ban <tomban@bell.net>
Sent: **Monday, July 26, 2021 11:42 AM**

To: enopath <enopath@aol.com>
Cc: olaf fjetland <o.fjetland1@gmail.com>
Subject: RE: your (Gershon's) letter 1977

Dear Jay,

Thank you very much.

Please send me your letter to Sam to which he responded with this letter.

Thanks.

Kindest regards,

Tom

----- Original Message -----

From: enopath@aol.com

Date: **Monday, July 26, 2021 12:26 PM**

To: Tom Ban <tomban@bell.net

Cc: 'olaf fjetland' o.fjetland1@gmail.com; 'samuel gershon' samuelgershon258@gmail.com; 'J Amsterdam' enopath@aol.com

Subject: RE: your (Gershon's) letter 1977

Dear Tom:

Regrettably, I have not been able to locate a copy of my 1977 letter to Sam, nor have I found copies of any of the other letters that I wrote to other program directors at other universities (with the exception of what appears to be a brief correspondence with Bob Post at the NIMH). While these items may (or may not) be somewhere in my attic, my extremely limited vision (such as it is) would now no longer allow me to identify them. What stands out to me, however, from other correspondence at the time, and from personal memories of working on the Depression Research Unit in 1977) was that Penn's department of psychiatry was not a very cordial environment in which to work, and I was seeking to develop my scholarly research in a more collegial and less competitive environment.

So, I'm sorry that I cannot now accommodate your request for a copy of my original 1977 letter to Sam.

Kind regards,

Jay

September 30, 2021