On July 27, 1977, George Rosen died suddenly in Oxford, England. He and Mrs. Rosen had planned to travel leisurely through the English countryside, enjoying themselves as they had so often in the past, and ultimately arrive in Scotland in time for Professor Rosen to deliver a keynote address and participate in a symposium on “Medicine and Industrialization in History.” Editor of the American Journal of Public Health from 1957 to 1973, and Professor of the History of Science and Medicine and Epidemiology and Public Health at Yale since 1969, he was regarded, nationally and internationally, as one of the elder statesmen and preeminent scholars of the history of medicine, a distinction earned through some 40 years of unremitting research in archives and libraries in the United States and abroad. A memorial service will be held October 14, at 4:00 pm, in the Medical History Library of Yale University School of Medicine.

To those who knew him, Professor Rosen was the quintessential academic scholar—a man of immense learning, originality, certainty, and order. Author of ten books and over 200 published articles in professional journals around the world, his life’s work extends over and into every branch of the history of medicine. Known primarily as a social historian of medicine and public health, his career also embraced clinical medicine and public health practice.

Born in Brooklyn, New York on June 23, 1910, he was educated in local schools and at the College of the City of New York where he was graduated BS in 1930. He earned his MD degree in 1935 from the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Berlin. In fulfilling the requirements for the medical degree, Rosen studied for a time with Paul Diepgen, Director of the Institute of the History of Medicine in Berlin, and ultimately submitted his doctoral thesis on the European reception of William Beaumont’s physiological studies of digestion.

During the years in Berlin, Professor Rosen was introduced to a fellow medical student named Beate Caspari, an uncommonly gifted and gracious young woman who was the daughter of an active and well respected Berlin physician. They shared an immediate and profound affection for each other, nurtured by common interests in the theatre, art, music, ballet, nature, and Weltanschauung. They were married on July 6, 1933 and, after graduation, with Nazism spreading irresistibly, were encouraged by family and friends to depart immediately for America. For over 40 years, Professor and Mrs. Rosen were inseparable companions, travelers, and co-workers. During World War II, they co-edited a Ciba Symposium (1938–44), and, shortly thereafter, co-authors of the widely read and popular anthology, 400 Years of a Doctor’s Life (1947). Dr. Caspari-Rosen pursued her own active career as an ophthalmologist and has been most recently associated with the Yale Health Plan. Professor Rosen is also survived by a son, Dr. Peter Rosen, Associate Professor of Pathology, Cornell University School of Medicine, a daughter, Dr. Susan Koslow, Assistant Professor of Art History, Brooklyn College, and four grandchildren.

Upon returning to the United States in 1935, Dr. Rosen interned at Beth El Hospital in Brooklyn (1935–37) and entered the private practice of medicine (1937–42). He began his public health work in the early 1940s as Clinic Physician, Bureau of Tuberculosis, and Junior Health Officer in the New York City Department of Health (1941–43). During the war he served in the Medical Intelligence Division of the Army Medical Corps as well as in the Preventive Medicine Service, Surgeon General’s Office, and the European Theatre of Operations. Returning to the New York City Health Department, he served as Health Officer (1946), District Health Officer (1947–49), and Director of its Bureau of Health Education (1949–50). Concurrently he matriculated in Columbia University and was awarded the PhD in sociology in 1944 for a dissertation on medical specialization; he received the MPH degree from Columbia University.
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School of Public Health in 1947. Appointed Director of the Division of Health Education and Preventive Services of the Health Insurance Plan of Greater New York in 1950, he concurrently held the position of Professor of Public Health Education at the School of Public Health and Administrative Medicine, Columbia University (1951–69).

Despite the fact that the overwhelming majority of Professor Rosen’s publications were in the history of medicine, he surprisingly did not dedicate himself full-time to teaching and research in the history of medicine until 1969, when he was called to Yale to head the program in the History of Medicine and its Department of History of Science and Medicine. In all that he did, he was the ideal and consummate teacher—scholarly, demanding, concerned, humane.

A writer of force and clarity, who possessed sound editorial judgment and a seemingly effortless ability to separate documented fact from opinion proffered as fact, Professor Rosen also exerted a wide influence through his editorship of two journals—the Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences (1946–52) and the American Journal of Public Health (1957–73). Next year would have marked Dr. Rosen's thirtieth year of continuing association with the American Journal of Public Health. In 1948 he joined the Editorial Board and in the same year the Journal published his first submission, "A Book Shelf for Health Education." He became Chairman of the Editorial Board in 1956, and editor of the Journal in 1957. After retiring as editor, he continued as contributing editor of the Journal’s “Public Health: Then and Now” department. His 16-year tenure was longer than that of any of the Journal’s preceding eight editors, except for Mazycz Ravenel who also served 16 years. During Dr. Rosen's editorship, the Journal circulation doubled from 15,000 to 30,000 and it achieved an international reputation. Throughout his career, he refereed countless manuscripts, and authors received and benefitted from his editorial comments and annotations, themselves gems of erudition and restraint.

Professor Rosen’s writing reflect the influence of Henry E. Sigerist, former Director of the Johns Hopkins Institute of the History of Medicine (1932–47). Sigerist’s conception of medicine was the study and application of biology in an historical matrix which encompassed social, political, and cultural phenomena. Medical practice was an integral component of sociology and an outgrowth of sociological factors. Medical history, then, was a tool for analyzing the past in order to orient to the present and help to foresee the future. Professor Rosen’s research and teaching, in many ways, began where Sigerist’s had left off.

Professor Rosen shared Sigerist's belief in the utility and social efficacy of the history of medicine. In a recent contribution to the April issue of the Journal, Dr. Rosen described the origins of contract medical practice in the United States and the opposition that engendered, showing the relationship of the past to the present.

Professor Rosen’s pedagogic and research objectives were to place medicine in a "social context." As he wrote in the Preface to his History of Public Health:

"History performs a social task. It may be regarded as the collective memory of the human group and for good or evil helps to mold its collective consciousness. It creates an awareness of oneself in relation to the world around one, including both our yesterdays and our tomorrows. A meaningful understanding of the present requires that it be seen in the light of the past from which it has emerged and of the future which it is bringing forth. Every situation that man has faced and every problem that he has had to solve have been the product of historical developments. Furthermore, the way in which we act in a given situation is, in large measure, determined by the mental image of the past that we have. To understand the problems of our own society and to be capable of playing an intelligent role in shaping our civilization, we must have a sense of continuity in time, an awareness that one cannot advance intelligently into the future without a willingness to look attentively at the past, we must have knowledge of the past and how it brought the present into being."

Professor Rosen's books, The History of Miner's Disease, the now classic A History of Public Health, Preventive Medicine in the USA, and Essays on the History of Health Care: From Medical Police to Social Medicine, and his many articles, a few of which are listed below, are indications of the wide range of his interests. For these and other works he received the Grant Squires Award from Columbia University (1943), the William H. Welch Medal of the American Association for the History of Medicine (1961), the Elizabeth S. Prentiss Award in Health Education of the Cleveland Health Museum (1964), Edgar C. Hayhow Award of the American College of Hospital Administrators (1965), and the Hafner Award from the Medical Library Association and American Association for the History of Medicine (1966). In addition, he was the Fielding H. Garrison Lecturer, American Association for the History of Medicine (1961), the Benjamin Rush Lecturer, American Psychiatric Association (1967), and the Richard H. Shryock Lecturer, University of Pennsylvania (1975). He served as president of the American Association for the History of Medicine (1964–66), the Society for the Social History of Medicine (1975), and the International Academy of the History of Medicine (1973–76).

Dr. Rosen was a fellow of APHA, his membership and affiliation with the Public Health Education Section dating back to 1946. In November, 1977, he was to be honored at a symposium, entitled "An Evening with George Rosen," sponsored by the Conference on Social Sciences in Health, American Public Health Association, during the Annual Meeting in Washington, D.C.

As Professor Rosen approached both retirement and emeritus status, there was no discernible change in life-style. Both he and Mrs. Rosen continued to work diligently and productively throughout the academic year, reserving summers for European holidays. They entertained often, were inveterate readers of “good” fiction, and frequented movie houses more than they cared to admit. Both enjoyed the company of old friends and new acquaintances, of students and contemporaries, and were, in turn, admired and loved by those whose lives came within their ken.

Professor Rosen especially loved to take problems to bits—to seek a fundamental understanding of the why of

* Translated into the Japanese language in 1974.
things. He grasped facts with remarkable ease, played with them until he recognized their part in the world order, and then proceeded to other problems, other challenges. The following passage which concludes A History of Public Health illustrates his appreciation of the significance of the past, recognition of the present, and hope for the future:

"Many health problems have been solved in theory, and this knowledge awaits application in practice. This is true of much preventable ill health in all countries and particularly in underdeveloped lands. In all countries there are problems of community health that require social and political action guided by available knowledge. This is true of such matters as the provision of public health services or the organization of medical care. Furthermore, the horizon of health workers today can no longer be limited to the local or even the national community but must extend to the international community. Today, we are all members of another; and so each in our community, we must strive toward a goal of freedom from disease, want, and fear. We must strive to enhance and hand on the noble legacy that has come down to us. And may the outcome be a happy one."

At this time when our loss weighs heavily upon us, and in years to come, we can remember with gratitude all that George Rosen was and accomplished. We can take comfort in the knowledge that he instilled in others, simply by being himself, standards of excellence and high principle and that his wisdom, enthusiasm, and vitality touched, influenced, and enriched many lives.

The Journal is grateful to Arthur J. Visseltear, PhD, MPH, Associate Professor of Public Health, and Research Associate in the History of Medicine, Yale University School of Medicine, for his major contribution to the foregoing. Portions were also prepared by APHA editorial staff.

REFERENCES

1. Sponsored by the XVth International Congress of the History of Science, Edinburgh, August 15, 1977; Rosen's address was entitled "Urbanization, Occupation, and Disease in the United States, 1870-1920; the Case of New York City."


