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GABRIEL WARD LASKER

Gabriel died on Tuesday 27 August 2002 in his 91st year. He had been a very committed member of the Editorial Board since January 1991 and he continued to review papers for the Journal with the same degree of impartiality and care until a week before he died.

Gabriel was born in England but migrated to the United States of America in 1916 and he took United States citizenship in 1921. His first exposure to anthropology was in China. Although he had gone there primarily to learn Chinese, he undertook research on metabolism of the Chinese and on growth in Chinese children. After nearly two years in China he returned to the United States and was admitted into the graduate programme at Harvard. The Second World War interrupted his studies and he completed his PhD in 1945. His thesis was on the physical differentiation of immigrant and American-born Chinese. The effects of migration on human genetic variation and in relation to human plasticity were to become central research interests and he conducted fieldwork in Mexico, Peru and England.

Gabriel was hired to teach in the School of Medicine at Wayne (later Wayne State) University, Detroit, Michigan. Although he was to spend the next 36 years teaching anatomy at Wayne State he took sabbaticals to teach anthropology at a number of universities, including Chicago, Wisconsin, California and Michigan State. He became an adjunct professor in Anthropology and Psychiatry at Wayne State and advocated well ahead of his time (1955) the importance of the inclusion of anthropologists in public health and clinical departments.

Gabriel has worked tirelessly to promote physical (biological) anthropology. He founded the *Yearbook of Physical Anthropology* in 1945 and edited it until 1952. In his work on the *Yearbook* Gabriel was aided by Bernice Kaplan, a cultural anthropologist (Mrs Bunny Lasker) and over their 53+ years together Gabriel and Bunny were a great duo, undertaking much joint research. In 1945 Gabriel was elected Secretary of the American Association of Physical Anthropologists and during his 5-year term he was able to accelerate change in the discipline and bring the subject to the attention of a much wider audience.

He also served in the professional Associations of Physical Anthropologists: from 1946 to 1951 as Secretary-Treasurer, from 1960 to 1962 as Vice-President, and from 1963 to 1965 as President of the American Association of Physical Anthropologists, and from 1952 to 1957 as Secretary of the Anthropological Section (Section H) of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. He has been Chairman of the Conference of Biological Editors (1963 to 1965) and of the Human Biology Council. He was a founding member of the International Association of Human Biologists and member of the board of the Union Internationale des Sciences Anthropologiques et Ethnologiques and of the Central States Anthropological Society.

Gabriel became editor of *Human Biology* in 1953. The journal was close to extinction but with support from W. W. Howells they turned the journal round. Gabriel went on to edit the journal for 35 years. Being an editor is a difficult job but Gabriel followed the rule of treating all authors equally and fairly. He tirelessly promoted good scholarship and high standards and was an extremely respected

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editor. He was particularly encouraging to junior authors as they grappled with the conversion of a thesis into polished scientific papers.

Gabriel said his working life was one of thirds: one-third teaching anatomy, one-third editing and one-third research. His 1969 paper in *Science* in which human biological adaptability is seen within the framework of human plasticity was a landmark. Several of Gabriel's researches have stood the test of time: for instance, at a time when human types were generally thought to be definable stable entities, his demonstration of major changes of somatotype during partial starvation demonstrated the lack of stability of constitutional types, and his study of returned Mexican emigrants confirmed that adult physique is influenced by experience as well as heredity.

After retiring in 1982 as Emeritus Professor of Anatomy and Adjunct Professor of Anthropology, Gabriel extended his research to the use of historical records and of isonymy in studying genetic structure and migration patterns. One of his colleagues dubbed Gabriel 'the father of modern isonymy research'. His output in retirement was astonishing: over 80 books, articles and reviews. He played a very significant role in persuading Cambridge University Press to set up what was to become the highly successful *Cambridge Studies in Biological Anthropology*. His own volume on *Surnames and Genetic Structure* was the first to be published in the series (1985) and it has become widely used by all scholars involved in population genetics and biodemography. Gabriel co-edited and contributed to four other titles covering human migration, research strategies, applications of biological anthropology to human affairs, and human plasticity. In total Gabriel was author of over 250 publications including the college textbooks entitled *The Evolution of Man: A Brief Introduction to Physical Anthropology* (1961), *Human Evolution: Physical Anthropology and the Origin of Man* (1963) and *Physical Anthropology* (1973).

Between 1976 and 1995 the Laskers spent most summers in the UK, as well as longer periods when Bunny could escape from her teaching duties. Most of the time it was my privilege to host them in Cambridge and on several of their extended visits they were elected to prestigious Overseas Fellowships at Churchill College. Gabriel and Bunny enjoyed the atmosphere of Cambridge enormously — dining in College, visits to the theatre and music recitals at the University — but most of all the chance to work on a host of research projects.

Gabriel's contribution to biological anthropology was formally recognized in 1993 when he became one of the first recipients of the Charles Darwin Award of the American Association of Physical Anthropologists. In 1996 the Human Biology Association honoured him with the Franz Boas Award and he received an honorary Doctor of Science degree from the University of Turin in 2000 for his scholarship in Human Biology.

Biosocial studies are richer for his contributions but many of us have lost a great friend and a very dear colleague.

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