

Lawrence Joseph Stone, 1912-1975

At a Meeting of the  
Faculty of Vassar College  
held

May eleventh, nineteen hundred  
and seventy-seven, the following  
Memorial

was unanimously adopted:

Lawrence Joseph Stone received his undergraduate degree from Cornell and his Master's and Doctoral degrees from Columbia. He taught for various periods at Columbia, Sarah Lawrence, and Brooklyn College, before coming to Vassar in 1939 as an instructor in the Child Study Department. With the exception of two years spent in the Dept. of Psychiatry of the U.S. Public Health Service during the war, Joe was an integral part of Vassar life until his untimely death on December 13, 1975.

Joe's original training and research had been in Experimental Psychology; he was hired by the Child Study Department at Vassar because of the work he had done at Sarah Lawrence filming children for a study of normal personality development. As a result of his early teaching at Vassar, Joe's enduring professional interests emerged: Personality Development, Projective Techniques, Psychotherapy (he maintained a small private practice for years), making films about personality development in normal children, and Child Advocacy (he found it ironic that the American Psychological Association had proclaimed a code of ethics for the handling of laboratory animals many years before they took similar action with respect to human subjects).

The Vassar Film Program begun under the auspices of Mary Fisher Langmuir (now Essex), then Chairman of the Child Study Department, became a unique vehicle for the teaching of Child Development courses across the country and in Europe. Joe made 34 films in his lifetime, including many which won professional awards; 10 films were produced at the request of the Office of Economic Opportunity for use in training Head Start personnel. His final three films were made in Israeli Kibbutzim, adding to the cross-cultural perspective that he had already introduced in films of Greek and Austrian communal child-rearing.

Because of Joe's many and various professional interests, he was particularly suited to introduce a wide range of nontraditional courses in the Child Study Department, and he was a stimulating teacher. (The enduring quality of his influence in the classroom and in the field was recently made visible by the more than 300 former students and colleagues who returned to Vassar for the

-2-

conference in his honor in March of this year.) The fact that the Department has always included an outstanding Nursery School provided both an empirical and theoretical basis for the study of children, which taught both students and incoming faculty members the importance of accurate observation of child behavior, in

evaluating the validity of a particular theoretical orientation. The times and the state of the art dictated that the primary orientation of the Child Study Department through the 1940's and 1950's was toward the training of teachers and the preparation of young women for motherhood. It is a testimony to Joe's flexibility that, by the time of the merger of the Child Study and Psychology Departments in 1965, the curriculum of the Child Study Department had already moved in the direction of more rigorous study of psychological development throughout the life-span.

In addition to numerous articles and reviews, Joe Stone's text, *Childhood and Adolescence* written with Joe Church, essentially revolutionized the writing of text books in the field. Its radical departure seems very obvious now, but it was the first text to present the individual as an integrated organism developing over time. The traditional text had sliced the child (or our knowledge of him) into such areas as perceptual development, cognitive development, and social development, leaving it difficult if not impossible to see how development in one area influences behavior in another. The "Two Joe's" were beginning work on the Fourth Edition of Stone & Church at the time of Joe's death. Over the years, *Childhood and Adolescence* has been translated into Spanish, Dutch, French, and other languages.

Joe's last major publication, coauthored with Lois Murphy and Henrietta Smith, was a monumental work which again provided a breakthrough in the field of child development. Entitled "The Competent Infant," this volume not only pulled together the major contributions to research in infancy, historical as well as contemporary, in a selection of readings, but also contained beautifully lucid criticisms and directions for future research in the chapter introductions.

The punning (many of them "Groaners"); the twinkle in the eye; the pointed but never malicious wit; the pain over misuse of language; the love of jazz and his delight in knowing obscure musicians and their works, his encyclopedic knowledge of psychology and his personal acquaintance with people who were doing important work in the field, both those who were well-known and those who were just beginning; his persistence in the face of obstacles (which were sometimes us); his delight in children and children's easy responsiveness to him; and his joy in lavishing the good

-3-

things of life on his colleagues in the form of huge thick rare steaks. All of these things stand out in our memories of Joe. He delighted in the role of Paterfamilias, both with his own family and with his colleagues and friends. He frequently used his ability as a raconteur and his seemingly infinite knowledge of jokes--old and new, good and sometimes bad--to lighten moments of stress or tension.

In his last years, Joe's big house on Raymond Avenue was alive with wave after wave of daughters, sons-in-law, and S

grandchildren. These years seemed an almost ideal fulfillment  
for so uxorious, gregarious, epicurean, fun-loving, child-loving,  
and jazz-loving a man.

Respectfully Submitted,

Henrietta T. Smith

Anne P. Constantinople

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