

FAMILY & FRIENDS: JEROME'S CAREER DECISIONS

Jerome Shen also found that professional interests did not always line up with nourishing family life. In 1958, Jerome and his family had lived in St. Louis for almost ten years. The family had grown, and he decided it was time to start his own pediatric practice. Working alone in rented office space on the second floor of Brentwood Medical Square, Jerome's practice began slowly. Not graduating from one of the two local medical schools, (SLU or Washington University,) meant he had very few referrals being sent his way. With his practice still fairly small, Jerome found time to explore his interest in adolescent medicine. At this time, the field of adolescent medicine was just beginning to differentiate itself from general pediatrics. Focusing on the adolescent ages allowed more attention to be given to problems such as drug abuse and sexual behavior.ⁱ St. Louis, however, did not offer many opportunities to pursue these studies. Instead Jerome headed to Boston after winning a graduate fellowship at Harvard University's Graduate School of Medicine. There he would study under the pioneer of adolescent medicine, Dr. James Roswell Gallagher.

Dr. Gallagher had established the first adolescent health program at Phillips Academy in 1934, and started the world's first adolescent unit at Children's Medical Center in Boston. His 1960 textbook, *Medical Care of the Adolescent*, was the first of its kind, and he later founded the Society for Adolescent Medicine. Gallagher was clearly the leader in adolescent medicine, and during Jerome's two year fellowship (1957-58) under his guidance at Harvard, Gallagher was impressed by Jerome's talents. About twenty years later, Dr. Gallagher encouraged Jerome to edit a new book, *The Clinical Practice of Adolescent Medicine*. In a section titled "In Appreciation," Jerome wrote that the book

“could never have been started or finished, without the support and encouragement of my devoted friend and teacher, Ros Gallagher. In a sense this book belongs to him.”ⁱⁱ What did Jerome find so appealing about his mentor? Some of it had to do with Ros’ intellectual abilities, but more important were the personal aspects of their relationship:

[Ros] has over the years generously made himself available for verbal or written consultation, on any subject and at any time, and has never failed to give a forthright and appropriate response. His strength of character and compassion manifest themselves in a deep commitment to young people, to his students, and to colleagues. Association with him inevitably generates an optimistic outlook and a desire for self-improvement.

Although the book was written in 1980, it carried a sentiment that Jerome demonstrated in 1958: a preference for practice over theory. In the book’s Preface, Jerome wrote that he selected authors who would place an “emphasis on *practical* applications for practitioners.”ⁱⁱⁱ He also thanked all of his “adolescent patients and their parents for giving [him] the privilege of sharing their burdens and, oftentimes, joys. Helping them to be healthier and to suffer less [gave Jerome] the true satisfaction of practicing adolescent medicine.” For Jerome, the joy was in the patients, in the hands-on aspects of being a physician. Though he was capable of producing theory, Jerome was not inclined to join the academy. One important reason for this is that Jerome’s medical background had not included a lot of time in research. But another important consideration was Jerome’s desire to spend time with his family. The issue would become especially important for Jerome in 1959 because in August of that year, his youngest son Thomas was born. This meant three kids under the age of ten in the Shen household, and Jerome didn’t want to be working all the time. The choice to pursue academic research, then, or even to expand his private practice, was not much of a choice at all because, like Doc Lawler, Jerome’s commitment to family came first.

As Jerome began to get more involved in the St. Louis medical community, he found himself at the beginning of the 1960's as Head of the Department of Pediatrics at St. Louis City Hospital. As Head of the Department, he would not only have to deal with patients, but also with hospital administrators – in dealing with labor issues, Jerome again looked a lot like Doc Lawler. Though St. Louis City Hospital has since been boarded up, in 1960 it played a major role in providing health services to city residents. Members of the Lawler family, in fact, worked as candy strippers in the building. It is highly likely that during Jerome's time there, which lasted until 1963, some of the people treated in the Pediatrics Department were family or friends of Doc Lawler. While Doc would never have known Dr. Shen, he would have loved what Jerome did for the medical residents under his supervision.

The size of the hospital meant that Jerome was responsible for nine residents, and combined with limited city funds, this meant that his residents had very little support staff. As a consequence, Jerome's residents usually had to do work usually assigned to technicians – taking patients' urine and blood samples, and then testing them in the lab. Unhappy with the way his residents were being treated, and unable to force any timely action from the city, Jerome decided he would simply hire his own lab technician to take care of the jobs on his floor. He recruited one of the faster technicians from the lab to come upstairs and work in the Pediatrics Department, and it seemed to him to be the easiest solution. But even though Jerome's adjustment accomplished its goal of making life more pleasant for the pediatric residents, the arrangement quickly fell through when Jerome's bosses learned what had happened. When Jerome left City Hospital in 1963, it was in part because of disagreements with hospital management.

Jerome's renegade hiring procedures in City Hospital demonstrate his willingness to stand up for those who worked for him. It was the same sort of willingness that made Doc repeatedly stand up for the men in Local 562. But if they shared this commitment to "their people," Jerome's actions in City Hospital demonstrate different strategies. While Doc preferred low-key, behind the scenes maneuvering, Jerome chose a path destined to bring conflict. It is, after all, a little hard to keep a busy lab technician behind the scenes. As opposed to Doc, who favored negotiations, Jerome more often brought a sense of "my way or the highway" to the discussions.

Colleagues and friends acknowledge that it could sometimes be very hard to talk to Jerome because of his uncompromising tendencies. Though Doc Lawler was also not one to compromise, still he was known as someone people could come and talk to. Both Doc and Jerome were eager to stand up for the people who counted on them. The difference, essentially, was that Doc Lawler would at least listen to the person across from him. Though age (and with that experience) made him more open to differences, as a bright young doctor in the 1960's, Jerome showed very little interest in listening to anyone who disagreed with him.

If Doc Lawler did ever close his ears, it was to avoid one source: the *St. Louis Globe Democrat*. Though Jerome had his critics, he experienced nothing like the heat Doc repeated took from the *Globe-Democrat*. Though Doc's trials with the *Globe-Democrat* may not immediately offer information on both Doc and Jerome, Doc's handling of the *Globe-Democrat* is so central to his public life that it is necessary to consider. If we are to know Doc Lawler, we need to return to the question the *Globe-Democrat* forces us to consider. Was Doc a hero of the working class or a villain who stalled civic progress?

ⁱ The definition of “adolescent” ages varies: at Harvard at the time it was as broad as 10-23; while at Cardinal Glennon Children’s Hospital in St. Louis it was 13-15 or 15-18. By age 18 the general expectation is that the patient will seek a general practitioner to serve as the primary care physician.

ⁱⁱ Shen, Jerome T.Y. “In Appreciation.” *The Clinical Practice of Adolescent Medicine*. Appleton-Century-Crofts, New York: 1980.

ⁱⁱⁱ *Ibid.* xx. (His italics.)