



**Jerome H. Markovitz**

February 2, 1957 — September 5, 2002

Jerome H. Markovitz, M.D., M.P.H., a friend and colleague, passed away from cancer on September 5, 2002. Included among his many contributions to Behavioral Medicine, he served as an Associate Editor of *Annals of Behavioral Medicine* for the last 3 years.

Jerry graduated from the University of Minnesota with a B.A. in child psychology in 1979. He also attended the University of Minnesota for medical school, and he subsequently completed his internship at Mount Sinai and residency at the University of Rochester. An extremely important step in his professional life was his postdoctoral fellowship at the University of Pittsburgh. During his postdoc, he was able to pursue his interests in the role of psychological factors in cardiovascular disease under the mentorship of Karen A. Matthews. In 1992 he joined the Division of Preventive Medicine at the University of Alabama at Birmingham and was an Associate Professor there at the time of his passing.

Jerry was intensely interested in his work and brought a great deal of zeal, enthusiasm, and passion to his professional life. He was a valuable and insightful colleague who treated world-famous researchers and postdoctoral fellows in exactly

the same interested and respectful way. Those of us who had the pleasure of working with him knew him as a quiet and humble man who was dedicated to excellent research. Working with him was also a lot of fun; he had a wonderful sense of humor. He was an upbeat, optimistic person, even in the face of his diagnosis and its almost uniformly poor prognosis. He did a mean Minnesota accent (those people in *Fargo* could have taken lessons) and had widespread interests. In the course of a short visit, you could catch up on one of several sports, discuss world affairs, or debate which artists should have been included in Ken Burns' *Jazz* but were somehow overlooked. In addition to playing and writing music, he listened to an eclectic variety in much of his spare time or while working.

Jerry organized and chaired what has come to be known as "The Great Debate" at the 2001 annual meeting of the American Psychosomatic Society. The debate, the resolve of which was that psychosocial interventions could improve objective outcomes in organic diseases, brought together former Editor-in-Chief of the *New England Journal of Medicine* and the *Journal of the American Medical Association* to debate against two prominent members of the behavioral/psychosomatic medicine community—Redford B. Williams and Neil Schneiderman. For those fortunate enough to have attended the debate, it was a sin-

gularly special and successful event, full of conviction, humor, and even rock-n-roll lyrics chosen by Jerry to exemplify the interest of popular culture in the notion that our mental states can indeed affect disease. Who other than Jerry could have pulled off that debate? He fondly dedicated the debate to his father who was in the audience, a physician who Jerry said understood the importance of the psyche in medicine.

In the last year of his life, Jerry continued to pursue the work he loved as much as he was able. He approached his diagnosis in his usual scientific way, thoroughly researching his options and going with a rigorous and new but promising course of treatment. He was not bitter or despairing when it became obvious that the treatments would not be successful and that his disease was going to take his life in a fairly short period of time. He did all he could to see that his work would continue. He carefully selected and worked with those who would continue his various projects to ensure that there would be a smooth transition. He was especially concerned that his work on cardiovascular disease in South Asians would be continued.

Two weeks before his death he was in his office conducting project meetings. When asked about this, he said he'd had time to think about his life and what it was that made him happy, and these were the things he wanted to spend his remaining time and energy on—namely, his family, friends, and science. He said he

was not happy to die, but he died happy. We should all hope to end that way.

Jerry was first and last a devoted husband to his wife, Susie, and devoted father to their children Eve and Ari. He did all he could for their emotional and material support. He worked hard to bring closure and peace to his family.

He was a warm and considerate friend. We will miss him but will also have the deeply abiding satisfaction of having known a splendid human being. We can think of a no more fitting way to end this obituary than with Jerry's own words, words he used to close a letter in which he announced to friends and colleagues that his cancer had recurred and that his prognosis was dim.

“As for words of wisdom from me, they have already been written by others—love is first, love is what makes us human, forgiveness is key, do not judge others. Working at those understandings is what life is all about.”

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