

Remembering

Dr. Louis Greenspan

1934-2018

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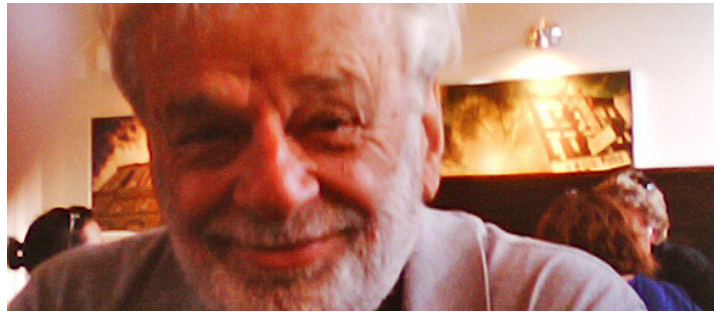
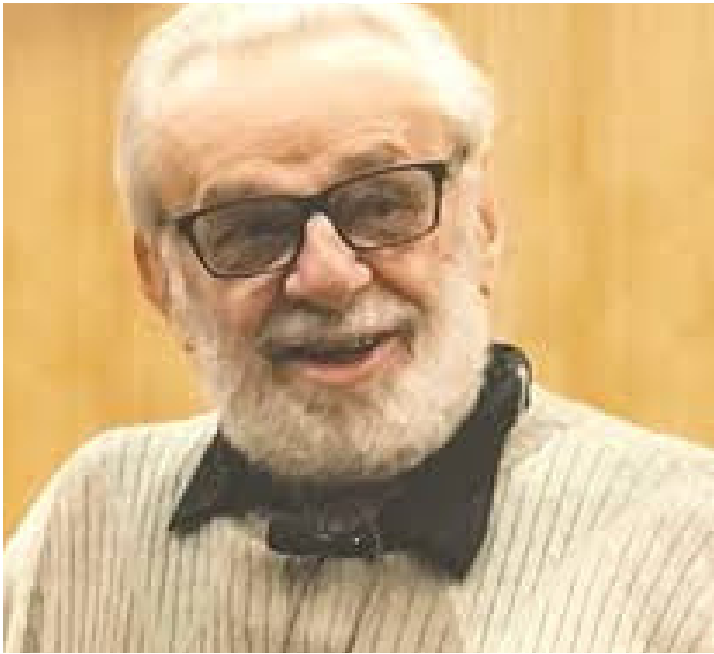
Memorial Program & Photos

Speech presented by Lauren Gorfinkel (2017), Mia Kibel (2017), and Varun Puri (2017)

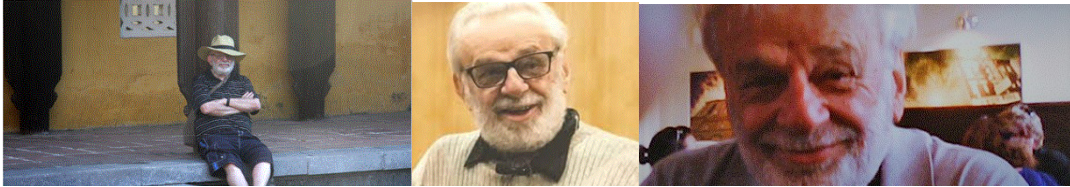
Speech presented by Dr. Kati Ivanyi (1988)

PROFESSOR LOUIS GREENSPAN
OCT. 20, 1934 TO MAY 10, 2018

Memorial Celebration
Great Hall, University Club
McMaster University
Monday, November 26th, 3:30 -5:30 PM
(905) 525-9140, Ext. 24567



LOUIS GREENSPAN MEMORIAL CELEBRATION
Great Hall, University Club
Monday, November 26th
3:30 pm



PROGRAM

Master of Ceremonies

Travis Kroeker, Professor, Department of Religious Studies

Speakers

Department of Religious Studies

Ellen Badone, Professor

Arts & Science Program

Lauren Gorfinkel, Mia Kibel, Varun Puri; Student Alumni

Russel Project/ Department of History

Dick Rempel, Professor Emeritus

Department of Religious Studies

Lorne Dawson, Student Alumnus and Professor, University of Waterloo

University Administration

Susan Denburg, Associate Vice-President, Academic, Faculty of Health Sciences

Intermission

coffee/tea & cookies

Family

Jeremy Greenspan to introduce short video clip

Arts & Science Program

Dr. Kati Ivanyi, Arts & Science Alumna and Louis' Medical Doctor

Family

Sheila Greenspan

You are welcome to gather with friends in the University Club Bar after the Memorial Celebration.

Speech for Dr. Greenspan's memorial, 26 November 2018
by Arts & Science alumni Mia Kibel, Varun Puri, and Lauren Gorfinkel

Mia Kibel:

Like some of you, all three of us were taught by Dr. Greenspan in the Arts & Science program. He taught us in our second year, in a course called Western Civilization, and then again two years ago, in our fourth year, in a seminar titled Contemporary Intellectual History. As you might have guessed from the names, both are courses that wonderfully suit the kind of teacher and thinker that Dr. Greenspan was, and the things that he gave to us moving forward.

Varun Puri:

We were asked to talk today about Dr. Greenspan on behalf of students in the Arts & Science Program. But this felt really hard. We all have particular stories about going for coffee, frequent reminders to “go whoop it up” on Friday nights, and insights into how Hamilton has been “up and coming” now for 50 years. It was common to run into him on his to the library, at the Second Cup in Westdale, or walking around the track at the gym. In many ways, in addition to being his students, we were all his friends, and learned a lot from him outside of our classes. But none of those stories seemed to capture the deeper things that Dr. Greenspan brought to the Arts & Science program, or the ways in which we feel we’ve changed as a result of having him as our teacher. So instead, we’d like to talk about Dr. Greenspan through one of his courses, Contemporary Intellectual History.

This class was only offered once, in what turned out to be the final semester that Dr. Greenspan taught at McMaster. He didn’t want to cover a lot. Only, “the rise and decline of a liberal world order,” “the digital age,” “the resurgence of fundamentalist religion,” and “skepticism concerning moral and religious truth.”

Every week, all ten or so of us sat for three hours. We listened to him speak about how he had seen the world change over the almost seventy years that he had been paying careful attention. He made us read texts some of you might remember, by Fukuyama and Hannah Arendt, out loud, probably so he could be sure that we at least got some of the message. But he also made us watch a movie by Zizek, and talk about the Arab spring, handed out copies of a super hero movie review from the New York Times just because he liked the writing. And he made us talk—about Charles Taylor and Plato, but also about ISIS, and twitter, and Kim Kardashian. Nothing was too low-brow to find interesting; nothing was too high brow to question, or laugh about.

Lauren Gorfinkel:

What we learned from Dr. Greenspan in that class was really, we think, what it means to be an intellectual—someone who is interested in the world around them and takes a genuine joy in learning new things. He taught us to approach the things we see and hear in the world with careful attention; and that things we found interesting about our experiences were worthy of serious study. This course wasn’t about reading the great books. It wasn’t about understanding history. He was concerned in a real way with understanding the present, which he seemed to

find bewildering and delightful in equal measure, and giving us the tools to do the same. He showed us that we could keep learning about the same text for a lifetime. Even after 40 years of studying Spinoza, he had new ideas about it. More than just teaching us, Dr. Greenspan took us seriously as thinkers and writers, and insisted that we take ourselves seriously as well. Every time I write, I follow his advice: give a generous introduction, let the ideas flow through your examples, and don't just explain when you can editorialize. The class ended every Friday evening at 5:30, but we'd almost always take it to the Phoenix for drinks to keep it going.

Dr. Greenspan's goals for this final course were to "bring students to a clear understanding of the issues, to the habit of relevant discussion, and to the practice of making informed judgements on complex and volatile subjects", and in that understanding, habit, and practice it's hard to imagine a better teacher. This learning cut to core what the Arts & Science program seeks to achieve – it was something we often discuss among ourselves, and carry with us even when we don't realize it.

We didn't want to speak for all Arts & Science students, but we're happy to do so when we say that it was a privilege to be taught by someone who took such evident joy in being in the world, and learning about it.



Speech for Dr. Louis Greenspan's memorial, 26 November 2018
by Arts & Science alumna Dr. Kati Ivanyi

Good afternoon everyone. For those of you who do not know me, my name is Kati Ivanyi. I am a graduate of the Arts and Science program from far, far too many years ago now, and I am a family doctor here in Hamilton. It is a deep honour to have been asked by Sheila and the family to say a few words.

Since being asked to participate, I have thought so much about what I can bring and contribute to a gathering such as this. Everyone else has already spoken so eloquently about Louis' numerous accomplishments, academic brilliance, sense of humour, passion for life. I am hoping to share just a few personal anecdotes ... tied together with a common theme of gratitude.

I first met Dr. Greenspan in 1985, when I came to McMaster University and, just like every other Arts and Science student, took his Western Thought I course in my first year. To say that I was intimidated by him would be a massive understatement. Dr. Greenspan was the epitome of the brilliant (and perhaps slightly absent-minded) university professor. With apologies to all of my other professors here today, his lectures were the absolute highlight of my week, and I always tried so hard to find a casual yet deeply intelligent comment that would win approval. I am certain he found me somewhat amusing, and hopefully not significantly annoying.

I have found one of my papers from that era ... about the enduring negative effect of Cartesian influence on Western health care. I was certain that this was a brilliant and completely original treatise, and one upon which I could build my future naturopathic medical career. Dr. Greenspan wrote in his comments: "very good, very intelligent ... but not convincing." I was crushed.

And yet, he offered a way forward: "After all, Cartesian dualism led to great results in medicine ... what has holism achieved?" So ... I thought about that a lot, and eventually finalized my decision to study Medicine with what I felt was his approval for the best way forward for me.

Fast forwarding a few years ... I had started to regularly run into Louis in different settings around town. I could not believe he remembered me, given how many years had passed, and how many students passed through his classroom through the years. Over conversations waiting for our very similar orders at The Locke Street Bakery, I learnt that we actually had so much in common ... and were, as Anne Shirley would say, "kindred spirits" in some ways. Whether it was a common love of New York City, or our connection with Nova Scotia, or running into each other at the Live in HD opera broadcasts at the Silver City in Ancaster ... I had discovered the unexpected gift of so many points of connection with a person I admired so very much.

In 2005, I was deeply honoured when Louis and his family joined my family practice at Stonechurch Family Health Centre. I was grateful for his confidence in me (despite my non-convincing essays in the past) and determined to prove myself yet again, right back to trying to find those casually intelligent comments that would impress.

I have to apologize to any patient who had the misfortune of being booked after one of my appointments with Louis ... as we would inevitably run significantly overtime, lost in conversation.

In 2013, I watched the "After Office Hours" interview with Louis - and I loved his self-effacing comment about his "undistinguished performance" in the military cadets ... followed by his little giggle of delight.

His career advice at the end of the video is simple yet so important: “don’t just do what you have to do, do something that you love.” How true.

Well, I love family medicine. And what I love the most about family medicine is the building of relationships, the honour of being allowed deep into people’s lives, and being able to journey with families through some of their most important and sacred moments in life.

The final journey with Louis over the last few months of his life was the most poignant one in my career to date, and one that I will never forget. From sharing the news of his likely diagnosis, to the conversations with him and Sheila about their priorities and goals of care, to the opportunity to work with the entire family for his good death on his terms in his home ... I am eternally grateful. Key ingredients in my mind — courageous and loving family to take on the rollercoaster ride of the dying process, the continuity of a palliative care visiting nurse, and my seamless access to the specialized skills of my palliative care physician colleague, Dr. Erin Gallagher, who was willing and able to make a home visit at just the right time.

A few crystal clear flashes will stay with me in particular — Louis’ delight when we threw the diabetic diet out the window and he got to eat as much ice cream as he wanted. Glimpses of Louis holding court in his hospital bed set up by the window in his library, as medical visits were slotted in amongst a steady stream of friends and family coming to have one more great discussion with the good professor. A conversation just a few days before his passing, when he said he was having “marvelous” days with his friends and family. The smile on his face when he heard the voices of his grandchildren on a video, just a few short hours before his passing.

As I have reflected on these moments since May 10, I have realized that Louis was still teaching me until the very end. Thank you Professor Greenspan. Rest well.