



MORRIS SIEGEL
1906–1961

TO THOSE of us who knew Morris Siegel in his first years of graduate work at Columbia, he epitomized the “New Yorker.” Born and reared in the city, growing up on the lower East Side and in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn, he had experienced the impact of these neighborhoods. Like so many persons, he had had ambitions to become a boxer or a baseball player. His many jobs included work as a family restaurant manager, and a taxi driver, again occupations which typified the “New Yorker.”

He was educated in the city schools, including his undergraduate work at City College, New York. When he came to the department of Anthropology, at Columbia he was older than most graduate students. His thirst for knowledge was prodigious. He was an avid reader, a questing student, and finished all of the requirements for his Ph.D., including his dissertation, in the incredibly short course of two years. He wished for knowing more and more about Anthropology, and unlike some of us who were casual and faced dismissal of a class due to the absence of the instructor as an unlooked-for holiday, he felt that he was being deprived of instruction.

Siegel's field work was extensive as well as intensive, from the Southwest of the U.S.A. to Guatemala and the Caribbean. During World War II he worked for the United States Government in the office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs and the Office of Strategic Services and, from 1949–1953, for the United Nations Trusteeship Division on African Affairs. He taught in a number of institutions including Columbia University, Boston University, Atlanta University, the University of Puerto Rico, the University of Illinois and at his death was teaching at Oklahoma State University in Stillwater. The

topics that he studied and wrote about were wide and varied. His publications show this.

Much of what we remember had to do with his generosity—of interest, time and help. Morris was a dedicated teacher, conscientious and warm. His vitality and enthusiasm were conveyed not only to his students but to colleagues as well. Though plagued by illness he continued to write, publish and teach.

He is survived by two daughters, Judith V. Epstein and Katherine King Siegel, and by his wife, Mrs. Martha Royce Siegel.

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