

## Kalman H. Silvert

by HENRY M. SILVERT, PhD

My father, Kal, was many people to me—loving father, mentor, intellectual role model, and educator. Both my dad and my mom, Frieda, instilled in me an awareness of the symbiotic connection between the health of the self (the individual) and the health of others (the society at large), or, as C. Wright Mills put it, the link between private matters and public issues. How did this happen? A lot of this awareness came from just living with them and listening to and participating in their intellectual conversations, debates, and, sometimes, even arguments.

But while I learned a great deal from them, my parents also let me develop my own intellectual authority. During the summers of my high school years in Hanover, New Hampshire, and Norwich, Vermont, Kal would make reading lists for me, and we would discuss the books I read. Many of these books became a significant part of my intellectual memory. One of the most important was Sabine's anthology of political theory. While clearly a reference book, my assignment was to read it from cover to cover, as I did with volumes by Marx, Weber, Cassirer, Bolívar, Neruda, and countless others. But the anthology's ideas that the wealth of the nation is dependent on many people working together, and that this collaboration can occur differently in diverse places, became part of my consciousness. So did the concept that this process never proceeds in a linear fashion but always does so disjunctively.

During my time reading for a bachelor of philosophy in Latin American studies at Oxford University, I had the opportunity to travel to Chile to work on my thesis. As many of you know, my father was well known in Chile, but, at the time, I had no idea how widely. He gave me a letter of introduction to use in case I needed it, but he never elaborated on the people he knew

or whom to contact once I was there. I did bring my dad's letter of introduction when I went to the Socialist Party's headquarters. When I met with the director of communications, I handed him the letter and said, "Soy yanqui, soy estudiante en la Universidad de Oxford en Inglaterra pero no soy imperialista." After looking at the letter, he gave me a smile, turned around, and took out my dad's book on the history of Chile. "Kalman es su padre, pues no puede ser imperialista," he said.

On my way back to England, I stopped in Norwich to complete the first draft of my thesis. In discussions with my father during that visit, I developed the notion, which by no means is exclusive to me, that progressives in Chile were in a constant commitment to the maximization of individual and collective liberty for all Chileans. This was the central theme of my thesis. We can, and Kal did, take this commitment to democratic thought and action and extend its applicability to the entire world. We can also logically conclude that those who are not interested in continuing to maximize individual and collective liberty are antidemocratic.

One of my father's constant concerns was the question of what environmental factors enable people to think democratically. I think that his two seminal works on the role that educational attainment plays in social and economic development and political identification provide some insight into this question. He concluded that education, especially primary and secondary education, provides the potential to develop democratic ideas and concerns for "the other," but it does not necessarily lead to the adoption of those beliefs. This answer won't please everyone, but it certainly provides food for thought for us all.

From the time I was a teenager, my father always advised me never to label myself or other people. I don't think that I ever heard him categorize anybody in a derogatory way except during my very last dinner with him before he died. I was a visiting professor at the Colegio de México and teaching a course on the comparative politics of Latin America, and he was in Mexico City on Ford Foundation business. One of his Ford Foundation contacts invited us to have dinner at his home on my father's last night in the city. A Chilean friend of Kal's colleague who taught at the Universidad Autónoma de México (UNAM) was also at the dinner. After cordial introductions, the "friend" began to grill my father about how in the world a Yankee could ever think himself capable of understanding anything about Latin American politics or culture. I could see the unease in my father's body as he began to explain his work. The aggressive tenor of the conversation continued throughout the evening. Finally, while we were having dessert, the friend declared, "¿Qué podemos hacer cuando las demandas de los estudiantes nos empuja más y más hacia la derecha? No soy fascista." (What can we do when students' demands push us more to the [political] right? I am not a fascist.) My father turned to her and said in an even voice, "¡Pues, Usted es fascista!" (Well, you are a fascist!) He was right! He might have said these words to someone's face before, but I had never personally heard him say anything like that before that evening.

All of my memories of my father are part of my life now and continue to help me better understand today's world. His writings are no less important to me. In one of his books—I don't remember whether it is the volume on education, class, and nation that he coauthored with Leonard Reissman or his wonderful little book on the reasons for democracy—he argues

## Judith Tandler, 1938–2016

that Chile, on September 11, 1973, was an extreme case of the contradiction within capitalism between interest in developing and furthering the wealth of the nation and the desire for the individual accumulation of capital. Can the same be said about where the United States is now? I hope not.

When I was a student, most of my instructors, and especially those in political science and sociology, knew who my father was. There were a few who did not but were familiar with the last name. I remember one time when I was having a cup of coffee and a donut with one of my professors before class. Out of the blue, he remarked that there had been a professor in the politics department who had died in the mid-1970s and wondered whether I was any relation to him. On a more memorable occasion, about eight years after my father died, I ran into one of my undergraduate philosophy professors, someone I hadn't seen in many years, on the corner of Bleecker Street and LaGuardia Place in Greenwich Village. He told me that there had been a very nice person whose last name was also Silvert who taught at NYU and asked whether I knew him. When I said that I was his son, he told me that he had no idea and said that he was very sorry that he had not put both of us together. But I wasn't sorry at all, and I don't think that Dad would have been either. In fact, I thank that person for not putting us together in his mind. One of my father's goals for me was to become a worthy intellectual in my own right. He succeeded!

Thank you. ■

Judith Tandler was born December 30, 1938, in Detroit, Michigan, and passed away July 25, 2016. She was the daughter of first-generation Jewish immigrants from Ukraine and Russia. Her family was very close and she loved her parents dearly. Her father was a newspaper man who worked for the *Detroit News* in the beginning of the civil rights era, and she was deeply affected by the power of his words, his activism, and his love of language. Judith always wanted to be a good writer and to make him proud with the power of her own words. Her mother was also an activist who taught Judith the importance of connecting to people, listening to their stories, and working for the powerless. Judith's mother went to work, after her husband died very young, to teach illiterate adults to read. Judith was clearly impacted by many of these early experiences and dedicated her own life to listening, writing, and empowering the disadvantaged. Her father, Louis Tandler, mother Mollie Medow Tandler, and sister RoseAnna Tandler Worth all predeceased her.

Judith had many early academic successes. She graduated summa cum laude from the University of Michigan and then did her PhD work at Columbia on a scholarship from the Ford Foundation. She was an economist for the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in Brazil, worked as an economist for the Oakland Police Department, was a fellow at the Center for the Behavioral Sciences at Stanford, and taught at UC Irvine and UC Berkeley before moving to Boston to work at MIT in 1984. She taught at MIT for 30 years and influenced a large cadre of graduate students in development economics, local and regional development, and organizational theories, particularly regarding public sector performance. She was an optimist and instilled in her students an appreciation for good public

sector performance in contrast to the increasing criticism of government from both the right and left. Her legacy at MIT covers not only a broad range of academic talks, articles, and pathbreaking books, including *Good Government in the Tropics* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), but she was also known for her dedication to her students.

Excellent students came to MIT from around the world so that they might work with Judith. Many are now in highly influential positions, continuing her tradition of intellectual rigor and public service. Judith derived a deep sense of meaning from mentoring, and her devotion to her students inspired them to excellence. She was known for her insistence that her students adhere to the highest standards in their work. Her students had to know the subjects they were studying intimately. Moreover, she impressed upon them the understanding that some outcomes are unexplainable by orthodox theories of economics, and that such cases demand more of the conscientious researcher. Judith was very selective in accepting advisees, but once she took anyone under her wing, they found in her a lifelong supporter and friend.

Although Judith never had her own children, she was a dedicated aunt who provided much love and guidance to her family. She is survived by Laura Susan, Greg, and Melanie Jensenworth; Nancy Lou, Drake, Mollie Rose, and Isaac Emerson Meadow; Sarah Elizabeth Worth; William Royce Price, William Tandler Price, and Charles Rabon Price. ■