

A face in the crowd / A forum for people to discuss tough issues



By
Joanna
Zikos

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FRANK G'TOOLE

When he was editor of the Worcester Medical News, Dr. Samuel Bachrach would bring up ethical questions for young doctors to ponder.

Although he retired from practicing medicine in 1978, Bachrach hasn't stopped bringing up those questions.

The Worcester doctor, now 75, is project director and a founding member of the Worcester Forum for the Study of Values Inc. The forum, which is beginning its 11th year this fall, has presented programs on a variety of topics including medical treatments, business and ethics, AIDS, and Communist China, among others. Programs, which are free and usually are open to the public, are held at the Worcester Public Library and the Unitarian Universalist Church on Holden Street.

"The forum draws attention to the ethical and moral lessons to be learned from some of these topics," Bachrach says. "As a doctor, my interest has always been great as far as medical ethics are concerned. My interest in creating such a forum is to involve lay-people from the community at-large as well as doctors and to touch upon various disciplines."

The forum's motto, according to Dr. Bachrach, is to develop "awareness, education and involvement in value questions and to stimulate creative solutions to our society's ethical dilemmas."

The son of immigrant parents who had spent some of their young lives fleeing persecution in Poland, Germany and Russia during the turn of the century, Bachrach says he has a special respect for the U.S. Constitution and has fought for civil rights throughout his life.

Bachrach has never been one to shy away from asking questions and raising discussions on what sometimes ended up as controversial issues. In 1956 he was appointed chairman of the Committee on Aging of Community Services of Worcester. In this capacity, his concern focused on the city's growing elderly population and the quality of their lives.

As a member of the Massachusetts Chapter of the Medical Commission for Human Rights, he participated in freedom marches in Selma, Ala., and Washington, D.C., during the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s.

And, as president of the Worcester Public Library's Board of Trustees from 1969 to 1970, he was instrumental in finding and bringing to the public's eye the Depression-

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era mural that is now on display on the library's second floor.

Looking back on his career as a doctor, Bachrach sees a lifetime of fascinating developments in both the science and the ethics of medicine. He admits, however, that doctors today have a tough row to hoe. "I have a great deal of satisfaction in seeing changes from the old type of medicine to the scientific age of medicine to the high-tech developments ..." he says.

"But there are problems that doctors have today that challenge the profession," he continues. "The doctor patient relationship is not as secure as it was before, because of malpractice suits. And medicine has become something of a business. People rush to brokers to buy stocks for everything from clinics to hospitals. I think this bothers most doctors."

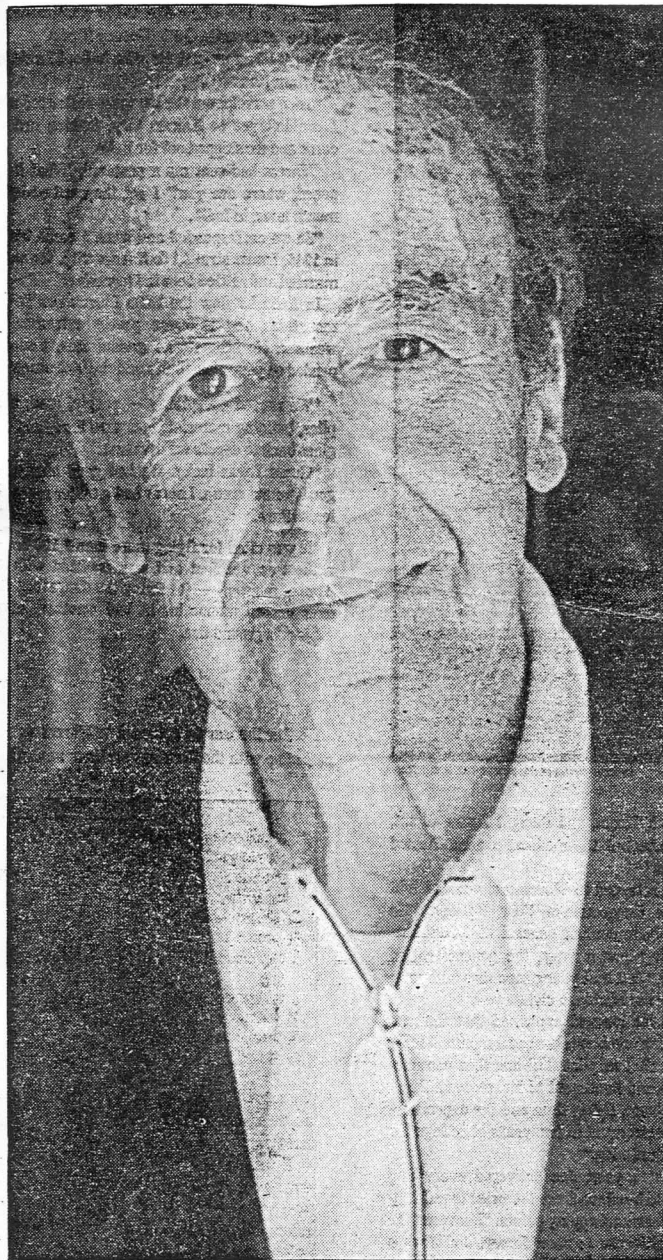
Yet, despite the tides that are hitting the medical profession today, Bachrach thinks that young doctors who are dedicated to the basics — of helping those in need — won't be deterred in their mission.

"They all have stars in their eyes and are idealistic about medicine," Bachrach says. "The first thing is that these doctors want to be helpful; they want to contribute something valuable to society."

Bachrach is asked about the stereotype of the person who becomes a doctor just to be able to buy a Mercedes or a Jaguar. "There are those," he chuckles. "But, such a concern is secondary."

"A prospective doctor today is faced with hard study and long hours," he says. "And, in this process, they must develop a sense of compassion for their patients."

Joanna Zikos is a member of the Gazette staff.



Dr. Sam Bachrach

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