

In Memoriam—Samuel Barry Guze
(October 18, 1923–July 19, 2000)

Edited by C. Robert Cloninger, MD

Samuel Barry Guze, MD, the Spencer T. Olin Professor of Psychiatry and former Head of the Department of Psychiatry at Washington University, died Wednesday July 19, 2000 in St. Louis, Missouri from a fall complicated by polycythemia vera, a bone marrow disease. He was 76 and had been active professionally up to the time of his death.

Dr. Guze (pronounced goo-ZAY) was one of a few American psychiatrists who pioneered a medical approach to psychiatric diagnosis and treatment. He validated criteria for the diagnosis of psychiatric disorders by means of follow-up and family studies beginning in the 1960s in association with his recently deceased colleagues Eli Robins (1921–1994), George Winokur (1925–1996), Don Goodwin (1931–1999), Seymour Kety (1916–2000), and Mandel Cohen (1907–2000). Their criterion-based approach created a paradigm shift from psychodynamic assessments to symptom-based diagnosis and treatment, which is now the standard for classification throughout the world. The death of Samuel Guze marks the end of an era in psychiatry that spawned replicable descriptive and neurobiological research that provides a solid foundation for the future of psychiatry as a branch of medicine.

Early Life and Career Overview

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Sam was born on October 18, 1923, in New York City where his father was a pharmacist. He was always exceptionally intelligent and graduated from high school in New York at the age of 15 (January 1939). He stayed in New York with his family while attending City College for two years (1939–1941) before enrolling at Washington University in St. Louis. He completed his undergraduate studies (1941–1942) and graduated from medical school in June 1945 at the age of 21. After his internship in medicine at Barnes Hospital, he served in the Army Medical Corps from July 1946 to March 1948. He then returned to the Washington University Medical Center as a fellow in internal medicine in 1946. Except for 1 year of training in medicine in Connecticut, in 1949, Dr. Guze remained at Washington University School of Medicine (WUSM) in St. Louis for the remaining 50 years (1950–2000).

Dr. Guze was a faculty member in Internal Medicine beginning in 1951 and in Psychiatry beginning in 1955. He received Board certification in both Internal Medicine (1954) and Psychiatry (1957). While working in internal medicine, he became interested in psychosomatic medicine, studying with Dr. George Saslow. From this Dr. Guze developed a distinctive medical approach to psychiatric interviewing and diagnosis. He was an exceptionally careful observer of the onset and course of specific signs and symptoms of psychiatric disorders, eschewing concern for subjective psychodynamic formulations that dominated American psychiatry when he began in psychiatry in 1950. Dr. Guze liked to compare the diagnosis and treatment of disorders in psychiatry with those of internal medicine. His own research and training of others in psychiatry in his medical approach revolutionized the entire field.

Dr. Guze served as Vice-Chancellor for Medical Affairs and President of the Washington University Medical Center from 1971 to 1989. Even during
this time he was able to continue his research and teaching in psychiatry because he was exceptionally well-organized. He also served as head of the department of psychiatry from 1975 to 1989 and from 1993 to 1997. His first love was always toward psychiatry but he combined this with administrative service in the university, as well as national and various international positions, because he felt this was the way he could best serve psychiatry.

Dr. Guze was a humble person who did not seek attention for his many accomplishments. Still he was clearly one of the most influential psychiatrists of his time and was recognized by many awards for his having revolutionized psychiatry. He received the Rhoda and Bernard Sarnat Prize from the Institute of Medicine, the Samuel Hamilton Medal and the Paul Hoch Award Medal from the American Psychopathological Association, the Gold Medal Research Award from the Society of Biological Psychiatry, the Achievement Award from the American Academy of Clinical Psychiatrists, the Distinguished Public Service Award from the United States Department of Health and Human Services, and a Distinguished Alumni Award from Washington University School of Medicine.

His life was celebrated by family and friends at a memorial service that was held at the Graham Chapel of Washington University on September 10, 2000. The comments that follow are an edited transcript of that memorial service.

Memorial Opening
William H. Danforth, MD
Washington University

It's an honor for me to be part of this memorial service for our friend and colleague Sam Guze. I had the great good fortune to work closely with Sam for over 30 years. Time and again I relied on his wisdom and good sense, his judgment and his sensitivity in handling difficult situations. Time and again I called on Sam for professional advice about a patient, a friend, or a family member, for there was no physician as wise and as trusted as Sam Guze. And he always had time. His advice was not simply good; it was just the best to be had. Time and again I said to myself how lucky I am to work with an individual of such goodwill and integrity, with someone who never misleads or exaggerates, who never does or says anything to build up himself, who does only what is decent, right, and proper, who is always kind, who is never indiscreet or mean-spirited or even harsh in his judgments. How lucky I am to work with someone so honest and so trustworthy. Sam lived the advice given by Plutarch on governing—make virtue the rule of your conduct and the end of your actions.

Sam’s character was especially important to me because Sam was a key leader of Washington University and because I believe that a great institution operates on trust perhaps more than any other single thing. My regular meetings with Sam and his partner Ken King were one of the great privileges of my life. I mention my experiences and impressions not because I think I was unique or special. On the contrary I mention them because I am certain that each person in this room had similar experiences and impressions. I am sure that when the going got rough all of you leaned on Sam for advice and counsel, just as I did. We sought him out also when the going was good. We learned from him. We enjoyed his intellect and the wide range of his interests. Joy tells me that she made a list of the books by his reading table and bedside. The books included a P. D. James mystery, Notes from the Underground by Fyodor Dostoevsky, Genes, Peoples, and Languages by L. L. Cavalli-Sforza, Advice for A Young Investigator by S. Ramony Cajal, and A New Birth of Freedom by C. L. Black, Jr., along with works by Peter Medawar, Thomas Sowell, and Isaiah Berlin.

Intelligence, kindness, wisdom, and goodwill are central to our memories of Sam, but there is much more to say. His character and his intellect were matched by his accomplishments. He came first to Washington University as a student in September 1941. He enriched this institution, his academic home, for 59 years, becoming one of its greatest leaders. He was a physician’s physician, an admired teacher and role model, a scientist of the first range, as well as writer, thinker, and devoted family man. We will be hearing from friends and family members who were engaged in different facets of Sam’s life. First is Ken King, who with Sam shared the responsibility of overseeing of one of the nation’s great institutions and led it to new heights.

Medical Center Leadership
M. Kenton King, MD
Washington University School of Medicine

We are here to celebrate a wonderful life. Sam was just great. Did you know we got a 10-year bonus? In his work Sam knew the importance of the family history. With heart trouble in mother, father, and brother, Sam was telling me 40 years ago that he didn’t