

Jonathon Erlen

In Memoriam

It is my sad duty to inform SAHMS members of the passing of John Erlen. He served for many years on the Board as Outreach and Membership Chair and is probably responsible much of this organization's growth during its formative years. For those members of longstanding, John is well and fondly remembered as a regular attendee of our annual conferences—truly a hail fellow well met—in the purest and best sense of that phrase, hearty, friendly, and congenial to all.

A fine scholar in his own right, John edited and helped annotate the 1656 herbal *The Skilful Physician* with Carey Baliban and Richard Siderits (1997) and edited with Joseph F. Spillane the compiled seven-chapter study *Federal Drug Control: The Evolution of Policy and Practice* (2004), in many ways a seminal work in our understanding of the development of drug policy in the United States.

But none of this conveys the depth and longevity of John's association with SAHMS. He is best described as SAHMS' founding friend. Every organization has them. These are committed individuals whose names aren't necessarily on any documents memorializing its establishment. They are not revealed by a search of the organization's Bylaws, Charter, or Articles of Incorporation, but they are *there* behind every one of them. John's association with SAHMS is nearly as long as my own, which dates from 1999 when Margaret Barnett pretty much single-handedly launched the Southern Association for the History of Medicine and Science in Hattiesburg from her home institution at University of Southern Mississippi. When I offered to host the next meeting in Birmingham that following year, it was John who generously gave of his time and expertise to come at his own expense to spend a few days with me on my campus at UAB to prepare for that meeting. I knew nothing of organizing a conference of this kind, but thanks to John's experienced hand and advise, the meeting was a great success. That was just the beginning. John took an avid interest in SAHMS' development, an interest that is underscored in his efforts to reach out into the academic community (he knew everyone!) and encourage attendance at our meetings. This is what I mean by a "founding friend." He was always willing to help in any way and build the organization up. SAHMS was Margaret Barnett's brainchild, and she collaborated with Maarten Ultee, then at the University of Alabama, and myself at UAB to bring it to life, but I'm confident that much of its early success was due to Jonathan Erlen's interest and facilitation—truly in this sense a *founding friend*.

For me, John's passing is a personal loss. Some thirty year ago when I knew practically no one in this field, it was John who introduced me around at every meeting we attended together, especially AAHM. John himself had been in the field since the 1970s and was then an old familiar to many. In a very short time, I was on a first name basis with many colleagues, thanks largely to John's willingness to take me underwing. John loved students and those new to the field, so I know I speak for many in saying that he was a true mentor. And indeed he was for SAHMS too, and that is how he should be remembered. It was our good fortune to have known him—farewell friend!

-Mike Flannery, SAHMS past President/Treasurer