The Borenstein Presidency has been an eponym of medical professionalism. In the model of professionalism, this teacher, clinician, and psychoanalyst has striven to sustain for psychiatrists fulfillment in their work, security, and autonomy. He has made civic and social obligations central to his mission.

Dan has championed health care reforms, fought against antitrust constraints, opposed the profit-driven excesses of managed care, and challenged confidentiality threats to our patients.

In addressing the relationship between the pharmaceutical industry and organized psychiatry, he has called attention to the industry’s influence on medical education and residency training. Committed to social engagement, he believes that our curriculum should teach advocacy as well as diagnostic skills.

Dan has an instinct for what’s right, reflected in his deep concern about the future roles of IMGs, minorities, and national groups in the APA.

With calm assurance, he persuasively analyzes and masters data-based evidence. Over the many years, he has persevered in insisting upon transparency in the Board proceedings and from the Medical Director’s office. He has advocated successfully for unambiguous conflict of interest guidelines for APA members and staff.

Dan has the breadth of vision. With knowledge and expertise he has advanced the mission of the APA, moving us forward in a changing world.

Dan wasn’t hatched out of an egg. What were his beginnings? What roads did he travel to get to where he is now?

Dan’s paternal grandfather and grandmother grew up in Sharagorod, a Ukrainian village by the Bug River. His grandfather emigrated to the United States, funded by his great uncle who preceded him, leaving his son Jack (Dan’s father) and Dan’s grandmother behind. The Borenstein brothers were itinerant peddlers of pots and pans, travelling the U.S. South in a covered wagon. Their history parallels that of the Barry Goldwater family saga 50 years earlier. In 1892, they went to Silver City on the Continental Divide, opening a general store that eventually sold high-end clothing and shoes.

Silver City, a town of 4,000, lies between El Paso and Tucson—elevation 5,000 feet. Sixty percent of the population was Mexican American; there was one black family and several Chinese-American families who came from railroad construction camps. The town was at the end of a spur railroad. Its economy was rooted in ranching and in silver mining, which failed and was replaced over time by copper mining.

Billy the Kid was locked up in the local jail just before Dan’s grandfather arrived. Billy escaped by climbing up the inside of a chimney.

In 1896, at the age of six, Dan’s father Jack came to the United States, received public and trade school training, and then went West. A natty dresser, Jack owned three suits and wore a gold watch across his vest. He married Marjorie Kerr, born in Grand Ledge, Michigan, who was a Mayflower descendant of Scotch-Irish and English ancestry. Marjorie grew up in Deming, New Mexico. She had been a piano player in the Methodist Church, and she converted to Judaism when she married Jack. The Borensteins were one of the three Jewish families in this thriving town in the state of New Mexico that had just been elevated from a territory. The town doctor was Jewish. In order to hold a prayer service, the Jews were barely able to gather together 10 males over the age of 13.

Dan’s brother David was 3 years older than Dan. His rivalry with David sharpened his competitive instincts.

Dan attended elementary school and the freshman year of high school in Silver City, and, following David, transferred to the New Mexico Military Institute (NMMI), where the curriculum and disciplinary demands were rigorous. At the age of 16, during the summer months, he built a hot rod. He celebrated this achievement by promptly receiving three speeding tickets.
At NMMI, he was a top military cadet, first in his class, and captain of the tennis team. He applied to only one college, MIT, which quickly accepted him. In Boston, an overwhelming eastern metropolis, Dan went into culture shock. He was in a setting with women in his classes, and he was daunted by the multitudes of attractive women in the city. For the first time in 3 years of schooling, he wore non-military clothes. In his freshman year at MIT, as a chemical engineering student, he took a humanities course where he discovered Freud. He became fascinated by psychoanalysis and signed up for pre-medical courses. Dana Farnsworth and William Malamud encouraged him to attend the University of Colorado School of Medicine, which had the strongest department of psychiatry in the West. He seized the chance to return to his origins. In medical school, out of his continuing love for fast cars, he bought a Corvette. Psychoanalysis cured him of speeding tickets, having reduced his penchant for risk-taking behaviors.

Dan met Bonnie Ulland, a chief psychiatric nurse on his ward, when he was a resident in psychiatry at the University of Colorado. Bonnie was born in North Dakota into a family with Norwegian antecedents. She grew up in Broken Bow, Nebraska. Her family preceded Dan’s forebears in their immigration to the United States by 50 years. They were married in 1967. In 1971, their son Jay was born. Jay was schooled in Los Angeles and was graduated from Stanford University with a degree in economics, followed by a master’s degree in industrial engineering. Jay, like his father, is an accomplished tennis player.

When Dan completed his psychiatric residency, Bonnie and he moved to Los Angeles, where he entered private practice. In 1971, he completed psychoanalytic training at the Los Angeles Psychoanalytic Society and Institute. He joined the UCLA clinical faculty in 1972, and in 1980 he founded and directed the UCLA Mental Health Program for Physicians in Training, which became a prototype for other academic health centers. Currently, he is in full-time private practice, is a Clinical Professor in the UCLA Department of Psychiatry and Biobehavioral Sciences and serves on the Senior Faculty of the Los Angeles Psychoanalytic Society and Institute. He has published scholarly articles on a wide variety of subjects, including psychotherapy, managed care ethics, confidentiality peer review, impairment prevention, standards of proof for medical review procedures, and postanalytic encounters.

In addition to maintaining his commitment to patient care and academic interests, Dan has played a major role in psychiatric and medical organizations. He is serving in his 30th year on the APA Board of Trustees—as the Immediate Past-President, and previously as President, President-Elect, Vice President for 2 years, Secretary for 2 years, and Area VI (California) Trustee for 6 years. He was President of the Southern California Psychiatric Society from 1978 to 1979 and an APA Assembly Representative from 1982 to 1989. He has chaired and served on over 25 major APA components, is a member of the AMA House of Delegates, and recently completed his ninth year on the California Medical Association Board of Trustees.

Dan is also active in the community and is serving on the Boards of Directors of the Cooperative of American Physicians/Mutual Protective Trust and the PER Foundation for the Advancement of Psychiatric Education and Research. He is a longstanding member of the Advisory Committee of the Los Angeles Child Development Center. On five separate occasions, the California and Southern California Psychiatric Associations have honored Dan for his contributions.

Dan, in Western clothes and a big hat, expresses his essential self as the remarkable product of a rural Western town. He is emblematic of its values, history, and belief in the future.

Dr. Sacks is a Past-President of the APA and Clinical Professor of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, Child Study Center, Yale University School of Medicine. Address reprint requests to Dr. Sacks, 260 Riverside Ave., Westport, CT 06880.

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