

Jules C. Stein Bust Unveiling
National Eye Institute, January 7, 2014

The Jules Stein I Knew

Ambassador William Vanden Heuvel, RPB Board of Trustees

Thank you all for gathering here this afternoon. I am delighted to see this photo of Jacques Lipschitz, taken with Dr. Stein, as the bust of Dr. Stein that we are unveiling today was being sculpted.

Lipschitz, himself, was born in Lithuania, in 1891. He then moved to France and was part of the 20th century group -- Picasso and others -- who made a great contribution to art. He was recognized as one of the great sculptors of that era.

During the war, he was in Vichy, France. A group -- which I was later President of, the International Rescue Committee -- helped rescue him from Marseilles, and brought him to the United States. So he always had a very special feeling about this piece, because I introduced him to Dr. Stein as someone who might possibly do this sculpture.

There's some disagreement as to whether Dr. Stein really loved the sculpture, but I say to you that this is a very valuable sculpture, whatever anyone thinks of it otherwise. When the "sequestrators" come back ... you've got collateral here that could make a big difference in the negotiations, so hang onto it! Put a chain around it!

Research to Prevent Blindness was founded in February 1960, and during its first phase - - the first fifty years -- Jules Stein dominated and Lew Wasserman dominated. But now we have a new President, Brian Hofland, who represents the second phase, and whose imagination and creativity are going to have to carry the organization forward. One thing we've left with him, besides inspiration, is \$300 million. We hope that with that he's going to have a successful tenure!

Jules Stein was -- as all who've said and as Katrina has mentioned -- really, truly an extraordinary man. He was born in South Bend, Indiana, one of five children. He always had that touch of brilliance. He began working at an early age and found -- as far back as high school -- he could make money by organizing bands and having people attend. We have to go back quite a bit to recall what kind of an era that was!

After he graduated, he was turned down at Johns Hopkins. He then decided that he was going to really make some money, or do whatever he had to do, by leading bands. For a year, he was the conductor of a dancing group/orchestra. He was the violinist and saxophone player, at the Muehlebach Hotel in Kansas City, Harry Truman's old favorite place. And there he met a young lady (he'd later marry Doris Stein...many years later) who strongly encouraged him to go into medicine, which she knew he enjoyed.

I think the primary reason for her encouragement was because she thought her family would be more willing to accept him as a doctor than as a saxophone player. And he gave into that pressure and began going to I think it was the Rush Hospital, where he first began his medical training. Unfortunately, the young lady that had so directed and impressed his life, died in the flu epidemic of 1918, 1919. He then went to Chicago and established himself in the field of ophthalmology.

He was concerned about ophthalmology not having the stature and the recognition in the medical field that he thought it should have. And one of the reasons he chose to go into ophthalmology was because he was determined to do something about that. He went to Cook county Hospital for his residency, he went to Vienna for three months to study with one of the world's leading ophthalmologists Dr. Ernest Fuchs, and then he came back and set up a partnership with Dr. Harry Gradle.

By 1924, the time had come. He was getting a lot of work in both his business and his medical practice, and it was becoming more difficult to balance both. The radio was just coming into existence and having its impact on the entertainment field, and he saw this as extraordinary new era. He lived in Chicago with Al Capone and Prohibition, and the music world was very much involved in all of that, but no one ever accused Jules Stein of any omission or dereliction in the field of ethics in his business life.

He always said that that was because he was a doctor. He felt that, of all the people that he knew, doctors had that highest sense of responsibility in terms of ethical behavior and he was determined to follow that.

He told Dr. Gradle, when he left the partnership in 1924, that he wanted to give him 25 percent of MCA just to thank him for the opportunity of having practiced with him. But Dr. Gradle did not accept the offer, saying, "We've been doctors together, and I've admired you as a doctor. I'm a doctor, not a musician, and not in the business world." Still, Jules Stein was always enormously loyal to him and helped him, as he did so many other people throughout his life.

MCA was a different kind of company. Back then, the band business -- the singers and the actors, etc. -- was a celebrity business. It was a rough business and operated in a world that had many sinister implications. Jules Stein created MCA in a way so that it stood out from the very beginning. One of his greatest skills was in picking people of

great quality. Lew Wasserman once said about MCA, "Jules Stein is the tree. All of us are the apples."

And that, in a great sense, was true. He was very much the founder, very much the controller, but what he did was to give everybody a great sense of autonomy and a feeling that they could accomplish a great deal. He had a sense of fairness about him. He was frugal, as Katrina can testify probably better than anybody after she got off the economy flights where she had to fly standby.

He was a modest man. He had no pretense about him. And he was a man who had great moral concern for those who worked for him and a great sense of responsibility for them. Anybody who worked at MCA had the top level of employee benefits. For example, when his secretary of 18 years told him one day that she was going to get married but staying on as his employee, he didn't say anything about it. But a week later she learned that he had called her fiancée and had lunch with him and then sent her a note that said, "It'll be good for both of you." He took a very real, personal interest in people.

He was a pragmatic and creative man, and what was most important to him was time. Time could not be wasted. Time was who you were. Time was life. He thought of it as the most valuable commodity you had.

He chose Lew Wasserman to be his successor. In 1946 he made him President of MCA. Then, in 1959, he had a serious cancer operation and the question came to him, "How was he going to use the rest of his life?" Doris played a very important role in redirecting him and saying "Why not take this time, and return to your first love, and see what you can do in that field?"

So, in 1960, he had this meeting -- I guess I'm the last survivor. But it was Jules and Jim Adams and Bob McCormick and Mefford Runyon and Dr. van Slyke and Mary Lasker. You can't underestimate Mary Lasker. To those of you who may have known her -- I knew her in politics and public life and philanthropy for many years -- she was probably the most powerful public lobbyist that we had in this country. Sort of a new field. And in the whole medical area, not just eyes, but in the whole medical area, she played a very significant role, beginning in the post war years, as to what the responsibility of government should be.

Jules turned to her because she was a friend of his as well. And I think those two spearheaded the creation of RPB. He wanted to create an organization that was going to change the nature of ophthalmology in the sense of how the public perceived it. And he wanted that organization to operate from a position of stature and strength. Secondly, he wanted to bring together the ophthalmological groups in the country and let them know that there was a private sector operation that was prepared to listen to them and to support them.

He wanted to create the Jules Stein Eye Institute just as an example of the kind of institution that could in fact play a major role. And then, most importantly, he really wanted to see a national eye institute. There was some opposition to the idea, probably for budgetary and bureaucratic reasons, but Jules and Mary Lasker were absolutely determined.

And he reached out. He was not a person who took advantage of his position of power in the private world, but he knew what he had to do. He had never testified before Congress before but he did it this time. He had never talked to Presidents about something of a public value like this, but he did it. He used his entertainment connections so wonderfully. Mr. Gosden, who was Amos in Amos 'n' Andy, was a golfing partner of President Eisenhower. And Jules prevailed upon him to set up an appointment. So he talked Eisenhower into supporting the whole concept of a medical institution. And then with Lyndon Johnson -- whatever went down on the ranch I don't know -- but after meeting with Jules, Johnson also changed his mind about what he was going to do.

Jules Stein also wanted to teach a different kind of fund-raising in the medical field. Instead of giving money directly to ophthalmology departments in many hospitals, he organized and paid for the fund-raising effort that would raise the money in the local communities for these hospitals which was something nobody, I think, had done before, and it was done with great success.

He paid all of that expense and, most people didn't know it, but on every one of those contributions Jules Stein made a matching contribution as well. It changed the nature of philanthropy and money raising in terms of ophthalmology.

Another major concern that he had ... he wanted to say to those who were wealthy, to those who were in the business world and had great success, "The meaning of your life is going to be measured in different ways. Take the talent that has enabled you to make this fortune, take the commitment that has given you the energy to do what I know you've had to do, and invest that money in your country and in your community in a field where you can bring a very special aspect to it."

That's what he did for ophthalmology. He used every advantage that he could bring together, never for himself, but for the public recognition of what he felt had to be done. When he had a major dinner in Los Angeles marking the opening of the Jules Stein Eye Institute, and the thousand guests were brought together, he had eye shades at every table. And he said, as he began the dinner, "All of you put on those eye shades. For ten minutes you're going to be blind. Then you'll get a sense of why it's so urgent that all of us do really something like this." It had made a great impact on so many different people.

He was involved in this enterprise to the last moments of his life, in 1981. No scientist could have done it alone. No doctor could have done it alone. No philanthropist could have done it alone. What was needed in the field, at that time, was medical investment and research -- which was his primary objective. Research. Research. Research. They put it in the title of the group that he founded to make sure that nobody could mistake how he wanted those resources to be spent.

No one could have done that alone. But he was the synergistic, catalytic force that brought all of these forces together. And after he created RPB and the Jules Stein Eye Institute on the private sector side, he turned to NIH as his public partner and tried to be as useful and as helpful and as creative as he could be.

So, the fact that you are remembering him this day, and having this bust left in his remembrance, is a very important thing to all of us who loved him. And it will be a very important thing 50 years from now -- when people may forget all or any of us -- to be reminded that there was a private citizen who trained in a very special way, took the talents, and commitment, and the energy that made him one of the great business executives of America, and became a philanthropic instrument that enabled his dreams for ophthalmology to come through. So thank you for honoring Jules Stein today.