

Dear friends and colleagues:

I apologize profusely to Bob and to this audience that I had to leave this conference a little early. However, I could not but leave a few sentences with my friend and colleague Hugh O'Brodovich for him to read to this audience and especially to Bob.

This is a wonderful occasion to recognize Bob Mellins as one of the main founders and pillars of Pediatric Respiratory Medicine in the US and the world. But more than this, today is a great opportunity for me to share with you some of my thoughts about the real Bob, as a person, as a clinician, as a scientist and a teacher, from one of his disciples who has had the privilege, the honor and the luck to have been a trainee of his and later a colleague and a life-long friend!

One of Bob's wonderful qualities, a quality of high value especially for trainees, is his incredibly insightful ways of asking the **important questions**, whether at *the bedside* or at *the bench*. He is almost as good as one of my favorite TV series actor, Colombo, with one last question before he usually leaves the scene, the one that just clenches the whole mystery or the diagnosis! He knows how to reach the conclusion by asking the right questions and by planning his moves, methodically, one after the other!! I donot believe that Bob plays chess but he certainly does in real life. Of course this becomes so important in patient care, for what is to be an outstanding clinician or a pediatric pulmonologist? Clearly, this also becomes so important at the bench, for what is to be an excellent scientist and investigator? He has been so talented in steering his trainees, and for that matter his colleagues and friends, in the right direction.

Although Bob was not a bench scientist, he certainly was a clinical scientist and an outstanding clinical scholar. He really inspired his trainees and colleagues, always deriving his experimental questions from the bedside.

A man of principles, no question, but Bob is also amazingly astute for being pragmatic when he needs to, and wonderfully diplomatic with colleagues, institutional administrators, parents and children, his own family and his extended one. I guess to survive and do well in academic circles, may be this is one important quality to have and to teach our younger colleagues. Oh, and here is an idea, Bob: now that you solved so many problems in Pediatric Respiratory Medicine, often diplomatically, how about heading to the middle east to solve so many crises? Tony Blair can use some help!!

A man of generosity, no question! His trainees, including myself, have heard him “preach” so many times about credit and who should have it. One of his favorite sayings is: “You can always achieve a lot more if you do not care who gets the credit”!!

Although Bob was not known to be wasteful (and I am being diplomatic here!!), he knew how to stretch the dollar!! But more importantly, Bob gave considerably of himself to his trainees, colleagues and Columbia University! There is no better description of Bob that comes to mind than that of Kahlil Gibran who said about people like Bob: *You give but little when you give of your possessions. It is when you give of yourself that you truly give.* In a lot of ways, William James describes Bob well also when he said: *The great use of life is to spend it for something that outlasts it.*

Bob, Congratulations, this honor is so well deserved! I wish I could have been there to congratulate you in person and give you a hug!

Gaby Haddad, May 15, 2011