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Remarks

By

C. Everett Koop, MD ScD

Delivered in the Helpern Library

New York City

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Milton Helpern had been the medical examiner for the City of New York at the time when I was in medical school at Cornell University Medical College. He was the most fascinating lecturer by far that we encountered in our four years there. During the course on forensic medicine, which he taught, he was assigned a terrible hour – 1 pm on Saturday afternoon – in an era when a good many of the medical students, still holding some of their Rah, Rah enthusiasm from college, attended local, or even distant football games, which started at the same time. In spite of that, there was always standing room only in Milton Helpern's classes, and I for one, whenever it was possible to do so, went to Bellevue Hospital and watched him do an autopsy while at the same time, he not only discussed what he was doing then, but reminisced about things that that particular case brought to mind in other situations. He was a very remarkable teacher.

I used this opportunity to talk about my interest in developing a National Health Museum on the Mall in Washington. There the connection between Milton Helpern and C. Everett Koop, and between Washington and New York on this occasion was that the National Health Museum that I was attempting to build, would in the minds of some people be seen as an outgrowth of the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology and they had just completed accessioning the Milton M. Helpern New York Medical Examiners collection, a gift of Mrs. Helpern and the City of New York.

I then went to my prepared remarks, which were based upon the speech I gave in Maine and which is already accessible in this archive, delivered on August 23, 1990 to the "Pot and Kettle", a Luncheon Social Club in Bar Harbor, Maine.

Officiating at the transfer of the Helpern collection to the yet to be build National Health Museum was a well-known and much-loved mystery writer in America Mary Higgins Clark, who had a wonderful relation with Milton Helpern and had discussed with him many of the forensic medical twists to her marvelous mystery stories.