MEMORIAL SERVICE FOR

AARON B. SALANT

4 JANUARY 1878

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28 JULY 1967

7 SEPTEMBER 1967

THE ORDER FOR
THE MEMORIAL SERVICE
FOR AARON B. SALANT
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 7, 1967
IN THE AUDITORIUM OF
THE SOCIETY FOR ETHICAL CULTURE
IN NEW YORK CITY

Adagio	Fiocco
'Come, Sweet Death'	J. S. Bach
Finale—Andante (Sonata VI)	Mendelssohn
Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring	J. S. Bach
Adagio (Chorale in A minor)	Franck

SPEAKERS
Jerome Nathanson
Walter S. Salant
Morris H. Gold
Roy R. Neuberger

Chorale Prelude, Opus 122, No. 3 'O World, I now must leave thee'	Brahms

WE GATHER in this memorial for an extraordinary human being. Let there be no tears. Let there be gratitude.

Since we have had differing relationships with Aaron Salant and many of us don't know each other, let me state the order of service. I am Jerome Nathanson, and I shall begin with a few words. Then Walter Salant will speak about his father, followed by Morris Gold, representing the firm of Salant and Salant. Roy Neuberger, our Society's President and his son-in-law, will follow. I shall close the service.

I say he was an extraordinary man. He lived a long life. If he had lived half as long, he would have been an extraordinary man. He was a child of the Enlightenment—a *philosophe* in the greatest of traditions, a man who could not stand cant or ignorance. As Marie said to me once, his chief concern was knowledge; he considered ignorance a cardinal sin. And as Bacon says, "Knowledge is power."

But Aaron Salant did not believe in the innate goodness of man. For him, knowledge as power was not enough. If it is caring power, if it is loving power, then something decent and fine will happen in terms of the potentials of mankind.

Walter S. Salant

FOR A SON to choose what he would say to family and friends about his father is difficult. He knows and feels too many things. Some facets of any man's life are known to few if to any other people, and some thoughts and feelings remain unknown to all. In Dad, reticence and the passion for anonymity were extreme, so that the portion of his thoughts and even of his activities that were known to few or to no others was unusually large. For that reason, perhaps I can contribute most to our appreciation of him by telling you of a few matters of fact, some of which I have learned only in the past few months.

Of his intellectual powers and interests you are probably all aware. His academic attainments as a young student were well known to his family and friends of his own age. My sister, brother, and I knew of them in a general way. We had in the house a tray of medals he had received as an undergraduate. I confess that I took their existence for granted. In the last year, though, I did examine them and, noticing that some did not say for what they were awarded, made an effort to find out. The answers to my inquiries increased my wonder at the breadth as well as the degree of the excellence in his performance as a student; the awards extended to virtually every academic subject —or rather to every one that did not require manual dexterity, which he entirely lacked, except when it came to playing marbles, at which he was an expert.

Dad's approach always remained that of the mature student, and he saw things in a broad context. This was true of the practical matters I know about, as well as those which were more purely intellectual. Early in his business career, when the practices of competitor firms forced him to direct his attention to the employment of prison labor for private profit, he made himself an expert on that subject and on the broader questions of penology which underlay the public issues. In about 1911 he translated a lecture on the subject given by a professor of law at the University of Berlin eleven years earlier—how he found that, I do not know. I never saw the printed version of his translation in our house and I doubt that it was there, but I found it in the New York Public Library recently, and found it was accompanied by notes written by Dad which reflected an extensive knowledge of the literature on the subject. How much I did not know about his past was impressed on me again when I read, on the title page, "Translated by Aaron B. Salant, Formerly Chairman, National Committee on Prison Labor." I had never heard him mention that Committee, much less that he was Chairman of it.

Here was an important issue of public policy: How could society enable those condemned to prison to be constructively occupied, rather than rot in idleness, without at the same time creating "cut-throat" competition in the market for free labor? I have only now realized how live and chronic a public issue that was. Before it was settled, legislation on the subject had

been introduced in every Congress for at least two decades—which is as far back as I have looked—and probably much earlier, for it was the subject of planks in the platform of the American Federation of Labor for decades before that. The major policy problem was finally resolved in 1928 by passage of a law known as the Hawes-Cooper Act. I knew that Dad had worked on this problem but only in recent weeks did I learn—not from him, of course—that he had drafted that Act. He had long supported regulatory legislation but he remained in the background and very well concealed. So far as I know, he never testified before any Congressional committee concerned with the matter, although he worked closely with those who did.

How he felt about public appearances he made clear when I asked him one time whether he recalled the experience of giving the valedictory at his college graduation. He said, "I certainly do. It was the worst experience of my life."

Throughout that long life, Dad retained, along with this revulsion at public identification, his scholarly approach and active intellectual interests. He was driven by a desire to understand the deeper forces behind events and developments in the world—not deeper in a mystical or metaphysical sense, for he had no use for mysticism or metaphysics—but in the sense of underlying human and scientific reality. He looked to history for perspective. He was, in fact, a remarkable historian who would have graced any university history department had he made his career in a university. He had all the qualities required of a great historian: the capacity to write lucidly and gracefully, eagerness to dig for facts, ability to think clearly, to read at great speed while absorbing both the detail and the essence of what he read and at the same time remaining critical of it, and

to retain it all in his incredible memory, so that he could draw later upon what he had absorbed.

In the last few years, he complained that his memory was deteriorating. Perhaps it was. But from what a level! Only last Christmas, while in New York to visit him, I walked through Central Park with friends and came upon the statue of a Polish king of the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. I had not seen that statue before, nor had I ever heard of that king. Upon returning to Dad's apartment, I mentioned the statue to him but I had already forgotten the king's name, not having his memory or one approaching it, and could identify it only by the legend as one of a Polish king who had repulsed the Teutonic Knights early in the fifteenth century. Wondering if this fellow, completely unknown to me, was really worthy of a statue, I asked Dad if he knew who the man was. Dad thought a moment but said nothing, so we talked of something else. But ten minutes later he said "Was it Wladyslaw Jagiello?" That was indeed the man. This was the deteriorated memory on the eve of his eighty-ninth birthday!

Eager as Dad was to acquire knowledge, he was equally eager to impart it, especially to the young. My own first exposure to Economics came from him. So, too, in a way with Ethics. As a student in the Ethical Culture Schools, I was exposed systematically to problems of Ethics as they were reflected in specific dilemmas of conduct. My introduction to the deeper philosophical problems of Ethics came from Dad.

One passage he enjoyed citing in connection with this general subject was the response of Andrew Undershaft, the munitions manufacturer in Shaw's play, "Major Barbara," when Undershaft's conventional son, while disclaiming knowledge

of the subject matter of any profession, still claims to know one thing: the difference between right and wrong. That, as the son said, is "nothing more than any honorable Englishman claims as his birthright." Dad enjoyed and also taught me to appreciate the significance of the father's railing response: "You don't say so!", he said, "No capacity for business, no knowledge of the law, no sympathy for art, no pretension to philosophy; only a simple knowledge of the secret that has puzzled all the philosophers, baffled all the lawyers, muddled all the men of business, and ruined most of the artists: the secret of right and wrong. Why, man, you're a genius, a master of masters, a god! At twenty-four, too!"

Dad could and did put his fingers instantaneously on such passages, which whetted our appetites, and on countless other things he had read that impressed him.

When we were not at home, we received in the mail newspaper clippings and quotations from books on subjects he had discussed with us. These came in a steady stream, sometimes in a flow that was overwhelming.

His desire to stimulate and support the intellectual interests of others and to share his knowledge with them was not focused only on his own children or even on the young. I am sure that many of you here today have at one time or another received such evidences of his knowledge and of his interest in what interested you.

In all these activities, and in his preference for family and home life, he was actively supported by the warmth and understanding of Mother. She also indulged his desire to avoid superficial social activities. She looked after him with unflagging and selfless devotion. In matters of daily life, he was dependent on

her beyond the usual dependence of husband on wife. Nearly seven years ago, in the fifty-sixth year of their marriage, she died after having had a heart ailment for several years which, with silent heroism, she kept from all her family. To those who knew their relationship, the main question was, How could Dad possibly get along without her? He faced this situation bravely and without making demands on his children or others, and continued to live alone. No doubt he was helped in doing so by having such great internal resources; few people depended so little on others for company. Even so, the courage and dignity with which, from the age of eighty-three, he faced life without Mother was remarkable.

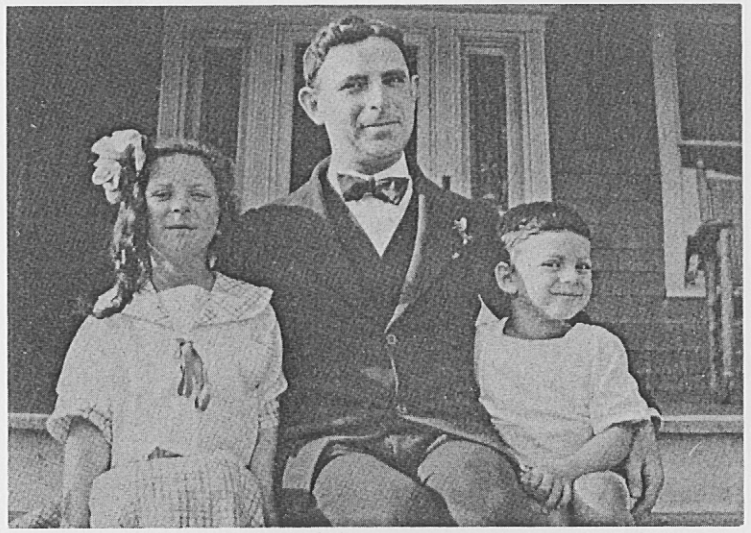
A new blow came a year ago in the form of the accidental death of our brother, Bill. This was still more shocking in a way, because of Bill's excellent health and relative youth, and especially cruel, because Dad was well past eighty-eight and also, I think, because Dad saw so much of himself in Bill. But his first reaction to the news, when he recovered his speech, was "I'm glad Mother isn't here for this."

After all these blows he did not mope. He continued to go to his office, where he busied himself with his intellectual hobbies, until last Thanksgiving, some six weeks before his eighty-ninth birthday.

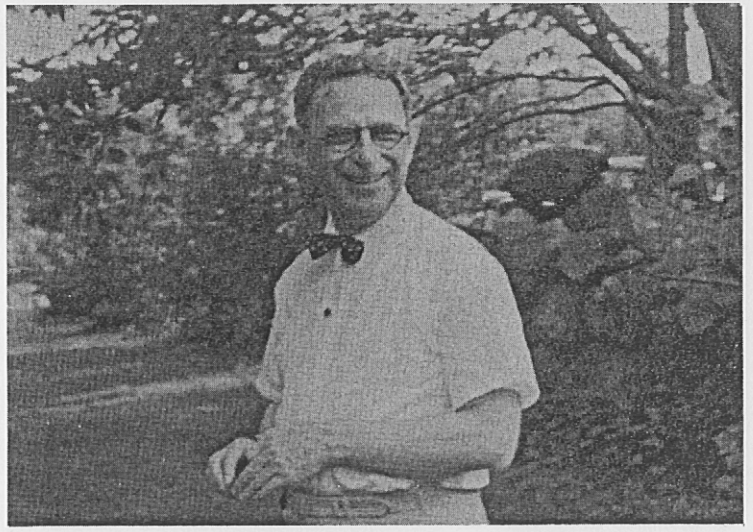
In these last years, he continued to teach those around him, not only in his accustomed and conscious way about matters in which he was interested but by the example of his conduct. He lived not only long but well, for things that are good and true and lasting. And even though bodily weakness and the loss of wife and son, brothers and friends, made living ever harder, he lived for things outside himself to the end. His example, and

Mother's too, were lessons in selflessness, courage and dignity.

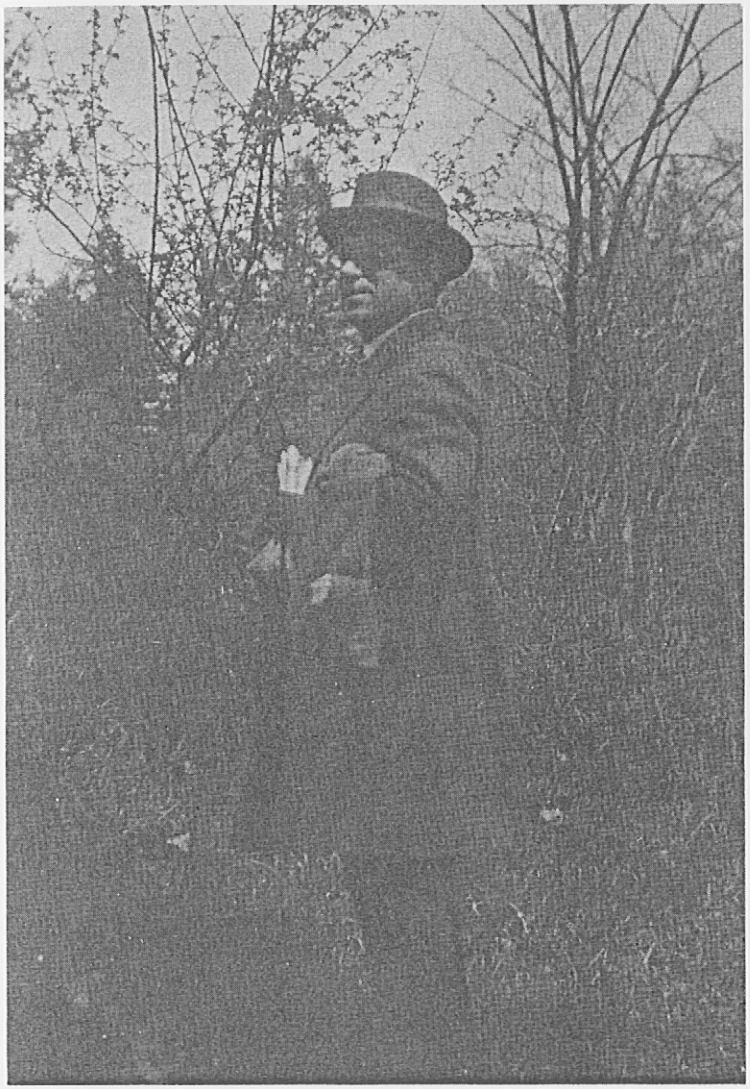
Neither of them would want me to bewail their passing. And in a sense it would not be fitting for us to do so, for their presence lives—it lives in what they gave to us all and what those of us closest to them pass on to others. All that was good and strong in them will give strength to those who live on, loving them still.



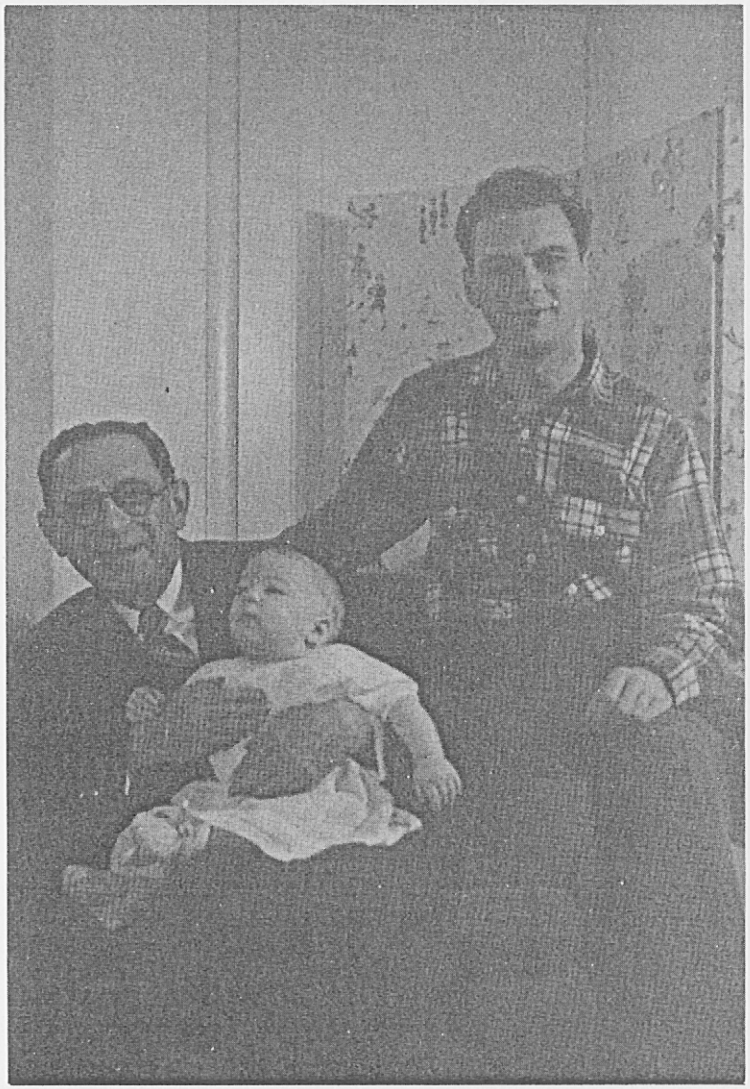
Dad, Marie and Walter at Belle Harbor, summer of 1916



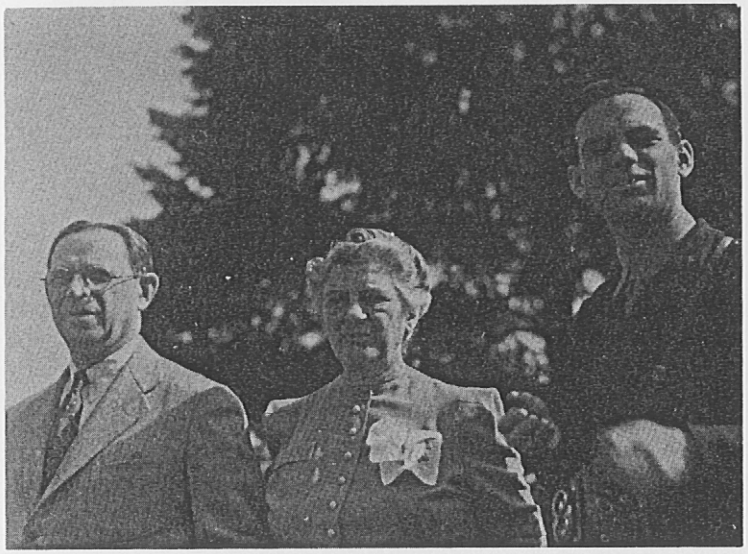
In Ridgefield, Connecticut, 4 July 1939



On a Sunday family outing in the country, early 1920's



With Walter and Michael, in Alexandria, Virginia, early 1943



With Mother and Bill at Hershey, Pennsylvania,
on Mother and Dad's 40th anniversary, 15 March 1945

Morris H. Gold

WHAT a challenge it must have been for A. B. Salant when he accepted the suggestion of his brother, Gabe, to give up his career in the academic world, to become associated with the very young, and yet-to-be-established commercial enterprise, known as Salant and Salant. We understand the motivation for his move was his desire to become financially able to marry the lady of his choice.

Mr. Salant took on the responsibility of the manufacturing department, which is probably as far removed as one can get from the relatively placid lack-of-deadline type of life one enjoys as a professor. In order for the young enterprise to keep its head above water, it required maximum manufacturing efficiency, good labor management relations, tight production schedules and coordination of merchandising, selling and production. All of these typically industrial challenges, Mr. Salant rapidly learned to assimilate, and in fact, before too long, introduced innovations and ideas of his own which were new to the industry.

Yet, with all the rather hectic day-to-day proceedings, he always found time to sit down with anybody who approached, and freely gave of his sage advice and good sense. He was truly

a friend of all who wanted to know him. For a man of his vision, the relatively mundane goings-on of the business world were not enough to take up the breadth of his natural inquisitiveness. Therefore, although he left the academic world, he still found time to pursue his interests in it. Any subject which aroused his curiosity was thoroughly researched and carefully tabulated in proper order. He developed voluminous information through culling and selecting pertinent bits and pieces. He was a meticulous man at work. No minutiae were too trivial. No slender lead was overlooked, no avenue unapproached, when A. B. Salant set out to learn the facts.

All of these habits also contributed to his success as a businessman. He was constantly looking way ahead and formulating policies which would stand us in good stead, not just a year or two in the future, but ten or twenty years or even more. Very early he foresaw the burgeoning industrial development in the South. This part of our country, still suffering from post-Civil War deterioration and inertia, was just beginning to improve its economy in the late 1920s and early '30s when Mr. Salant started the chain of plants for our company which today are its backbone and strength. When he went South in those days and suggested to the local town fathers that we set up a manufacturing plant in what were then backwoods or fringe agricultural areas, he found many who did not believe that industry could flourish there. The people were farmers, satisfied to eke out a precarious living with no opportunity of improving their own lot or that of their children. Very soon, however, under Mr. Salant's cautious urging, every doubter without exception acknowledged that what he had said would come to pass actually did, and towns whose populations were numbered

in the hundreds when the company appeared on the scene grew and prospered with it. It can be honestly said that several thousand Tennesseans would not be where they are today without his vision and his understanding of what economic growth could accomplish in a backward, rural area.

He was a strong advocate of the T. V. A. and was very influential with many of the local citizens in the areas now served by it, who had serious doubts as to its potential.

It was also in those early thirties that collective bargaining came to our industry, and here again with his understanding and vision of the future, he advocated and furthered this principle of labor-management relations. He knew, and through him, we knew, what to expect in the future. With this knowledge we are able to plan soundly and intelligently. He was an outstanding example of how to apply academic knowledge to the business world—an art too often ignored or given short shrift.

Of course, we all greatly miss him. Perhaps we miss most the few moments at the end of a day when you might sit down and listen to him talk on any number of subjects, none having anything to do with the company. As an example, I recall personally that Joe Lipshie and I, when we were all a lot younger and worked closely with Mr. Salant at the Brooklyn factory, frequently were invited by him to lunch, after our half-day shift on Saturdays. By pre-arrangement, we would have chosen a subject, such as education, religion, politics, current events, or anything in which we were interested. All that was required to start things going was one small question. We would then sit back and have revealed to us everything pertaining to it in such depth that when he was through that subject was covered from

A to Z. We almost felt as if we were sitting at the feet of a very wise seer. But why shouldn't we have felt that way? After all, we were!

Roy R. Neuberger

MY REMARKS in reference to my father-in-law will be brief and personal. Eulogies most frequently are hollow because the words of praise do not stem from the heart or from contact with the deceased. My thirty-six years of close association with Aaron B. Salant enable me to speak of him with knowledge, with admiration and with gratitude. His qualities were many but I would mention just a few. His love and thirst for knowledge, his devotion to his family and his modesty, to my mind, represent his outstanding virtues. He could have been a great educator or historian. He taught me to think and, given the opportunity, he could have encouraged many others to improve their minds. Rather he chose the quiet and retiring road—the road of contemplation and study.

He particularly enjoyed the occasions when he and his beloved wife visited with Marie and our family in the country. For there he could spend his time reading his treasured books in the quiet and solitude which Nature provided and at the same time be surrounded by his loved ones.

He was an ethical man and we do honor to our cause by meeting here to revere his cherished memory.

Jerome Nathanson

BEFORE I conclude, I have two statements to read. You will see as I read them what I mean when I say, in anticipation, that I do not altogether trust myself to do so. The first is a letter from his daughter-in-law Edna.

To Dad with Love:

On this day of remembering, I want to express a few thoughts which I tried at times to tell you but which you seemed embarrassed to hear. You shied away so from anything sentimental or emotional. How could I tell you how grateful I am for the many years of happiness you and Mother gave me as part of your family? From our very first meeting in 1936 you made me feel welcome. Although our intellectual interests were different, I never stopped admiring your knowledge and you, in your turn, were always interested in *my* work.

You and Mother were the only parents I ever knew well, my own having died when I was a child. Over the years you became still closer and dearer to me. I owe you and Mother a great deal, for the constant love and devotion you always extended to me, and later to our children, as well as for the selflessness of that devotion. And above all, I thank you for having

been such a loving husband and father because your fine example gave me, in Walter, a loving husband and gave to Michael and Stephen a loving father. My life might have been very different if I had had some other mother-in-law and father-in-law. That I had you both was my great good fortune.

Edna

Well, that was hard enough to read. And now, this one is by Steve Salant, one of the grandsons.

If I may judge by the experience of my friends, few see their grandfathers frequently and fewer ever get to know them. For most, the relationship is strained and superficial.

Ours would have remained that way if we had continued as we began. I can remember the gifts he would send at Christmas; how as a boy, I was made to get dressed up; how—scrubbed, combed and polished—I would go with my family to New York for 'The Visit.' Grandpa would play marbles or talk of baseball and soon, we would go home to Washington on a long train ride. Comic books made such trips endurable. Neither Grandpa nor I was in our element—he dressed in a suit but talking of baseball, and I talking of baseball but in a suit.

It was later that I began to know Arlo Bates Salt—Grandpa in one of his disguises. He would mysteriously learn of topics which interested me and—under any number of pen-names—would send me books and articles which he thought relevant.

As the years passed and my interests changed, Grandpa tailored his mailings to my fancies. He furnished material for most of my term papers—on Jefferson, Twain, Milton, Hiss and

Montaigne. The breadth of his knowledge was remarkable. In my first year of college, I took a course in the History of Western Philosophy. The weekly lectures were unbearably dull; but Friday I would go to Schrafft's with Grandpa and, for several hours over dinner, we would discuss each topic in detail. Every week I would go to see him. Every week he would reveal himself more expert than my professor on whatever topic of history I was studying.

During that year books from Arlo Bates Salt arrived every day. Classmates took advantage of the large and growing library he was providing. It was not merely the volume of material which was so useful. Few minds but his could have read and absorbed all of it. Grandpa, however, had read everything he sent and had written comments in the margin. His mind had an enormous capacity for sifting what was relevant and sifting again. Books rarely arrived without typewritten summaries or the pertinent passages marked.

Several of my friends went with me for visits to discuss subjects which interested them. Always, Grandpa had strong views. When he introduced a subject, he would always begin at the end: with his most vehement conclusions. Those not interested must have dismissed them as rash. Others discovered that—when challenged and only then—Grandpa would reveal the evidence on which his conclusion rested.

He always played upon one's curiosity: mysterious notes, letters under pen names, vehement conclusions with only a hint of the enormous research Grandpa had undertaken. Talking with him was for me a sequence of mysteries and discoveries.

Occasionally, I brought a girl to visit. Grandpa was always

very kind and gentle. He would show pictures of Grandma and Marie, would read poetry, and insist upon getting up when she entered and helping her with her coat when she left.

On one girl especially, he made a strong impression. Long after I lost close touch with her, he and she continued to write and exchange gifts. When she learned he was sick in June, she drove from Washington to see him. Despite warnings from the nurse that he was too tired for many visitors, despite a wait of several hours while he slept, she waited to see him. He loved her visit.

I cannot fully explain why the young responded so well to Grandpa—why they read books he gave them and failed to read those assigned in class; why they wrote him when they wrote almost no one else; why they visited him and not their own grandparents.

It's worth considering why, though. He was, of course, fascinated by many of the subjects we studied. But more important, he never seemed to disapprove. He never sighed when I lit a cigarette, glared at my blue jeans or clucked over a tie that didn't match. He never injected himself as the yardstick against which I would feel too short. He wanted to share ideas. He cared nothing for the rest.

With Grandpa, I never felt compelled to make an impression. Often, as I passed 74th Street late at night, I would suddenly decide to visit. I would slip in, leave a note, make certain he was sleeping soundly, and fall asleep in the bed he had provided for me. The next morning we would have breakfast together. He was always pleased to see me. I never wore my suit and he never talked of baseball. Going to Grandpa's was like going to see a student across town. And it really was seeing

a fellow student—one older, much better read, but interested in the same subjects, friendly and undemanding.

Steve, I never have read a more moving statement from a young man about his grandparent—never.

I don't know what I can add. Aaron Salant had this thirst for knowledge. The search for knowledge and truth, as has been said, is the noblest expression of the human spirit. This is a quotation he was fond of: "Man's hunger for knowledge about himself and the forces by which he is surrounded gives human life its meaning and purpose and clothes it with final dignity."

Again, he was fond of quoting this from Diderot: "I thread my way through the jungle of ignorance, falsehood and illusion, by the light of a flickering taper. Along come Superstition and Ignorance and blow it out." He was fond of an essay by the late John Erskine, who taught English at Columbia. It is titled, "The Moral Obligation to be Intelligent"—the *moral* obligation.

At the time of Aaron Salant's death, we had a small service at the cemetery for the family, and I quoted these lines of Santayana's:

> Oh, world, thou choosest not the wisest part,
> It is not wisdom to be only wise,
> And on the inward vision close the eyes,
> But it is wisdom to believe the heart.

He passed his legacy on in this way, with his feeling, with this caring, reflected in this incredible statement of Steve's, to say nothing of Edna's and Walter's. How many men would

talk about their fathers-in-law as Roy did? How many could?

"So what signifies?" is a favorite question these days among young people. What signifies? To be touched by the quality of a life like this—that signifies, that counts. The caring—down through the children and the grandchildren and the great-grandchildren, through the business associates, through the schools, through the friends, that will carry on to children now unborn both in the family and outside it—all this signifies.

In concluding this meeting, I do not quote directly but paraphrase:

> To suffer woes that hope thinks infinite,
> To endure wrongs darker than death or night,
> To defy powers which seem omnipotent;
> To love and bear,
> To hope till hope creates
> From its own wreck the thing it contemplates—
> Neither to change, to falter, to repent,
> This is alone to be
> Good and beautiful and free,
> This is alone life and victory.