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## Eric Stein

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## ERIC STEIN

*Theodore J. St. Antoine\**

Eric Stein was one of the wisest, shrewdest, most broadly knowledgeable, and most benign human beings I have ever known. Since others can speak more authoritatively about Eric's scholarship and his contributions to international law, I am going to concentrate on him personally and on his relationships with his Michigan Law School colleagues.

Eric was the last person to intrude on you, but he had a gentle way of intervening with sage counsel. I can recall three times he did so with me. At the very beginning of my years at the Law School, he said, "You are now a faculty member at Michigan. You are in a position where you shouldn't hesitate to call anyone in this University and ask to see them." When I retired from full-time teaching, he admonished me, "Stay visible. You'll lose out on many good things otherwise."

A third cautionary word from Eric was much more mundane, but it could have been life-saving. "You have a small lump over your right eyebrow," he said. "Have you had it checked? Don't depend entirely on doctors to look out for you. I have learned that you must frequently be your own doctor." Big picture or quotidian item, Eric's sharp eyes missed little, if anything.

Another savvy academic once remarked that old professors tend to get bitter and cranky. I have observed that phenomenon many times, but I never saw the slightest hint of it in Eric. He took his own sound advice about keeping up. No one else among the senior faculty was readier to cultivate the younger members, and it paid handsome dividends. It helped Eric remain fresh and vibrant and productive to the end, and in turn it enabled him to serve as a model and an inspiration for everyone.

Nothing was more touching than to see the warm, unaffected attention paid to Eric in his last illness by colleagues two generations removed from his. But Eric and his wife Ginny did not limit their outreach to the young. Most persons joining the faculty could count on gracious, Old World hospitality in the Stein home that quickly made newcomers feel as if they had always belonged.

Eric and Ginny loved art, music, and literature. Despite (or perhaps because of) Eric's last-minute escape from his native Czechoslovakia after the Nazis took over, the Stein house was a miniature museum of German Expressionist art, much of it grim and haunting. Ginny also taught art history for many years at Eastern Michigan University.

My wife Lloyd and I had the pleasure in recent years of driving the Steins into Detroit for performances of the Michigan Opera Theatre. The

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trips and the pre-opera suppers became veritable seminars on everything from Ann Arbor architecture to world politics. Somewhat to my surprise, I learned that Eric's pet opera was not Mozart or late Verdi but that elegant, nostalgic, richly romantic evocation of eighteenth century Vienna, *Der Rosenkavalier*.

Eric carried his romanticism over into his fondness for poetry. Wordsworth was a favorite. Here, more predictably, he fastened on such works as Wordsworth's *Intimations of Immortality*:

Though nothing can bring back the hour  
Of splendour in the grass, of glory in the flower;  
We will grieve not, rather find  
Strength in what remains behind;  
.....  
In the faith that looks through death,  
In years that bring the philosophic mind.

Eric was a published poet in his own right, in what I would characterize as the Wordsworthian-Frostian tradition. But he was no prisoner of the past. We had a lively discussion of Peter Gay's book, *Modernism*. "It's good," was Eric's verdict, "but rather weak on twentieth century music."

Even as he was dying, Eric retained his critical faculties. I told him of my disappointment when the great pianist, Martha Argerich, canceled a concert in London for which I had bought tickets. "Oh, I know about her," Eric shot back. "She does that all the time!" More poignantly, Eric celebrated his ninety-eighth birthday at Arbor Hospice a couple of weeks before he died. Later I said to him, "Eric, there is no reason you should know about this, but '98' is a number that has special significance in the history of the University of Michigan. It was the number worn by our greatest football player, Tom Harmon." Came the quick response, "I saw Harmon play in 1940!"

Eric Stein was indeed a man, not only for all seasons, but for all occasions.