Jeanne Quint Benoliel

Concerned with the finitude of human existence—fully aware that the ultimate prognosis of life is death—for more than three decades you have spoken out on the subject of thanatology, demonstrating the significance of the act of dying to healthcare practitioner and patient alike, and seeking to meliorate our common end through psycho-social, not exclusively technological treatment.

From the first nursing research in the fifties on the “Impact of Mastectomy” to the earliest oncology community graduate program you set up for nurses who care for terminally ill patients, you have pioneered studies of dying and bereavement. Your work encompasses entire families and every generation; you have propounded alternatives to hospital life-support systems through hospice and home health programs. Promoting the importance of the physician-nurse collaboration, you have understood and underlined that caring for patients as they end their lives takes its toll on the psyche of the health provider.

Maintaining a healthy perspective while courageously confronting every medical taboo, ceaseless in your encouragement of open communications as a palliative to death, you have written and testified with feeling and eloquence. Your wit and warmth are well recognized; your practical and philosophical advice in a full range of difficult and essential areas is heeded and followed.

Welcoming you from the University of Washington, where you were Elizabeth Sterling Soule Distinguished Professor of Nursing and Health Care Systems, the Trustees of the University of Pennsylvania acknowledge your influence world-wide, on both coasts—and particularly at our own School of Nursing—as they offer you the award, symptom of their highest regard, of an honorary degree, Doctor of Science.

Miriam Ben-Porat

Born in Russia, a graduate of the British Mandatory Law School before establishment of a law faculty at Hebrew University—or, indeed, of the State of Israel—you broke new ground for women when you were appointed assistant and deputy state prosecutor, judge and president of the Jerusalem District Court, and the first woman justice and deputy president of the Supreme Court of Israel.

Possessed of excellent sound judgment, professional thoroughness, and extraordinary energy, throughout a demanding judicial career you continued to contribute to scholarship as a professor at Hebrew University and through published articles and a book on negotiable instruments. On reaching the age of statutory retirement, you simply changed course and proceeded to pursue a second career as State Comptroller and Public Complaints Commissioner, the most important position in Israel’s parliamentary system. The first incumbent actually to name names, however influential, in this position of “national ombudsman,” you contributed to elevating administrative principles in government while working to improve ethical and effective administration by public servants. In the process you have single-handedly reinvented the office, becoming a crucial force for integrity in government—and the most admired person in Israeli public life.

Aware that, in your position, plaudits from high places can too often be interpreted as “the homage paid by vice to virtue,” the Trustees welcome you to the University of Pennsylvania as a universally respected symbol of ethical integrity and a champion of social justice. In travelling so far, Miriam Ben-Porat, to accept from their hands the degree, Doctor of Laws, honoris causa, you provide an example to our students and bring certain honor to our campus.
Hillary Rodham Clinton

In a society that still requires First Ladies to have small feet—even when they leave behind large shoes for those who come after to fill—you have prevailed, by example, over the nay-sayers: you have demonstrated that full and enthusiastic engagement in the multiple roles of American women in the 1990s is an enhancement, and no detriment, in the wife of the president of the United States.

Informed that “girls need not apply,” you abandoned a teen-age ambition to train as an astronaut, choosing instead to hone your remarkable talents for advocacy as well as conciliation. In a unique personal trajectory—infused as much by your heart as your head—after earning your wings as special counsel to the House Judiciary Committee in Washington, you moved to Arkansas where you taught criminal law and ran a legal aid clinic at the University in Fayetteville, and later became a top-flight litigator in Little Rock—while volunteering as the highly respected adviser to its Governor.

Committed since your student days to protecting and speaking out for the young—described as the “best friend American kids ever had”—as board member and chair of the Children’s Defense Fund you have brought succor to a generation of children. As head of the Arkansas Education Standards Committee, you substituted maximum expectations for minimum standards and initiated permanent change in the way people thought about education.

The highly educated men and women of the University of Pennsylvania’s Class of ’93, excited by your ideals, grateful for your trailblazing—and simply exhilarated by your presence—now commend the Trustees for choosing this day to honor you, Hillary Rodham Clinton, recognizing your importance as a symbol and your example as activist, your achievements in the past—of which there is no foreseeable end—as they confer on you the honorary degree, Doctor of Laws.

Alfred Gellhorn

Distinguished scion of an eminent family of reformers, during six decades as physician and educator you have battled to improve the lot of both patient and medical student.

Coming to the University of Pennsylvania as the first director of its Medical Center and dean of the School of Medicine, you introduced new dimensions in social thinking into many aspects of curriculum and health care delivery and drew on the interdisciplinary riches of “One University.” This significant chapter in Penn’s medical history saw the establishment of a department of community medicine, and, in an early example of cooperation with our neighbors, of the West Philadelphia Community Mental Health Consortium.

Your encouragement of HEPUP of fond memory—the Health Education Program of the University of Pennsylvania—helped set local high school students on track for college, foreshadowing the Gateway to Higher Education and programs to encourage minority M.D.s that continue to occupy your attention in New York. There, as vice president for health affairs at the City College, and now, six careers after you retired, as director of medical affairs for the New York State Department of Health, you continue to push for health care as a right, not a privilege, to forward research on AIDS, and to work toward making quality services available to all.

Remembered at the University of Pennsylvania for introducing North America’s first School of Medicine to the second half of the twentieth century, you are welcomed home, Alfred Gellhorn, by a host of admirers and survivors who applaud the Trustees for honoring your contributions to medicine and physician education in the service of humanity through this award of the honorary degree, Doctor of Science.

Ralph Landau

Imaginative engineer, self-trained entrepreneur, and hands-on economist, you bring an extraordinary range of talents, experience, and judgment to an industry that has revolutionized the latter half of the twentieth century and holds the key to many of the problems facing society in today’s interdependent world economy.

Graduating with a doctorate—and a clutch of future CEOs—from pre-war MIT, then a veritable hotbed for the new profession of chemical engineering, you went on to develop a whole new field of proprietary chemical technology. You founded a hi-tech, systems engineering, multi-national, participatory company—before those terms had entered the vocabulary of commerce.

Creator of a slew of patents—some 50 in five countries—under your leadership original processes were developed to produce key ingredients for polyester fiber, plastics, antifreezes, and other new materials. In a second career as academic, you currently co-direct programs on technology and economic growth at Stanford and on technology and economic policy at Harvard while continuing to write papers, monographs, and books that link technological with economic thinking.

In this centennial year of Penn’s Chemical Engineering program, the Trustees take particular pride in acclaiming a colleague who is a celebrated innovator and a great individual technological entrepreneur of our time. Commending you for studying French and German as well as chemistry as a Penn undergraduate—for editing the Pennsylvania Triangle and the Class Record besides conducting scientific research—they rejoice in the opportunity to add to the accolades of many professional organizations and institutions as they accord you, Ralph Landau—gifted graduate, concerned scientific educator, and valued advisor—the honorary degree, Doctor of Science.
William Julius Wilson

Dominating the field of urban poverty studies, nationally and internationally renowned for your illuminating investigations regarding the African American community, you receive universal respect for your writing and research and a commitment to your subject that is both moral and intellectual.

Through powerful works of social analysis and courageous advocacy, you point to the role of structural changes in the economy as it affects the social fabric of our inner cities. Following a protracted period of malign neglect, you explicitly seek a revitalized liberal approach to the problems of The Truly Disadvantaged. Nonetheless, through the persuasive alternatives you propose, you have not hesitated to call into question the assumptions of liberals, conservatives, and civil rights leaders alike, refusing to let ideology interfere with factual interpretation. You do not fear to act as a lightning rod; but, while your candor may expose you to attacks from all sides, your opinions are eagerly sought out—from the ivory towers of foundations to the contentious corridors of policy makers.

Admiring the integrity, dignity, and resolute will with which you have pursued your researches—aware that when William Julius Williams speaks people listen—the Trustees welcome you to the University of Pennsylvania from the University of Chicago, where you are Lucy Flower University Professor, and chaired its distinguished department of sociology. Conscious that they do honor to themselves in adding to your high acclaim as MacArthur Prize Fellow, and member of the National Academy of Sciences, they take great pleasure in conferring on you their own highest honor, the degree Doctor of Humane Letters, honoris causa.