



**A Message from the Director of the
Inamori International Center for Ethics and Excellence
Gregory L. Eastwood, MD**

The purpose of the Inamori Center is to foster ethical leadership around the world.

June 16, 2008

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(1) Plans Gel for Sept 4 Visit by Inamori Ethics Prize Recipient Francis Collins

Dr. Francis S. Collins, who has led the Human Genome Project since 1993, will receive the Inamori Ethics Prize September 4 during a ceremony in Severance Hall. (See Message from the Director April 8, 2008 at <http://www.case.edu/provost/inamori/news/newsletter.html> and press release <http://blog.case.edu/case-news/2008/04/08/inamori>) Earlier that day, Dr. Collins will give a lecture and participate in a Symposium that will include university faculty, as described below. The Lecture and Symposium are free to the public and the audience will be encouraged to comment and ask questions. Following is a schedule of the events September 4.

- 1:00 PM Lecture by Dr. Collins, Severance Hall
Introduction by Joseph Nadeau, PhD - Chair, Department of Genetics

- 2:00 PM Symposium and Conversation with Dr. Collins, Severance Hall
Cynthia Beall, PhD - S. Idell Pyle Professor of Anthropology and Professor of Anatomy and Global Health
Eric Juengst, PhD - Professor of Bioethics and Director, Center for Genetic Research Ethics and Law
Georgia Wiesner, MD - Associate Professor of Genetics & Medicine and Director, Center for Human Genetics, University Hospitals

- 5:00 PM Reception, Grand Foyer, Severance Hall
- 6:00 PM Prize Ceremony, Main Auditorium, Severance Hall
(Information about tickets to the Reception and Prize Ceremony will be forthcoming.)

(2) Heroes and Mentors and Peers

“At that age [11 years] I was susceptible to heroes and role models and decided that I wanted to be like him.”

- Gregory L. Eastwood, Case Western Reserve University Alumni Website,
Spring 2008 <http://www.case.edu/alumni/award/eastwoodint.html>

“Mentor was an old friend of Odysseus, to whom the King had entrusted his whole household when he sailed, with orders to... keep everything intact.”

- Homer, *The Odyssey*

“Everyone near him was influenced by him, deeply and permanently. Some he taught how to think, others how to see or hear.”

- John Steinbeck, from *About Ed Ricketts*,
in *The Log From the Sea of Cortez*, 1951

One of the obligations of those who have influence over others' lives, which clearly include leaders, is to pay attention to the circumstances under which we do influence others' lives. Heroes and role models play a big part in the growing up process, even well into adulthood. Parents, teachers, coaches, and others often do not fully appreciate the profound ways they emotionally and intellectually touch and influence the lives of children and young adults. Perhaps my sixth grade Sunday school teacher, Dr. Gerald S. Wilson, had some idea of the effect he had on me because I followed him to Western Reserve University School of Medicine. But I wish I could have thanked Mr. Monte, my 12th grade English teacher, for igniting my interest in literature and poetry and the numerous other teachers and exemplars who sustained me throughout my formal education.

Somewhere along our educational and early career path we commonly encounter mentors. Mentors also can be heroes, and they typically have qualities that we admire and want to emulate, but usually they guide us in practical, operational matters, helping us to find our direction and learn what to do and how to do it. Sometimes we recognize their value at the time, but often it is in retrospect, as life unfolds, that we understand better their importance to us. The mentoring relationships I experienced developed naturally in the course of my education and career, that is, they did not occur within a structured program of mentoring. Mentoring of young faculty is much discussed on college campuses and it goes on in corporations and other organizations, often with good results. I think the challenge of organized, structured mentoring programs is to preserve the magic of the natural process while making it broadly and consistently available. (Incidentally, Mentor, the old friend of Ulysses to whom he entrusted his household and his son Telemachus when he left Ithaca for the Trojan War and subsequent adventures, and from whom we get the term mentor, evidently was not a very good mentor. When Ulysses returned 20 years later, the house was in riot and whether Telemachus had received the proper instruction from Mentor is debatable.)

After heroes and mentors, what then? The majority of one's years remain, the horizon of life is distant, and, we hope, the main learning of life has just begun. The unequal relationships with heroes, mentors, teachers, and the like have receded and what persists is the routine of day to day interaction with many people, professionally and socially, who more or less are our peers in that they are people with whom we do not have an unequal relationship. I believe that relationships and friendships with peers, by the exchange of ideas or observation, are among the richest sources of our education as mature adults. I probably always understood this at some intuitive level but I came to understand it better when I learned more about the remarkable friendship of the Nobel Prize winning writer John Steinbeck and the marine biologist Ed Ricketts.

Ricketts and Steinbeck met in 1930 in Monterey, California. Steinbeck had just published his first novel, *Cup of Gold*. Ricketts owned a small biological supply house on Cannery Row, where he also lived. They were close friends until 1948, when Ricketts accidentally drove his car into the path of the Southern Pacific Railways Del Monte Express and was killed. Steinbeck, Ricketts,

and others, including the mythologist Joseph Campbell, met frequently at Ricketts' laboratory-home and exchanged ideas. The discussions, which lasted hours, sometimes days, aided by quantities of beer, produced several theories that found expression in Steinbeck's novels.

Ricketts' theories, developed with input from Steinbeck and sometimes Campbell, included the "Toto-Picture," which is the unoriginal notion that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts and everything is related to everything else; "Is Thinking," which allows one to see how things are related, to regard good and bad as relative, and to accept things as they are; and the "Phalanx Theory," which says that a group of people, or phalanx, becomes an entity separate from the individual and develops its own motivations and behavior. Ricketts, who had acquired the name "Doc" on Cannery Row, although he had not finished college (neither did Steinbeck), is represented by characters in several of Steinbeck's novels: Doc Burton in *In Dubious Battle* (1936), Casy in *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939), Doctor Winter in *The Moon is Down* (1942), and Doc in *Cannery Row* (1945) and *Sweet Thursday* (1954).

The influence of Ed Ricketts on John Steinbeck, his thinking and consequent writing, is evident and is an example of what I maintain is perhaps the most important way that we learn and develop new ideas throughout most of our adult life, namely, peer relationships. Clearly, most of our interactions with peers are not as intense or sustained as that between Ricketts and Steinbeck and, of course, our thoughts are stimulated by what we read and what we see and hear through the various media. But I have become aware of how much I learn from my peers, even short, sometimes casual, interactions with people. The more we are aware of this and understand it, the more we can use it and benefit from it. This may be an example of what the French scientist Louis Pasteur (1822-1895) meant when he said, "Chance favors the prepared mind."

References

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Astro R. *Edward F. Ricketts*. Boise State Western Writers Series. No. 21, 1976.

Astro R. *Steinbeck and Ricketts: The Morphology of a Metaphysic*. University of Windsor Review 1973;8.2:24-33.