

Sent: Sunday, August 30, 2015 9:37:57 PM
To: jeevacation@gmail.com
From: David Grosf <[REDACTED]>
Subject: Oliver Sacks

I am very sad to lose Oliver Sacks. I can scarcely imagine two people more different in personality than you and him, and so I hope your connection to him was as enriching as it could be. I chatted with him once but feel I know much more about what he was like from (1) his contributions to the radio show RadioLab and the like, (2) his writing, of course, and (3) a superb job he did presenting a poster at the gigantic Society for Neuroscience annual meeting ~1991. It was about a neurologically impaired patient's color perception anomalies. Color vision is a vicious, competitive, complicated field and he survived aggressive interrogation by my colleague, and milder questioning from me, really really well. I was astonished that he could do such a great job with research in a particularly treacherous sub-field and it made me inclined to give him the benefit of the doubt about his popularly accessible contributions. Enriching the memory is that his poster was just one in a vast bazaar of research works. His work enjoyed no special status due to being the most famous neurologist in the Western world: it belonged in the poster session about visual sensory deficits from lesions or somesuch.

I would have liked very much to talk to him about the hazards of "storytelling" in science, because he has admitted, with what seemed to be a mild regret, to changing the ending (the *data*) of patient stories in the UK edition of his first/early book *Migraine*. The temptation to compress and simplify in storytelling and obscure or erase troublesome anomalies is a hazard of scholarship and science, and it is particularly dangerous to science.

I hope this email finds you well. I'm about to leave for Burning Man (my 9th time!). My father, quite diminished by what turns out now most likely to have been a long series of very small strokes, is in the precarious care of the crazy Carmen in the Bronx; my mother is frail and sharp as a whip on the Upper West Side. My brother has an exciting AI start-up under-way, with some revenue already, in Seattle (Coherent Knowledge Systems).

Best,
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David Grosf
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