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Josef Brožek's Bethlehem Years

When my husband, Hugh, and I arrived at Lehigh University in 1971, Josef was no longer department chair (1959–1963). He consolidated his second defining career role as research professor in the history of psychology (1964–1979). In 1979, Josef traveled to Würzburg, Germany, as a Senior Fulbright Research Fellow. He returned to Lehigh as adjunct professor (1982–1987). In 1998, the Brožeks left Bethlehem, PA, for St. Paul, MN.

Josef suggested as my 1986 dissertation topic the moral philosopher and psychologist Alexander Bain (1818–1903), because no full-length study of Bain existed (Flesher, 1986). Josef was not on my dissertation committee, but he was a crucial mentor and advisor during and after my graduate study (Brožek, Flesher, & León, 1980). He regularly left reprints which might interest me on what he called “my corner” of his desk. He told me after a piece was published to look not back, but rather forward to the next project. He also entreated: “Just do as much as you can.” Josef, world scholar citizen, was especially supportive of his scholar students who chose groundbreaking paths.

Josef's love of books, languages, and history was evident. His generous

donation of his personal library of 20,000 books and voluminous papers to the Archives of the History of American Psychology at the University of Akron, OH, is its largest one to date. After the Iron Curtain fell, Josef once filled our car trunk with book packets for the Washington government office that was shipping “Western” books to “Eastern” Europe.

Josef knew Russian (early Siberian childhood), Czech (homeland); Hebrew, Greek, and Latin (classical education); Croatian, Slovakian, Slovenian, Polish, and Macedonian (Slavic languages); Italian, French, Spanish, Portuguese (Romance languages); Romanian, German, Dutch, and English; as well as some Swedish (pleasing his mother-in-law), Hungarian, and Lusatian Sorb (a dying language). At age 71, Josef learned Portuguese, in 6 weeks, for a talk in Lisbon. He needed only to eliminate Spanish from his bedtime poetry reading because of its linguistic proximity to Portuguese.

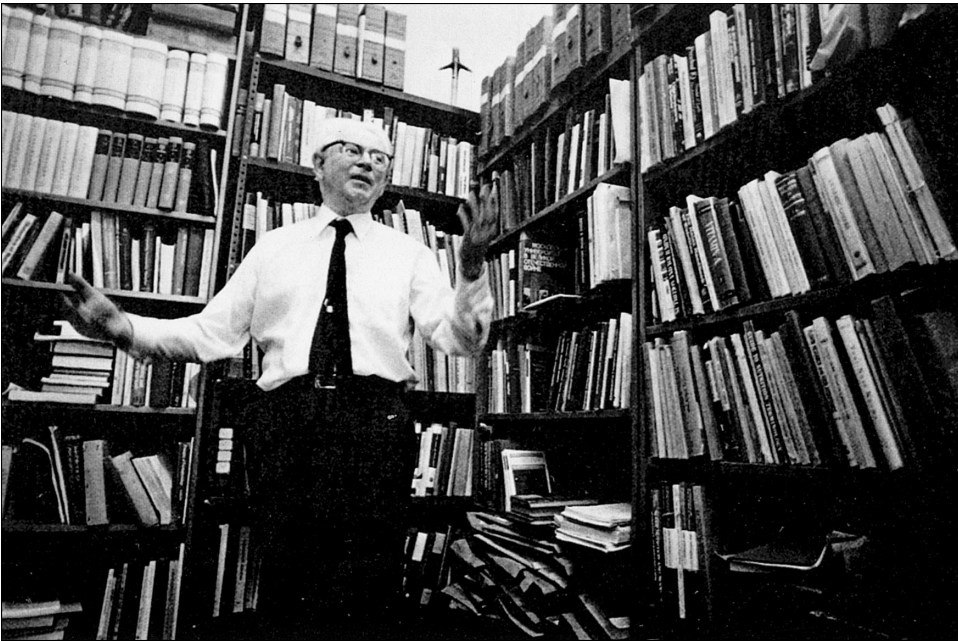
The communication—by phone, mail, and in person—passing regularly through the Brožek home was nothing short of phenomenal and demonstrates why a complete assessment of Josef’s influence is impossible. The team of Josef and Eunice was invariably warm and welcoming. I confidently called Eunice at 10:00 p.m. one night, saying I was bringing medieval scholar Peter Brown to their home for breakfast the next morning to discuss monastic fasting and malnutrition.

The Brožek home was oriented around research in the European style, yet Josef was readily available at noon, when he took lunch, and at 4:00, when he took tea. When I called him about sighting a magnificent stand of Jack ‘O Lantern fungi, he answered: “I’ll be ready as soon as you and your camera get here.” The Brožeks bigheartedly shared their cottage in the Poconos. One day, with a twinkle in his eye, Josef said, “Come, see my ‘Czech’ swimming pool.” He had dammed a nearby small stream so that one could swim “forever” by matching one’s pace against the stream’s opposing flow.

In his Bethlehem “retirement” years, Josef edited about a book a year. World hunger remained an abiding concern; his vast knowledge of nutrition was bearing fruit. He worked at MIT with Neville Scrimshaw on nutrition (he also met Professor Ho there), collaborated with the World Health Organization on a survey of world hunger, lectured on nutrition during the United Nations’ Year of the Child, had a book on nutrition funded by the Nestlé Foundation (Brožek & Schürch, 1984/1985), consulted with the Institute for Nutrition in Central America and Panama, and traveled to the Union of South Africa to work with Bryon Bronte Stewart. They discussed how to aid emigrating Kalihari tribesmen in shifting from a prehistoric desert diet to urban fare.

Highlights of Josef’s Bethlehem years in the history of psychology include two National Endowment for the Humanities conferences on the teaching of the history of psychology; consultation on the PhD program at the University of New Hampshire; development of the Archives of the History of American Psychology; the founding of American Psychological Association Division 26 (History of Psychology), acting as division president once; and participating in Cheiron.

Just as Josef began his presentations with humor, so I affectionately close mine. He once told me that he identified with penguins, but provided no explanation. What immediately came to mind was his hairstyle. Years later, visiting the International Penguin Research Station (at Sea World in San Diego, CA), I found my interpretation. When watching through a wall of glass, one penguin caught my



Josef Brožek in his room at Linderman Library, Lehigh University, 1979. Reprinted with permission from *Lehigh Horizons*, May 1979. Copyright Theo Anderson, Lehigh University Relations.

eye. He swam with amazing proficiency, tumbling and spiraling. Every so often, he joined the penguins sedately standing on the ice. His periods of rest never lasted long, though, and soon he'd return to the water to frolic again. Like this penguin, Josef had virtuosity, grace, and an audacious involvement in life.

Mary Mosher Flesher
Smith College

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Josef Brožek: The Spanish Connection

Perhaps the largest part of Brožek's time was dedicated to others—other people, other countries, other times. Altruism and generosity were essential traits of his personality. Whether these were inborn or acquired is difficult to say.