

REUNION CLASS GIFT HONORS DANIEL NATHANS

By Billie Walker



In 1994, Nobel laureate **Daniel Nathans** told a gathering of Johns Hopkins alumni and friends, “I came to Hopkins 32 years ago as an assistant professor, eager to develop my own research program and to teach. What I found was an ideal setting for both. I discovered that teaching is a sacred trust at Hopkins and an integral part of almost everything we do. And that it is a given here, signaled by example, that only our best efforts are worthy of us ... There’s something special about this place, emanating from an inspiring history. It has to do with extraordinary freedom, collegiality, and unrelenting pursuit of excellence.”

Nathans, University Professor of Molecular Biology and Genetics, died in 1999. His extraordinary career has been recognized at Hopkins most recently by the naming in his honor of one of four advisory colleges within the School of Medicine. Established in 2005 to give each medical student a “home” within the school, the colleges (formerly known as “A,” “B,” “C,” and “D”) bring students together with specially assigned faculty who are their master teachers and professional advisers throughout their four years. The other three colleges have been named for Florence Sabin, Helen Taussig, and Vivien Thomas. Each col-

lege will have its own room in the new Anne and Mike Armstrong Medical Education Building, presently under construction.

The 25th reunion classes in 2007—the classes of 1981 and 1982—collaborated to donate \$500,000 to name the Nathans College Room in the Armstrong Building. More than 100 alumni contributed toward the generous gift.

One of the donors, **Kevin Fox '81**, MacDonald Professor of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania, unknowingly echoed Nathans’ sentiments when he spoke of his reasons for supporting the gift. “Being at Hopkins was extraordinary,” Fox says, “because of the sense of history, the striving for excellence, the commitment to serious hard work, joy in the process, and the active indoctrination of students into the lore and greatness of the institution. Not only did we have the privilege of a medical education, but we had it at the best medical center in the nation, if not the world.”

“Imagine our feelings of awe when, as second-year students in 1978, we arrived at Dr. Nathans’ molecular biology class to find a note that it was canceled because our professor had just been named recipient of the Nobel Prize!” Fox recalls. “I feel every bit as passionate about Hopkins today as when I graduated. There is a special



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aura and a special magic about Johns Hopkins that I hold in the highest possible regard.”

Another reunion donor is **Charles Flexner '82**, professor of medicine at Hopkins with joint appointments in pharmacology and international health. Flexner recently headed a task force charged with assessing the Hopkins experience of its residents and fellows. Interestingly, his great-great uncle, Abraham Flexner, was the eminent educator who, in 1910, issued a famous report on medical education that castigated most schools and held up Hopkins as an ideal of rigorous standards in clinical education and laboratory research.

“Since Hopkins has always been at the forefront of medi-

cal education, it is an honor to contribute to the Nathans College Room in the building that reflects a new era in the training of physicians and researchers,” Flexner says. “And by combining the gifts of so many classmates, we were able to make our contribution truly substantial. Hopkins has given many things to the world, but its most precious gift to its alumni is the gift of education. This is our chance to give something back.”

To be dedicated October 24, 2009, the Armstrong Medical Education Building is designed to serve medical education for the 21st century, as outlined in Hopkins’ groundbreaking new “Genes to Society” curriculum. The facility will bring exceptional opportunities for social and collegial interaction within the four advisory colleges, and will also provide model digital classrooms and laboratories and bench-to-bedside technologies.

To contribute to the Anne and Mike Armstrong Medical Education Building Fund, please visit www.alumni.jhu.edu/medicine/makeagift.htm or call the Development and Alumni Relations Office at (410) 516-0776 or (888) JHM-1336.



> The Nathans College Room will be a part of the new Armstrong Building.