

Alfred Sommer



I've led a peripatetic career, dragging along Jill, my wife, of nearly 60 years!

After training in medicine at Harvard, I joined the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), where we ended up being posted to the Cholera Research Laboratory in what was then East Pakistan (now Bangladesh). We had been evacuated, way back then, to a "safe haven" in Iran (goes to show how the world has changed. As have I.

That experience led me to new interests in Ophthalmology, Epidemiology, and public health. After training at Hopkins, in both ophthalmology and epidemiology, we headed back overseas, for 3 years conducting research on blindness prevention and child survival in Indonesia, and then one year in London analyzing and writing up the data.

In 1980 we returned to Baltimore to establish the Dana Center for Preventive Ophthalmology at the Wilmer Institute, as a joint undertaking with the Johns Hopkins School of Public Health. In 1990 I was "drafted" to succeed D.A. Henderson as the Dean of what is now the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, a position I held for 15 years (until 2005). I continue to serve both the JHU Schools of Public Health (where my office is located) and Medicine.

I served on the corporate boards of Becton Dickenson and of T. Rowe Price, and continue to serve on the (NFP) boards of the Lasker Foundation (which I chaired for 6 years as the first non-family member to do so), the Bloomberg Philanthropies, Johns Hopkins Medicine International (Chair), and as Chair of the scientific selection Jury of the (Portuguese) Champalimaud Foundation. Along the way, I was elected to both the National Academy of Medicine and the National Academy of Sciences.

My "official" titles at JHU are now: Dean Emeritus of the BSPH; University Distinguished Service Professor; Professor of Epidemiology (SPH) and Ophthalmology (SOM); and inaugural Gilman Scholar.

Jill and I still live in the only house we have ever owned, which we bought in Mount Washington when we first arrived in Baltimore in 1972.