



The Potamkin Prize for Pick's and Alzheimer's Disease
A Legacy of Love Established in Honor of Luba Potamkin

Luba Potamkin was a vibrant and beautiful woman with a smile and a personality that wooed millions. One of New York and Philadelphia's most recognizable leading ladies, she was glamorous and charming, and famous for appearing as the TV spokesperson for the family's chain of auto dealerships, the largest in America. Many remember her for the commercials she did for the Potamkin's popular New York Cadillac dealership in the 1970s.

In the late seventies, it seemed as if Luba had dropped out of sight, disappeared. Few people knew that, in 1978, she was diagnosed with a form of Alzheimer's disease. At a time way before Alzheimer's had the public awareness it has today, before people really knew exactly what it was, she suffered through the heartbreaking progression of the disease. This deeply impacted her family – especially her husband Victor, and sons Robert and Alan.

The family sought the best possible medical treatment and care possible for the beloved wife and mother; but ultimately, they, like the families of all Alzheimer's victims, could only make her as comfortable as possible as she silently slipped into the grips of the disease. It forever changed them ... and inspired them to help others in the most significant and substantial way possible.

The Potamkin Prize is Established

In the eighties, the family (Robert, Alan and father Victor) called upon top neurologists to help them design a way to truly make a difference in Alzheimer's disease research and treatment. The Potamkin Prize for Alzheimer's Disease Research was established in 1988, with the help of many top neurologist and specialists, to "*recognize and promote excellence in neuroscientific research dedicated to finding the cause of Alzheimer's disease and developing effective therapy for it.*"

The American Academy of Neurology was chosen to administer the Prize in recognition of the excellence of many AAN members doing clinical and basic science research on Alzheimer's disease and related disorders and for its international scope—it is the largest organization of clinical and academic neurologists in the world.

The annual award is \$100,000 and was first awarded in 1988. The Potamkins decided not to stop there. It has been awarded 15 times, and is now into its 16th year, with the 2003 award to David M. Holtzman, MD, a professor of neurology at the Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis, Missouri, and to Ashley I. Bush, MD, PhD, a professor of neurology at Harvard Medical School in Boston, Massachusetts.

“The Potamkin Prize is unique in that it’s not a research grant or funding for a study, it is a reward for important work done by the individual researchers,” says Robert Potamkin, co-founder of The Potamkin Prize and chairman of Potamkin Companies. “We feel very strongly that it is important to recognize, honor and reward the winners directly. We felt that a significant and prestigious prize would draw the best minds and most devoted scientists to the fore.”

The Nobel Prize of Neuroscience

“The Potamkin Prize has come to symbolize internationally the premier neuroscientific prize for outstanding excellence in clinical or basic research on Alzheimer’s disease and the related dementias,” says Roger N. Rosenberg, MD, former president of the American Academy of Neurology, and chair of the Potamkin Prize Committee from 1988 to 1999. He says it is considered by many to be the Nobel Prize in the field of Alzheimer’s research; in fact, Stanley B. Prusiner, MD, who received the Potamkin Prize in 1991, received the Nobel Prize for Medicine in 1997.

“The Potamkin Prize has marked the progress of research on Alzheimer’s disease and related disorders,” says Dr. Rosenberg. “More importantly, it has recognized early and emerging areas of research, to emphasize those research disciplines, and to encourage increased effort in those areas. We believe that the Prize has focused attention on the necessary, critical areas of research and has attracted talented investigators into these disciplines.”

The Potamkin Family’s Commitment

The Potamkin family has greatly helped to advance understanding and bring worldwide attention to Alzheimer’s, Pick’s and related disorders through the establishment of the Potamkin Prize. Regrettably, Luba Potamkin passed on in 1994; and Victor Potamkin passed on in 1995. Through their sons Robert and Alan, the legacy of generosity has lived on and has continued to make this unique prize available through the American Academy of Neurology.

The Potamkins are devoted to helping conquer Pick's and Alzheimer's disease. It is a cause they have devoted themselves to in many ways. Robert and his wife Lexie, and Alan and his wife Claudia, have contributed millions of dollars, and they play an active role as key supporters of many Alzheimer's-related charities, personally devoting time and energy, and actively raising money to support research and the care of Alzheimer's patients.

“We are keenly aware of the heartache Pick's and Alzheimer's disease can wreak on a family, and the difficulties faced by its victims and their caretakers,” says Alan Potamkin, co-founder of the Potamkin Prize and co-chairman of Potamkin Companies. “We've tried to help ease that burden for people.”

Biographical Information

Robert M. Potamkin and Alan H. Potamkin are successful businessmen and well-known philanthropists. They have expanded Potamkin Companies beyond automobile dealerships, into a conglomerate that is involved in real estate development, radio stations, television stations, hotels and Office Depot stores in Eastern Europe.

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