



## About Tom SenGupta

Tom SenGupta is a pharmacist who takes seriously the responsibilities of citizenship in his adopted homeland. For 43 years, he was the proprietor of Schneider Drug in Minneapolis' Prospect Park. There, beginning in 1988, he hosted a highly regarded series of after-hours discussions about how to spur America to live up to its democratic ideals.

Born Aug. 7, 1939 in Calcutta, India, to an educated, middle-class family, young SenGupta was inspired to value all people by his maternal grandmother, Kamala Gupta, a social worker. He came of age during the early years of Indian independence and absorbed his nation's enthusiasm for democratic self-rule.

In 1958, he opted for a college education in the United States. He enrolled in Loyola University in New Orleans and was soon drawn to the budding U.S. civil rights movement. His support for the presidential candidacy of Minnesota U.S. Sen. Hubert Humphrey in 1960 helped him choose pharmacy school at the University of Minnesota in 1961. Minnesota suited him, he discovered. He met and married Janice LaMourea of Duluth in 1964; graduated and went to work for a downtown Minneapolis pharmacy in 1965; became a U.S. citizen in 1969; and purchased Schneider Drug from Earl Schneider in 1972.

At SenGupta's store, customers were seen patients and friends. No one in need was ever denied service. SenGupta was nearly a constant presence behind the counter, knowing that customers expected him there to provide advice on everything from drug dosages to a child's birthday gift.

The store's reputation grew as it became a gathering spot for those who value intellectually rich conversation about the American condition. Aware of the legendary political talks hosted by druggist Hubert Humphrey Sr. in Doland, S.D., SenGupta was emboldened in 1988 to invite friends to discuss "Is American democracy worth saving?" That first forum drew three physicians and three professors and kept them talking late into the night. The talks became monthly affairs, with SenGupta setting the agenda and personally recruiting guests. An early participant was U.S. Sen. Paul Wellstone; soon other DFL candidates were asking to come. SenGupta encouraged participants to question authority and to believe that conversation among citizens is the requisite first step toward positive democratic change.

SenGupta's health failed in 2015 and Schneider Drug was sold. But he recovered enough to be on hand in January 2016 to lead the first Tom SenGupta Forum under the sponsorship of the Sabo Center for Democracy and Citizenship. He and Jan live in Minneapolis; they have two grown daughters.