

## MEMORIAL RESOLUTION JULIAN M. DAVIDSON, PH.D.

(1931-2001)

Dr. Julian Mordecai Davidson, Professor Emeritus of Molecular and Cellular Physiology since 1993, died December 31, 2001 at the age of 70, nearly 11 years after being diagnosed with Alzheimer's Disease at the age of 59. Dr. Davidson, a renowned researcher in reproductive neuroendocrinology, hormonal behavior in animals, and human sexuality, joined Stanford in 1963 as an Assistant Professor of Physiology and was promoted to Associate Professor in 1969, and to Professor in 1980.

Professor Davidson was born in Dublin on April 15, 1931 and grew up in Glasgow, Scotland, where he acquired a characteristic dialect and special charm that persisted throughout his lifetime, including through his years of Alzheimer's Disease, during which he continued to sing, and later hum, "You Take the High Road", as well as "Oh My Darling Clementine" and "Hava Nagilah", revealing his inherent cheerfulness right to the end.

Julian M. Davidson received his M.S. in Animal Husbandry at Hebrew University in Jerusalem in 1955 and his Ph.D. in Physiology from the University of California, San Francisco in 1959. His mentors included some of the best neuroendocrinologists of that era, Dr. William Ganong at UCSF, for his PhD, and Drs. Charles Sawyer at UCSF and Frank A. Beach at UC Berkeley, for postdoctoral fellowships. While in Dr. Beach's laboratory, Dr. Davidson collaborated with Dr. Gordan Bermant, with whom he later co-authored "*The Biological Basis of Sexual Behavior*" (1974), which influenced many aspiring biologists to make their way to Davidson's laboratory at the Stanford School of Medicine for undergraduate, graduate, and post-doctoral training in the wide-ranging physiological influences of reproductive hormones. One of the first of many productive collaborators, Dr. Erla Smith, became an integral member of his laboratory, retiring from Stanford as a Senior Research Associate when the lab closed in 1993.

Among his many academic contributions, Julian Davidson was one of three founding editors (with Drs. Frank Beach and Richard E. Whalen) of the reputable scientific journal *Hormones and Behavior* and served in this capacity from 1969 to 1976, and as consulting editor until 1986. To honor his death, the journal published a collection of remembrances by former colleagues, students, and fellows, [*Hormones and Behavior* 43 (2003) 265-280], which reveal the high regard, appreciation, and deep affection felt by the many individuals whose academic, and personal, lives Professor Davidson influenced. In addition to Stanford students and fellows, Dr. Davidson provided special mentorship to many young (and older) researchers by organizing an annual meeting with his Bay Area colleagues, known as the West Coast Sex Conference, which provided an intimate scientific forum for these scientists to share, critique, and advance each others' research endeavors, most often in Palo Alto, with Julian as the provocative and genial host. The success of this scientific forum inspired the creation of the Eastern Regional Conference on Reproductive Behavior, which later became the Conference on Reproductive Behavior and subsequently mutated into the Society for Behavioral Neuroendocrinology.

While Dr. Davidson may be best known for his research on the neuroendocrinology of sexual behavior "of rats and men", with seminal papers on the influence of testosterone

implants in the medial preoptic area of the brain on the copulatory behavior of castrated rats, and other landmark contributions to our understanding of the hypothalamo-pituitary-gonadal and – adrenal axes, he published in several other domains. Most notably, he published a fascinating article on: “The physiology of meditation and mystical states of consciousness”, in 1976 (*Perspect. Biol. Med.* 19: 345-3880) and co-edited a collection of articles on altered states of consciousness with Richard Davidson (no relation) in 1981 entitled, *The Psychobiology of Consciousness* (Plenum, New York). His article in this book explored the possibility of studying human orgasm as the most common and accessible altered state of consciousness, having taken up research in human sexuality after acquiring human sex-research techniques from Dr. John Bancroft during a sabbatical in Edinburgh in the late 1970’s. Julian Davidson’s research was expanded in the 1980’s to include studies of hormones and human sexuality, including studies of transsexual men and women, menopause, spinal cord injured men, and general sexual function. This, in turn, attracted a new group of eminent researchers to his Stanford laboratory who interfaced with the animal researchers in mutually rewarding collaborations.

Professor Davidson is survived by his wife, Ann Davidson, whose 1997 book entitled: *Alzheimer’s: A Love Story, One Year in My Husband’s Journey* (Birch Lane Press, Seacaucus, N.J.) chronicles the early stages of Julian’s disease, and their three children, Ben, Karen, and Jeffrey. Ben Davidson is the Assistant Dean of Students and Director of the Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Community Resource Center at Stanford. Karen da Sa, a journalist with the San Jose Mercury News, was recently awarded a John S. Knight Fellowship at Stanford for the 2005-2006 academic year for her work on juvenile justice and the criminalization of youth. Jeffrey Davidson is a successful musician in New York City.

Many Stanford faculty, including Professors David Spiegel of Psychiatry and Gordon Bower of Psychology, joined Davidson’s family, friends, and former colleagues at a special memorial service held at the Stanford Faculty Club shortly after his December 31, 2001 death, to play special tribute to this valuable member of the Stanford academic community. He was also honored for his commitment to community and social causes, including support of human rights, gay rights, and humor and gaiety in general, having impressed upon his students, fellows, and colleagues, not only the value of the academic pursuit of answers to exciting scientific questions, but also, the importance of seeking a life path that pleases and excites one’s whole self and of having fun along the way.

It is truly unfortunate that Alzheimer’s Disease brought such a premature and abrupt end to Julian Davidson’s academic contributions, which would have undoubtedly continued to mount, as well as a less-than-optimal closure to the many special friendships and bonds he had developed with former students, fellows, and colleagues, but the Stanford community was fortunate to have benefited from 30 years of Julian Davidson’s service and dedication to the university and our broader academic and social world.

Committee:  
Marcia Stefanick, Ph.D.