

Robert N. Butler, M.D.

Earlier this week we learned of the death of Bob Butler at age 83. We in Ohio have fond memories of his time with us in Cleveland when he served as Keynote Speaker at the 2008 OAGE Annual and Professional Conference On Aging. His new book *The Longevity Revolution: The Benefits and Challenges of Living A Long Life* had just been published, and he made this topic the basis of his excellent presentation. This also gave many people a chance to have him sign a copy of the book. I know that I will cherish mine.

One has to only Google his name and wonderful obituaries are there to read. His early life and care by his grandparents, his interest in older people from the very beginning of his medical career, his early research and leadership that extended to the present. Bob Butler and Jack Botwinick worked with James Birren on some of the earliest research on aging related cognitive changes going back to the late 50's and early 60's.

He was Co-Author of *Mental Health and Aging* a textbook that has had many editions and served as a text for physicians, nurses, psychologists, social workers and many other professions. This then led to his Pulitzer Prize winning book *Why Survive? Growing Old In America*. He Co-Authored *Sex after Sixty* which added greatly to our knowledge of the topic.

He had another special connection to Ohio. With the establishment of The National Institute On Aging, he was selected as the first Director. When the National Advisory Committee was created Martin Janis, Director of the Ohio Commission on Aging was selected as one of its members. Dr. Butler gave a major address at Ohio State University concerning Geriatric Medicine in the early 1980's due to Martin's involvement, and Dr. Butler took a personal interest in the implementation of the 1978 Begala Bill which has been provided funding for 7 medical schools in Ohio to support Officers of Geriatric Medicine and Gerontology. This was the first such funding in the country.

As a delegate to the 1981 White House Conference On Aging I worked with him and others to introduce recommendations in support of AOA, NIA, NIMH and many other issues. He was a great advocate. I especially remember going to

Washington for a Special Conference on Geriatric Medicine when Dr. Butler brought Sir Ferguson Anderson, the great Scottish geriatrician, to the United States to promote geriatrics.

He was a transformative leader as evidenced by a most successful career ending with leadership as President and CEO of the International Longevity Center and membership on numerous boards . It was my personal pleasure in 2005, as Chair of the American Society On Aging Awards Committee, to present him with the Hall of Fame award.

Robert Butler is clearly one of the greatest founders of the fields of Gerontology and Geriatric Medicine and has influenced many of us on both personal and professional levels. Ohio says so long to a good friend and colleague.

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