

Scientist and policy expert Clifford Grobstein, Ph.D., Dies at age 82

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SCIENTIST AND POLICY EXPERT CLIFFORD GROBSTEIN, PH.D., DIES AT AGE 82

Clifford Grobstein, Ph.D., a distinguished scientist and policy expert regarded by many as the father of modern developmental biology, died of pneumonia in La Jolla, California, on Sunday, September 6, after a long illness. Grobstein, a Rancho Santa Fe resident, was 82.

Grobstein, who was Professor Emeritus of Biological Science and Public Policy at UCSD, served as an influential faculty leader and administrator at the University of California, San Diego for more than three decades, beginning in the early formative years of the La Jolla campus.

He joined the UCSD faculty in 1965, leaving his position as Professor and Head of the Department of Biology at Stanford University to accept the chairmanship of the Department of Biology at UCSD, and in 1966 was named Dean of the newly formed School of Medicine. As Dean and Vice Chancellor of the School of Medicine, an unusual appointment in that he was a Ph.D. scientist and not an M.D., he was instrumental in laying the groundwork for the school's rapid rise to excellence as a premier biomedical research institution and training ground for physicians and physician-scientists.

In 1973, he was appointed Vice Chancellor for University Relations for UCSD, a position that focused on building links between the university and the community. In 1977 he stepped down to focus on his academic and research interests as Professor of Biological Science and Public Policy.

"Cliff Grobstein was a tremendous role model, not only as a scientist, but also as a champion of the public interest and a respected commentator on the complex issues surrounding modern day science and medicine," said UCSD Chancellor Robert C. Dynes. "His interests reached far beyond the laboratory and classroom. He spurred thoughtful public discussion about the pressing issues generated by the scientific advances of our time, and contributed great wisdom and insight, no matter how complex or controversial the topic might be."

Grobstein was born in New York City and received a B.S. degree in biology from City College of New York (CCNY) in 1936. He earned his M.S. and Ph.D. in Zoology from UCLA, and served as a biologist in the National Cancer Institute of the U.S. Public Health Service for 10 years before joining the faculty at Stanford University.

He was the author of several books, including "The Strategy of Life," "The Double Image of the Double Helix," and "Science and the Unborn." His book, "From Chance to Purpose, an Appraisal of External Human Fertilization" won the American Publishers Association award for best publication of the year in that field. In addition to his books, he authored over 250 scientific publications.

His professional honors included election to the National Academy of Science, where he had the distinction of being the youngest person at that time to be inducted. In addition, he was elected to the National Institute of

Medicine, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, honored with The Brachet Medal by the Belgian Royal Society, became a Fellow of the Hastings Center, and also received The Anniversary Medal from CCNY.

His many accomplishments included chairmanship of the NAS Committee on Diet, Nutrition and Cancer, which resulted in a publication providing the first definitive link between diet and cancer, implicating dietary fat intake as an important agent in promoting breast cancer, prostate cancer and colorectal cancer. Most importantly, his research in the field of developmental biology formed the basis for the current knowledge of intercellular matrix, which is key in research leading toward greater understanding and eventually effective treatment for cancer.

"The UCSD School of Medicine was fortunate to have Clifford Grobstein as its dean during its early years," said John Alksne, M.D., Vice Chancellor for Health Sciences and Dean of the medical school. Alksne, a neurosurgeon, was recruited to UCSD during Grobstein's tenure as dean. "Those were exhilarating times as the school's intellectual as well as structural foundations were being laid. He was well-suited to leading the recruitment efforts which successfully attracted many eminent physicians and scientists from around the country to La Jolla, creating a medical school that remains committed to excellence in biomedical science as well as academics and clinical medicine."

Friends and colleagues note that Grobstein had enormous intellectual capacity to think beyond his scientific discipline, consistently taking the lead in far-ranging discussions of the fundamental elements of science, as well as its broader implications for society. Besides his intense interest in uncovering the mysteries of science, Grobstein pursued a passion for flying, which he developed early in his career as an Aviation Physiologist with the USAAF. He was often seen flying along the coast, looking for migrating whales, or flying over the rugged landscapes outside of San Diego, enjoying the art in nature.

Grobstein is survived by his devoted wife of more than 32 years, Ruth Grobstein, M.D., Ph.D., founding head of radiation oncology and a founder and interim director of the Ida M. and Cecil H. Green Cancer Center at Scripps Clinic in La Jolla; and his children Paul Grobstein of Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania and Joan Grobstein of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; stepdaughters Sandra Wilbur of Larchmont, New York, Beth Beloff of Houston, Texas, and Robin BeloffWachsberg of Santa Rosa, California, and their husbands; and 10 grandchildren.

An endowed lectureship in Biology, Medicine and Public Policy will be established at the UCSD School of Medicine to honor Prof. Grobstein. The family is holding a private memorial. The public memorial will be held in early October at the UCSD Faculty Club. In lieu of flowers, contributions may be sent in memory of Clifford Grobstein to the UCSD School of Medicine Development Office, 9500 Gilman Drive, 0602, La Jolla, CA, 92093-0602. Checks should be payable to the UCSD Foundation.

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