



IN MEMORIAM

Donald Novin
Professor of Psychology, Emeritus
UC Los Angeles
1936 - 2008

Donald Novin, professor of psychology, came to UCLA as an assistant professor in 1962. He received his undergraduate education at the University of Minnesota, where he studied psychology and graduated Magna Cum Laude. At Minnesota he was especially influenced by the Minnesota philosophy of science group founded there by Herbert Feigl. He came to Yale University for doctoral training in 1956, where he worked with Neal E. Miller, one of the founders of modern behavioral neuroscience. Don's thesis work established that thirst was substantially due to stimulation of nerve cells within the brain that were directly sensitive to the concentration solutes in the fluids bathing the cells. This was the first time that the direct physical event that caused a psychological drive state had been pinned down. It is now classical work that is described in text books of behavioral neuroscience. It also was seminal in providing evidence that sensors of bodily condition that influenced motivation resided within the brain itself. After receiving his PhD at Yale in 1960 he spent two years as a post- doctoral fellow with Bengt Anderson at the Carolinska Institute in Stockholm, and he then took up his position at UCLA where he remained until his retirement in 1994.

Not long after coming to UCLA he became chair of the Behavioral Neuroscience Area of the Psychology Department and Director of the NIH "Physiological Psychology" Training Grant, which he initially helped procure and which continues to this day as the longest- running such grant in the country. The program which he chaired became, and remains, one of the most highly regarded such programs in the country, a status to which Don's scientific reputation materially contributed. Don was a dominant figure in research on the behavioral neuroscience of motivation. His early work on the role of brain receptors in signaling need states eventually became dogma in part due to Don's work. But later in his career at UCLA he again had a major impact on the field by establishing a role for visceral, as well as brain receptors in control of hunger.

Don was, and very much thought of himself as, a scientist to the core. However he was also an avid outdoorsman and fanatical amateur historian. Being in the lab, fishing, and reading history were for him the greatest of pleasures. A number of us remember annual fishing/ backpacking trips in the Sierras that he organized for himself and colleagues. One of us, who was more interested in eating the fish than catching them, recalls going slightly hungry. But the secret Sierra places he took us to make up for that; nobody ever turned down an invitation to one of those trips.

Early- onset Parkinson's disease forced his premature retirement, which occurred at a time when he was making what he considered his most important discoveries. As his disease progressed, he became less and less able to carry out normal activities. Until quite recently, however, he took great pleasure in visiting his corner office on the eighth floor of Franz Hall; and stories of Department politics, etc., were always a sure way to provoke a brief respite from his Parkinson's symptoms, which responded well to his active interest and involvement. And even after he could no longer really do so effectively, fishing remained a preoccupation. Watching him fish in the surf when he could hardly walk can only be described as inspirational.

Don leaves his wife, Carolyn, and sons Wade and Eli.

Frank Kransne