

Death of Dr. Harold R. Behrman

Email Announcement

Dear SSR Friends and Colleagues:

Sad news has reached us that Dr. Harold R. Behrman died on June 10, 2008.

Dr. Behrman was a long-time member of SSR and was a member of the Board of Directors, 1998-2001.

Dr. Behrman served on numerous SSR Committees: on the Editorial Board, 1971-1978; Nominating Committee, 1972; Program Committee in 1985 and as Chair in 1986; the Development and Endowment Committee, 1997 and 1998.

From Dean Robert Alpern at the Yale School of Medicine

To the School of Medicine Community,

It is with great sadness that I share news of the passing of Harold R. Behrman, Ph.D., professor of obstetrics, gynecology and reproductive sciences, and of pharmacology. Dr. Behrman was a leading expert in reproductive biology who had served on the Yale faculty for more than 30 years. He died on Tuesday, June 10, at his home in Madison.

The following remembrance of Dr. Behrman was prepared by his colleague Richard Hochberg, Ph.D., in the Department of Obstetrics, Gynecology and Reproductive Sciences, who has captured in words the tremendous impact he had, both on the department and on his field. We mourn his loss and will miss him greatly.

Sincerely,

Dean Robert J. Alpern, M.D.
Ensign Professor of Medicine

In Memoriam: Harold R. Behrman, Ph.D.

Hal Behrman was born in 1939 and raised on a ranch in a small town outside of Medicine Hat, Alberta, Canada. Although a Yale Professor, he also thought of himself as a rancher (perhaps even a cowboy) and every year he would go back to his brother Jim's ranch, where he would help with the roundup of the cattle and the castration of the calves; the latter skill he put to good use in his research as well. A few years ago he had a log cabin constructed on the ranch where he enjoyed staying for a week or two during summers, talking the night away with his family and the ranch hands. He always said that there wasn't enough "sky" in

Connecticut, and that he would eventually retire to Canada. This was not comforting to his wife, Carol, but we all knew that Yale and the East Coast had become much more ingrained in him than he admitted and that he would never leave.

Hal graduated with a B.Sc. from the University of Manitoba in 1962, where he also received an M.Sc. degree in 1965. He then matriculated at the University of North Carolina, receiving his Ph.D. in 1967. Following graduation, he joined the laboratory of the late Roy Greep at Harvard as a postdoctoral fellow. In 1970 he was promoted to assistant professor in the Department of Physiology at Harvard. His studies at Harvard on the effect of gonadotrophins and prostaglandins on the ovary and uterus were groundbreaking. In 1971 he became chair of the Department of Reproductive Biology in the Merck Institute for Therapeutic Research, where he was involved in the beginnings of the development of the statins and 5*-reductase inhibitors. Nevertheless, he clearly missed academia and in 1975 readily accepted the offer when he was recruited here as Director of Reproductive Biology in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, with a joint appointment in Pharmacology. Needless to say, this appointment came at a considerable financial sacrifice. He was promoted to professor in 1981. His studies on female reproduction were major contributions, and they encompassed almost every aspect of ovarian physiology and pathology, including steroidogenesis, ovulation and luteinization. Hal was one of the founders of the Annual Prostaglandin Conference and editor of the journal *Prostaglandins*. He was commentaries editor for *Biochemical Pharmacology*, and a member of the board of editors for the *American Journal of Physiology* and the *Proceedings of the Society of Experimental Medicine and Biology*. He was a member of the editorial boards of *Biology of Reproduction* and *Endocrinology*. He served on three different NIH study sections: Pharmacology, Biochemical Endocrinology and Reproductive Biology. He also served on the NSF Cellular Physiology Panel and the Canadian MRC and Centre of Excellence panels.

Hal developed and refined many of the techniques that were used in the immunoassay of the reproductive hormones in blood, and his seminal book on radioimmunoassay is still used today. He was highly valued as a mentor and for many years taught the fellows in the Reproductive Endocrinology and Infertility section of the Ob/Gyn department, as well as a large number of the department's residents and graduate students from Pharmacology. Fellows and students, who graduated decades ago, still came here to see Hal and express their gratitude for his guidance.

It is not possible to exaggerate Hal's impact on the intellectual life of the Department of Obstetrics, Gynecology and Reproductive Sciences here at Yale. But he also had a major impact on our camaraderie. At lunchtime we were all welcomed into his office where the sound of laughter resonated out into the hallway. We were the happy recipients of his self-deprecating sense of humor and the fellowship that he generated. Hal is survived by his wife Carol, his mother Minnie Pederson, brother Jim Behrman, sister Janice Kalmring, daughters Tracy Linson and Terry Pustilnik, stepdaughter Kate Gallagher and stepson Kevin Godbout, eight grandchildren and four step-grandchildren. Hal was a mentor to many and a friend to everyone; we will all miss him very much.

—Written in tribute to Dr. Behrman by Dr. Richard Hochberg