

Obituary

In Memoriam: Aubrey E. Taylor (1933-2015)



Aubrey E. Taylor

It is with profound sadness that we note the passing of our mentor and dear friend, Aubrey E. Taylor, on December 23, 2015, at the age of 82. His death followed several years of declining health related to Alzheimer's disease. Aubrey is survived by his wife Jane Davis Taylor; daughters Audrey Jane Hildebrand (Price), Lenda Sue Taylor, and Mary Ann Taylor; grandchildren Taylor Hildebrand (Valley), Emily Bridgefort (James), Sarah Backes (Byron), John Smith, and Mary Jane Smith; and great-grandchild Walter Backes.

A proud native of Texas, Aubrey graduated from Paschal High School in Fort Worth, Texas. He subsequently served for 2 years in the U.S. Army. During this early period of Aubrey's life, he developed a passion for, excelled as a competitor in, and earned income from the rodeo. However, recognizing the significant risks to his own health and the limited financial stability that riding steers and bucking horses would afford him and his growing family, Aubrey chose another career path. He enrolled as an undergraduate student majoring in mathematics and psychology at Texas Christian University (TCU), earning a baccalaureate degree in 1960. It is notable that 38 years after earning the BS degree, Aubrey was recognized by TCU as a "distinguished alumnus" for his career achievements as a scholar. Furthermore, we note that his trainees continued to benefit from his early experiences, as Aubrey would frequently relay tips on rodeo riding strategy to accompany tips on math, science, and career development.

After completion of the bachelor's degree, Aubrey was recruited to join the graduate program in Physiology and Biophysics at the University of Mississippi Medical Center, where he earned a PhD degree under the tutelage of Arthur C. Guyton in 1964. That year, Aubrey assumed his first faculty position as an Assistant Professor in the Department of Physiology and Biophysics at the University of Mississippi. He took time out from

this academic appointment to complete a 2-year postdoctoral fellowship in the Biophysical Laboratory at Harvard University to study membrane transport and nonequilibrium thermodynamics with Peter Curran. With this training, Aubrey began a life-long effort to apply his knowledge of mathematics, physiology, and biophysics to improve our understanding of the physical and chemical factors that influence microvascular function in health and disease.

On his return to the University of Mississippi in 1967, Aubrey was promoted to Associate Professor, then again to Professor in 1973. Four years thereafter, he was named Professor and Chair of the Department of Physiology at the University of South Alabama College of Medicine, a position that he held with distinction until his retirement in 2002. Due to the international attention drawn to Aubrey's own research contributions, his skillful leadership and devotion to his faculty, the Department flourished and quickly gained a worldwide reputation as a leading center for microcirculation research.

Aubrey had an active service role and held numerous leadership positions in different national and international scientific organizations, including the American Physiological Society (APS), the Microcirculatory Society (MCS), the American Heart Association (AHA), and the American Thoracic Society (ATS). He served for 4 years on the APS Council and was subsequently elected as the Society's 61st President. He also chaired the APS Membership Committee and served as the Respiratory Section representative to the Program Committee. He held similar positions in the MCS, serving on the MCS Council and was elected to serve as the Society's 30th President. Aubrey's service contributions to the AHA include membership on the Research Committee, Chair of the Lung and Development Study Group, and Chair of the Cardiopulmonary and Critical Care Council. Aubrey also served on the Council of the Association of Chairmen of Physiology Departments and was recognized by that organization with a Distinguished Service Award in 1995.

Aubrey's research and scholarly contributions over a 40+ year career as a physiologist were wide-ranging and

involved several organ systems. The thread connecting much of this work was his passion to define the factors governing transcapillary fluid and solute exchange in health and disease, with a particular focus on the lung. Since Aubrey was also an avid bird watcher, transcapillary *Starling* forces really held additional meaning for him. He was a renaissance scholar whose work was not limited to basic mechanistic questions but included many studies that were directed toward identifying novel therapeutic approaches for treatment of pulmonary edema. He did translational research long before the term was coined and the effort popularized. Aubrey published more than 700 original papers, reviews, books, and book chapters.

Recognition for Aubrey's achievements as a research scientist came in numerous forms. He enjoyed 30 years of continuous research from the National Institutes of Health, including a 10-year MERIT award. Aubrey served on the editorial board of several prestigious journals, including the *American Journal of Physiology*, *Circulation Research*, *Journal of Applied Physiology*, *Microcirculation*, and the *American Journal of Respiratory and Critical Care Medicine*. He was also an associate editor for the *Journal of Applied Physiology*, the *Journal of Critical Care*, and *Clinical Sciences*. A number of national and international organizations have recognized him with major lectures and awards for a lifetime of outstanding research. Some notable examples are the Research Achievement Award from the AHA, the Cannon Award from the APS, the Landis Award from the MCS, the Wiggers Award from the Cardiovascular Section of the APS, and the Classics in Physiology Award from the ATS. In 2015, Aubrey was elected as a Fellow of the American Physiological Society.

Many may not know that Aubrey played a significant role in the development of national health policy regarding second-hand tobacco smoke, ultimately helping to pave the way for smoke-free work places. Aubrey led the group that developed an AHA position paper on environmental tobacco smoke and cardiovascular disease, published in 1992, and was a vocal advocate for the AHA in this regard. Over the next several years, he held news conferences, spoke to AHA affiliate and division boards and the Alabama Governor's Health Conference on the impact of environmental smoke. In 1994, he testified to Congressional Subcommittees on environmental smoke and heart disease. These efforts were recognized in 2005, when Aubrey received the

AHA Award of Meritorious Achievement.

Aubrey's reputation as a scientist attracted a number of trainees to his laboratory. He served as mentor for 15 predoctoral graduate students and 20 postdoctoral fellows, with the latter group coming from different universities in North America, Europe, Asia, and Australia. We both had the privilege of training with Aubrey and can attest to his effectiveness as a mentor. His expectations were high, but this came with an unwavering dedication to our success as scientists. Aubrey was always proud of his trainees and their accomplishments, generous with his support and praise, and never was willing to take credit for the efforts of his students. He had the capacity to challenge our thoughts, study design, and data interpretation in a way that was just so scientifically healthy and helpful. For any trainee coming to his office, the door was always open, science discussions lively, and the parting words from Aubrey often "great . . . publish it." To those he trained, Aubrey never seemed aware of how special he was, which made him all the more so.

In addition to his numerous and wide-ranging contributions to science, Aubrey will be remembered as a genuine, kind, and warm individual with a down-to-earth style. Aubrey's personality did not stray too far from that evident during his earlier life on the rodeo circuit, with the occasional utterance of salty language to complement his scientific terminology. He was not always inclined to conform to stereotypical scientific interactions, and we loved him all the more for it. Aubrey was truly a legendary figure who dedicated his life to research and teaching. He succeeded, through the force of his personality and convictions, in shaping the lives and careers of many physiologists, who will miss him for a long, long time. ●

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