

## In Memoriam

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In Memoriam F. Owen Black, M.D.



We note with great sadness the unexpected passing of our colleague and friend, Dr. F. Owen Black on 18 May 2012, just after returning home from a scientific meeting in Atlanta, where he was excited to hear Neil Armstrong deliver a luncheon speech. A dedicated neurotologist and well-known vestibular researcher, Dr. Black took the lead in re-initiating Ashton Graybiel's seminal series of Symposia on the Role of the Vestibular Organs in Space Exploration. He hosted and chaired the sixth Symposium at the Benson Hotel in Portland, Oregon in 2002, more than 30 years after Graybiel's fifth Symposium. He continued to participate as a member of the core organizing committee through the seventh, held in Noordwijk, the Netherlands in 2006, and the eighth, held last year in Houston, where he led the Program Committee.

Dr. Black was born in St. Louis, Missouri in 1937. He received his B.A. in Chemistry and Mathematics from Southwest Missouri State University in 1959 and his M.D. from the University of Missouri in 1963. He went on to complete an internship at the Mobile (AL) General Hospital, a residency in general surgery at Bataan Memorial Hospital in Albuquerque, NM, and a fellowship in Otolaryngology/Otology at the University of Colorado. He then spent two years in the US Navy Medical Corps, including time as a combat surgeon in Vietnam. Subsequently, he spent three years as an Associate Professor of Otolaryngology at The University

of Florida, 12 years as the Medical Director of the Division of Vestibular Disorders at the Eye and Ear Hospital of Pittsburgh, and 30 years as Director of Neurotology Research at Legacy Health System in Portland, OR.

In addition to his distinguished clinical career, Dr. Black was an active researcher, having received multiple competitive research awards, including an NIH Research Career Development Award, a seven-year Javits Neuroscience Investigator Award and an NIDCD Claude Pepper Award. He published more than 100 manuscripts in the peer-reviewed literature, and played a key role in the development of computerized dynamic posturography as a clinical and research tool. He also advised the NIH as a member of their Hearing Research Study Section and the NIDCD Advisory Council and NASA as a member of the AIBS Life Sciences Advisory Panel and chair of the Space Biomedical Research Institute Advisory Committee. He recognized that much could be learned from understanding astronaut readaptation to Earth's gravity, which was applicable to clinical care of vestibular patients, and vice-versa.

Above all else, Owen was a generous, amicable colleague/mentor. He sought out individuals whose skills and talents complemented his own and found clever ways to work with them. To those he worked closely with the distinction between colleague and mentor was never clear – he was as good at listening as at talking, as good at learning as at teaching. The list of those whose careers he influenced is long and includes many in the vestibular research community: Neal Barmack, Joe Furman, Jan Holly, Fay Horak, Gin McCollum, Dan Merfeld, Lew Nashner, Dennis O'Leary, Bill Paloski, Bob Peterka, Conrad Wall, Scott Wood, and Lionel Zupan. While we shall miss his knowledge, insight, and friendship, we are comforted by our confidence that his legacy will carry on through all those whose lives he touched.

Charles M. Oman  
William H. Paloski  
Laurence R. Young