



Dr. George C. Williams, Professor Emeritus of Ecology and Evolution at Stony Brook

Eric W. Kaler, Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs

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To All Faculty and Staff:

George C. Williams, an evolutionary biologist of worldwide renown and Professor Emeritus of Ecology and Evolution at Stony Brook University passed away on September 8, 2010. George Williams was born on May 12, 1926. After serving in the U.S. Army, he enrolled in the University of California at Berkeley and received a B.A. in Zoology in 1949. He received his M. A. (1952) and Ph.D. (1955) at UCLA, and became an Assistant Professor at Michigan State University in 1955. In 1960, he joined the Stony Brook faculty as an Associate Professor, and became Professor of Biological Sciences in 1967. He was a key figure in establishing both the Department of Ecology and Evolution and the Marine Sciences Research Center at Stony Brook. George retired in 1990, but his contributions, such as his seminal book on Darwinian medicine, continue.

Professor Williams is widely regarded by peers in his field as one of the most influential and incisive evolutionary theorists of the twentieth century. He stimulated important new fields of research in evolutionary biology and shaped current understanding of the process of evolution by natural selection. He advocated and helped to build a "science of adaptation" that addresses the evolution of animal and human behaviors and organisms' life histories, including the question of why we get old. Together with Randolph Nesse, professor of psychiatry at the University of Michigan, he launched the field of "Darwinian medicine," an evolutionary approach to the study of human health and disease.

Dr. Williams also distinguished himself by professional service. He was Vice President, and later President, of the Society for the Study of Evolution, and Editor of *The American Naturalist*. His many honors and awards include election as Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (1984) and of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences (1990); being named Eminent Ecologist by the Ecological Society of America (1989); receipt of the Daniel Giraud Elliott Award from the U. S. National Academy of Sciences (1992) and the Raymond Pearl Award from the American Society for Human Biology (1997); and receipt of Honorary Sc. D. degrees from Queen's University (1995) and SUNY-Stony Brook (2000). He was elected to the U. S. National Academy of Sciences in 1993, and was co-recipient (with John Maynard Smith and Ernst Mayr) of the highly prestigious Crafoord Prize, awarded by the Swedish Royal Academy, in 1999. (The Crafoord Prize is intended, according to the Swedish Academy, "to promote basic research in mathematics, astronomy, the biosciences (particularly ecology), the geosciences and polyarthritis", and is considered the equivalent of the Nobel Prize in fields for which no Nobel is specified.)

George is survived by his wife, Doris Williams, and four children, Jacques, Sibyl, Judith, and Phoebe.

Sincerely,

Eric W. Kaler
Provost and Senior Vice President