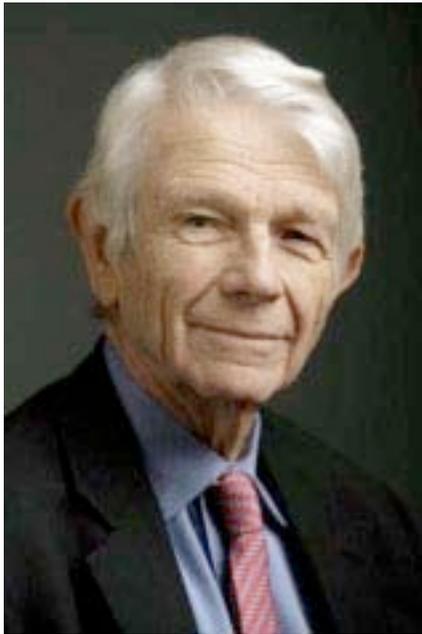


Celebrating Dr. Butler: ILC's Founder Dies at 83

Compiled by INPEA Web, Lynn M. Hyland
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Robert Neil Butler
21 January 1927 – 4 July 2010

* ILC's Tribute

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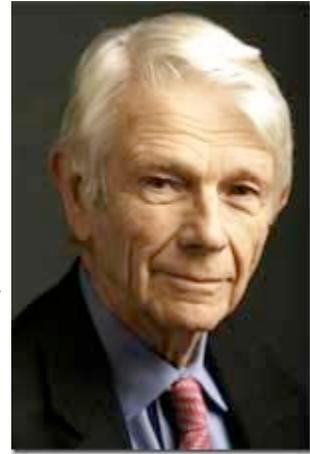
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Celebrating Dr. Butler: ILC's Founder Dies at 83

The International Longevity Center's founding president and CEO, Robert N. Butler, M.D., died July 4, 2010 at the age of 83. A memorial service in his honor will be held on September 29, 2010. The ILC-USA was Dr. Butler's vision when first organized in the early 1990s—and its programs on healthy aging, productive engagement and combating ageism were his driving goals.

Dr. Butler was widely regarded as "the father of geriatrics," for his leadership in the field aging and longevity. Once a bench scientist at the National Institutes of Health and originally trained as a psychiatrist, he was tapped to be the first director of the National Institute of Aging and there helped shape the nation's aging policy for more than a generation. His seminal book, *Why Survive? On Aging America* won the Pulitzer Prize and was one of the first comprehensive examinations of what became the Age Wave driven by long-living Baby Boomers. A scholar and author who wrote several books ranging from popular guides on health to medical school textbooks and learned monographs, he introduced such concepts as healthy aging and ageism, among others.



He also initiated the Life Review as a therapeutic device, drawing on older persons' desire to reminisce.

Contribute to the Butler Fund

Members of Dr. Robert Butler's family are coordinating a Dr. Robert Butler Fund. If you would like to contribute, please make your check payable to the "Robert Butler Charitable Fund" and forward checks to:

Cynthia Butler
3211 Homewood Road
Davidsonville, MD 21035

For more information, email butlergleason@gmail.com

From the NIA, he became the founding chair of the Brookdale Department of Geriatrics at Mount Sinai Medical School in New York—the nation's first in a medical school. Subsequently, he founded and led the International Longevity Center first at Mount Sinai and subsequently as an independent non-profit in its own headquarters from 1998 to 2010. He had many honors—national and international, including the coveted Heinz Foundation Prize. He encouraged and helped organize ILC's in 11 countries and was involved in three White House Conferences on Aging under three U.S. presidents.

His most recent book, *The Longevity Prescription* was published in June by Avery/Penguin. He championed the diffusion of knowledge in all the aging disciplines and professions urging its practical use to solve problems.

Dr. Butler is most identified with a view of aging as a great human achievement, not simply a problem to be solved. Known for his openness to all knowledge and ideas he supported work on aging not just in science and medicine, but in the social sciences and humanities as well. A public intellectual, he made frequent appearances in the media to explain new findings—and encourage the public to better understand, embrace and celebrate aging. The Board, Management and Staff of the ILC-USA, its sister centers around the world and various task forces and committees mourn his loss while saluting his monumental influence.

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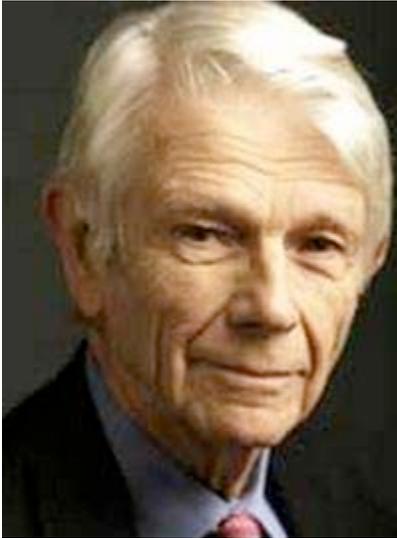
The Hindu

Memorial Service for Dr. Robert Butler

In Memoriam

Dr. Robert N. Butler

January 21, 1927 – July 4, 2010



A memorial service will be held to celebrate the life of ILC-USA founder,
world-renowned gerontologist, and Pulitzer Prize winner

Dr. Robert N. Butler

on Wednesday, September 29, 2010

at 4:00 PM

All Souls Unitarian Church

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New York, NY 10075

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July 7, 2010

Robert Butler, Aging Expert, Is Dead at 83

By **DOUGLAS MARTIN**

Dr. Robert N. Butler, a psychiatrist whose painful youthful realization that death is inevitable prompted him to challenge and ultimately reform the treatment of the elderly through research, public policy and a [Pulitzer Prize-winning](#) book, died Sunday in Manhattan. He was 83 and had worked until three days before his death.

The cause was acute leukemia, his daughter Christine Butler said.

Dr. Butler's influence was apparent in the widely used word he coined to describe discrimination against the elderly: "ageism." He defended as healthy the way many old people slip into old memories — even giving it a name, "life review."

In speech after speech, he pounded home the message that longevity in the United States had increased by 30 years in the 20th century — greater than the gain during the preceding 5,000 years of human history — and that this had led to profound changes in every aspect of society, employment and politics among them.

Dr. Christine Cassel, president of the American Board of Internal Medicine, said in an interview that Dr. Butler had in effect "created an entire field of medicine." She said he had helped change attitudes so that aging could be perceived "a positive thing."

Dr. Butler was the founding director of the [National Institute on Aging](#) at the [National Institutes of Health](#) and advocated for the aging before Congress and the [United Nations](#). He helped start and led the [American Association for Geriatric Psychiatry](#), the [Alzheimer's Disease Association](#) and the [International Longevity Center](#). President [Bill Clinton](#) named him chairman of the 1995 White House Conference on Aging.

"He really put geriatrics on the map," Dr. David B. Reuben, chief of the division of geriatrics at the [University of California, Los Angeles](#), said in an interview.

Dr. Butler challenged long-held conceptions about aging, calling it “the neglected stepchild of the human life cycle.” He helped establish, for example, that senility is not inevitable with aging. When the Heinz Family Foundation presented him with an award in 2003, it called him “a prophetic visionary.”

The most noted exposition of his vision was the 1975 book that earned him his Pulitzer, “[Why Survive? Being Old in America](#).” It went from a bleak explication of the elderly’s condition to [prescriptions](#) to improve it.

“Human beings need the freedom to live with change, to invent and reinvent themselves a number of times through their lives,” Dr. Butler wrote.

Dr. Butler’s mission emerged from his childhood, he wrote in his book. His parents had scarcely named him Robert Neil Butler before splitting up 11 months after his birth on Jan. 21, 1927, in Manhattan. He went to live with his maternal grandparents on a chicken farm in Vineland, N.J.

He came to revere his grandfather, with whom he cared for sick chickens in the “hospital” at one end of the chicken house. He loved the old man’s stories. But the grandfather disappeared when Robert was 7, and nobody would tell him why. He finally learned that he had died.

Robert found solace in his friendship with a physician he identified only as Dr. Rose. Dr. Rose had helped him through [scarlet fever](#) and took him on his rounds by horse and carriage. The boy decided he could have helped his grandfather survive had he been a doctor. He also concluded that he would have preferred that people had been honest with him about death.

From his grandmother, he learned about the strength and endurance of the elderly, he wrote. After losing the farm in the Depression, she and her grandson lived on government-surplus foods and lived in a cheap hotel. Robert sold newspapers. Then the hotel burned down, with all their possessions.

“What I remember even more than the hardships of those years was my grandmother’s triumphant spirit and determination,” he wrote. “Experiencing at first hand an older person’s struggle to survive, I was myself helped to survive as well.”

Dr. Butler served in the United States Maritime Service before entering [Columbia University](#), where he earned his bachelor’s and medical degrees. During his internship in [psychiatry](#) at St. Luke’s Hospital, he had many elderly patients and realized how little he had

been taught about treating them. He began reading about the biology of aging.

After his residency at the [University of California, San Francisco](#), he worked at the National Institute of Mental Health as a research psychiatrist. He studied the central nervous system in elderly people, work that became part of a large study of aging. He also helped [Ralph Nader](#) investigate problems in [nursing homes](#).

The book that emerged from his experiences proposed many specific reforms to help old people, including a national service corps that would enlist the elderly as community volunteers.

In 1975 he succeeded in creating a National Institute on Aging and was its head for six years.

“Nobody thought research on aging was a legitimate field until Bob came along and convinced them to create a separate institute,” Dr. Cassel said.

In 1982, the Mount Sinai School of Medicine in Manhattan asked Dr. Butler’s advice on whom to hire for a new geriatrics chair. He proposed instead that the school create a department devoted solely to gerontology. It did, and was one of the first to do so.

He wrote numerous articles and several books, including the bestseller “Sex after Sixty,” which he wrote with his second wife, Dr. Myrna I. Lewis, in 1976.

Dr. Butler’s first marriage, to Diane McLaughlin, ended in divorce. Dr. Lewis died in 2005. Besides his daughter Christine, he is survived by three other daughters, Carole Butler Hall, Cynthia Butler and Alexandra Butler; and six grandchildren.

Dr. Butler acknowledged in an interview two years ago with The Saturday Evening Post that his views on his own aging had changed: he feared death less.

“I feel less threatened by the end of life than I perhaps did when I was 35,” he said.

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Dr. Robert N. Butler dies at 83; Pulitzer Prize-winning pioneer in the study of aging

The gerontologist founded the National Institute on Aging and the first department of geriatrics at a U.S. medical school. He was also 'a moral voice who insisted that society value our elders.'

July 07, 2010 | By Thomas H. Maugh II, Los Angeles Times

Dr. Robert N. Butler, a gerontologist who pioneered the study of aging, founded the National Institute on Aging and the first department of geriatrics at a U.S. medical school and received the Pulitzer Prize for his seminal book on healthy aging, died Sunday at Mount Sinai Medical Center in New York. He was 83 and had leukemia.

"Not only was he the leading voice on issues related to longevity and the study of aging, but he was a moral voice who insisted that society value our elders in its public policies and programs," Michael J. Burgess, director of the New York State Office for the Aging, said Tuesday in a statement.

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The United States has undergone a transformation that he explained in his recent book on the phenomenon, "[The Longevity Revolution](#)." In the last century, the average American gained 30 additional years of life, an increase greater than that achieved during the previous 5,000 years of human history. Expected life span grew from 47 years in 1900 to more than 77 today, but medicine has not kept pace with that growth, he argued.

Butler chose medicine as a career because he was profoundly affected by the death of his grandfather, who had helped raise him, and he planned to be a hematologist. But he was shocked by what he viewed as the callous disregard for the elderly among his medical school professors.

Those professors frequently referred to older people as "crocks" because they viewed their older patients as being as fragile as a piece of crockery. "I had grown up with my grandparents, and it seemed quite disrespectful to me," Butler later said. Those experiences led him into geriatrics, a branch of medicine that is still woefully understaffed.

After his internships and residencies, he joined the [National Institute of Mental Health](#), where he eventually became the lead investigator on the first study of healthy aging. Previously, researchers had examined many of the diseases that afflict the elderly, as well as the elderly who were institutionalized, but had performed little research on normal aging.

That study reached the then-remarkable conclusion that most frailties of the elderly were caused by disease, socioeconomic adversity and even personality. Aging was a risk factor for many problems of the elderly, such as senility and Alzheimer's disease, but not the cause. That conclusion led to a breakthrough in our thinking about aging, Butler said, and laid the groundwork for future studies about healthy aging.

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(Page 2 of 2)

The 10-year study resulted in the landmark book "Human Aging." Its results were also the core of Butler's book "Why Survive? Being Old in America," which won the 1976 Pulitzer Prize for nonfiction.

In 1968, Butler coined the term "ageism" to describe what he felt was bias against the elderly. He saw the need when many residents of his neighborhood complained vociferously about the purchase of property by outsiders to provide housing for the elderly. "There was no term to explain this prejudice, and so I decided, analogous to the terms sexism and racism, we could use a new useful term, which I called ageism," he said.

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He later led a task force that addressed the prejudice, producing the 2006 report "Ageism in America."

In 1975, Butler became the founding director of the [National Institute on Aging](#), part of the National Institutes of Health. He left the position in 1982 to establish and chair the department of geriatrics and adult development at the Mount Sinai Medical School, the first such department in the country.

In 1990, he established what is now the [International Longevity Center-USA](#) at Mount Sinai. It subsequently became an independent nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting healthy aging, with branches in 11 countries.

Robert Neil Butler was born Jan. 21, 1927, in New York. He received his bachelor's degree in 1949 and his medical degree in 1953, both from Columbia University. He is the author of several other books and received numerous awards.

Butler had three daughters, Ann Christine, Carole Melissa and Cynthia Lee, with his first wife, the former Diane McLaughlin. He married his second wife, Myrna I. Lewis, in 1975, and they had one daughter, Alexandra Nicole. Myrna died of cancer in 2000.

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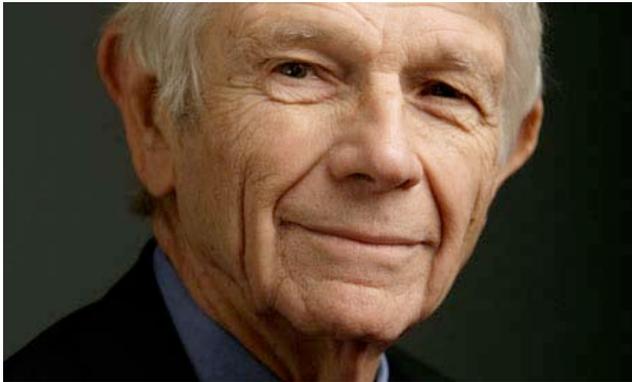
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Robert Butler obituary

Doctor who worked to change perceptions of ageing and the aged

Michael Carlsonguardian.co.uk, Sunday 18 July 2010 18.47 BST

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Dr Robert Butler coined the term 'ageism'. Photograph: AP

No one did more to change society's perceptions of ageing and the aged than Robert Butler, who has died from leukaemia aged 83. It was fitting that Butler continued working until just three days before his death, because his greatest achievement was in changing the attitude that obsolescence was an inevitable product of the ageing process. In 1968 Butler coined the term "ageism" to denote the way society denied older people the opportunities to pursue life, to reinvent themselves. As he wrote in his 2008 book, *The Longevity Revolution*, life expectancy had increased more in the past century than in the previous 5,000 years, but society was predictably slow to adjust to that change.

Butler's early research convinced him that the ageing process itself was not the cause of problems such as senility, which were instead the result of disease, neglect and stagnation. These views were reinforced when he worked with Ralph Nader on an investigation into the poor care offered by nursing homes. Two decades of research and experience culminated in his 1975 book, *Why Survive? Being Old in America*, which won a Pulitzer prize and virtually created a new paradigm for the discussion of old age.

The following year he and his second wife, Dr Myrna Lewis, published the bestselling *Sex After Sixty*, which remains in print. More than a sex manual, it served as a guide for maintaining feelings of love and desire in the face of society's insistence that such things were intended for the young. In 1975, Butler helped found the National Institute On Aging (NIA), and served as its first director, before leaving to create the pioneering department of gerontology at New York's Mount Sinai medical centre.

Butler's approach to ageing was shaped by his childhood. Born in New York, his parents separated before his first birthday, and he was brought up by his maternal grandparents on a chicken farm in Vineland, New Jersey. When Butler was seven, his grandfather, whom he adored, died, but for a long time no one explained to him why he had gone. When they did, the realisation that his grandparents were "old" shook him. A local doctor showed an interest in him and he resolved to become a doctor himself.

Meanwhile, his grandmother lost the farm to the depression; she found work as a

seamstress and was aided by welfare. They lived in a cheap hotel and at one point lost all their possessions when it burned down. But his grandmother, in her 60s and raising a child, never gave up. Butler credited her determination and willingness to "start over" with helping him to realise that people benefited from having goals they could strive to achieve.

Helping support his grandmother by selling papers, he joined the US maritime service and worked his way into Columbia University, where as a pre-med student he also edited the campus daily paper. He graduated in 1949, and earned his medical degree there in 1953.

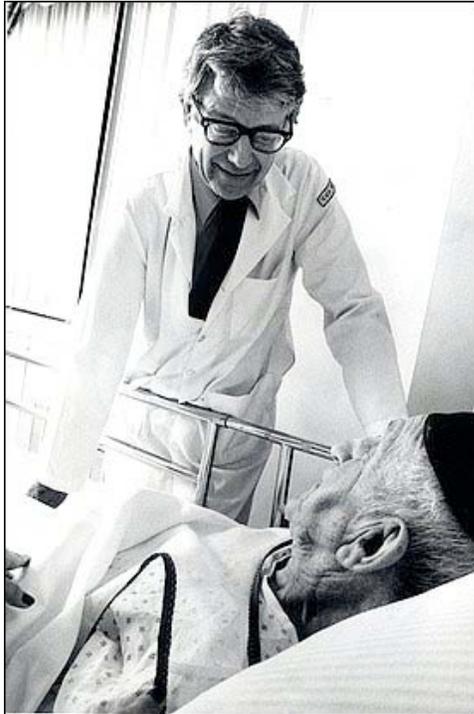
Upset by the cavalier way his fellow interns treated elderly patients, Butler joined the National Institute of Mental Health in 1955 as the lead researcher on a 10-year study of ageing. The results were published in the book *Human Ageing*.

A decade later, with the multiple success of his books, the National Institutes of Health created the NIA, with Butler as its director. In that post, he helped make research into Alzheimer's disease a national priority. At Mount Sinai medical centre, he pioneered the concept of "life review", where elderly patients reflect on their lives to set new goals.

Butler was exceptional in his ability to combine medical and social concerns to create a comprehensive approach to ageing. In *Why Survive?*, he wrote: "The tragedy of old age is not the fact that each of us must grow old and die but that the process of doing so has been made unnecessarily and at times excruciatingly painful, humiliating, debilitating and isolating through insensitivity, ignorance and poverty." It was a view he continued to voice in *Ageing and Mental Health* (1998) and *Life in An Older America* (2001), and which informed *I Remember Better When I Paint* (2009), a documentary about art therapy and Alzheimer's disease.

Butler's first marriage, to Diane McLaughlin, ended in divorce, and in 1975 he married Lewis. She died in 2005. He is survived by three daughters from his first marriage and one from his second.

- Robert Neil Butler, gerontologist, born 21 January 1927; died 4 July 2010



Robert N. Butler coined the term "ageism" and founded organizations dedicated to the research and care of senior citizens.

Photo Credit: Larry Barns/mount Sinai Medical Center

Related Article: ['The father of modern gerontology' pioneered aging-research initiatives](#), page B07

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The Washington Post

Robert N. Butler dies, 'Father of modern gerontology' was 83

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By Emma Brown
Washington Post Staff Writer
Wednesday, July 7, 2010; B07

Robert N. Butler, 83, a Pulitzer Prize-winning author, psychiatrist and expert on aging who helped illuminate the "quiet despair, deprivation, desolation and muted rage" that he said characterized the act of growing old in America, and who co-wrote a best-selling sex manual for senior citizens, died July 4 at Mount Sinai Medical Center in New York. He had leukemia.

For more than half a century, Dr. Butler was a leading advocate in academic and policy circles for the dignified treatment and care of the elderly. He coined the term "ageism" to describe systematic discrimination against older people and challenged lawmakers, scientists and medical students to consider how to create a health-care system in which Americans could grow old gracefully.

"Bob was certainly the person, more than any other single individual, who helped create the modern notion that aging is a time of choice, of opportunity, of growth," said Dan Perry, who leads the Washington-based Alliance for Aging Research. "He was really the father of modern gerontology."

Dr. Butler was appointed the first director of the National Institute on Aging, part of the National Institutes of Health, in the 1970s. Later, he established a geriatrics department at Mount Sinai, one of the first such comprehensive departments at an American medical school. At the time of his death, he was president and chief executive of the International Longevity Center-USA, a New York-based nonprofit research organization he founded in 1990.

He was perhaps best known by the general public as the co-author -- with his wife, social worker Myrna I. Lewis -- of the manual "Sex After 60," first published in 1976.

The book, republished since as "Love and Sex After 60," offered advice for dealing with everything from the complicated emotions of remarriage to the mechanics of aging bodies. (Can't hear what your lover is saying? Just sit closer, the authors advised.)

"Love and Sex After 60" was for several years in the 1990s the nation's best-selling large-print book.

"Some might mistake it for a simplistic how-to book, and it certainly does contain a treasure trove of helpful hints," wrote author Natalie Davis Spingarn in her 1994 Washington Post review. "But it is much more than that. It is a book with a message that comes through loud, clear and passionate: Our increasing numbers of older people are as entitled to the same pleasures and fulfillment as other adults."

Dr. Butler's career began in 1955, when as a researcher at the National Institute of Mental Health he helped conduct one of the first long-term studies of older people.

Among that study's groundbreaking conclusions was that senility is not an inevitable consequence of age and that psychiatric care is not wasted on the elderly, as was commonly believed. The researchers also found that older people were more contented and tended to live longer when their lives were filled with goals, structure and a sense of purpose.

Through his work as a clinician and researcher, Dr. Butler saw firsthand how difficult it was for the elderly to find adequate health care and live with dignity. They were treated by society as useless, warehoused in nursing homes staffed by woefully undertrained caregivers and seen by doctors who knew little about the unique needs of people in the latter stages of life.

Dr. Butler compiled those observations in his 1975 book "Why Survive? Being Old in America," which won the Pulitzer for general nonfiction in 1976. "We have shaped a society which is extremely harsh to live in when one is old," he wrote. "The tragedy of old age is not the fact that each of us must grow old and die but that the process of doing so has been made unnecessarily and at times excruciatingly painful, humiliating, debilitating, and isolating through insensitivity, ignorance, and poverty."

Raised by grandparents

Robert Neil Butler was born Jan. 21, 1927, in New York. His parents separated when he was 11 months old, and he was raised by his grandparents in southern New Jersey.

He served in the U.S. Maritime Service during the 1940s and graduated in 1949 from Columbia University, where he received a medical degree in 1953. He studied psychiatry and neurology as a resident first at the University of California, San Francisco and later at NIMH in Bethesda.

He was a U.S. Public Health Service surgeon from 1955 to 1962. He also had a private practice in the Washington area and was a researcher and gerontologist at the Washington School of Psychiatry from the early 1960s until 1976. He taught at several medical schools, including those at Georgetown, Howard and George Washington universities.

In 1976, Dr. Butler became the first director of the National Institute on Aging, where he successfully pushed Congress to increase research funding, particularly for Alzheimer's disease. He left government service in the early 1980s to launch Mount Sinai's geriatrics department, part of his efforts to overhaul the treatment of the elderly by improving the education of doctors.

Dr. Butler was the co-founder of what is now the Alzheimer's Association and the American Federation for Aging Research and wrote hundreds of articles and many books about the biology and sociology of aging. His research led to the development of life-review therapy, in which elderly patients use reminiscence to understand and come to terms with their pasts before dying.

In 1973, he co-wrote with Lewis one of the first comprehensive textbooks on geriatrics, "Aging and Mental Health." She became his second wife, and they were married 30 years before her death in 2005.

His first marriage, to Diane McLaughlin, ended in divorce. Survivors include three daughters from his first marriage, A. Christine Butler of Washington, Carole Hall of Oklahoma City and Cynthia Butler of Davidsonville; a daughter from his second marriage, Alexandra Butler of New York; and six grandchildren.

Dr. Butler said it was his grandmother who first showed him the fortitude of older people under stressful conditions. She was nearing 60 when she was widowed during the Depression. Homeless and still responsible for her 7-year-old grandson, she took a job as a seamstress. A few years later, they lost everything they owned in a hotel fire.

“We started again,” he wrote in a preface to “Why Survive?.” “And what I remember even more than the hardships of those years was my grandmother’s triumphant spirit and determination.”

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Milestones



Mohammed Hussein Fadlallah

LEBANON'S MOST SENIOR Shi'ite cleric died July 4 at 75. His name, Mohammed Hussein Fadlallah, will mean nothing to most Americans, but he has been a central figure in modern Middle Eastern history.

Fadlallah was one of the

early leaders of Da'wa, the same Islamic group to which Iraq's current Prime Minister, Nouri al-Maliki, belongs. In the 1980s, Fadlallah was at the top of the Reagan Administration's enemy list. The White House mistakenly shared the assumption he was the spiritual leader of Hizballah, the Lebanese militant group the U.S. was at war with at the time.

Fadlallah preached against foreign occupation, but in that sense he was no different from Lebanon's other Muslim clerics. Fadlallah was almost certainly not involved in Hizballah's terrorist attacks in Lebanon. In fact, he complained privately about the Iranians taking hostages in his country through their proxy, the Islamic Jihad Organization, believing it was un-Islamic.

We really got Fadlallah wrong

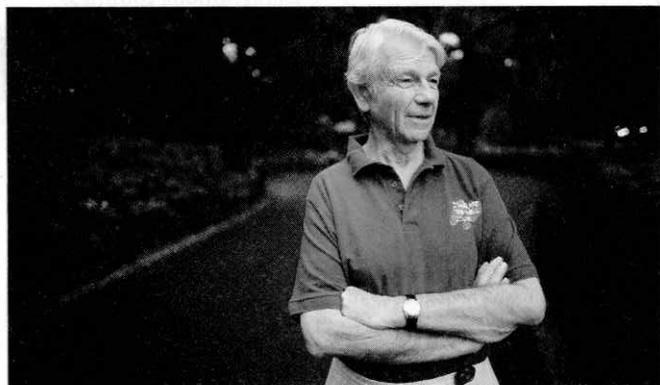
when we started to call him the spiritual leader of Hizballah. The Iranians always looked at Fadlallah as an obstacle to Hizballah's dominance of Lebanese Shi'ites. There was even a time when some in Iranian intelligence considered getting rid of Fadlallah.

Fadlallah was not a friend to the U.S. He preached jihad against the West, creating a climate for the 1983 attack on the Marine barracks in Beirut. But at the end of the day, he was an independent Arab voice, a Shi'ite Muslim courageous enough to stand up against Iran. In that sense, we should regret his passing.

—BY ROBERT BAER



Baer, a former Middle East CIA field officer, is the author of *The Devil We Know: Dealing with the New Iranian Superpower*



Robert Butler

ROBERT BUTLER WAS ONLY 83 when he died from leukemia on July 4. That might seem a respectable age, but Butler, a prominent gerontologist, psychiatrist and founder of the International Longevity Center—a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting healthy aging—was nowhere near ready to go.

Butler campaigned vigorously against ageism (a term he coined in 1968) but deployed a gentle wit to tackle the misconceptions and sheer ignorance fueling age prejudice. He became his own most eloquent argument against ageism, visible proof that the elderly can be as productive, engaged, open to ideas and fun as younger folk.

Butler's output was prodigious. He was the first director of the National Institute on Aging, establishing Alzheimer's disease as a national research priority, and founded the U.S.'s first department of geriatrics, at the Mount Sinai School of Medicine. His books included the Pulitzer Prize-winning *Why Survive? Being Old in America*.

He believed that by eating well, exercising and staying connected, we might extend our already increased longevity. More important, Butler thought we should be able to look forward to enjoying good health for a larger proportion of our life span. In that respect, at least, he proved a role model right to the end, energetic and effective almost until the moment he died.

—BY CATHERINE MAYER

Beryl Bainbridge

When she was 14, Beryl Bainbridge was expelled from school. In her 60s, she was made a Dame of the British Empire. In between and up until her death July 2 in her mid-70s (the exact year of her birth is up for debate), she wrote prolifically and lived colorfully with a dark sense of humor. *The Dressmaker*, published in 1973, was the first of her five novels to be short-listed for the prestigious Man Booker Prize. *The Bottle Factory Outing*, published the following year, was the second. An established yet singular figure on the British literary scene, Bainbridge used events and characters from her life—and later from history—as the basis for her fiction. She wrote of familial relationships and murder, romantic betrayal and the young Hitler. *The Birthday Boys* took on Robert Scott's South Pole expedition; *Master Georgie*, the Crimean War. Several of her novels were made into movies, including *An Awfully Big Adventure*, which was inspired by her years in the theater. As she once said, "I much prefer the past. I don't feel comfortable in the so-called present." —BY ALEXANDRA SILVER



Statement by Michael J. Burgess, Director New York State Office for the Aging

On the passing of Dr. Robert N. Butler

by [New York State Office for the Aging](#)

ALBANY, NY (07/06/2010)(readMedia)-- New York State and the nation have lost a giant in the field of gerontology with the passing of Dr. Robert Butler on Sunday. Not only was he the leading voice on issues related to longevity and the study of aging, but he was a moral voice who insisted that society value our elders in its public policies and programs.

I was pleased to be able to honor him in May along with nine others with a special award from the New York State Office for the Aging. Dr. Butler also came to Albany in 2008 to make a presentation to our agency staff on an agency training day.

Dr. Butler achieved much deserved acclaim and recognition for his academic and policy work in the field of aging throughout his career here and abroad.

Robert N. Butler, M.D., was President and Chief Executive Officer and Co-Chair of the Alliance for Health and the Future of the International Longevity Center and professor of geriatrics at the Brookdale Department of Geriatrics and Adult Development at the Mount Sinai Medical Center in New York City. From 1975 to 1982 he was the founding director of the National Institute on Aging of the National Institutes of Health. In 1982 he founded the first department of geriatrics in a U.S. medical school. He was a founding Fellow of the American Geriatrics Society and vice-chairman of the Alliance for Aging Research. He served as Chair, Advisory Committee, 1995 White House Conference on Aging. He served as member (1986-) and then Chair (1994-) of the Advisory Committee of the Metropolitan Life Foundation Awards for Medical Research. He is a member of the Advisory Committee, Project on Death In America of the Open Society Institute (George Soros, Founder).

Dr. Butler was a consultant to the U.S. Senate Special Committee on Aging, the Commonwealth Fund, the Brookdale Foundation, the Donald W. Reynolds Foundation and numerous other organizations. He served on the National Advisory Committees of the Physicians for Human Rights, the National Women's Health Resource Center and the Mildred and Claude Pepper Foundation, among other organizations. Dr. Butler had been a frequent advisor to the World Health Organization. He was elected a member of the Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Sciences in 1979. He was also a member of the National Academy of Social Insurance. He was a member of the Physician Payment Review Commission, an agency of the U.S. Congress, 1986-89. In 1976 Dr. Butler won the Pulitzer Prize for his book "Why Survive? Being Old in America." He is co-author (with Dr. Myrna I. Lewis) of the books "Aging and Mental Health" and "Love and Sex After 60."

Dr. Butler is owed our gratitude for his work and the humanity he showed in his career.



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Robert Butler, MD, In Memoriam

By Richard Peck, Contributing Writer, MedPage Today
Reviewed by
July 06, 2010

Review

Robert N. Butler, MD, age 83, died Sunday at Mount Sinai Medical Center in New York, where he had been hospitalized for treatment of leukemia. Butler was the founding director of the National Institute on Aging and won a Pulitzer Prize for his writings on aging.

I was saddened to learn today of the death of Robert N. Butler, MD, one of those rare physicians who lived decades ahead of his time.

He was a pioneering geriatrician/gerontologist, with a series of "firsts" to his name. After writing his groundbreaking and probably still most famous work, "Why Survive: Being Old in America," in 1976, he opened the door to popular comprehension of aging and its issues. He went on to become the founding director of the National Institute on Aging and to establish the first full-fledged department of geriatrics at the Mount Sinai School of Medicine in New York.

I introduced him to another "first."

During the 1980s I edited a clinical journal for primary care physicians called *Geriatrics*. When the then editor-in-chief, Matthew Divertie, MD, of the Mayo Clinic, died unexpectedly in 1986, I asked Butler to step into that role.

He accepted and discovered the, to him, "new world" of publishing in the intensely practical world of trade and professional magazines. Meanwhile, through Butler, I met and worked with the crème-de-la-crème of aging studies professionals and intellectuals.

What impressed me a great deal was the "drop everything and do it" attitude these distinguished people displayed when the smooth, gentlemanly Butler requested their participation in *Geriatrics* projects and panel discussions. He was clearly held in universal high regard within the worldwide geriatrics community.

He enthusiastically attended the trade publication "Academy Awards" when he received the Jesse H. Neal Award for the editorials he wrote regularly for our publication; I think he was bemused by this. (When my editorial successor, a student of the Neal Awards process, resubmitted Dr. Butler's column and won the Award four

years in a row thereafter, it was my turn for bemusement.)

Over the years in the late '80s and early '90s, Dr. Butler gave our publication exactly what I hoped he would: cache and intellectual respectability throughout the geriatrics community.

He was deeply aware of the vital importance of geriatrics knowledge to practicing physicians, and no doubt shared my frustration at the slow progress the discipline has made as a professional specialty.

We lost touch in latter years, though I followed his books co-authored with his vibrant wife, psychotherapist/social worker Myrna Lewis, on sexuality and aging, and mourned her untimely death five years ago.

For the past several years Dr. Butler headed up the International Center on Longevity and continued to explore new territories of aging-related issues that will someday be commonplace to all of us.

It will be another decade or two, I'm sure, before his achievements register upon us in full.

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Ageing with dignity

MALA KAPUR SHANKARDASS

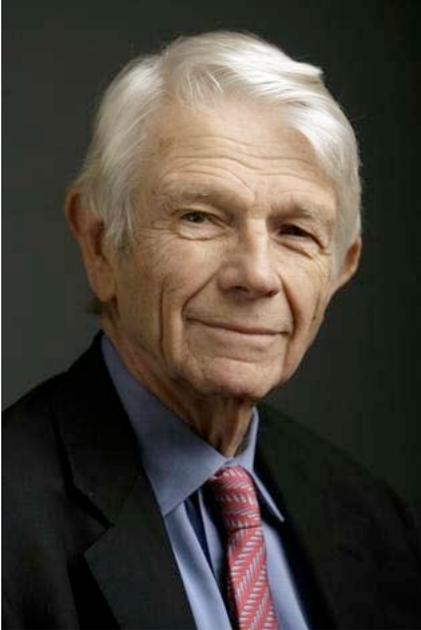


Photo: AP Dr. Robert Butler: Ageing with dignity.

Remembering Dr. Robert Butler, Pulitzer Prize-winning longevity expert, and a champion of older people who died recently. He will be remembered as the epitome of aging with dignity, grace and good health, a role model for younger gerontologists and his fans growing by the years. He was a practitioner of all that he prescribed.

On the evening of June 28, I, like many other professional friends of Robert Butler, received an e-mail from International Longevity Center-USA (ILC-USA). Its founder and current president and CEO, Butler's new book *The Longevity Prescription: The 8 Proven Keys to A Long, Healthy Life* had been published by Avery Publishing Group in May 2010. Before I could absorb the strengths of his latest addition to a list of over 15 books from 1963 onwards, offering a revitalising plan for reaping the rich rewards of the final third of life, I heard the news of his death due to leukaemia.

The first reaction for many of us, associated with him through our work and friendship, as we quickly sent emails, SMS to each other sharing the sad news, was, "Not Butler, the name synonymous with healthy ageing." Could the end of Bob, as he was fondly called, come at an age when he was writing another book with the working title *Medical Mistakes and Miracles* and contributing so significantly to studies of the impact of the unprecedented ageing of populations upon society and its institutions?

Role model

He will be remembered as the epitome of aging with dignity, grace and good health, a role model for younger gerontologists like me and his fans growing by the years. He was a practitioner of all that he prescribed. His sharpness, alertness and vitality till he died is exemplary. It sets the tone befittingly for his promoted concepts of "productive ageing" and "successful aging". Dr. Butler, a pioneer in reflecting on old age as a function of disease, social-economic adversity and even personality was concerned with making lives of older people vibrant.

His research conducted in the 1960s established the fact that senility is not inevitable with ageing but, rather, a consequence of disease. As a physician and geriatrician he identified Alzheimer's disease as a national research priority for the U.S. and his interest in championing research and policy on older people with focus on their well being led him to be the founder of the first department of geriatric medicine at Mount Sinai and the National Institute on Ageing within the National Institutes of Health in his country. He later became associated with ILC-USA in New York City, a research, policy and education centre dedicated to the field of longevity and aging and which opened branches in some other countries too.

I know Bob never thought of retiring. As a longevity expert, he always recommended physical and mental activity, regularity with routines, inclusion of walking, exercising and reading. By choice he was an early riser, giving himself healthier time to be involved with work, which for him was never a burden. He loved research, writing, interacting with those interested in the field of aging. Connecting with friends, colleagues, of his age and those younger was important for him.

His energy, enthusiasm for work, ability to share was infectious. Since my first interaction with him few years ago at an international meeting where I delivered a talk using his work in the Indian context, we had regular communication on a variety of issues.

His insights and ability to draw attention to diverse dimensions of aging in societies is well recognised. He coined the phrase "ageism" to refer to age discrimination in American society but the term caters to a universal phenomenon, appealing in use to explain why older people are not chosen for employment, unrecognised for contribution in work, victims of elder abuse, ignored in policy and media responses. Bob wanted to stop perpetuation of age-related bias at different levels.

Can we afford?

I find it difficult to take the sad news of his demise and go through the pages of his earlier book *Longevity Revolution*, which I discussed extensively with him in 2008 while debating the benefits and challenges of living a long life while walking with him and attending professional events in St. Gallen, Switzerland. His optimism about life touched me. I am sure Dr. Butler as a great scholar and practitioner will always be remembered and will stay among us.

As he argued frequently, while extension of life, people living longer in all countries does raise questions of whether societies are able to afford ageing. But the present and future generations of enlightened citizenry will make transformations to age better.

They will refute myths and stereotypes on ageing and contribute towards celebration of life. For after all old age which was an experience of few in earlier times is now the experience of many and its perception has to be as 'a time of continuing vitality'.

The writer an Associate Professor of Sociology, Maitreyi College, Delhi University specialises in Gerontology and works for improving quality of life of older people. Email: LittleThingsMatter@gmail.com

Keywords: [Robert Butler](#), [Pulitzer Prize](#)

<http://www.timegoesby.net/weblog/2010/08/the-longevity-prescription-of-dr-robert-butler-a-proposal.html>



« ELDER MUSIC: Forgotten (But Not Completely) | REFLECTIONS: On Recent History »
Monday, 09 August 2010 - Posted by Ronni Bennett at 05:35 AM

The Longevity Prescription of Dr. Robert Butler: A Proposal

HEALTH Over the weekend, I ran across a beautiful online tribute to Dr. Robert Butler, the learned geriatrician, teacher, researcher, longevity expert, Pulitzer Prize-winning author and elder advocate who died last month on 4 July at age 83. It was written by one of his many international colleagues.

“He will be remembered as the epitome of aging with dignity, grace and good health, a role model for younger gerontologists like me...” writes Mala Kapur Shankardass in The Hindu.

“He was a practitioner of all that he prescribed. His sharpness, alertness and vitality till he died is exemplary. It sets the tone befittingly for his promoted concepts of 'productive ageing' and 'successful aging...His energy, enthusiasm for work, ability to share was infectious.”

“Infectious” is exactly the right word, as I learned when I was privileged to spend an expense-paid week at the tenth annual Age Boom Academy for a dozen journalists held at Dr. Butler's International Longevity Center in New York City last year.

Even when the discussion turned serious - to the debilities of old age or to cultural and institutional ageism - there was a twinkle in his eye and an enthusiasm for the work that needs to be done. In his presence, I believed it will be done and that I – and each old person - can be a part of making it happen.

Dr. Butler's most recent and, alas, last book on aging, his 17th, arrived in my mailbox in May while I was in the midst of planning and executing my move from Maine to Oregon. With the intention to write about it here, I managed to read it in bits and pieces in between packing and all, but it was lost in a box that I unpacked only in the past couple of weeks. Then it got buried under a bunch of papers I had not moved in that time.

Mala Kapur Shankardass's tribute has me back on track.

The title is *The Longevity Prescription – The 8 Proven Keys to a Long, Healthy Life*. Generally, I have little truck with self-help books, even one from Dr. Butler. But this is not your ordinary self-help book. In this one, the good doctor's native enthusiasm infects every page – along with his intelligence, optimism and the wisdom of a lifetime.

He's not preaching at you about what you should do to attain a vibrant old age; he is engaging and encouraging the reader to practice living as he did. You cannot read this book without believing you can overcome or accommodate obstacles that are in your way or, more particularly, you think are in your way to a longer, healthier old age.

Just about every sentence is packed with information I want to pass on to you, particularly his many small, easy steps we can take every day to improve and maintain our health. There is so much, however, that I don't believe a "review" can do the book justice.

So here is what I propose: That we go through the book together, one chapter a week – there are nine plus an important introduction - and make this a kind of TGB Book Discussion Club – over ten weeks. That's two-and-a-half months to an improved old age for all of us.

Certainly, I encourage you to buy the book, but if you can't afford it (\$26 U.S. and \$32.50 Canadian – I don't know if it's published in Great Britain, Europe and elsewhere) or don't want to, I will write about each chapter in enough detail that you will get a reasonably good idea of the main points.

Your job then, in the Comments section of the post each week, will be to respond to what you've learned, introduce elements I've left out (if you're reading along), tell us about your experiences with what you do now to maintain your health, what you need to change, what you want to incorporate from the book into your daily lives, encourage all of us in our efforts and to respond to and build on one another's comments.

If this interests you, sign up today in the Comments section below. Well, no one needs to sign up. But if there is enough interest, I'll get us started with the introduction chapter next week.

Posted at <http://www.timegoesby.net/weblog/2010/08/the-longevity-prescription-of-dr-robert-butler-a-proposal.html> by Ronni Bennett 09 August 2010

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What Psychiatrist Robert Butler Left Behind



— National Institute on Aging/Wikimedia

He coined "ageism." He founded gerontology. Plus more reasons to remember this champion of elders.

By James Ridgeway

Wed Jul. 7, 2010 3:29 PM PDT

If you're like most people, you may find that at about age 70, life begins to close in on you. You're supposed to be retired by then with an adequate pension and/or a 401K—only you don't have a pension, your 401K went down in the big recession, and to tell the truth, you don't want to retire anyway. You want to work, but there the job market is tight, age discrimination is rampant, and thanks to the Supreme Court, there's virtually no way to fight it. You don't have the money, or maybe the nerve, to strike out on your own, unless you call flipping burgers striking out on your own.

The advertisements for retirement investments and hair color keep telling you that 70 is the new 40, that you're only as young as you feel. AARP's magazines say the same thing—but the world they depict seems unreal and, to tell the truth, somewhat revolting. Because you don't feel young—you feel old. And in today's America, that's hardly a happy feeling. You feel shoved aside, irrelevant, a relic waiting to hurry up and die. You realize you can't remember things as well as you once did, have more and more of the proverbial "senior moments," and start wondering how long it will be until you sink into dementia, maybe Alzheimer's, at which point your life will really be over.

There's precious little in our society that acts as an antidote to any of these thoughts. But for the last half-century, there has been one man: Dr. Robert N. Butler. A psychiatrist, activist, and visionary, Butler died on Sunday at the age of 83, and is being eulogized in the obituaries as the founder of modern gerontology, the man who coined the word "ageism." Butler founded the National Institute of Aging at the NIH, and helped found the American Association for geriatric Psychiatry and the Alzheimer's Disease Association; he also launched the first medical department devoted to geriatrics at Mount Sinai Hospital in New York. He wrote influential books ^[1], advised politicians, counseled the World Health Organization, and he founded and ran the International Longevity Center ^[2] in New York.

Through all of this work, Butler inspired thousands, perhaps millions of people to think differently about growing old, and to treat aging and the aged differently. For old people, that

transformation is even more profound, because it means thinking differently about yourself. I am one of those people whose thinking was changed, in some significant way, by Robert Butler and his work.

I was lucky enough to meet Butler a few weeks ago at a week-long series of seminars his International Longevity Center put on annually for a small group of journalists, called the Age Boom Academy. That one week produced some of the most astute briefings on every aspect of health policy and the challenges ahead that one could hope to take in—from research on Alzheimer's, to the political assault on Medicare and Social Security currently underway in the administration and Congress, to the day-to-day work on the ground across the City of New York. What I had feared might consist of a bunch of self-serving medical and psych professionals was instead an immersion into the real world of the politics and economics of medicine, tempered always by Butler's vision. Despite his concerns for the scandalous lack of funding for research on Alzheimer's and the aging brain, as well as the growing shortage of doctors trained in gerontology or even general practitioners, he approached his work with unyielding optimism. I had no idea he was battling a life-threatening illness.

On Monday I was on a train on my way to New York, where I had an appointment this week to sit down with him to further discuss his ideas, when I received an email and learned that he was gone. Although he had acute leukemia, Butler reportedly had been working until three days before his death. At 83, he had seemed like he was in the prime of life—not because he acted like he was 40, but because he had succeeded in redefining 83 as a different kind of prime, for himself and for others.

In a speech not long ago ^[3] at the American Academy of aging, Butler quoted Proust from *In Search of Lost Time*, "If we mean to try to understand this self, it is only in our innermost depths, by endeavoring to reconstruct it there, that the quest can be achieved." He saw that quest as part of the journey into old age, and gave it significance and dignity. He said in his speech:

In the 1950s, psychology, psychiatry and gerontology textbooks devalued reminiscence and memories. Reminiscing was condescendingly called "living in the past," and phrases like "wandering of mind," "boring" and "garrulous" were used to describe elders who looked back. Actually, reminiscence was thought to be an early diagnostic sign of senile psychosis—what is known today as Alzheimer's disease. However, I was seeing a different picture in vibrant, healthy individuals who were engaging in a fascinating inward journey.

More than fifty years later, Butler's ideas are widely respected by psychologists and social workers, many physicians and research scientists, and even some policymakers. As far as they have caught on at all with the general public, it is thanks to his tireless work. He like to point out that demographics was on his side: More and more, elders will outnumber youth, and the voice of the geezers will grow stronger and stronger.

I was pleased to see, this morning, an eloquently written obituary in the *New York Times* ^[4] by Douglas Martin. Fittingly, it included some remembrances of Butler's past. As Martin notes, "Dr.

Butler's mission emerged from his childhood." His parents split up less than a year after he was born, and he went to live with his grandparents on a New Jersey chicken farm.

He came to revere his grandfather, with whom he cared for sick chickens in the "hospital" at one end of the chicken house. He loved the old man's stories. But the grandfather disappeared when Robert was 7, and nobody would tell him why. He finally learned that he had died.

Robert found solace in his friendship with a physician he identified only as Dr. Rose. Dr. Rose had helped him through scarlet fever and took him on his rounds by horse and carriage. The boy decided he could have helped his grandfather survive had he been a doctor. He also concluded that he would have preferred that people had been honest with him about death.

From his grandmother, he learned about the strength and endurance of the elderly, he wrote. After losing the farm in the Depression, she and her grandson lived on government-surplus foods and lived in a cheap hotel. Robert sold newspapers. Then the hotel burned down, with all their possessions.

"What I remember even more than the hardships of those years was my grandmother's triumphant spirit and determination," he wrote. "Experiencing at first hand an older person's struggle to survive, I was myself helped to survive as well."

Butler spent his life passing on that painful but profound gift to thousands of other people. I feel fortunate to have been one of them.

Source URL: <http://motherjones.com/environment/2010/07/robert-n-butler-1927-2010-visionary-psychiatrist-and-champion-elders>

Links:

[1] <http://www.amazon.com/Why-Survive-Being-Old-America/dp/0801874254>

[2] <http://www.ilcusa.org/>

[3]

<http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5gpAHbndH7eAh6Of6sYgKELSw9OXgD9GPL4C02>

[4] <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/07/07/health/research/07butler.html>

James Ridgeway is a senior correspondent at Mother Jones.

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WEDNESDAY, JULY 7, 2010

Robert Butler Dies at 83: Aging Expert Won Pulitzer

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Robert Butler was only 83 when he died. That might seem like a respectable age — indeed, it exceeds the average [life expectancy](#) of a white American man by...

TIME (7/7/2010 3:45:32 PM -08:00)

A Last Conversation With Dr. Robert Butler



"I think a lot of older people are sitting on their asses, playing golf, and not making a contribution to society...."

[New York Times](#) (blog) (7/7/2010 9:14:52 AM -08:00)

Remembering the 'father of geriatrics'

Dr. Robert Butler, regarded as "the father of geriatrics," died Sunday at age 83. He had leukemia. His accomplishments included serving as the first...

CNN (blog) (7/7/2010 8:16:16 AM -08:00)

Seniors Owe Robert Butler Many Thanks

Dr. Robert N. Butler, who coined the word "ageism" and has been called the father of modern [gerontology](#), died of leukemia on Independence...

U.S. News & World Report (blog) (7/7/2010 7:04:32 AM -08:00)

Dr. Robert N. Butler dies at 83; Pulitzer Prize-winning pioneer in the study



The gerontologist founded the National [Institute on Aging](#) and the first department of geriatrics at a US [medical school](#). He was also 'a moral voice who...

Los Angeles Times (7/6/2010 11:02:46 PM -08:00)

'Father of modern gerontology' Robert N. Butler dies at 83



Robert N. Butler, 83, a Pulitzer Prize-winning author, psychiatrist and expert on aging who helped illuminate the "quiet despair, deprivation,...

Washington Post (7/6/2010 10:52:06 PM -08:00)

Robert Butler, Aging Expert, Is Dead at 83

Dr. Robert N. Butler, a psychiatrist whose painful youthful realization that death is inevitable prompted him to challenge and ultimately...

New York Times (7/6/2010 8:21:56 PM -08:00)

Health Highlights: July 6, 2010

The American gerontologist and psychiatrist who coined the term "ageism" died Sunday in New York City. Dr. Robert Butler, 83, died of leukemia at Mount...

BusinessWeek (7/6/2010 9:27:02 AM -08:00)

America Says Goodbye To Advocate for the Elderly, Robert Butler



Dr. Robert N. Butler passed away at the ripe age of 83 after battling leukemia. Dr. Butler is recognized as one of the most important leaders into the study...

Tech Jackal (7/7/2010 4:29:43 PM -08:00)

What Psychiatrist Robert Butler Left Behind



He coined "ageism." He founded gerontology. Plus more reasons to remember this champion of elders. If you're like most people, you may find that at about...

Mother Jones (7/7/2010 3:29:11 PM -08:00)

TCF Project Sites:

Robert Butler virtually created the modern field of geriatrics. He changed the way we view aging and he shaped the National Institute on Aging as its first...

Century Foundation (7/7/2010 11:59:49 AM -08:00)

Dr. Robert Butler, Trailblazing Advocate for the Elderly, Dies at 83

Dr. Robert Butler, a psychiatrist who was widely regarded as "the father of geriatrics" and who spent a career working to change the way society views and...

ElderLawAnswers.com (7/7/2010 11:04:36 AM -08:00)

Robert N. Butler Has Died



The Pulitzer Prize-winning author Dr. Robert N. Butler has passed away. He was 83-years-old....

mediabistro.com (blog) (7/7/2010 10:38:17 AM -08:00)

The man who transformed aging and death, at peace

You probably never heard of Robert Neil Butler, who died Sunday at 83, but if your family is like mine he transformed it...

SmartPlanet.com (blog) (7/7/2010 8:53:05 AM -08:00)

Statement from Secretary Sebelius on the Death of Dr. Robert Butler



WASHINGTON--([BUSINESS WIRE](#))--I join the rest of the country in mourning the death of Dr. Robert Butler, one of America's greatest champions for the health...

Business Wire ([press release](#)) (7/7/2010 7:33:34 AM -08:00)

Expert Robert Butler Dead At 83



Dr. Robert N. Butler, 83, a psychiatrist and renowned gerontologist who pioneered the study of aging, worked hard to reform the [treatment](#) of the elderly...

Visit Bulgaria (7/7/2010 4:57:55 AM -08:00)

Robert Butler, Advocate of the Oldies, Dies at 83



Dr. Robert N. Butler, world's leading psychiatrist and the writer of Pulitzer Prize-winning book, died at 83 in [Manhattan](#) this Sunday...

TopNews United Kingdom (blog) (7/7/2010 3:59:09 AM -08:00)

No headline - nbriefs

NEW YORK — Queen Elizabeth II placed a wreath of flowers at a site of the Sept. 11 attacks Tuesday and chatted with victims' families and first responders,...

San Angelo Standard Times (7/6/2010 6:35:30 PM -08:00)

Robert Butler, MD, In Memoriam

Robert N. Butler, MD, age 83, died Sunday at Mount Sinai [Medical](#) Center in New York, where he had been...

MedPage Today (7/6/2010 12:44:55 PM -08:00)

National Institute Of Aging Founder Dies In Manhattan



Dr. Robert Butler died on Sunday at Mount Sinai Medical Center after a battle with leukemia. He was 83 years old. Butler – a psychiatrist and gerontologist...

NY1 (7/6/2010 9:59:30 AM -08:00)

at 4:45 PM

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