In Memoriam - Gilbert Howlett Smith 1938-2020

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On July 6, 2020, the international mammary gland research community lost an iconic figure, Gilbert Howlett Smith (Gil), to pancreatic cancer. Gil was 81 years old and had devoted the previous 55 years to the study of mammary gland development and cancer as a member of the National Cancer Institute, National Institutes of Health. Gil approached his studies from the viewpoint of a developmental biologist. He was an innovative, smart, thoughtful, honest and motivated scientist who made seminal contributions in several different areas to our

understanding of the development and progression of mammary gland cancer. From his early days using electron microscopy to describe the MMTV virus capsid and presumptive stem cells in the normal and premalignant gland to his latter studies identifying lineage-limited progenitor cells in the normal developing gland, Gil's results made an impact for future studies. He pioneered the idea of the mammary niche and his research described and contributed to the importance of the role of the microenvironment on the development and progression of mammary cancer. His recent studies focused on the important role of changes in mitochondria DNA in nuclear function and mammary gland cancer progression. Gil was the consummate scientist, always willing to entertain and explore new ideas and not hesitant to present his findings to the community.

Gil was admired and respected throughout the international community. At the annual Gordon Research Conference on Mammary Gland Biology, many new and experienced scientists interacted with Gil both in the conference room, in the poster sessions and after hours. Gil attracted the young scientist with his honesty, his wealth of knowledge and his ability to generate enthusiasm for the subject of mammary gland development and cancer. Outside the instructive sessions, Gil could be found on the tennis courts playing enthusiastically, on the golf course hitting the ball viciously, discussing soccer with his English friends and in the evening sessions, on the dance floor or surrounded by young scientist in vigorous discussions. As a scientist, Gil was an example of what we scientists hope to achieve; as a mentor, he was dedicated and fostering and his many mentees now carry his work forward in new directions. As a friend, he was a good listener, was supportive and always ready for a challenge. As a parent, he was a positive and loving father to five amazing kids, each of whom he was immensely proud of as adults. Gil will be missed by many friends, colleagues and family and each of whom have their own unique and personal story by which to remember him.

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