David Olton (1943–1994) *In Memoriam*

We are saddened to announce the death of David Olton, who was one of our consulting editors. David died of pancreatic cancer on February 1, 1994, at the age of 51. A professor of psychology at the Johns Hopkins University, he had an international reputation for his studies of brain mechanisms of learning, memory, and cognitive processing.

David was born in Montclair, New Jersey, and raised in Richmond, Virginia. He graduated from Haverford College in 1964, where he won an award from the Pennsylvania Psychological Association for the best undergraduate research project—a presage of things to come. He went on to earn his doctorate at the University of Michigan, under the direction of Robert Issacson. His dissertation demonstrated that rats with hippocampal lesions learned a shuttle avoidance task faster than intact animals. Immediately after graduate school, he accepted a faculty position at Johns Hopkins, where he rose quickly through the ranks to full professor, and served as department chair from 1982 to 1987. He also held a joint appointment in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Medicine at The Johns Hopkins School of Medicine.

David was an enthusiastic biker, who loved to tell of his fascinating long-distance biking excursions. He frequently biked the 25 miles between his home and office. He was an experienced sailor,

an avid hiker, a cross-country skier, a dedicated gardener, a loyal member of the volunteer fire department, and a sheep farmer. In the past few years, he found special pleasure in swing and contra dancing, which he embraced with the same intense enthusiasm as he had every other part of his life.

A member of the Council of the Society for Neuroscience, David served on many grant review committees and editorial boards. He was an invited speaker and a featured panel member at many national and international meetings. He loved to teach, and he received numerous awards at Johns Hopkins, including the Alpha Phi Favorite Faculty Award and the George Owen Award for Outstanding Teaching and Devotion to Undergraduates.

He continued his intense and enthusiastic pursuit of knowledge about brain function and cognition right up to his last days. When the Psychology faculty at Johns Hopkins approached Dave about having a party for his 51st birthday and asked what kind of party he would prefer, he replied, a "data blitz," in which everyone present would be given 5 or 10 minutes to present their most interesting recent results or ideas. He had introduced the idea of a data blitz at the Winter Conference on the Neurobiology of Learning and Memory, and it had been a rousing success. So on January 15, over 120 of his friends and colleagues descended on Hopkins from as far away as Hawaii, California, Canada, and England to celebrate his 51st birthday and his life. David was too weak to attend the entire conference, but he was able to greet each participant at lunch and made a brief appearance at the afternoon session. Although there were many nostalgic and melancholy moments, the general tenor of the meeting was set by David. Thus it was a happy and joyful occasion, in which all participants were pleased to be able to be together with their friend and share in their love for him.

David's mark in psychology and neuroscience is indelible, for many reasons: his introduction of the radial arm maze, which has become such an important tool in the study of animal cognition; his insightful theoretical contributions to our understanding of the functions of the hippocampus and other parts of the brain in learning and memory; his intense influence on many superior graduate students and post docs, who received much more from him than merely excellent training; his influence on many colleagues whose thinking was sharpened by interactions with him; his leadership role on journals, discussion panels, and review panels; and his many clever experiments that revealed that rats (and rat runners) were capable of far more complex cognitive processing than had previously been imagined.

But more importantly, those who knew him well will always remember his intense and almost naive *joie de vivre*. It was always a pleasure to be in his company and to discuss anything with him, in part because of his enthusiasm, but also because he seemed so interested in others and their ideas. He was always kind and civil in his criticism of the ideas and arguments of others, and always modest about the importance of his own ideas. David was indeed a great and gentle man, a Mensch.

He is survived by his wife, Lisbeth Redfield Olton of Annapolis, Maryland; his father, Reverend Robert Matthew Olton of Charlottesville, Virginia; a sister, Judith Olton Mueller of McLean, Virginia; and a brother, Dr. Robert Matthew Olton, Jr., of Belmont, California. He was cared for in his final illness by Stephanie Smith of Bethesda, Maryland.

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