

## David W. Robertson, In Memoriam

Albert J. Robichaud

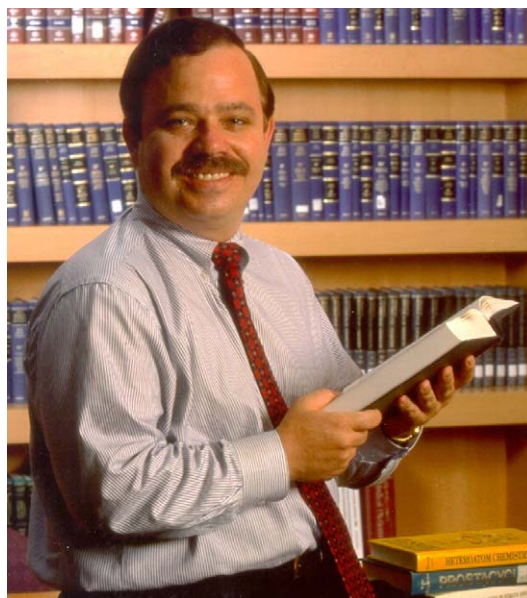
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On August 16, 2003, one of the leaders of the medicinal chemistry and pharmaceutical communities, Dr. David W. Robertson, passed away. As a tribute to his impact on the many colleagues he mentored, guided, and encouraged, the following seven articles are dedicated to his memory.

Dave was born in Dumas, Texas, on July 30, 1955, and is survived by his two children, Cassandra and Andrew, of San Diego; his parents, R.L. and Nixie Robertson of Dumas; his three sisters, Linda Hamlin of Mount Pulaski, IL, Glenna Rummel of Fritch, TX, Suzanne Roberts of Sumter, S.C., and his brother, Timothy Robertson of Dumas. Dave began his career in his home state of Texas, earning a Bachelor of Science degree in Chemistry and Biology with highest honors from Stephen F. Austin State University in 1977. He received his Ph.D. at the University of Illinois with Prof. John A. Katzenellenbogen in 1981 working on the synthesis of non-steroidal anti-estrogens and estrogens, and cytotoxic hormone analogs.

Dave's first industrial position was with Eli Lilly in Indianapolis, where he joined as Sr. Medicinal Chemist in the cardiovascular group. Dave's abilities as a medicinal chemist were evident from the start where within two years he led a team in the identification of the phosphodiesterase inhibitor isomazole, for the treatment of cardiac arrhythmia. Collaboration was one of Dave's greatest assets, and it was no surprise that from the outset he worked to foster relationships with colleagues from other therapeutic areas. Coincident with his efforts in the cardiovascular area, Dave worked with pharmacologists from Lilly's neuroscience franchise and assembled an impressive list of accomplishments. Most notably, Dave was an inventor and a discoverer of a selective serotonin uptake inhibitor, dapoxetine, as well as a dual inhibitor of serotonin and norepinephrine up-



take, duloxetine, which Lilly has successfully launched under the trade name Cymbalta®. This drug is used to treat patients suffering the debilitating effects of major depressive disorder and diabetic neuropathy, and represents the kind of research to which Dave dedicated his scientific life.

In 1991, Dave was recruited to Ligand Pharmaceuticals in San Diego, CA, where he served as a Vice President of Research until 1996, when he moved to what was then DuPont Merck Pharmaceutical Co in Wilmington Delaware. During his short tenure at DuPont Merck, Dave was responsible for the expansion of the neuroscience franchise, focusing his efforts on obesity, psychosis, ADHD, and Alzheimer's disease. In addition, Dave initiated several key collaborations with leading contract and research organizations that were pivotal to the success of the discovery efforts of DuPont Merck. At the time this approach to sourcing was rare and is a

testament to Dave's abilities to reach out and create unique opportunities for success.

In 1999, Dave moved to Pharmacia & Upjohn (Pharmacia Corp.), where he was Vice President of Research responsible for the Neuroscience and Cardiovascular franchises. In 2002 and until his death, Dave was Executive Director of Chemistry at Pfizer's Ann Arbor, Michigan site. Although his time at Pfizer was short, Dave left an indelible mark on this organization as well. Since his death, Pfizer has created an undergraduate scholarship grant at Stephen F. Austin State University, and funded an award through the American Chemical Society Division of Medicinal Chemistry in his honor. This annual award recognizes medicinal chemists under age 40 who have demonstrated a significant impact on the discovery of new medicines or drug targets, something Dave Robertson certainly accomplished.

Dave Robertson was a prolific contributor to the field, authoring more than 120 manuscripts, presenting at nearly 150 scientific conferences, and contributing as an inventor to more than 60 patents. He was an active member of the American Chemical Society, serving on the Editorial Board, and as Section Editor for *Annual Reports in Medicinal Chemistry*. His impact on many pharmaceutical companies, both large and small, through his mentorship, guidance, and counseling of colleagues through the years is perhaps his greatest legacy.

If you were fortunate enough to work with Dave, as I was, you would no doubt have come away a more enriched and thorough scientist. Dave had such a collaborative and empowering style that made you want to get right to the task at hand. To say he was a motivator

would be a significant understatement. There was never any doubt that Dave's goal was the discovery and development of "medicines that matter" (*Dave's term*). He did this, however, with such a unique and personal touch that is counter-intuitive to the management process. Dave focused on the individual and believed that success was derived from building talented teams of energetic scientists. He was adroit at recruiting and bringing together researchers from diverse disciplines and managing their coalescence to a singular task. He believed in independent action, celebrated spirited debate, and encouraged the questioning of authority, including his. Dave believed that focus and accountability were tantamount to success, and he refused to accept failure.

While working with Dave, I found him to be a devoted father, regularly making trans-continental trips to be with his children in San Diego. This value was evident in his management style, always recognizing the priorities of one's family. Dave always took the time to listen to your concerns, no matter how trivial or insignificant they may have been. He would always be focused on what was best for you personally, balancing the pressures of the job with your individual concerns. Dave was one of those people who would always find the positive in any situation. This infectious optimism was often times expressed in one of his many classic metaphors, to which anyone who knew Dave for more than a week was familiar. I'm confident each and every colleague of Dr. Robertson has more than one favorite 'Dave-ism' they have used on special occasions. I know what mine is, and it always makes me smile and think of Dave.

—Albert J. Robichaud