

William Woodson Dawson 1933-2010

Dr. William Woodson Dawson, age 76, Professor Emeritus of Ophthalmology, Physiology and Neuroscience at the University of Florida College of Medicine, passed peacefully to the Church Eternal on March 11, 2010, following a long, valiant battle against cancer. He was born in Nashville, Tennessee to Myrtle Gillentine and William Joseph Dawson. He was a graduate of West High School, Nashville.

Dr. Dawson earned degrees at Florida State University and Vanderbilt University. He did a post-doctoral fellowship in radiation biophysics at the University of California at Berkeley. Following this, he was a captain in the Medical Corps of the US Army.

He was appointed as The Joseph P. Kennedy Foundation Visiting Professor Kennedy at Vanderbilt's Peabody College in 1964-65. Following this fellowship, he came to the University of Florida College of Medicine, Department of Ophthalmology where he established an electro-diagnostic laboratory, and did research on blinding eye diseases. He developed the electroretinographic testing unit in the Ophthalmology Eye Clinic and administered it for thirty-five years. It was the outstanding facility of this type in the southeastern United States. In addition to his major appointments, he held courtesy appointments in the psychology department, the Veterinary Ophthalmology Department, and was an Honorary Faculty member of the University of Puerto Rico.

Dr. Dawson devoted most of his 45 years at the University of Florida to basic research into vision and eye disease. His career has been characterized by innovation and creativity in his approach to his research program and to the clinical electro-diagnostic unit. He has investigated most of the common eye diseases using novel approaches to elucidating their underlying causation. Most recently he has focused on glaucoma and age-related macular degeneration, and brought to light previously unknown basic physiological defects in both diseases. Dr. Dawson has been active in collaboration locally, nationally and internationally with scientists around the nation and the world. During his tenure at the University of Florida, he brought in over \$18 million dollars in research grants and funding.

He was a member of the American Physiological Society; Association for Research in Vision and Ophthalmology; International Association for Aquatic Animal Medicine; Pavlovian Society; International Society for Clinical Electrophysiology of Vision; National Academy of Science; National Research Council, Committee on Vision; New York Academy of Sciences; Phi Sigma Society; Society for Neuroscience and Society of Sigma Xi. Dr. Dawson has published over 250 papers in scientific journals and made more than 150 presentations at scientific meetings, both internationally as well as nationally. His list of additional honors and positions of service to the scientific community covers several pages.

Dr. Dawson is survived by his beloved wife of 20 years, Judyth Corey Dawson,; and three daughters: Angela Vaziri of Alameda, CA; Diana Bedell, and husband, Brian of Gainesville; and Jude Dawson of Gainesville. He is also survived by his step-daughter, Sandra Frankenberger; and step-son, Dr. Mark Frankenberger, and his wife Dr. Alison Frankenberger. He has three grandchildren and three step-grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his first wife, Shirley, devoted mother of his three daughters.

He was a member of First Presbyterian Church of Gainesville, and an ardent supporter of its music program. He enjoyed boating and fishing, traveling both nationally and abroad, history, music, and quiet times at his home overlooking Paynes Prairie.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests memorial donations to one of the following: The Dawson Music Scholarship Fund, 106 SW Third Street, Gainesville, Florida 32601. This scholarship benefits select music students at Santa Fe College and the University of Florida; The North Florida Lions Eye Foundation, 7812 Blakeford Mill Lane, Jacksonville, Florida 32256; or Micanopy Historical Society, P. O. Box 75, Micanopy, FL 32667.

Dr. Dawson will be cremated and his ashes will be incorporated into the Eternal Reef in the Gulf of Mexico.