



May 27, 2020

## John B. Little, October 5, 1929 – May 24, 2020 In Memoriam



Born October 5, 1929 in Boston, Massachusetts, John B. Little (Jack) passed away on Sunday, May 24, 2020. He was an outstanding scientist who made seminal discoveries in radiation biology and cancer biology, including mechanistic aspects of DNA repair, mutagenesis, genomic instability, and other nontargeted effects of exposure that each influence radiation response. Dr. Little was the Director of the John B. Little Center for Radiation Sciences and Environmental Health and of the Kresge Center for Environmental Health at the Harvard School of Public Health, where he served as Chairman of the Department of Physiology and the Department of Cancer Cell Biology. Dr. Little was the James Stevens Simmons Professor of Radiobiology until his retirement. He earned his AB in Physics from Harvard University in 1951 and an MD from Boston University in 1955. He

did his internship on the Osler Service at the Johns Hopkins Hospital, and then served as a U.S. Army Captain in the Medical Corps in Texas, and in Bussac, France. He completed his training in Radiology at the Massachusetts General Hospital and was board certified in Radiology. Dr. Little served as a consultant in radiobiology at the Massachusetts General Hospital starting in 1965. He was a recipient of the Radiation Research Society Failla Award in 1994 and the Henry S. Kaplan Distinguished Scientist Award from the International Association for Radiation Research in 1999.

Dr. Little was first elected to the National Council on Radiation Protection and Measurements (NCRP) in 1991 and became a Distinguished Emeritus Member in 2009. During his tenure, he served as a Member of Scientific Committee 1 and as a Consultant to Scientific Committee 83. He was also a member of the 1996 Annual Meeting Program Committee. Dr. Little's outstanding contributions to the field of radiation protection were recognized by his selection as the Lauriston S. Taylor Lecturer in 2005. Dr. Little's Taylor Lecture, delivered at the NCRP Annual Meeting, was entitled "Nontargeted Effects of Radiation: Implications for Low Dose Exposures."

Dr. Little was a member of the Radiation Research Society and served as their President from 1986 to 1987; and a member of the American Association for Cancer Research, the American Physiological Society, the American Society for Photobiology, and the Health Physics Society. He authored or co-authored more than 525 scientific papers and holds a patent for "Cell Lines and Methods for Assaying Human Interchromosomal Recombination."

He was Chairman of the Board on Radiation Effects Research, Commission of Life Sciences, National Research Council, National Academies from 1992 to 1998; Chairman of the Science Council of the Radiation Effects Research Foundation from 1992 to 1998; a Member of the International Commission on Radiological Protection Committee 1; and Chairman of the Board of Scientific Councilors of the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, among many other international panels, editorial boards, and committees.

Dr. Little's legacy includes his inspired leadership of an NIH Radiation Biology training grant starting in 1975. Over his extraordinary career, Dr. Little mentored more than 250 individuals from all over the world, including undergraduate students, doctoral candidates, postdoctoral fellows, and clinician-scientists. Many of his trainees have served the NCRP as committee members, as members of the Council, and the Board of Directors. Dr. Little will be fondly remembered as a fine gentleman, thoughtful and caring mentor, and wonderful scientist.

The NCRP extends its condolences to his wife, Françoise, sons John Jr. and Frédéric, daughters-in-law Pamela and Claudia, and five grandchildren.