Fungal Genetics Newsletter 54 In Press

Obituaries

David Dexter Perkins (1919-2007)

David Perkins died on January 2, 2007 after a short illness. Two comprehensive obituaries, documenting the lives and scientific careers of David and his wife Dorothy Newmeyer Perkins (1922-2007) have been published elsewhere, and it is not our intention to duplicate those accounts, merely to commend them (Davis 2007, Genetics 175: 1-6; Raju 2007, J. Genetics, Vol. 86, in press). This is an account focusing specifically on David's involvement with the Fungal Genetics Stock Center, Neurospora Newsletter and its successor, the Fungal Genetics Newsletter, over the past forty-five years.

David was one of the five members of the committee that organized the first Neurospora Information Conference in 1961, the predecessor of the Fungal Genetics Conferences. A direct outgrowth of this first conference was the creation of the Neurospora Newsletter. David was always a strong supporter of the Newsletter, as a journal for the fast but refereed publication of short research notes, new linkage data, maps, FGSC stock lists relating to Neurospora, and subsequently, from 1986, to fungi in general. His own first item in the Newsletter was in volume 2, with a note on the favourable nature of the asci of *bis* x *bis* crosses for meiotic cytogenetics. Over the following four decades and more, David published eighty-five items in the Newsletter, covering research reports, novel techniques, new linkage data, regular updates of the complete linkage maps of *Neurospora crassa*, guidelines for gene nomenclature and obituaries for fellow pioneers in the sphere of Neurospora genetics. David was a tower of strength for the three editors of the Newsletter since its inception, Barbara Bachmann, Peter Russell and Matthew Sachs, not only as a contributor and as a reviewer of contributed papers but also in providing encouragement and moral support when needed.
In addition to David's Newsletter contributions, he played a major role in establishing and nurturing the Fungal Genetics Stock Center. Kevin McCluskey, the present curator of FGSC, compiled David's major contributions to the stock center. Beginning in 1960, David deposited 3150 strains in the FGSC collection including strains 1-192. In 1999, he deposited most of his 3900 stains from wild collection. Thus it is not unusual to see the initials DDP associated with most of the Neurospora strains in the FGSC collection. David's natural populations of Neurospora provide a rich source of variability that contributed to several major discoveries: heterokaryon incompatibility genes, transposable elements, senescence inducing plasmids, meiotic drive causing Spore killer elements etc.

David was always frugal both in private life and in science; he walked or bicycled to work, and always used glass plates, culture tubes and pipets that were washed and reused, again and again. He devised numerous simple methods for storing strains on silica gel, developed multiply marked "*multicent*" strains for reliable and quick mapping of centromere-linked mutations, and incorporated three reciprocal chromosome rearrangements into a single strain "*alcoy*" for mapping various mutant genes. He was also the main driving force behind the Neurospora Methods Manual (ed. Deborah Bell-Pederson), which is available on line at the FGSC site.

The Newsletter, like the whole Neurospora community, has lost a friend, an adviser, and its figurehead. David led the community in his quiet, self-effacing way, through good and bad times, from the early days of map construction and mapping functions, studies on chromosome rearrangements, spore killers, population biology, to the genome sequence and beyond. His continuous and evolving role is well-documented in his contributions in the pages of the Newsletter and elsewhere. David will be best remembered as one of the founders and pillars of our vibrant community and its most tireless advocate.

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