



Willys Kent Silvers

January 12, 1929 - January 24, 2024

Willys Kent Silvers, a Professor of Human Genetics at the University of Pennsylvania, died on January 24, 2024 at his home in Gladwyne. Born in the Bronx in 1929, Willys received his pre-college education at the Ethical Culture Fieldston School in Manhattan. From there, he matriculated to Johns Hopkins University, received his Ph.D. from the University of Chicago and did an NIH postdoctoral fellowship at Brown University. Dr. Silvers spent eight years at the Wistar Institute starting in 1957 before being recruited to the University of Pennsylvania and helping to start the Department of Genetics where he worked until 1996. While at Penn he served as acting chair of the Department for 9 years and chaired the Genetics Graduate group for 12 years. Dr. Silvers authored 2 books and over 200 other publications. He really enjoyed his students and was a recipient of the Mary F. Lindback Award for Distinguished Teaching and the Dean's Award in Graduate Teaching.

Dr. Silvers spent many summers conducting research at the Jackson Laboratory in Bar Harbor, Maine. In the summer of 1956, while continuing his post-doctoral work at the Lab, he met his wife, Abigail, a summer student preparing for Medical School. After a very short courtship, the two married and settled in Philadelphia, where Abigail had been admitted to the University of Pennsylvania Medical School. Dr. Silvers relationship with the Lab continued and he would eventually serve on the Lab's Board of Scientific Overseers, chairing it from 1986-1989.

Dr. Silvers primary research interests were in pigment cell and transplantation biology. Dr. Silvers wrote books on each topic, publishing *The Immunobiology of Transplantation* (which he co-authored with Ruper Billingham) in 1971 and *the Coat Colors of Mice* which was published in 1979.

In 1990, the University of Pennsylvania honored Dr. Silvers by engaging an artist to draw his portrait and have it hung in the Clinical Research Building of the University.

Following his retirement from the University of Pennsylvania, he continued to do melanoma research at Fox Chase Cancer Center as a visiting scientist while becoming an avid collector of art from the New Hope School of Pennsylvania Impressionists.

Upon Abigail's death in 2005, Willys set up a scholarship fund in her name at the Baldwin School to pay the tuition of disadvantaged scholars.

Besides his son and daughter, he is survived by two grandsons, Nicholas and Willys III. In accord with his wishes no funeral services is planned. He has requested contributions in his memory be directed to the Abigail Adams Silvers Scholarship Fund c/o The Baldwin School, 701 Montgomery Ave., Bryn Mawr, PA 19010.

Tribute Wall



“ *I knew his twin brother Lewis who died a couple years v ago.
Passionate fine artist. Expressed his love for Willys may they both
rest in peace.*

Dana Chrisler - January 29, 2024 at 11:10 AM