

## **In memoriam of W. B (Bernie) Webb (1920–2018): A Pioneer in Sleep research**

Wilse Bernard (Bernie) Webb, one of the pioneers of modern sleep research died on January 18, 2018, at the age of 98. Bernie was born in Yazoo City, Mississippi, and obtained the BA degree from Louisiana State University. He entered the psychology program at the University of Iowa in September 1941, but enlisted in the Army Air Corp in March of 1942 as a psychological technician. He was commissioned and served for four years, conducting psychological research in the training commands and overseas. He returned to graduate school and completed his PhD in 1947 under Kenneth Spence, PhD, a leading figure in theories of learning and motivation.

After teaching positions at the University of Tennessee and Washington University he became the Director of the Aviation Psychology Laboratory of the US Naval School of Aviation Medicine in 1953, where, based upon his wartime experiences, he did research and published in aviation psychology with an emphasis on aircraft accidents. In 1958 he was appointed Chairman of the Department of Psychology at the University of Florida where in 1969 he was appointed Graduate Research Professor and in 1989 retired as a professor Emeritus. Bernie received two Research Fellowships to engage in research in Cambridge, England, where he was a Fellow at Churchill College.

Bernie was one of the pioneers in the area of sleep research that had begun to emerge in the 1950s. His first paper in this area was published in the *Journal of Experimental Psychology* in 1957: "Antecedents of sleep". In this paper he reported on the relationship between sleep and three antecedent conditions: past experience, time of sleep deprivation, and an irrelevant drive level. He reported on a marked individual consistency in sleep latency that appeared to be more important than the experimental conditions imposed on the subjects. Later he published extensively in the areas of individual differences in sleep patterns, the effects of sleep deprivation, and the aging of sleep. His major contributions however focused on sleep as a biological rhythm rather than exclusively a nutritive or homeostatic system. His laboratory was among the first to use electrophysiological sleep recordings in long periods of time isolation and performed extensive studies on displaced sleep schedules simulating jet lag and shift work, as well as other non-24-hour schedules. His theoretical analyses contributed substantially to the development of the two-factor theory of sleep. He was an early proponent of viewing sleep as an evolutionarily developed adaptive process. Many students were introduced to sleep by reading his *Annual Review of Psychology* chapter on sleep as well as similar articles in the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, *Encyclopedia of Psychology*, *Encyclopedia of Comparative Psychology*, and the *Encyclopedia of Sleep*. Bernie was the author/editor of eight books, more than 160 scientific articles and 40 book chapters. He was one of the early members of the Association for the Psychophysiological Study of Sleep (APSS) and later the Sleep Research Society. He was one of a handful of people who attended the earliest APSS meetings.

Although his research focused mainly on sleep he had a great interest in the history of psychology as well as in the teaching of psychology. He was also very active in professional organizations. He served as the President of the Southern Society for

Philosophy and Psychology and the Southeastern Psychological Association, as President of the Division of Teaching and the Division of History of the American Psychological Association (APA), and was twice a member of the APA Board of Directors. The sleep community recognized his contributions and elected him as an Honorary Member of the American Academy of Sleep Medicine. The Sleep Research Society bestowed on him the Distinguished Scientist Award in 1992. He always had interests beyond science. As a boy he collected arrowheads from the cotton fields and Roman Coins when he grew up. He greatly enjoyed poetry and had a radio program for poetry reading for years.

On retirement, Bernie enjoyed life to the fullest. He and his wife Mary, whose death preceded him by a decade, were inveterate travelers. They absorbed Europe and extended into Greece, and Egypt as well as Russia, Turkey and China. In their later years they enjoyed frequent cruises.

Bernie is survived by 4 children, eight grandchildren and 2 great grandchildren.