

IN MEMORIAM

PAUL FREDERICK BASCH



Paul Basch was born 10 November 1933 in the back of the general store operated by his parents in the village of Kirchstetten, Austria. At the time of his death 14 June 2001 from complications following open-heart surgery, he was Professor Emeritus of Health Research and Policy, Stanford University School of Medicine.

Dr. Basch's death occurred some 25 years after a serious heart attack near Wuxi, China. At that time he was serving as deputy chairman of the U.S. Schistosomiasis Delegation from the National Academy of Sciences to the People's Republic of China, one of the earliest official delegations to the PRC. In characteristic fashion, Paul subsequently published a tongue-in-cheek, but accurate, description of his near-fatal experience, titled *A Barefoot Patient in China* (Stanford M.D., 1976), as well as a proper medical account (with J. S. Lehman, Jr.) in the *Archives of Internal Medicine* (136: 804–806, 1976). During the intervening quarter century, Paul, also in characteristic fashion, made a focused, efficient, and single-minded use of what he acutely realized might be a brief time span.

Paul was brilliant, utterly candid and honest, intolerant of fools and time-wasters, but generous, warm, and loyal to his many friends. No one could match his repartee or the swiftness (and inevitability) of his puns. His instantaneous humor marked his mind: rapid, incisive, efficient, iconoclastic, independent. Despite his gregarious nature, Paul was a loner, with strong, sometimes acerbic opinions, often contrary to popular view. This may relate to his early history. He escaped with his older brother Henry to England from Nazi-occupied Austria in 1939, where the boys lived with a childless British couple until 1940. His parents escaped separately from Austria, and the family was reunited in time to take one of the last ship convoys from Liverpool to New

York. Though often facing hostility in a difficult environment in New York City while growing up, Paul was an apt and focused student. He attended the prestigious Bronx High School of Science, then graduated in Biology from City College of New York in 1954 and rapidly completed graduate school at the University of Michigan, earning his doctorate in 1958. His thesis was on the biology and evolution of the freshwater limpets, family Ancyliidae. In Paul's words, the study was on "an obscure group of freshwater mollusks about which he became at the time the world's leading (and only) authority". Vintage Basch.

He worked independently, even while a member of a research team, as during his 8-year participation, with his wife Natalícia, as a member of Dr. Kian-Joe Lie's pioneering group at the University of California, San Francisco, and at UCSF's International Center for Medical Research and Training at The Institute of Medical Research, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, studying trematode–snail and intertrematode interactions in host snails. After a 3-year stint of field and laboratory investigations in Malaysia, Paul went to Belo Horizonte, Brazil, under Rockefeller Foundation support to continue his field studies on schistosome–snail host–parasite relations.

The best of his findings there was a young researcher, Maria Natalícia Mourão, subsequently his research colleague, wife of 35 years, and mother of sons Richard and Daniel. The new family returned to Malaysia in January 1969, their elder son Richard being just 8 weeks old. A year later, Dr. Basch accepted a faculty position at the Department of Family, Community, and Preventive Medicine (subsequently renamed Health Research and Policy), Stanford University School of Medicine, to teach courses in medical parasitology and international health. He developed 5 new and popular courses on widely ranging topics for the Stanford Medical School curriculum. His classes in medical parasitology and international health continued for 30 years, and he became well known as an outstanding teacher, although he had never himself taken a course in either subject. He often wryly remarked that he was guilty of practicing parasitology without a license.

Paul established his own laboratory at Stanford with only student volunteer and grant-supported part-time assistants. Nonetheless, his lab was soon recognized as a leading center for growing schistosomes in artificial culture and for a variety of studies to unravel the complex reproductive and hormonal relations that result in the production of eggs, the major cause of pathology in humans.

Paul's focus gradually shifted from schistosomiasis to health policy issues and from laboratory research to teaching, writing, and consulting. He served as a consultant for the U.S. Agency for International Development, World Health Organization, and other organizations on health-related projects in many developing countries. He was a member of the Tropical Medicine and Parasitology Study Section of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases of the NIH and served on the Board of the NIH-NIAID U.S.-Japan Cooperative Medical Science Program (Geographic Medicine Branch). At Stanford, Paul combined his interest in international health and in his students by active participation in their Latin American and African Studies committees and other international health activities.

Dr. Basch published 125 research papers and textbook chapters, chiefly as senior author, and 56 as sole author, a rarity in these days of multiple authorship. He wrote 5 books published by Oxford Press: 3 on international health; 1 on the science, policy, and practice of vaccine use in world health; and one summarizing work on schistosome development, reproduction, and host relations . . . much of it his own. His widely used *Textbook of International Health* underwent a thoroughly revised second edition, published in 1999. Paul took early retirement from his Stanford professorship in 1997 to concentrate on his writing. Time ran out while he was working on his last book, *Good for You/Bad for You: Health, Science, and Illusion*. The title suggests his thinking in his later years, with a pragmatic no-nonsense rejection of any form of illusory or nonscientific medicine. Lack of completion of this work is a loss for us all.

Despite his self-deprecating and seemingly laid-back style, Paul was a sternly disciplined dedicated researcher and teacher. He was extraordinarily well organized and thorough and an early devotee and master