



## REMEMBERING JULIUS C. ALLEN

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**Abstract** – Our respected colleague and friend, Dr. Julius C. Allen, passed away on Thursday, February 10, 2005. Known to his friends and family as “Julie,” Dr. Allen was an internationally-recognized investigator in cardiovascular science and an early contributor to the biochemistry of the Na,K-pump. His work was inevitably multi-disciplinary, with contributions to biochemistry, physiology, and pharmacology. He helped develop and later directed the Graduate Program for Cardiovascular Sciences at Baylor College of Medicine. Beyond his science, Dr. Allen was a strong advocate of progressive social and political reform, as well as a passionate sports enthusiast. With his sense of humor, it was impossible not to have a good time when he was around. His friendship, wise advice, and experience will be sorely missed.

**Key words:** Allen, Julius C.; memorial; cardiovascular science

A valued colleague and long-term contributor to the field of cardiovascular physiology, Dr. Julius C. Allen, passed away on February 10, 2005. Known to all his friends as “Julie,” he was a talented scientist, skilled administrator, and compassionate humanitarian. His contributions will be deeply missed.

After earning his Ph.D. in pharmacology from the University of Alberta in 1967, Julie moved to Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, Texas, where he remained for nearly 35 years (BCM-Medicine, 2005). Training as a postdoctoral fellow with Arnold Schwartz, he was instrumental in completing some of the early work on the purification of membrane proteins, focusing on the Na,K-ATPase and its binding of cardiotonic glycosides (e.g., Allen et al. 1970). He retained this interest in transporters and their pharmacology throughout his career, eventually focusing on vascular smooth muscle and its regulation. Julie served as a reviewer for American Heart Association and National Institutes of Health study sections and was active in several professional societies. Over the years, he was a regular participant in the series of International Conferences on the Na,K-ATPase and Related Cation Pumps.

Shortly after my recruitment to the University of Texas, I became involved in a collaboration with Julie. He wanted to learn some molecular biology techniques and proposed a short sabbatical in my laboratory to obtain this training. For a junior faculty member who was just starting out, it was a heady experience to have this respected senior investigator asking to work with me. Julie was convinced that there was something very unusual about the Na,K-ATPase in the vascular smooth muscle samples that he was studying, and he wanted my help with a molecular characterization (Medford et al. 1991). Over the next few months, I gained a healthy respect for the challenges posed to biochemists and physiologists by smooth muscle, as well as for the talented scientists such as Julie who worked with this difficult tissue. What I thought would be a simple problem quickly evolved into a long-term project, and despite years of effort, many questions remain.

Like the experiences of so many who worked with Julie, our scientific collaboration grew into a true friendship. It was simply impossible to avoid a good time when you were with him, and some of his experiences in

classrooms and scientific meetings have become the stuff of legend. Many of these were “fish-out-of-water” stories that recount the attempts of Julie and his friends to adapt to various cultures and traditions at various international meetings. For example, Julie and I managed to get lost in nearly every city that we visited, and our attempts at obtaining directions from the locals often bordered on the absurd. On the road and at home, he was always ready with a joke, and he loved to post cartoons on the wall opposite his office at Baylor, eventually collecting hundreds. Indeed, this cartoon collage became part of the standard tour when visiting the College of Medicine. Julie was also an avid runner and swimmer, and the swimming pool that he maintained in his backyard was the site of many parties and picnics over the years.

As much as Julie enjoyed having a good time, he had a serious side as well. He was instrumental in establishing the Cardiovascular Sciences Graduate Training program, and he served as its director and an advisor for the many students who entered the program. His counsel wasn't limited to the graduate trainees, however, and I sought his advice many times when I became the director of our departmental graduate program here at Texas Tech. He was also deeply involved in humanitarian projects, serving in various advisory roles in organizations supporting the deaf. As might be expected from such an outgoing personality, Julie loved to argue politics, and he worked as an activist for various issues in the community. Indeed, one of my last conversations with Julie was when I called to congratulate him on the publication of a letter to the editor at the *New York Times* commenting on the conduct of the war in Iraq (Allen 2004).

Despite his many interests, he remained a devoted husband and father, and he took many opportunities to spend vacations with his now grown-up sons and their families. I had the chance to attend a memorial dinner with his family and neighbors after a service at Baylor. Despite the sorrow, his wife Martha and sons Jeffrey and Matthew spent as much time laughing over stories about Julie as thinking about the loss. We can probably all agree that while we may miss Julie, we will always have

fond memories of his friendship and accomplishments.

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Dr. Julius C. Allen