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I was shocked to learn that Bob Butler passed away on July 4th. Although I have been a gerontologist for about 25 years, I never imagined that Dr. Butler could or would die. Bob has been a presence in my life since I read *Why Survive? Being Old in America* in the early eighties.

I had already decided on a career in aging focused on geriatric mental health, so Bob was like a rock star to me. He was my hero; he had dedicated his life and career to creating a better society for older people, and I planned on doing the same.

When I had an opportunity to meet him in person after I began working at the Brookdale Foundation in 1994, I was both thrilled and intimidated. We met in his home office and I was too nervous to speak. He couldn't have been more gracious and was completely down to earth and quite helpful. I worked with Bob on the Brookdale Fellowship program (which he advised) until 1998 and then I went to work with him at the International Longevity Center (ILC).

I was always impressed with Bob's abundant knowledge. He could see and say things in a way that no one else could. For instance, Bob didn't believe in the widely held notion that longevity and population aging are economic threats that put a drain on society; he

truly believed that health and longevity create wealth. So he commissioned a study to investigate his theory. He believed that health results in productive engagement throughout life, and he was living proof of that!

Bob was always optimistic, with boundless energy. Each day he had a dozen new ideas. We worked on many projects at once, and while I would need to take a break, he seemed to become more energized the busier he became. We fondly called him the Energizer Bunny.

Bob was a true Renaissance man, but always approachable. And although he was a psychiatrist, he believed that providing appropriate care to older people required an interdisciplinary team. He hired staff from various disciplines and always sought our input on everything. Everyone at the ILC read and commented on chapters of his book *The Longevity Revolution*, as well as on all ILC publications.

Bob believed that all health care professionals should receive support for training in geriatrics. He lobbied Congress hard for geriatric fellowship awards for physicians and planned on doing the same for nurses and social workers once he got his foot in the door. I feel so honored now to be working at the Hartford Foundation where my



ILC Alliance presidents and directors with persons concerned
Dr. Pereyra, (Third from the left) and (to right): Ms. O'Brien, Mr. Morioka, Dr. Forette,
Dr. Butler and Baroness Greengross

colleagues and I can continue to advance this vision of interdisciplinary geriatric care.

In this past week I have heard from many friends and colleagues from around the world. Many leaders have told me that Bob was an inspiration to them. Several colleagues wrote that they started an International Longevity Center in their country because Bob inspired them. A good friend wrote succinctly what everyone has been saying: "You cannot imagine my grief, because apart from being a very dear friend, he was my inspiration and I was terribly proud of being close to such an extraordinary

man. I will always miss him."

Many of my colleagues are wondering, "Who can replace Bob?" and "Who from the next generation can fill Bob's shoes? I don't believe anyone can or should. Bob's purpose was to be a visionary leader, to inspire others to believe in better care for older people and take up the charge. It took a leader to prepare the way; it takes an entire workforce to build a better society for older people. This is the mission of the Hartford Foundation, and I trust it is your mission, too. Let's honor Bob by working together towards our common goal.