

In Memoriam

Jeremy R. Knowles

1935–2008

JEREMY KNOWLES, AN ACCOMPLISHED SCIENTIST AND AN HHMI TRUSTEE, DIED APRIL 3, 2008. HE WAS 72 YEARS OLD.



Jeremy R. Knowles, an HHMI Trustee for nearly a decade, died April 3, 2008, at his home in Cambridge, Massachusetts, following a long bout with prostate cancer. He was 72.

“Jeremy had a deep concern for and pride in the Institute and its work and the highest of standards for its science and scientists,” said Hanna H. Gray, Chair of the Trustees. “His warmth and intelligence made him both loved and respected by his colleagues everywhere.”

An accomplished chemist whose research traversed the boundaries of chemistry and biochemistry, Knowles was known for his luminous intelligence, penetrating judgment, elegant speech, and refined wit. He was a towering figure at Harvard University whose faculty he joined in 1974 as Professor of Chemistry. He became Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences in 1991, at a critical moment that required firm leadership and a deft touch. He served for 11 years and then reprised the role from 2006 to 2007.

“As an HHMI Trustee, Jeremy was completely engaged in both the Institute’s scientific and educational activities. Among many other contributions, he provided thoughtful advice concerning the development of HHMI’s Janelia Farm Research Campus,” said Thomas R. Cech, President of the Institute.

Knowles played an equally significant role in shaping the vision of the Institute’s programs in science education and chaired a Trustee subcommittee that served as an important sounding board for new initiatives. That keen interest reflected his own commitment to teaching; he took

particular delight in returning to the classroom upon stepping down as Dean.

Born in England, Knowles attended Magdalen College School in Oxford and served as an officer in the Royal Air Force before reading chemistry at Balliol College at Oxford University, receiving his B.A. in 1959 and his D.Phil. in 1961. Upon completing a postdoctoral fellowship at the California Institute of Technology, Knowles returned to Oxford as a Fellow and Tutor of Wadham College and was appointed to a University Lectureship in 1966.

Knowles’ scientific interests lay at the intersection of chemistry and biochemistry and he made lasting contributions to understanding the chemistry of enzyme action. He returned to the United States in 1969 and 1971 as a Visiting Professor in the Departments of Molecular Biophysics and Chemistry at Yale University before coming to Harvard in 1973 as Sloan Visiting Professor. Although he returned to Oxford from 1983 to 1984, Knowles remained at Harvard for the rest of his career in academia.

The *Harvard University Gazette*, in recounting Knowles’ accomplishments, noted that he advised more than 50 Ph.D. recipients during his career at Oxford and Harvard and authored more than 250 research papers. He was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1977 and a Foreign Associate of the National Academy of Sciences in 1988. He received many other honors and awards.

Knowles is survived by his wife, Jane; their three children, Sebastian, Julius, and Timothy; and seven grandchildren. ■