

In Memoriam

Michael Alcalay, M.D., M.P.H. '74, died November 18, 2006, at age 65. A pediatrician at Kaiser Permanente Medical Center in Oakland, Alcalay spent much of his career providing health care and advocating for disenfranchised patients. He opened a health clinic for farmworkers in Watsonville, produced a syndicated AIDS radio show, and served as medical director of the Oakland Cannabis Buyers' Cooperative, among other accomplishments.

He grew up in Los Angeles and attended UC Berkeley, and later UCLA medical school, on scholarships. After serving two years as a physician in the Vietnam War, he moved back to the Bay Area, and through his partner, who was Puerto Rican, he became interested in Latino immigrants' health issues. In 1975, he opened *Salud Para la Gente*, a free clinic for farmworkers, in Watsonville. The clinic was staffed by Bay Area doctors and nurses who donated their services.

In 1980, Alcalay began working abroad, in England, Germany, Kenya, Mexico, and Nicaragua. In Nicaragua, he made his first foray into media, co-producing a 90-minute video documentary about gains in health care under the Sandinistas. After Alcalay was diagnosed with HIV in 1986, he started producing a 15-minute radio show called "AIDS in Focus" through KPFA in Berkeley. In the early 1990s, Alcalay's attention turned to the medical properties of marijuana. He spent years researching the drug and its effects on various conditions, enrolling more than 1,000 patients through the Oakland Cannabis Buyers' Cooperative. He was also featured on a PBS documentary called "Waiting to Inhale."

Alcalay is survived by his twin sons, his mother, stepfather, two brothers, and a sister.



George McClelland Foster Jr., Ph.D., a professor of anthropology and lecturer in public health at the University of California, Berkeley, died May 18, 2006, at age 92. He was

generally known as the founder of medical anthropology and for his pioneering contributions on peasant societies and long-term field

research documenting societal change. Foster, who received his Ph.D. in anthropology from UC Berkeley in 1941, established himself as one of the most distinguished anthropologists of his generation during a career spanning more than six decades. Key areas of his work included historical reconstruction, social roles and structure, material and visual cultures, international public health, ethnography and field methods, and pottery technology. He also earned a reputation as an outstanding scholar for his theories such as the "principle of limited good" in times of scarcity, as well as for his work on medical systems based on the concept of the human body's need for a temperature balance between hot and cold. Foster authored nearly 300 publications, including more than a dozen books on theory, method and ethnography.

Over the years, Foster served as a consultant on international health for numerous agencies such as the World Health Organization, UNICEF and others, and he traveled widely throughout Asia, Africa, and Latin America. He was elected president of the American Anthropological Association in 1970. He was elected to the U.S. National Academy of Sciences and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. He received the Malinowski Award from the Society for Applied Anthropology, a Guggenheim Fellowship, and a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Society for Medical Anthropology. Foster also received an honorary doctorate from Southern Methodist University. Upon his retirement in 1979, Foster received the Berkeley Citation, the campus's highest honor.

Foster is survived by his son and daughter, five grandchildren, and four great-grandchildren.



Sylvie Redmond Griffiths, M.A., died on September 6, 2006, at age 90. Born in New York City, she received her B.A. from Bennington College and her M.A. in psychology

from the University of California, Berkeley. She was married to the late **William (Bill) Griffiths**, professor emeritus at the UC Berkeley School of Public Health, who played

a vital role in building the School's Health Education Program and was adviser and mentor to generations of international students. The couple often hosted public health students in their home. They traveled extensively to many Third World countries in conjunction with Bill's work in health education and population planning. After Bill's death, Sylvie established the William Griffiths Endowed Fund at the UC Berkeley School of Public Health in his memory. She remained an active supporter of the School and regularly attended the annual Scholarship Tea.

She took active leadership roles in numerous state and local organizations, including serving terms as president of the Richmond League of Women Voters, the Richmond YWCA, the Bay Area YWCAs and the Faculty Wives' Section Club at UC Berkeley. She also served as a member of short memoirs that recounted significant incidents in her life, many of which included famous people, including J.D. Rockefeller II, Dorothy Day, B.F. Skinner, and Franklin Delano Roosevelt (her mother's first cousin). She is survived by four children and nine grandchildren.

To make a gift in memory of Sylvie Griffiths, please make your check payable to the "William Griffiths Endowed Fund" and mail it to Pat Hosel, Office of External Relations, UC Berkeley School of Public Health, 140 Warren Hall, Berkeley, CA 94720-7360.

James P. MacLaren, M.P.H. '62, died August 15, 2006, at age 91. He led a life full of adventures in Montana, Minnesota, Korea, Mexico, Peru, and the Panama Canal Zone, and retired in Oakland, California. He is survived by his wife, two daughters, a son, and eight grandchildren.

Joyce Ann Vermeersch, Dr.P.H. '75, M.P.H. '69, died June 12, 2006, at age 60. Born in Detroit, she received her B.S. cum laude from Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo. After receiving her doctorate in public health, she moved to Davis, California, where she was an assistant professor in the Department of Nutrition until 1979. After a successful career as a health

Alfred Wheeler Childs, M.D., M.P.H. '64

Alfred Wheeler Childs, M.D., M.P.H. '64, a former professor at the UC Berkeley School of Public Health and a dedicated and committed alumnus, died on July 5, 2006. He was 84.

Childs spent much of his life working towards improved health for all people, as a physician, faculty member, and advocate for advances in health care services. He participated in every aspect of patient care, from treating individuals at home and abroad, to directing an artificial kidney unit, to supporting the next generation of public health leaders through active involvement at the UC Berkeley School of Public Health.

Born in 1922 in San Francisco, he received a bachelor's degree in medical science from UC Berkeley in 1943 and a medical degree from UCSF in 1946. He enlisted in the Army Reserve from 1943 to 1946, served in the Air Force as a medical officer for two years, and in the Air Force Reserve from 1949 to 1964. He was a visiting fellow in medicine at Columbia University, New York City from 1954 to 1956.

In 1964 Childs received his master's degree in public health from UC Berkeley. He served on the faculty for the next 11 years, as well as on the clinical faculties of Stanford Medical School and UCSF. He also worked on the medical staff of Alta Bates Hospital in Berkeley and Presbyterian Hospital in San Francisco. He became director of the artificial kidney unit at Presbyterian, a role that brought media attention from television programs such as "Science In Action."



"Al was a tireless supporter of the School, and we were fortunate to benefit from his leadership and dedication," said Dean Stephen Shortell of the School of Public Health. "We were all privileged to work with him."

Childs was well known for his commitment to volunteering and working towards creating health care systems that meet the needs of all people. In 1962 he went to Peru with Project HOPE, an organization that seeks to address health problems around the globe, particularly in developing nations. He served on the UC Berkeley School of Public Health's Policy Advisory Council from its inception.

An active alumnus, Childs lent his time and leadership skills to the California Alumni Association, the University Art Museum Council, and the board of directors of the UC Berkeley Public Health Alumni Association. He also represented the School of Public

Health on the UC Berkeley Foundation Board of Trustees. In 1993, School of Public Health dean emerita **Patricia Buffer** established the Alfred W. Childs Distinguished Service Awards to recognize faculty and staff who exemplified Childs's generosity of spirit and commitment to the school. In 1991 he received the California Alumni Citation and in 1994 the Trustees Citation.

"Al was a tireless supporter of the School, and we were fortunate to benefit from his leadership and dedication," said **Dean Stephen Shortell** of the School of Public Health. "We were all privileged to work with him."

Childs is survived by his wife Eunice and his loving family.

To make a gift in memory of Alfred Childs, please make your check payable to the "Alfred W. Childs Endowed Fund" and mail it to Pat Hosel, Office of External Relations, UC Berkeley School of Public Health, 140 Warren Hall, Berkeley, CA, 94720-7360. [🔗](#)

program consultant, she entered McGeorge School of Law and received her J.D. with high distinction in 1985. She clerked for U.S. District Judge Edward Garcia and entered private practice. She returned to the U.S. Attorney's office in Sacramento as an assistant U.S. attorney in the Civil Division for five years.

In state service, she served with the formation of the Department of Managed Health Care, where she supervised 14 attorneys engaged in the regulation of health care service plans. Later, she joined the California Public Employees' Retirement System (CalPERS), where she served as chief of the Health Program Development Division and was

responsible for negotiating and administering HMO contracts for 1.2 million CalPERS members. She was also an attorney with the CalPERS legal office.

She is survived by her husband, Scott Merrill, and two cousins. [🔗](#)