

IN MEMORIAM

EVAN P. KYBA

Evan Peter Kyba was born in Canora, Saskatchewan, Canada, on June 27, 1940, the son of Peter and Mary (Keaschuk) Kyba, and passed away in Austin, Texas, on September 15, 2019. He is survived by his wife, Ferne, their son Kevan, their “daughter”(-in-law) Suzanne, their grandson Ashdon, all of whom reside in Austin, and his sister, Karen Donahue, of Calgary, Alberta, Canada.

Evan was a natural track and field athlete in his youth, and although his family lived in rural Saskatchewan, his supportive parents drove him throughout the province, enabling him to earn many ribbons and crests. His passion for sports continued through high school at Nutana Collegiate in Saskatoon and college at the University of Saskatchewan where he earned a Bachelor of Arts and a Diploma in Education in 1962 while playing football with the Saskatoon Hilltops Club of the Canadian Junior Football League. “Blowing out” his knee during a game led to surgery and his serendipitous meeting of Ferne Newman, one of the City Hospital nurses, whom he married on Bastille Day, July 14, 1962.

Following a three-year stint as a high school science teacher and football coach in Regina, Evan returned to Saskatoon to attend the University of Saskatchewan, where he completed a B.A. in Chemistry with Honors in 1967. He then entered the chemistry doctoral program at the University of Saskatchewan, but he came to the United States in January 1968 when his supervising professor R.A. Abramovitch moved to the University of Alabama at Tuscaloosa. After completing his Ph.D. in 1971, Evan, Ferne, and their new son Kevan moved to Los Angeles, where Evan worked at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) as a postdoctoral associate on

the early stages of host-guest chemistry with Professor Donald Cram, who was a co-winner of the 1987 Nobel Prize in Chemistry.

Evan joined the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry at The University of Texas at Austin as an assistant professor in 1972 and rose through the academic ranks to become a full professor. His early independent research career was marked by numerous publications in the general area of physical organic chemistry, followed by a series of important contributions in the synthesis of organophosphorus and organometallic compounds. Among his significant publications in physical organic chemistry were experimental and theoretical studies defining shifts of hydrogen atoms in alkylcarbenes; his synthetic contributions included preparation of a number of previously unknown phosphorus-containing macrocycles and their derived complexes. A demanding and highly regarded teacher and mentor to his students and postdoctoral associates, Evan also fulfilled significant departmental administrative duties, including serving as its associate chair. His teaching, research, and leadership were instrumental to the success of the growing department. On the nonacademic side, Evan continued to be active in sports and was part of the “chemistry professors” basketball team that occasionally played “friendlies” with the Lady Longhorns because their legendary coach Jody Conradt believed the scrimmages offered the team “challenging, aggressive competition.”

Evan finally acceded in December 1987 to repeated overtures by a former student to join Alcon Laboratories, an ophthalmic pharmaceutical company in Fort Worth, to develop the Department of Medicinal Chemistry. At the time, Alcon was changing its pharmaceutical strategy from a “license and develop” approach to a focus on research and drug development. This new opportunity proved too exciting to resist. Evan is credited with building and managing an organization that produced three block-buster drugs that scored multi-billion-dollar sales and

helped make Alcon one of the world's largest ophthalmic pharmaceutical companies. The success of these drugs played a key role in Nestle's eventual sale of Alcon to Novartis. He retired from Alcon as Vice President for Research in 2005. Always motivated by the challenges of chemistry, Evan consulted with a startup company seeking to develop a diagnostic process for Alzheimer's disease until several weeks before his death.

During and after his time at Alcon, Evan maintained his connections with the College of Natural Sciences at the University by serving as a member of the Dean's Advisory Council. Of particular interest to him was the development of the highly regarded Freshman Research Initiative.

Evan and Ferne had a commitment to lifelong learning. This foundation came from the family roots of both, with mothers and several other relatives who were teachers. Sharing a strong belief in "paying it forward," together they endowed the Ferne and Evan Kyba Professorship in Chemistry. This generous gift will assure ongoing support to the Department of Chemistry and help The University of Texas at Austin continue its mission to change the world.



Gregory L. Fennes, President
The University of Texas at Austin



Alan W. Friedman, Secretary
The General Faculty

This memorial resolution was prepared by a special committee consisting of Professors Stephen F. Martin (Chair), John C. Gilbert (Emeritus Professor of Chemistry), and Richard A. Jones.