Roscoe R. “Ike” Robinson, MD, an internationally recognized physician, educator, and researcher, President of the American Society of Nephrology in 1981–82, and founding Editor of *Kidney International*, died Saturday, August 7, 2004. Ike very literally changed the course of medicine and the study of kidney disease during the 74 years in which he lived. Although it is impossible to detail his many contributions, each is a reflection of the man he was and the life he led.

At the time of his death, Ike was Vice-Chancellor Emeritus for Health Affairs and Professor of Medicine at Vanderbilt University School of Medicine, where he had been affiliated since 1981. He was also President of both the American Society of Nephrology (from 1981 to 1982) and the International Society of Nephrology (from 1990 to 1993). His commitment to the study of kidney disease was revolutionary and unwavering. Very few people have made the type of contributions to international nephrology as towering as Ike’s. He was a man of unquestionable integrity, resourcefulness, and diligence. No problem was too great, nor any research dilemma too overwhelming to daunt his enthusiasm and love for the process of learning and striving for a solution that could potentially improve the quality of those lives around him, his patients, his colleagues, his professional associations, and the academic institutions to which he was affiliated. There is a common thread linking these contributions, and indeed, all of Ike’s career, the innate goodness and humanity of the man.

A native of Oklahoma, Ike’s father was President of Northern Oklahoma Junior College and subsequently of the Univer-
city of Central Oklahoma, which was also Ike’s alma mater. Ike’s father was Virgil to Ike’s Dante, guiding him into a commitment to academia. Ike graduated from the University of Oklahoma College of Medicine in 1950, where he was one of the three leading students in his class.

After medical school, Ike obtained his residency training in internal medicine at Duke University Medical Center, followed by a research fellowship at Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center before returning to Duke as director of the Division of Nephrology, the Florence McAllister Professor of Medicine, and Associate Vice President for Health Affairs. Except for the research fellowship at Columbia-Presbyterian and a medical stint in the United States Air Force where he established the Air Force’s first hemodialysis unit, Ike was present at Duke between 1954, when he began his residency, and 1981, when he accepted a position at Vanderbilt University.

While at Vanderbilt, Ike served as Vice-Chancellor for Health Affairs at Vanderbilt University between 1981 and 1997. His contributions at Vanderbilt are a paradigm of academic leadership. He was instrumental in the construction of the Vanderbilt Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Hospital; the Vanderbilt Ambulatory Clinic, which permitted more than a threefold increase in ambulatory visits to Vanderbilt; the Medical Research Building I, renamed the Ann and Roscoe R. Robinson Medical Research Building in 2000; the Annette and Irwin Eskind Biomedical Library, which also houses the Vanderbilt Informatics Center; and the Medical Research Building II.

In addition to these structural achievements, Ike also nurtured the lives and careers of his students. To his credit, four of Vanderbilt’s basic science departments, whose chairs were recruited by Ike, are considered among the top 10 in the country; Vanderbilt has seen a sixfold increase in grants and contracts, currently amounting to $120 million annually; six faculty have been elected to the National Academy of Science; there is one Nobel Laureate; and, during Ike’s tenure, the full-time faculty grew from 450 to approximately 1000.

Despite his dedication to his academic responsibilities, Ike’s contributions to the International Society of Nephrology are immeasurable. In 1972, the International Society of Nephrology launched a new journal, *Kidney International*, intended to become the flagship of the Society and the leading journal of nephrology in the world, and Ike was selected to serve as its Editor, a position he held for nearly 13 years.

Under Ike’s leadership, *Kidney International* became a remarkably successful academic instrument. And Ike’s managerial skills with *Kidney International* were such that the journal became a profitable venture that provided the fiscal driving force for the development of virtually all of the subsequent activities of the Society.

Ike’s contributions to *Kidney International* must be viewed in the context of the times. In 1972, the science of nephrology was meager in many regions of the world. Yet, the nascent *Kidney International* faced formidable competition with an array of distinguished journals.

To resolve this conundrum, Ike balanced stringent editorial standards with a unique editorial style. First-rate manuscripts were accepted rapidly. But the most elegant facet of Ike’s editorship was the style of his letters of rejection, which were, in fact, brilliant tutorials. They were tactful instead of accusatory, suffused with personal warmth, and softened by a note of optimism indicating that a manuscript might be salvaged by added experimentation or extensive revision. It was not unusual to see a rejected paper reappear on Ike’s desk a year or so later, but now as a manuscript worthy of publication.

What are the consequences of his remarkable stewardship? The academic reputation of *Kidney International* is unassailable, and *Kidney International* has met the Society’s goal of being global in scope.

Ike’s second major contribution to international nephrology was to develop the Forefronts in Nephrology series. The goal of the Forefronts series, conceived originally as a forum to bring together leading renal investigators with peers from flanking disciplines such as molecular genetics, molecular biology, and cell biology. The first Forefronts meeting was organized by Ike in 1986. Its title, “Molecular Biology of the Kidney,” articulates its theme. This meeting was the first specific gathering that brought to bear, in an explicit way, the powerful resources of molecular biology to renal research.

Ike’s third and fourth major contributions to international nephrology occurred during his tenure as President of the International Society of Nephrology, from 1990 to 1993. He recognized that the International Society faced two key problems. First, Ike understood that there might be significant information gaps between highly developed nations and maturing nations. Consequently, Ike organized the 1993 Jerusalem meeting using a thematic format that provided a first-rate menu, broadly based and attractive to virtually anyone in the renal community.

Second, Ike saw that some national meetings, particularly those in Western Europe and the United States, had become, in effect, competing meetings. To mitigate that feeling, Ike developed a visionary solution. He proposed that Society meetings be coupled to meetings of national or regional societies. If the purpose of national or international meetings was the dissemination of information, it was logical and, in essence, necessary to pool information for the good of nephrology and the patients the specialty serves.

As successful and prodigious as he was in his professional life, Ike was no less devoted to his wife, Ann, who shared his life and his many accomplishments for more than 50 years, and his two daughters, Brooke and Susan. To them, we extend our most heartfelt sympathy and our eternal gratitude for sharing Ike with all of us.

Ike’s professional, academic, and personal legacy is secure, as much of what he initiated has come to fruition, but his leadership, friendship, and good counsel are irreplaceable. He will be missed.

Claus Brun, 1963–1966
Hugh E. deWardener, 1969–1972
Priscilla S. Kincaid-Smith, 1972–1975
George E. Schreiner, 1978–1981
Donald W. Seldin, 1984–1987
Klaus Thurau, 1987–1990
J. Stewart Cameron, 1993–1995
Kiyoshi Kurokawa, 1997–1999
Thomas E. Andreoli, 1999–2001
Robert C. Atkins, 2001–2003
Jan J. Weening, 2003–2005