

## Obituary: Robert Morris

Robert Morris held the Koestler Chair of Parapsychology at Edinburgh from 1985 until his sudden death from a heart attack on August 12, 2004, and was a central figure in the field for nearly 40 years. Dr. Morris had a distinctive style of research which he promoted, attempting to link parapsychology to more established branches of psychology and never overstating the evidence for the phenomena. He encouraged dialogue with skeptics, and this helped to defuse the antipathy towards the subject.

Dr. Morris was born in Canonsburg, PA, in 1942. After taking a B.Sc. in Psychology from the University of Pittsburgh in 1963, he obtained his Ph.D. at Duke University in 1969 in comparative psychology and animal social behavior. His doctoral thesis was on "Factors Affecting the Maintenance of the Pair Bond in the Blond Ring Dove" or, as he liked to put it, "How Birds Kiss." Alongside his mainstream research activities, he also developed an interest in parapsychology, spending time with J. B. Rhine at the Foundation for Research on the Nature of Man in Durham, North Carolina. After he finished his doctoral research, he became Research Coordinator and then Research Associate at the Psychical Research Foundation.

From 1974 to 1985 he was a faculty member at the University of California at Santa Barbara, the University of California at Irvine, and Syracuse University. In these posts he taught courses in parapsychology, as well as in more conventional areas, incorporating parapsychology teaching within more conventional psychological curricula.

In 1985 he moved to Britain to become the first Koestler Professor of Parapsychology in the Department of Psychology at the University of Edinburgh. At Edinburgh, Morris managed a creative research unit and developed and taught more than twenty different courses. He had more than 100 publications, including coauthorship of two books, primarily in the psychology of anomalous experiences and various aspects of parapsychology. For a while he also co-edited the *European Journal of Parapsychology*. As Koestler Professor, he was often called upon to act as spokesman for the field, a task he fulfilled with consummate skill, always striving for fairness and balance. During his

time at Edinburgh he supervised 32 Ph.D.s in parapsychology, twelve of whom have gone on to obtain permanent academic positions in university departments, where they continue to pursue their research in the area. Thanks to his efforts, there are currently 10 universities in the United Kingdom where parapsychological research is pursued.

Dr. Morris twice served as President of the Parapsychological Association, and received the Association's Outstanding Contribution Award. He served on the Council of the Society for Psychical Research in London, becoming one of its Vice-Presidents and a recipient of its prestigious Myers medal. Outside of parapsychology, he was on the Council of the American Association for the Advancement of Science and for two years he was President of the Psychology Section of the British Association for the Advancement of Science. He also received the Charles Myers Award of the British Psychological Society in 1999.

Dr. Morris will be remembered for his wry sense of humor, deep intelligence, and unlimited potential for giving. He would spare no efforts to help people working in parapsychology, and his patience even with those who knew little about the subject was legendary. Above all, he was devoted to his students, who regarded him as the "dream supervisor" because his door was always open.