OBITUARY: HAROLD A. WIDDISON

Dr. Harold A. Widdison was Emeritus Professor of Medical Sociology at Northern Arizona University in Flagstaff, Arizona. Dr. Widdison taught sociology courses for 30 years and was a researcher in the field of near-death studies for over 30 years.

Dr. Widdison was born in Salt Lake City, Utah in 1935. At the age of 12 he moved with his family to Montana where he lived until he graduated from high school. He earned a B.S. degree in Sociology in 1959 and an M.S. in Business in 1961 from Brigham Young University. He was employed for five years at the Atomic Energy Commission in Washington, DC, before returning to graduate school at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio where he obtained his Ph.D. in 1970 in the fields of medical sociology and statistics.

From 1973 until his retirement in 2003, Dr. Widdison was a faculty member at Northern Arizona University in the Department of Sociology. He created and taught one of the first, if not the first, course on Death, Grief, and Bereavement, and he was instrumental in establishing some of the earliest courses in the country on those topics. While teaching this course, he became aware of the writings of Raymond Moody, Jr., George Ritchie, and others on near-death experiences (NDEs). Dr. Widdison lost his father not long before this discovery, which piqued his interest in the subject of NDEs. He began searching out various sources, including books, diaries, and journal articles, that related to the topic.

In 1982, Dr. Widdison contributed an article entitled *Near-Death Experiences and the Unscientific Scientist* to the first anthology on the subject of near-death research entitled *A Collection of Near-Death Research Readings*. In 1997, he co-authored with Craig R. Lundahl the book *The Eternal Journey: How Near-Death Experiences Illuminate Our Earthly Lives*. This book covered the whole spectrum of life from pre-earth life to earth life to post-earth life based on cases of NDEs spanning a period of over 200 years. It also examined pleasurable as well as distressing NDEs. In 2004, Dr. Widdison published another book on the subject entitled *Trailing Clouds of Glory: First Person Glimpses into Premortality*. Since 1972 he presented professional workshops, papers, and research at national and international conferences on death and NDEs. He authored or co-authored articles and
book reviews over the years in the Journal of Near-Death Studies on the topic of NDEs, and he gave a number of presentations at meetings of the International Association for Near-Death Studies (IANDS).

In addition to his interest in NDE research, Dr. Widdison had a very personal concern for the plight of people with disabilities and served many years on the Board of Directors of the Hozhoni Foundation in Northern Arizona. Among his other interests was studying rock art. He was an excellent photographer and visited and photographed Native American rock art throughout the western United States, Mexico, and Canada.

Dr. Widdison will be remembered as a family man, for his sense of humor, and for his concern for and kindness to others. He was liked by his students and was devoted to them. He was always concerned with helping his students and providing them with knowledge they could use in their careers.

Dr. Widdison continued to contribute to the field of near-death studies until his unexpected death on November 1, 2012.

Craig R. Lundahl
Silver City, NM