A Life Remembered – Professor Nicholas Sperelakis

Professor Nicholas Sperelakis, PhD, died peacefully, with his family surrounding him, on May 21, 2013. Nicholas is survived by his wife of 53 years, Dolores. He was a beloved father of six children, Nicholas, Mark (d), Christine, Sophia, Thomas, Anthony and daughter-in-law Sherri. A devoted grandfather to three wonderful grandchildren,Demitra, Nina and Gregory.

Born in Joliet, IL in 1930, the youngest of 5 children, he graduated from Joliet Township High School in 1947, where he was a wrestler and member of the National Honor Society. He graduated from the University of Illinois in 1951 with a BS in Chemistry. After graduation, he served in the U.S.Marine Corps during the Korean War conflict. Upon completion of his military service, he went back to the University of Illinois where he got his MS in Physiology and later completed his PhD in Physiology, with a minor in biochemistry in 1957.

Nicholas began his research career on a post-doctoral fellowship at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, OH. Once completed, he stayed on as an Associate Professor where he met his wife of 53 years, Dolores. In 1965, he spent a year at the University College London (England) in the Biophysics Department. In 1966, he joined the University of Virginia as Professor of Physiology. In 1972, during his tenure at UVA, he spent a year as a visiting professor at the University of St. Andrews (Scotland).

In 1983, Nicholas accepted the position of Chairman of the Physiology and Biophysics Department at the University of Cincinnati College of Medicine. In 1993, he stepped down as Chairman but remained at the university as the Joseph Eichberg Professor Emeritus to continue his research.

During his career, Professor Sperelakis published over 500 research articles and numerous chapters in textbooks relating to his work in electrophysiology and membrane biophysics.He was recognized by multiple organizations and received the American Heart Association's Research Merit Award (1996) and the Samuel Kaplan Visionary Award for Cardiac Research (1996). He was recognized globally as the authority on cardiac physiology at the cellular level, specifically his work with the calcium and sodium ion channels. His most renowned work in his field was when he edited the multi-authored Cell Physiology textbook which was recognized by American Library Association's CHOICE award as one of the top textbooks in 1996. In 2012, at

the age of 82, he worked with his publisher and colleagues to the release the 4th edition of Cell Physiology.

Research was his life but teaching was his passion! He believed in the potential of all people and was willing to help and mentor them to reach their goals. His dedication to teaching and education was honored by his graduate students with the Professor of the Year award in 1985. His commitment and dedication continued and he was rewarded again by his graduate students with the Outstanding Research, Mentoring and Teaching award in 1995.

Recognized globally for his work, Professor Sperelakis was also a humanitarian. He spent time working with the Wood's Hole Marine Biology Research facility, Project HOPE in Peru and Mexico, and belonged to over 60 organizations concerning the environment, animal welfare, human rights and Plant Earth.

His impact on the field of Physiology, his commitment to education, his dedication to his family and his passion for discovery defines the contributions he made and for the many lives he influenced. His passion lives on with family, friends, students and colleagues around the world.

"The foundation for every state is the education of its youth." – Diogenes, c.350 B.C.