Doris H. Wurster-Hill (1932–2007)

Doris H. Wurster-Hill, a well-known cytogeneticist, died in Jackson, Wyoming on July 5, 2007, at the age of 74. Dr. Wurster-Hill was a faculty member in the Department of Pathology of the Dartmouth Medical School for 32 years, 1962–1994. In 1994 she retired to Jackson with her husband, Fred Holford. Her husband, and her son, Steven H. Wurster, of McCall, Idaho survive her.

Those of us fortunate enough to have known Doris remember a vibrant, energetic, witty, smart and overall wonderful person. During her time at Dartmouth Medical School, she headed the clinical Cytogenetics Laboratory providing service to a large segment of the New England community. An equal amount of her time was spent on research in her two major areas of interest, cancer cytogenetics and wild animal cytogenetics and evolution. She had achieved wide recognition for her work in each of these areas.

She was born Doris Hadley in Washington, DC, on September 9, 1932, and grew up in Willow Grove, PA. She spent her freshman year at Indiana University, and then attended George Washington University, with a major in zoology; she graduated Phi Beta Kappa in 1954. She earned a Ph.D. in biology from Stanford University in 1958, with her thesis work in comparative endocrinology, and then spent a post-doctoral year at the University of Innsbruck, Austria, on a Fellowship from the American Association of University Women. In the 1960's she was part of a team that studied

the effects of the insecticide DDT on bird populations in Hanover, NH. Doris published more than 100 scientific papers, including many describing the cytogenetics of various cancers and leukemia. Her lifelong interest and excitement in animals is reflected in her extensive publications on species including felids, canids, mustelids, hyenas, and the giant panda.

Doris was an authority on the chromosomes of carnivores, especially felids and canids. In 1983, along with friend and colleague Oscar Ward, she led an Earthwatch Expedition to study the raccoon dog, Tanuki, in Japan. During this expedition, she demonstrated her unique skill of conveying her exciting ideas, not only to colleagues, but also to the non-scientific community.

What was Doris like as a person? Well, Doris was an original. Cheerful, resourceful, and gregarious by nature, she was incredibly enthusiastic about everything she did, and she did about everything. Among the things she did well were swimming, hiking, birding, skiing, scuba diving, motorcycling, and flying (private pilot, instrument and sea plane rated). She was tough as nails in the outdoors, an eager and disciplined competitor in games and contests, and usually won. We were all lucky to have had Doris as a colleague; she will be very much missed and certainly not forgotten.

*Oscar G. Ward
Arthur R. Brothman*