

Acclaimed neurologist and writer Oliver Sacks dies at 82

The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion and analysis.

Oliver Sacks, the neurologist and acclaimed author who explored some of the brain's strangest pathways in best-selling case histories like "The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat," using his patients' disorders as starting points for eloquent meditations on consciousness and the human condition, died on August 30 at his home in Manhattan. He was 82.

The cause was cancer, said Kate Edgar, his longtime personal assistant.

Dr. Sacks announced in February 2015, [in an Op-Ed essay in The New York Times](#), that an earlier melanoma in his eye had spread to his liver and that he was in the late stages of terminal cancer.

Dr. Sacks variously described his books and essays as case histories, pathographies, clinical tales or "neurological novels." His subjects included Madeleine J., a blind woman who perceived her hands only as useless "lumps of dough"; Jimmie G., a submarine radio operator whose amnesia stranded him for more than three decades in 1945; and Dr. P. — the man who mistook his wife for a hat — whose brain lost the ability to decipher what his eyes were seeing.



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The great, humane and inspirational Oliver Sacks has died. He wrote this recently. That's a life well-lived.

I have been increasingly conscious, for the last 10 years or so, of deaths among my contemporaries. My generation is on the way out, and each death I have felt as an abrupt, a tearing away of part of myself. There will be no one like us when we are gone, but then there is no one like anyone else, ever. When people die, they cannot be replaced. They leave holes that cannot be filled, for it is the fate — the genetic and neural fate — of every human being to be a unique individual, to find his own path, to live his own life, to die his own death.

I cannot pretend I am without fear. But my predominant feeling is one of gratitude. I have loved and been loved; I have been given much and I have given something in return; I have read and traveled and thought and written. I have had an intercourse with the world, the special intercourse of writers and readers.

Above all, I have been a sentient being, a thinking animal, on this beautiful planet, and that in itself has been an enormous privilege and adventure.

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Describing his patients' struggles and sometimes uncanny gifts, Dr. Sacks helped introduce syndromes like Tourette's or Asperger's to a general audience. But he illuminated their characters as much as their conditions; he humanized and demystified them.

Read full, original post: [Oliver Sacks, Neurologist Who Wrote About the Brain's Quirks, Dies at 82](#)