Ian Sussex
Professor, Department of Plant Biology, Emeritus
University of California, Berkeley
1927-2015

Ian Sussex, professor emeritus of Plant Biology at the University of California, Berkeley, and considered one of the most influential plant developmental biologists of the 20th century, died Monday, May 10th, 2015, in New Haven, CT. He was 88.

Sussex was born in Auckland, New Zealand, in 1927. Sussex graduated with a B.Sc. and M.Sc. from Auckland University College, New Zealand, and obtained his Ph.D. from the University of Manchester, Great Britain, where he worked with C.W. Wardlaw performing experimental investigations on the plant shoot apex. He carried out post-doctoral studies at Harvard University, and at the Agricultural Research Center, Versailles, France. At Harvard he worked with Ralph Wetmore and Kenneth Thimann studying the role of the hormone auxin on plant growth and differentiation. He went on to be a faculty member at the University of Pittsburgh, and then at Victoria University, New Zealand. From 1960 to 1990 he was on the faculty of the Biology Department of Yale University.
Sussex joined the newly established Department of Plant Biology, UC Berkeley, on July 1, 1990. He was instrumental in the establishment of the National Science Foundation Center for Plant Developmental Biology in the College of Natural Resources (CNR); this center provided graduate student stipends for over five years, and established a state of the art facility for light microscopy, currently called the CNR Biological Imaging Facility (BIF) in Koshland Hall. The BIF is an important and heavily utilized resource housing sophisticated microscopes that serves both the members of the Department of Plant and Microbial Biology as well as investigators in the biological sciences across the UC Berkeley campus.

Sussex directed a thriving research lab in Koshland Hall. He had a unique manner of mentoring graduate students for their thesis research where he expected them to come up with their own project--organism, question, everything. Each student was very independent. This way of mentoring attracted several dozen graduate students, post docs and visiting scientists from all over the world to come to work on projects of their own design. Many of those he guided went on to achieve prominent positions in the field of plant development, largely due to Ian’s unique style of mentoring. Ian fostered an egalitarian

community with students emerging as self-directed individuals prepared to mature into accomplished scientists. Ian also believed that you study something because it is interesting and provokes questioning, not because you see an application. This attitude is sorely missing in today's science.

While at Berkeley Sussex co-taught a number of courses including Cell and Developmental Biology of Plants and Functional Plant Anatomy. Sussex was always trying out new methods of teaching. A UC Berkeley colleague remembers a seminar class that she taught together with Sussex in the fall 1993 - it was at first going to be an ordinary format, but instead they decided to try something new, based on a paper published in the spring of 1993 - Creativity and Graduate Education, by Amanda Paulovich–. The seminar was a lot of fun to teach and stimulated enthusiastic interactions with the attending graduate students.
Ian was recognized by many prizes, honors and awards to acknowledge his contribution to the growing field of plant development. These include The Lifetime Achievement Award from the Society for Developmental Biology and the Yale Class Teaching Award. Ian truly enjoyed teaching and being a mentor to his many students and colleagues. He organized several conferences and taught and organized the summer course on plants at the Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory for several years. Ian was not only a brilliant scientist but also a devoted teacher and mentor.

Sussex is most noted for co-authoring with Taylor Steeves the influential book *Patterns in Plant Development,* first published in 1972. This book was a true classic. When Ian arrived in Berkeley, one professor in his department exclaimed, "I can't tell you how many times I read your book, but it's your presence that had the biggest impact! I could actually talk to the 'master' and of course, you were the best teacher to answer my queries."
Despite his fame, Ian was never arrogant, always extending his friendliness and kindness to all who sought his wisdom and knowledge. Ian was such an unassuming and modest person, yet so many of us have benefited from his teaching. During his stay at Berkeley, another colleagues notes "I felt I had learned more than the students we co-taught while sitting in his classes. He would joke and say: 'But you never took the exam!' After his retirement in 1997, we continued to offer undergraduate and graduate courses in Plant Development at Berkeley, and our department strives to bring in young faculty members who can continue his legacy in research and teaching in the field of Plant Developmental Biology.

Ian Sussex was a very accomplished and talented marathon runner and ran in marathons all over the world with a good friend and colleague from Yale. He finished several in fewer than 3 hours when he was over 55 years old.

Ian was truly a vanguard developmental biologist with remarkable impact though research and teaching by just being the strong quiet man that he was. He has been described by many as a true gentleman. He will be sorely missed, as his influence rippled through so many.

Sussex retired from UCB on June 30, 1997, and moved back to Connecticut where he rejoined the Yale faculty as a scientist and lecturer. Sussex is survived by his wife Nancy Kerk.

Sara Hake
Sheila McCornick
Renee Sung