

# ROBERT N. BUTLER, MD

**Visionary of Healthy Aging**



**W. ANDREW ACHENBAUM**

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**Visionary of Healthy Aging**

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*To Robert N. Butler's daughters  
—Cynthia, Carole, Christine, and Alexandra—  
and to his grandchildren and great-grandchildren*

*And in memory of Myrna I. Lewis (1938–2005)*



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## PREFACE

Robert Neil Butler, MD  
(January 21, 1927–July 4, 2010)

Dr. Robert N. Butler became the “Visionary of Healthy Aging” here and abroad by dint of his five decades of groundbreaking research, influential writing, prudent institution building, and diligent networking. He helped to transform the study of aging from a marginal specialty into an intellectually vibrant field of inquiry. Gerontology now attracts the attention of renowned scholars, emerging professionals, students, and other experts who are determined to understand the secrets of longevity and healthy aging. Butler designed, underwrote, and conveyed perspectives on aging rigorous enough to impress scientific peers and practical enough to sway policy makers and politicians. A psychiatrist and geriatrician, Butler also initiated changes in the training of physicians and other health professionals on how to care for the elderly. All this had a profound impact on altering the lay public’s images of the aged: Butler gave people reason to question stereotypes that demeaned late life and cause to focus on healthy, productive aging.

With Butler’s death a formative chapter in the history of gerontology and geriatrics ended: we are unlikely to see in our lifetimes anyone so