

OBITUARIES

Jules Davids, Lauded Professor Of Diplomatic History, Dies at 75

By Richard Pearson
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Jules Davids, 75, a longtime professor at Georgetown University's foreign service school whose scholarship was known and admired by at least two U.S. presidents, died Dec. 6 at the Rockville Nursing Home. He had Alzheimer's disease.

Dr. Davids, who taught at Georgetown for 40 years before retiring in 1986 as emeritus professor of American diplomatic history, had been awarded teaching prizes from both students and administration, had edited professional journals and was the author of highly praised books on international relations.

And over the years, his students included a future U.S. president and a future first lady.

In the spring semester of 1954, Dr. Davids taught a survey course on American history whose part-time students included a homemaker and former Washington newspaper photographer, Jacqueline Kennedy, whose husband was the junior senator from Massachusetts, John F. Kennedy (D).

Historian and biographer Herbert S. Parmet, in his book "Jack: The Struggles of John F. Kennedy," quoted Dr. Davids as saying that the future first lady wrote essays in the "comfortable B level" and that she passed her final exam with a grade of 89.

More important, Parmet reported, Jacqueline Kennedy thought highly of both the course books and Dr. Davids's lectures. She was especially impressed with one on President John Adams's diplomacy.

Over breakfast, Kennedy and her husband regularly discussed her Georgetown class, her essay assignments and the thoughts of her professor, Parmet wrote. Her description of the Adams lecture obviously impressed the future president.

Out of the blue, Dr. Davids received a phone call from Theodore C. Sorensen, Kennedy's chief Senate aide. The professor was told that Kennedy was about to begin a book project about the Senate and was asked whether he would be interested in working on the project for a nominal fee. Sorensen is said to have cautioned Dr. Davids that the budget was small and that the book probably would not sell very well.

The "book project" became Kennedy's 1957 Pulitzer Prize-winning "Profiles in Courage," which became a surprise bestseller for Harper's and has seldom, if ever, been out of print. True authorship of the book has long been the subject of dispute, with some saying the book was "more Sorensen than Kennedy."

Parmet wrote that Dr. Davids made "key contributions" to the book in the areas of historical research and organizational planning and drafted chapters on Daniel Webster, Sam Houston, Lucius Q.C. Lamar and George Norris. He also wrote a 13-page essay that Kennedy used in his closing chapter, "The Meaning of Political Courage."

Dr. Davids was said to have received \$700 for his work.

Mrs. Kennedy was not Dr. Davids's only student who went on to the White House. His 1968 American diplomacy course included the Arkansas scholar William Jefferson Clinton, who went on to win two terms as U.S. president. When Dr. Davids retired from the Georgetown faculty in 1986, he received a letter from Clinton, then governor of Arkansas, congratulating the professor on his career and recalling the class.

The White House was unable to report what grade the president received in the course. A spokesman for Dr. Davids's family said they did not have any of his grade books close at hand.

Dr. Davids, who lived in Bethesda, was a native of New York. He was a graduate of Brooklyn College and a member of Phi Beta Kappa. He received a master's degree from Georgetown's foreign service school and a doctorate in history from the university.

He was the author of such books as "America and the World of Our Time: U.S. Diplomacy in the 20th Century," which was named by the New York Times as one of the best books published in 1960 on world affairs.

In addition to teaching at Georgetown, Dr. Davids had taught at the State Department's Foreign Service Institute and at Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies in Washington. He also had been a visiting professor at universities in Mexico, Massachusetts and California.

He also edited the 53-volume "American Diplomatic and Public Papers: The United States and China." In the 1960s, he was a member of the senior staff of the Council on Foreign Relations in New York, the organization for which he wrote "The U.S. in World Affairs, 1964." In the 1970s, he served on the research council of the Center for Strategic and International Studies and helped found the publication "Diplomatic History" for the Society of Historians of American Foreign Policy.

He was a 1979 recipient of the "best teacher" award from Georgetown's foreign service school and a 1982 recipient of the Centennial Award for University Service, which was presented by the university alumni's board of directors. A Silver Medal is presented annually in Dr. Davids's name to Georgetown's outstanding diplomatic history student.

Survivors include his wife, Frances, of Bethesda; a son, Paul, of Los Angeles; a daughter, Jeanie Dwyer of Bethesda; and five grandchildren.

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Jules Davids, 75, aided Kennedy on book

Jules Davids, 75, a Georgetown University professor who may have been known most widely for his free-lance contributions to the book "Profiles in Courage," died of Alzheimer's disease Dec. 6 at a Rockville nursing home.

Mr. Davids was born in New York and graduated from Brooklyn College. He did secret work for the Treasury Department in World War II and took night courses at Georgetown. He began teaching in 1947 after receiving a master's degree from the School of Foreign Service and a doctorate in history.

Over the next four decades at Georgetown's School of Foreign Service, Mr. Davids, whose students included Bill Clinton, was known as a warm, involved teacher who thought nothing of staying up half the night writing eight recommendations for a single student.

Mr. Davids wrote several authoritative works on diplomatic history. By 1986, when he retired, he was a fixture in the foreign policy establishment. He was a senior staff member of the Council on Foreign Relations and author of its book "The U.S. in World Affairs, 1964." He also was a member of the research council of the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

But for all his academic acclaim, he made the biggest impact when he agreed to write biographical sketches of notable senators for a book being written by a former student's husband. The former student was Jacqueline Kennedy, her husband was the future president, and the book was "Profiles in Courage."

Mr. Davids received credit in the author's preface and a payment of \$700 but none of the royalties from the book, which became a surprise best seller and won the 1957 Pulitzer Prize for biography.

Mr. Davids is survived by his wife, Frances of Bethesda; a son, Paul of Los Angeles; a daughter, Jeanie Dwyer of Bethesda; and five grandchildren.