

OLIVER SACKS

b. July 9, 1933

d. August 30, 2015

NEUROLOGIST AND AUTHOR

*"We speak not only to tell other people what we think,
but to tell ourselves what we think."*

Oliver Sacks was an internationally renowned neurologist and best-selling author.

Oliver Sacks was a British-born physician and best-selling author who specialized in neurology. He spent most of his professional life in the United States. The New York Times called him "the poet laureate of medicine."

Sacks came from a long line of scientists. His father was a physician and his mother was one of the first female surgeons in England. Sacks's first autobiography, "Uncle Tungsten: Memories of a Chemical Boyhood," chronicles his early experiences escaping the Blitz during World War II and being enrolled at a cruel boarding school.

Sacks graduated in 1956 from Queen's College, Oxford, with a degree in biology and physiology. He came to the United States in the 1960s to complete a residency at Mt.

Zion Hospital in San Francisco. He pursued fellowships in neurology and psychiatry at UCLA. As part of his 2012 book, "Hallucinations," he discussed his experimentation with recreational drugs and its effects on his brain.

After moving to New York City, Sacks began documenting his observations about neurological diseases, which led to his book "The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat." His treatment of patients suffering from a rare illness became the basis of "Awakenings," which was adapted into a 1990 Academy Award-nominated film starring Robin Williams and Robert DeNiro. His book "Musicophilia: Tales of Music and the Brain" also inspired a film, "Musical Minds," on

the PBS series "Nova." Sacks created the Institute for Music and Neurologic Function, where he served as a medical adviser.

Sacks regularly contributed to The New Yorker, The New York Review of Books and The London Review of Books, as well as many medical publications. The recipient of numerous honors, he became a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters in 1996 and was named a Fellow of the New York Academy of Sciences in 1999. He was awarded a Commander of the Order of the British Empire for services to literature in 2008.

Sacks lived alone for most of his life. He spoke about being gay for the first time in his 2015 autobiography, "On the Move: A Life." He said he was celibate for 35 years before beginning a long-term relationship with writer Bill Hayes in 2008. "It has sometimes seemed to me that I have lived at a certain distance from life," he wrote. "This changed when Billy and I fell in love." They were together until his death.

Sacks wrote about his uveal melanoma, which affects the eye, in his 2010 book, "The Mind's Eye." When in 2014 the cancer returned in his liver and brain, he announced it in The New York Times. He died at age 82.

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