



Tribute to David Broder from APSA Congressional Fellowship Director

The APSA Congressional Fellowship Program Director Jeffrey Biggs offers the following tribute to David Broder, award-winning political columnist for The Washington Post, who passed away last week.

David S. Broder, 81, a Pulitzer Prize-winning columnist for *The Washington Post* and one of the most respected writers on national politics for four decades, passed away Wednesday, March 9, 2011 at Capital Hospice in Arlington of complications from diabetes. He was a very special man to many people, particularly his legions of readers, but he was also very special to the 2400 alumni of the APSA Congressional Fellowship.

On an August evening in 2003, the fellowship celebrated its 50th anniversary in the ornate splendor of Philadelphia's Union League Club. If there was a highlight amidst the nostalgia, there would be no rival to the overdue act of conferring on the *Washington Post's* David Broder the title of "Honorary APSA Congressional Fellow." Beginning in 1968 when he wrote a review of David Mayhew's recently published doctoral dissertation, David Broder was an unstinting supporter of the fellowship and political science. He had served continuously on the Advisory Committee since 1970. For the APSA Congressional Fellowship, David Broder was a pillar of strength that grew only stronger with the passage of time.

In 1983, David Broder was the second winner of the Association's prestigious Cary McWilliams award for journalistic contributions to political science. David Broder had "become a guardian of the integrity of the major political institutions of this land," the citation read. "He is part of our community. We read his work and know that we can trust it. He reads our work and uses it with skill and sophistication." As Rutgers University political science professor Ross K. Baker noted in the *Washington Post's* March 9 tribute to Broder by Adam Bernstein, "I can't think of any columnist of a major newspaper who took academic political scientists more seriously than David Broder."

In that same vein, Bernstein quoted another veteran Advisory Committee colleague of Mr. Broder, Senator Richard G. Lugar (R-Indiana): "In his thoughtful and probing questions based on decades of scholarship and on-the-scene observations, David Broder set the modern 'gold standard' for those of us engaged in political life as we sought to persuade others, to legislate and to administer the successful progress of our country."

The roots of David Broder's interest in the academic study of politics go back to his entrance as a freshman at the University of Chicago at age 15. He received a bachelor's degree in 1947 and a master's degree in political science in 1951. In 1951, he married college classmate Ann Collar, who became chairman of Arlington County's school board. Besides his wife, survivors include four sons, George Broder of San Francisco; Joshua Broder of Brooklyn, New York; Matthew Broder of Hamden, Connecticut; and Michael Broder of Arlington; and seven grandchildren.

Among his many contributions to journalism was his effort to give voters a more prominent voice in the coverage of politics and campaigns. In his *Washington Post* tribute to Broder, Bernstein quotes from an interview with *Washingtonian Magazine*: "I've learned that the most undervalued, underreported aspect of politics is what voters bring to the table." In search of those voices, for decades he reportedly traveled some 100,000 miles a year. As he honored his fellow citizens, David Broder also honored public servants such as long-time fellowship supporter Rep. William Steiger (R-Wisconsin) for whom the Steiger Fund continues to support the scholarship of fellowship alumni

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returning to Washington, D.C. to pursue scholarly endeavors. Steiger's untimely death in 1978 led to a bound volume of eulogies in 1979 in which David Broder's was first: "It is a cliché in the political reporting business that everyone of us carries around in his head a list of stories that he would have given his eyeteeth to have written. Some are scoops on which you were beaten. Some are exposés for which you wish you could claim credit. But the most uncomfortably remembered stories are those where you might have said – but did not – that somebody is doing a helluva job in public office. Bill Steiger had done that kind of job ever since he came to the House of Representatives. . . . Steiger was a man of exceptional talent, integrity and drive. But there are more than a few of his kind in politics. It would honor his memory if we occasionally wrote about them, too – before they die."

Perhaps there were times when the civil and optimistic David Broder judged people too charitably or when his optimism about our politics was not borne out. But the final word can probably be found in a March 12 *Washington Post* letter to the editor by Perry Beider of Silver Spring, Maryland ". . . to paraphrase what Porkypine said in the old 'Pogo' comic strip when Pogo expressed a similar faith in humanity's basic goodness: 'Well, if you gotta be wrong about something, that's the best thing to keep on being wrong about.'"

As Congressional Fellows, as political scientists, and as citizens, we have all lost a good friend and mentor. He will be sorely missed. We can hope that his work and his character encourage us to live up to the faith he had in us.