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Who he was

1927-1989
As a medical doctor...

1927 Jan. 21

- He was born in New York City. At the age of 11 months his parents divorced, and he was taken in by his maternal grandparents in their 70s who ran a chicken farm in the city of Vineland, New Jersey.

1934 (7 years old)

- After losing the chicken farm in the Great Depression and his grandfather's sudden death, he lived in a cheap hotel with his grandmother while receiving government-surplus foods.
- He sold newspapers and repaired bicycles to help out his grandmother who was working in sewing plant managed by the US Work Project Administration (WPA).

The hotel where they lived burned down and they lost everything. Even amidst these circumstances he was deeply moved by his grandmother's triumphant spirit and determination. He was also helped by the neighborhood physician, Dr. Rose, and decided that he himself would become a doctor in the future.

1949 (22 years old)

- He graduated from Columbia University in New York and became an MD (doctor of medicine) in 1953. His specialty was psychiatric medicine.

1954 (27 years old)

- He left Columbia University, being angered by the arrogant attitudes

and speech directed against elderly patients of his colleagues who were interns there.

- He became a senior researcher at the National Institute of Mental Health in Bethesda, Maryland in 1955.
- He was a chief of a 10-year longitudinal interdisciplinary study of community-residing older persons (which became fundamental research material for the Baltimore Longitudinal Study of Aging). Those research results were later published as "Human Aging" in 1966. Dr. Myrna Lewis, who would later become his second wife in 1975, was a member of the research team.

1963 (36 years old)

- He advocated the reminiscence, life review which would become a psychotherapy method for the elderly. Though a pessimistic view was initially taken of this method as a fixation on the past or a sign of aging, he found its positive significance and applied it as a psychotherapeutic method for the elderly.

1968 (41 years old)

- He coined the term "Ageism" to signify discrimination against the elderly, and this issue was taken up

by the Washington Post. The term "Ageism" later became listed in dictionaries and is now a generally used term.

1969 - 70 (42 - 43 years old)

- While serving as a consultant to the United States Senate Special Committee on Aging, he approached the interested congresspersons and wrote a report, summarizing his findings on mistreatment in nursing homes. He also worked energetically towards legal amendments to bring corrective changes. He was also active along with the famous consumer activist Mr. Ralph Nader on measures, including surprise inspections of nursing homes.

1975 (48 years old)

- He contributed to the establishment of the National Institute on Aging within the National Institute of Health and became its founding director (~1982).
- He summarized the results of his 20-year research in the book "Why Survive?- Being Old in America."

Comment:

Dr. Butler's Message to His Readers
Dr. Masako Osako

In this book, he agrees that old age can often be a tragedy in American society that prizes youth and productivity. However, he calls for drastic social reforms for the future of the elderly, including health care, Social Security and housing

policies. He also emphasizes that old age need not be a tragedy and that it is possible to create a society where American people can enjoy their old age.

1976 (49 years old)

- His book "Why Survive? Being Old in America" won the Pulitzer Prize (for General Non-Fiction).
- His book "Love and Sex after 60," co-authored with Dr. Myrna Lewis, was published. This book makes daring proposals with new concepts on love and sex in old age that are not publicly dealt with even in the US. It is still a bestseller some 30 years later. This is a particularly valuable information source for baby boomers who are now reaching old age.

1978 (51 years old)

- Dr. Butler made his first visit to Japan with his second wife Dr. Myrna Lewis. He participated in the 11th International Congress of Gerontology in Tokyo. He then gave a lecture at Kyoto International Symposium on Aging sponsored by the World Health Organization (WHO).

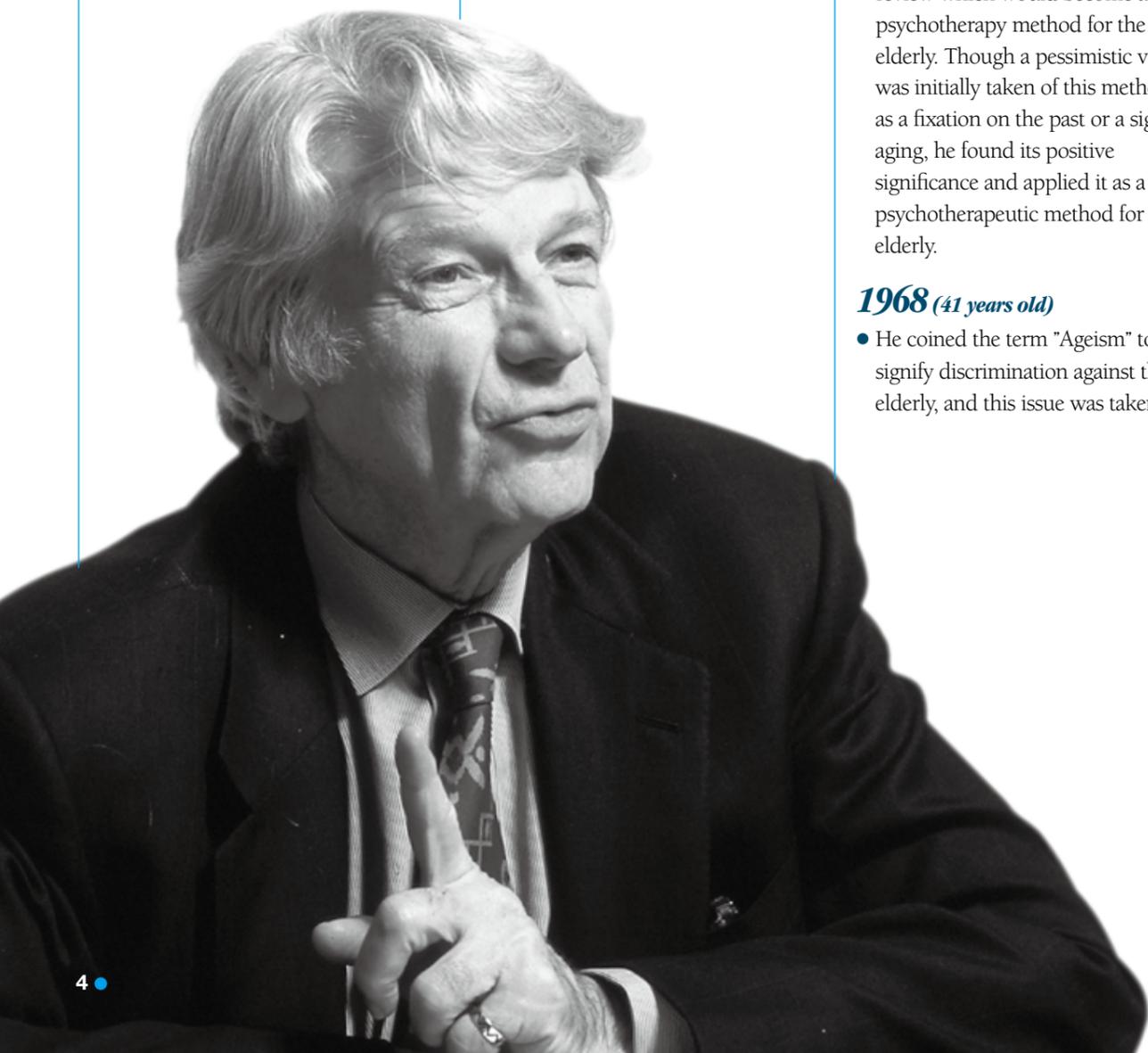
In what was probably his first lecture towards Japanese audience, Dr. Butler spoke on "Research on Aging: Challenges and Goals" where, while touching on religion and science, he called for the new social value system needed for humanity's first experience with population aging, as well as

desirable spirit and action. He even covered subjects such as death and the planet's environmental problems. His first appearance in Japan revealed profound philosophical insights, and these were received as impressive and inspiring.

He had been to Japan several times since then until 1997 and is famous for his love for Japan, such as liking for green tea and Japanese cuisine and always specifying JAL for his flights. He was scheduled to give a keynote address at 20th International Conference of Alzheimer's Disease International at Kyoto International Conference Hall in fall 2004 but was not able to visit Japan due to his wife Myrna's illness, and so he made his speech on video. His wife Myrna later died in 2005 at the age of 67.

1982 (55 years old)

- He was appointed as the founding chairman, Gerald and May Ellen Ritter Department of Geriatrics and Adult Development, The Mount Sinai Medical Center. This Department of Geriatrics was the first of its kind in the US. The comprehensive and experimental programs advocated by Dr. Butler; including all medical students associating with elderly patients both inside and outside the hospital, clinical experiments in geriatric treatment, and visits by physicians, medical students and interns to patient's homes; were implemented one after another.



- He played a central role in the first World Assembly on Ageing in Vienna, Austria.
- At the US Congressional Committee on Social Security Reforms, he proposed measures to link the increasing life expectancy to raising the retirement age. The committee chair was Mr. Alan Greenspan who served in the Reagan administration and later became chair of the Federal Reserve Board.

1983 (56 years old)

- Salzburg Global Seminar (Austria), founded and managed by Harvard University, covers various themes, among which was population aging in 1983. He was the central figure at the seminar, introducing the keyword "Productive Aging" to experts from all over the world.

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Playback:
"Health, Productivity and Aging :
An Overview" at Salzburg Seminar

1984 (57 years old)

- Invited by American Center of the US embassy in Japan, he gave lectures in Tokyo and Fukuoka. Assistant Professor Takako Sodei from Ochanomizu University served as coordinator.

1987 (60 years old)

- He visited Japan to attend the international symposium "Thinking over Aging Society" hosted by Asahi Shimbun (newspaper). He gave a keynote lecture titled "New Era of Longevity Full of Potential." This event turned out to be an opportunity for him to meet Mr. Shigeo Morioka, President of Yamanouchi Pharmaceuticals which sponsored the symposium, and it was the beginning of the actual work on establishing an institute for research and education regarding issues on aging in Japan and the US. The institute was initially named "International Leadership Center on Longevity and Society."

1988 (61 years old)

- The symposium "Who Is Responsible for My Old Age," hosted by the Sasakawa Memorial Foundation, was held in New York where Dr. Yoshio Gyoten, Ms. Keiko Higuchi, Dr. Takako Sodei, Ms. Mariko Bando and others participated from Japan. Guests from the US besides Dr. Butler included the former first lady Mrs. Rosalynn Carter and Ms. Betty Friedan. Energetic discussions were held on the roles and responsibilities of individuals, families, communities and the nation in an aged society.

16 ~ 20

Essay:
Kazuo Hasegawa
Takako Sodei

