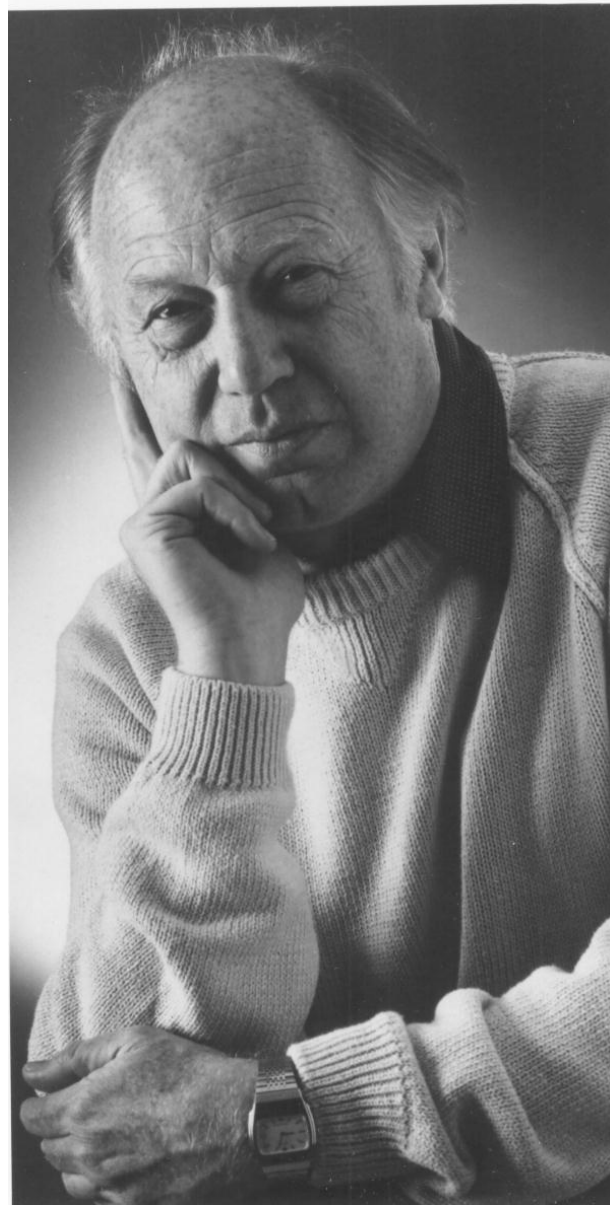


Michael Smith
1932-2000



Nobel Prize-winning chemist Dr. Michael Smith (1932-2000) will be remembered as a great humanitarian who was passionate about research and science. Michael Smith was born into a working-class family in Blackpool, England in 1932. He received his PhD in 1956 from the University of Manchester and then undertook his post-doctoral studies in Gobind Khorana's Laboratory in Vancouver, Canada. Khorana himself received a Nobel Prize in 1968 for work on the genetic code. Smith later moved with Khorana's group to Wisconsin in the USA in 1960, but in 1961 he moved back to Vancouver. For years Smith worked at the Fisheries Research Board of Canada Laboratory in Vancouver, and in 1966 he was appointed a UBC professor of Biochemistry in the Faculty of Medicine. Michael Smith enjoyed a long and productive research career at the University of British Columbia. In addition to being a Professor of Biochemistry and an MRC Career Investigator, he was the founding Director of the Biotechnology Laboratory from 1987 to 1995. Dr. Smith was also the founding Scientific Leader of the Protein Engineering Network Centers of Excellence. In 1996 he was named Peter Wall Distinguished Professor of Biotechnology and he subsequently became the founding Director of the Genome Sequencing Center at the BC Cancer Research Agency.

In 1993, Dr. Michael Smith received the Nobel Prize for his development of the technique of site-directed mutagenesis, a technique which allows the DNA sequence of any gene to be altered in a designated manner. He donated half of the Nobel prize money to researchers working on the genetics of schizophrenia, a widespread mental disorder for which research money is scarce. The other half he gave to Science World BC and to the Society for Canadian Women in Science and Technology. The Royal Bank Award, which he received in 1999, included a companion grant which he promptly donated to the BC Cancer Foundation.

Michael Smith was a distinguished and creative scientist, a humble man known for his humanity. He gave generously to the people of Canada and the world, using his time and energy to reach out to audiences with his message about the importance of science to everyone's life. As an advocate for science, Michael Smith was nearly irresistible. Whether he was speaking to audiences of government policy makers or to schoolchildren, people couldn't help but respond to his message. In part, that's because the brilliant research scientist was also a regular guy - a person who knew how to relate to the challenges faced by people outside academia. Dr. Smith was a natural leader who made the journey from humble beginnings to scientific greatness without losing touch with his roots.

Credits to the University of British Columbia