

10-1-1989

Press release : 1989 : 10 : 01 : USF St. Petersburg Dean Dr. Lowell E. Davis Dies at 58

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Recommended Citation

Kurelik, Deborah, "Press release : 1989 : 10 : 01 : USF St. Petersburg Dean Dr. Lowell E. Davis Dies at 58" (1989). *USFSP News and Press Releases* . 108.

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USF ST. PETERSBURG DEAN DR. LOWELL E. DAVIS DIES AT 58

St. Petersburg, FL (Oct. 1, 1989) -- Lowell E. Davis, 58, dean of the University of South Florida's St. Petersburg campus, died Sept. 30 at Bayfront Medical Center. He was hospitalized after suffering a stroke on Aug. 23.

Davis was USF's first black dean. He came to the St. Petersburg campus in August 1986 after a 17-year career at Syracuse University in New York, where he was a biology professor and an administrator. At Syracuse, he served as associate vice chancellor for academic affairs, overseeing 17 schools and colleges. He did extensive research in developmental biology, electron microscopy and biochemistry. He was a full professor of biology at USF.

Davis, an energetic and enthusiastic man, once said he wanted to leave an everlasting imprint on the campus. He joked that the "E" in his middle name stood for "Everlasting."

"I want to feel that I have made my mark, put my signature to something that is real quality," Davis said in 1986, upon accepting the USF position. He had hoped to leave a legacy to St. Petersburg.

His colleagues say he did.

"He was a strong, articulate leader for the St. Petersburg campus, and very sensitive to the role blacks should play in higher education," said Francis T. Borkowski, president of USF.

"He was a very caring human being and had a way of getting through to you almost immediately, a way of getting through to the heart," said Ralph McKay, development director of the campus.

Davis was born in Port Antonio, Jamaica, the youngest of seven children. He left the island in the mid-1950s to come to the United States, where he earned a bachelor's degree in chemistry and a master's degree in biology from Howard University in Washington, D.C. He earned a doctorate in biology from Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland.

(more)

ADD ONE -- USF ST. PETERSBURG DEAN DIES

At USF St. Petersburg, he concentrated on expanding the campus, faculty and course offerings available to students. New buildings at the campus during his tenure include a \$1.2 million Campus Activities Center that will open soon, and the acquisition and renovation of the Studebaker Building which houses the U.S. Geological Survey's Center for Coastal Geology. As dean, he strove to establish the university's largest regional campus as a center for academic excellence.

"He worked hard to bring additional programs and courses to that campus, and was very successful in doing so," Borkowski said.

"I appreciated his ability to speak for his campus, to develop good relationships with the community," said USF Provost Gerry G. Meisels.

Davis was very active in the community. He recently was named chairman of the board of the Pinellas County Urban League, was a member of the board of trustees of All Children's Hospital, and was a member of the board of governors of the St. Petersburg Area Chamber of Commerce. He was a member of the Tampa Bay Black Business Investment Corporation's advisory committee, and belonged to the St. Petersburg Rotary Club.

He also was president of the Black Faculty and Staff Association of USF.

The family suggested memorial contributions be made to the Lowell E. Davis Scholarship Fund at USF St. Petersburg.

A nationwide search for a new dean will begin shortly. Karen Spear, associate dean of USF St. Petersburg, will be acting dean in the interim.

Survivors include his wife, Shirley; two sons, Christian of Syracuse, and Ian of St. Petersburg; his mother and stepfather, Lena and Julius Dawes of Brooklyn, N.Y.; three brothers, Vincent and Eric Davis of Boston, and George Davis of Toronto; and three sisters, Selma Henry of Port Antonio, Lucille Duncan of Syracuse and Dorothy Davis of Toronto.