

Milestones



Mohammed Hussein Fadlallah

LEBANON'S MOST SENIOR Shi'ite cleric died July 4 at 75. His name, Mohammed Hussein Fadlallah, will mean nothing to most Americans, but he has been a central figure in modern Middle Eastern history.

Fadlallah was one of the

early leaders of Da'wa, the same Islamic group to which Iraq's current Prime Minister, Nouri al-Maliki, belongs. In the 1980s, Fadlallah was at the top of the Reagan Administration's enemy list. The White House mistakenly shared the assumption he was the spiritual leader of Hizballah, the Lebanese militant group the U.S. was at war with at the time.

Fadlallah preached against foreign occupation, but in that sense he was no different from Lebanon's other Muslim clerics. Fadlallah was almost certainly not involved in Hizballah's terrorist attacks in Lebanon. In fact, he complained privately about the Iranians taking hostages in his country through their proxy, the Islamic Jihad Organization, believing it was un-Islamic.

We really got Fadlallah wrong

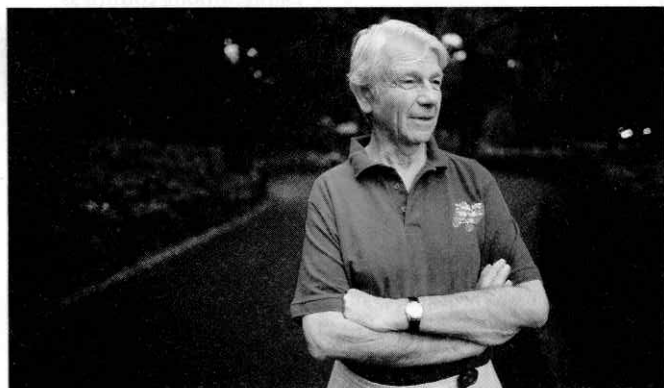
when we started to call him the spiritual leader of Hizballah. The Iranians always looked at Fadlallah as an obstacle to Hizballah's dominance of Lebanese Shi'ites. There was even a time when some in Iranian intelligence considered getting rid of Fadlallah.

Fadlallah was not a friend to the U.S. He preached jihad against the West, creating a climate for the 1983 attack on the Marine barracks in Beirut. But at the end of the day, he was an independent Arab voice, a Shi'ite Muslim courageous enough to stand up against Iran. In that sense, we should regret his passing.

—BY ROBERT BAER



Baer, a former Middle East CIA field officer, is the author of *The Devil We Know: Dealing with the New Iranian Superpower*



Robert Butler

ROBERT BUTLER WAS ONLY 83 when he died from leukemia on July 4. That might seem a respectable age, but Butler, a prominent gerontologist, psychiatrist and founder of the International Longevity Center—a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting healthy aging—was nowhere near ready to go.

Butler campaigned vigorously against ageism (a term he coined in 1968) but deployed a gentle wit to tackle the misconceptions and sheer ignorance fueling age prejudice. He became his own most eloquent argument against ageism, visible proof that the elderly can be as productive, engaged, open to ideas and fun as younger folk.

Butler's output was prodigious. He was the first director of the National Institute on Aging, establishing Alzheimer's disease as a national research priority, and founded the U.S.'s first department of geriatrics, at the Mount Sinai School of Medicine. His books included the Pulitzer Prize-winning *Why Survive? Being Old in America*.

He believed that by eating well, exercising and staying connected, we might extend our already increased longevity. More important, Butler thought we should be able to look forward to enjoying good health for a larger proportion of our life span. In that respect, at least, he proved a role model right to the end, energetic and effective almost until the moment he died.

—BY CATHERINE MAYER

Beryl Bainbridge

When she was 14, Beryl Bainbridge was expelled from school. In her 60s, she was made a Dame of the British Empire. In between and up until her death July 2 in her mid-70s (the exact year of her birth is up for debate), she wrote prolifically and lived colorfully with a dark sense of humor. *The Dressmaker*, published in 1973, was the first of her five novels to be short-listed for the prestigious Man Booker Prize. *The Bottle Factory Outing*, published the following year, was the second. An established yet singular figure on the British literary scene, Bainbridge used events and characters from her life—and later from history—as the basis for her fiction. She wrote of familial relationships and murder, romantic betrayal and the young Hitler. *The Birthday Boys* took on Robert Scott's South Pole expedition; *Master Georgie*, the Crimean War. Several of her novels were made into movies, including *An Awfully Big Adventure*, which was inspired by her years in the theater. As she once said, "I much prefer the past. I don't feel comfortable in the so-called present." —BY ALEXANDRA SILVER

