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The Cell Biology of Aging

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The Third Annual Symposium of the Society for Experimental Biology and
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Since the beginning of recorded history, man has searched for the perfect inhibitor of senescence. These searches have carried him into the furthest outreaches on the planet including deep into the great Himalayas with the hope of deriving secrets of life-styles which would produce clues as to the reported longevity of certain tribes of mountain people. Little of real value in increasing man's life span or his quality of life has come from these treks.

In our country, vitamin fads, diet fads, exercise programs, some good, some not so good, have and are often claimed as having a major impact on promoting long life. Although no one would dispute that good nutrition and exercise certainly have value in enriching our well being, there is relatively little data that these factors alone would greatly alter our longevity. In fact, even if we could eliminate two of our major killers, cardiovascular disease and cancer, there

would only be a modest change in the human life span. At present, other than having the right parents, there appears to be no easy or quick way to deter the aging process.

The scientific study of senescence, on the other hand, is relatively new, especially at the cellular level. In fact, until about 6 or 7 years ago, funds specifically set aside to stimulate aging research in this country were almost nonexistent. With the development of the National Institute of Aging and because of, or concomitant to, its eventual acquisition of research funds, many laboratories now have serious commitments to the study of cellular senescence. Each invited investigator for this symposium is a nationally and internationally recognized authority in his specialty. The topics are diverse but we feel they represent a good cross section of some of the most exciting research areas in aging today.