

## THEODORA (THEO) EMILY DECKER COLBORN

(Age 87)

On Sunday December 14, 2014, Theo Colborn died peacefully at home in Paonia, Colorado, with family by her side.

Dr. Colborn was born in Plainfield, New Jersey on March 28<sup>th</sup>, 1927. She is survived by her beloved children, Harry Colborn (and his wife Colleen Colborn), Kristy Colborn, Susan Raymond (her son Randy Raymond and daughter Tess Buckley), and Mark Colborn (his wife Kathryn Born and their two daughters, Sarah and Bailey Colborn).

Dr. Colborn's seminal contribution to the world was driving scientific and public awareness of "endocrine disruptors". These are chemicals that in even the most minute doses can compromise health by interfering with the development and functioning of reproductive, immune, neurological, metabolic and other bodily systems, especially when encountered in the womb or early in childhood. Her initial stitching together of this story was chronicled in her 1996 book "Our Stolen Future" (coauthored with Dianne Dumanoski and John Peterson Myers). Characterized as a scientific detective story, the book captivated the public and has now been translated into over 18 languages.

Throughout her career, Dr. Colborn spoke passionately of the need for a global program of "inner space research" that would receive as much attention and funding as our investigations of outer space. Such a program would address chemicals that can interfere with the delicate endocrine system and lead to adverse outcomes such as infertility, male birth defects, various cancers, autism, ADHD, Parkinson's and Alzheimer's diseases, diabetes, obesity and a variety of immune system disorders.

Dr. Colborn's scientific work launched relatively late in life. She first spent many years as a pharmacist and a sheep rancher while she raised her four children, primarily in western Colorado. At age 51 she began work on an MA in Science (fresh-water ecology) from Western State College of Colorado and later earned a PhD in Zoology with distributed minors in epidemiology, toxicology and water chemistry from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. In 2004 she became a Professor in the University of Florida's Department of Zoology. In 2011 she was awarded an Honorary Doctor of Science degree from the University of Colorado.

In 1985, Dr. Colborn's professional career took off when she received a Fellowship from the House Office of Technology Assessment, U.S. Congress. She joined the Conservation Foundation (World Wildlife Fund) in 1987 to provide scientific guidance for the 1990 book, "Great Lakes, Great Legacy". Starting in 1990 she held a Chair with the W. Alton Jones Foundation, and in 1993 was given a three-year Pew Fellows Award. She spent the next 10 years directing the Wildlife Contaminants Program at the World Wildlife Fund.

Dr. Colborn has served on numerous advisory panels, most notably the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Science Advisory Board, the Ecosystem Health Committee of the International Joint Commission of the United States and Canada, the Science Management Committee of the Toxic Substances Research Initiative of Canada, the U.S. EPA Endocrine Disruptor Screening and Testing Advisory Committee, and the EPA Endocrine Disruption Methods and Validation Subcommittee.

Most recently, in 2003 she launched TEDX, The Endocrine Disruption Exchange, an international nonprofit organization dedicated to compiling and disseminating scientific evidence about endocrine disruptors. She used TEDX as a base for calling attention to chemical hazards from hydraulic fracturing and to what she labeled “the fossil fuel connection”—the linkage between production of fossil fuels and their further use in making toxic chemicals. Throughout her career, she mentored many young women scientists who are continuing her work from their own influential positions in government, science and the non-profit world.

Dr. Colborn is widely viewed as a successor to Rachel Carson in raising scientific and public awareness about the hazards of chemicals in the environment. She received four prizes named for Carson, including one from Carson’s alma mater, Chatham College, and one from the Society of Toxicology and Environmental Chemistry. Among her other numerous recognitions were the Blue Planet Prize from Japan’s Asahi Glass Foundation, often referred to as the Nobel Prize for environmental issues, and the Swedish Goteborg Prize for the Environment and Sustainability. Time magazine named her a Global Environmental Hero and the U.N. Environment Programme awarded her its Women Leadership in the Environment Award.

Theo Colborn will be remembered around the globe for her uncompromising commitment to protecting the health of the environment, and those that inhabit it. Her work will be carried on by the hundreds of scientists, activists, and many generations of individuals whose lives she touched. Her impact, at present, is inestimable.

More information on her life and career is available at [www.tedx.org](http://www.tedx.org) . Memorial donations may be made to The Endocrine Disruption Exchange (TEDX), <http://endocrinedisruption.org/donations-and-support>, or TEDX, P.O. Box 1407, Paonia, Colorado 81428.