

From: <info@webofstories.com>

Subject: Oliver Sacks celebrates his 80th birthday

Date: Mon, 08 Jul 2013 11:20:03 +0000

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Web of Stories
Middlesex House
34-42 Cleveland Street
London W1T 4LB

T+44(0)20 7323 0323
press@webofstories.com
www.webofstories.com

[@webofstories](#)
www.facebook.com/webofstories

OLIVER SACKS

London, UK | 8 July 2013

For immediate release

As world-renowned British neurologist Oliver Sacks celebrates his 80th birthday on 9 July, he remains one of the most prolific names in his field. Web of Stories is proud to present a range of insightful recordings as Sacks recounts memories of his life and work.

The British doctor, referred to as 'the poet laureate of medicine?' by *The New York Times*, is best known for his collections of neurological case histories. *Awakenings* (1973), his book about a group of patients who had survived the great encephalitis lethargica epidemic of the early 20th century, inspired a 1990 Academy Award-nominated film. Sacks went on to author many more books including the best-selling *The Man who Mistook his Wife for a Hat* (1985) and *Musicophilia: Tales of Music and the Brain* (2007).

You can discover more about the man behind such groundbreaking work by watching over 300 recordings of him sharing memories, which include having had WH Auden as a mentor: 'He wrote a lovely review of *Migraine* and I felt, in a way, that this was the first time that a... someone of grand powers had taken notice of me.'

He also opens up about his nearly fatal experience with drugs: '*When I came to New York I was dangerously drug-addicted. Perhaps addiction isn't... isn't the right word, but I would take huge doses of amphetamine every weekend, and these were potentially fatal doses. I sort of specialised in overdoses... I had a sudden sober moment on New Year's Eve in '65; I looked at myself in the mirror and I said, "Oliver, you will not see another New Year's Day unless you get help. There has to be some intervention".*'

No recordings of Sacks would be complete without his memories of the pivotal work which led him to write *Awakenings*: '*These were people who had been almost inanimate for 30 or 40 years, who had burst into explosive life.*'

All of these recordings, and countless others, can be watched with fully searchable transcripts. All Web of

NOTES FOR EDITORS

ABOUT WEB OF STORIES

Everyone has a story to tell. Over time many stories become forgotten, but now Web of Stories offers members of the public the chance to tell their stories for future generations to enjoy. The project is built on the belief that we all have wonderful stories to share, and have family and friends whose tales we would like to hear.

Web of Stories began as an archive of life stories told by some of the great scientists, writers and artists of our time. As the number of stories grew, it became obvious that some were on related topics and that a web was slowly being created of connected stories.

We welcome anyone to come and talk about virtually anything they like. Just like our famous speakers, we hope you will record your stories for others to enjoy.

CONTACT

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Despite his unquestionable success, he admits to struggling at university. He also talks of his 'disastrous' year in neuropathology and neurochemistry: *'I screwed the oil immersion objective of the microscope through several priceless slides. I lost a sample which I'd spent 10 months preparing, a sample of myelin from nerve sheaths, and, finally, I got some food in the ultracentrifuge... basically they threw me out. They said, "Sacks, you are a menace. Why don't you go and see patients - you'll do less harm." And this was sort of the ignoble beginning of a clinical career.'*

Stories videos are easy to share with friends and colleagues, and may be embedded into personal blogs and websites.

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